

A Qualitative Investigation of Aesthetic Evaluation in Men's Artistic Gymnastics

Clive Alan Palmer

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Abstract

“A Qualitative Investigation of Aesthetic Evaluation in Men’s Artistic Gymnastics”

The title indicates that this will be a qualitative piece of research, which seeks to explore how the aesthetic aspect of Men’s Artistic Gymnastics might best be understood and thereafter, influence the evaluation process of gymnastic performances. The study also aims to examine how the aesthetic dimension of gymnastics is regarded by significant figures within the sport and to question the relevance of the aesthetic dimension in relation to the process of evaluation in the sport.

This research has utilised a qualitative methodology to investigate aesthetic evaluation of Men's Artistic Gymnastics at international levels of the sport. Earlier research (Palmer, 1999) suggested that practitioners did not regard their sport as artistic, as its name suggests, nor did they refer to formal artistic criteria to evaluate their products. This research sought therefore, to discover what aesthetic features might exist in the sport and how practitioners make sense of gymnastics performance. This has involved investigating how practitioners expressed personal preferences to give meaning to qualities conceived of a gymnastic image. Of particular interest here was how practitioners valued and differentiated between qualities they observed in the performances of others and how they valued and comprehended aesthetic qualities in the gymnastics they created themselves. The qualitative methodology, which underpins the perspective from which the researcher has observed the gymnastics world, indicated a range of methods that were appropriate for observing and theorising about aesthetic phenomena in that world. The qualitative approach has also helped to identify where and how the investigation should start and when it could be paused in order to present this thesis.

The initial research action became a prolonged period of fieldwork, which the researcher has termed as structured observation. This led the researcher onto a second phase of research which was to conduct formal interviews with expert practitioners. The period of structured observation indicated several important dimensions within the sport which were significant aesthetically. These were historical dimensions, notions of intent and craftsmanship, comprehension of rules and standards, skill and skilfulness and technical and technique within the sport. As the research progressed, the data indicated that a process of selection and rejection of gymnastic elements and rule conventions seemed to be at work. This selective phenomenon was investigated as a function of taste, which may account for one of the mechanisms by which the aesthetic of the sport is altering rapidly on the world stage. The process of

researching aesthetic taste in gymnastics directed the researcher to return to the field and conduct formal interviews. The interviews were designed to elicit a commentary from experts commenting on experts focusing on video footage from the 2000 European Championships. The consequence of this research action was that it necessarily narrowed the scope of vision upon aesthetic phenomena in the gymnastic world down to one event at a particular time in recent gymnastic history. Therefore expert practitioners from the highest levels in the sport were invited to contribute to the research.

The research draws conclusions, identifies some implications and makes some recommendations which centre around how the aesthetic qualities of gymnastic performance, which are realised by practitioners, might be best evaluated. The notion that an understanding of *how well* a gymnast performed, not just *what* he executed, influenced practitioners' responses towards performances and their differentiation between gymnasts. A strong reliance upon descriptive qualitative language to explain conceptions of aesthetic quality was in evidence, which may be making the application of the F.I.G. rules problematic for fair competitions under current protocols.

Three main areas of the conclusions are that: (a) The history of gymnastics is a significant aesthetic resource for the sport. Men's Artistic Gymnastics has a rich aesthetic heritage from which classic gymnastic detail can be pin-pointed in order to define the quality of innovation in the sport. Traces of classic gymnastic material may allow "the new" to be recognised and valued as being distinctly gymnastic, which may help to bring some stability to innovations in the modern-day sport. (b) There is a great deal of aesthetic material exhibited within a performance which is seemingly overlooked by the current evaluation process which could contribute towards a more comprehensive assessment of the aesthetic of performances. A Composition Jury might make such a contribution by assessing elements of form with a view to rewarding the gymnasts for the full range of aesthetic qualities they demonstrate in their performance. The instigation of such an initiative would necessitate a supporting programme of education. (c) The F.I.G. currently utilises a low level of technology to assist with the evaluation of gymnastic routines. If technology were embraced then, conceivably, judges' valuable expertise and attention might be directed more efficiently at making qualitative assessments of aesthetic qualities. A good deal of judges' attention at competition appears to be consumed by tasks in which technology could assist, and to much greater levels of accuracy than is achieved by human perception, for example, exact measurements of biomechanical execution. A measurement of this kind of aesthetic form; degrees and times of biomechanical execution, could be used to supplement the final evaluation rather than being a predominant factor at the expense of other important aesthetic reasoning. This seems to be what is taking

place currently. A more effective utilisation of technology might help to bring to fruition a Composition Jury, as recommended above, by freeing up judges from their current burdens of estimating “technical” features of performances. Other significant additional advantages of utilising technology would be the F.I.G.’s ability to record performances efficiently and quickly in a format that is easily shared. The recording would be in the primary aesthetic form of gymnastics i.e. a visual one, rather than in a transcribed format using a contrived system of symbols. Moreover, the constant transcribing of the contents of routines seems not only time consuming and distracting for judges but also relies upon the fallible human perception; these ostensibly weak links in the recording process would be removed with a more effective use of technology. Consequently, under current protocols, a great deal of important aesthetic information may go unrecorded and would therefore be lost.

Finally, some limitations of this research are recognised by the author and some suggestions made as to possible areas for further research.

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Glossary of Terms

F.I.G.	Federation Internationale Gymnastique - world governing body for gymnastics at international level.
M.T.C.	Men's Technical Committee. A committee in charge of Men's Artistic Gymnastics at F.I.G. or national governing body level.
B.G.	British Gymnastics - a national governing body.
Practitioners	Term used in this thesis to denote coaches, judges and/or gymnasts.
Gymnastics	For ease of reading and brevity the term gymnastics is often used in place of Men's Artistic Gymnastics. The term gymnastics is used specifically to denote the F.I.G. discipline of Men's Artistic Gymnastics. The term is not used generally to encompass all forms of gymnastics. If other forms of gymnastics are referred to they are named appropriately and explained in the context of the points being raised.

Preface

Genesis of this research into the aesthetic evaluation of Men's Artistic Gymnastics

This research has evolved from the researcher's M.A. thesis (Palmer, 1999) which explored how Men's *Artistic* Gymnastics might be understood and evaluated as an *artistic product* from a national perspective.

Palmer (1999) indicated that practitioners (coaches, judges and gymnasts) did not consciously utilise artistic criteria to evaluate their sport. However, when discussing their ideas concerning gymnastic performance such as perfection, elegance in presentation and individual flair, practitioners did appeal to their sense of aesthetic beauty to inform their personal evaluation of the gymnast and his performance.

This initial inquiry revealed that variations in styles of performance may be conceived of which could be an indicator of how a socio-aesthetic preference may be at work within the sport (Palmer, 1999).

Therefore, recommendations in the M.A. study for further research included identifying how aesthetic material in gymnastics might be created and recognised, and how a concept of national identity may be formed within the sport. This Ph.D. develops the M.A. study in two significant ways. Firstly, by focusing upon the conditions by which aesthetic material in gymnastics may be produced, presented and evaluated. Secondly, by investigating international points of view in order to learn more about the aesthetic perception of the gymnastic product.

Underpinning knowledge for this project has involved research into three areas: a philosophy of human movement, a philosophy of art, and artistic and aesthetic theory within the arts and sport. Monist, materialist theories of human movement have provided a valuable foundation from which to comprehend the physical actions that may help to create aesthetic objects in gymnastics, (for example, Ryle, 1949; Wimsatt and Beardsley, 1970; Curl, 1974; Best 1978; Carr, 1978, 1979; Diamond and Teichman, 1979; Gardner, 1983; McGinn, 1991; Dretske, 1994; Rorty, 1994; Stich, 1994). Works by theorists concerned with the philosophy of art have helped to identify how the aesthetic products of skilful actions might be considered as being artistic, particularly from the perspectives of form and expression (Langer, 1953, 1967; Cassirer, 1955, 1957; Shahn, 1957; Aldrich, 1963; Gombrich, 1968; Fry, 1969; Hospers, 1969; Reid, 1969; Osbourne, 1972; Gross, 1974; Sheppard, 1987; Gross, 1988; Crowther, 1991; Arnheim, 1994). This has provided guidance for differentiating between an artistic and an aesthetic conception of gymnastic actions. With an understanding of the philosophical conditions for intentional action, allied with a comprehension of how those actions may or may not be artistic, a review of aesthetic theories in

aesthetic education (Barry *et al.* 1964; Aspin, 1978; Bantock, 1978; Hirst, 1979; Best, 1979, 1982; Sibley, 1980; Codd, 1982; Simpson, 1986; Gaskin, 1989; Gracyk, 1990), **Physical Education** (Dubois, 1974; Aspin, 1977; Best, 1978a; Carr, 1979a; Meakin, 1980, 1986; Kirk, 1984), **dance** (Eshkol and Wachmann, 1958; Redfurn, 1973; Best, 1974; Hutchinson, 1974; Foster, 1976; McFee, 1976, 1992, 1999; Van Camp, 1981, 1995; Copeland and Cohen, 1983; Royce, 1984; Adshead, 1987; Carter, 2000) **and sport** (Gerber, 1972; Reid, 1974; Armstrong and Whitely, 1975; Best, 1975, 1978; Lowe, 1977; Cooper, 1978; Saraf, 1980; Kirk, 1986; Huang, 1990) has been undertaken. These authors have provided a focusing of aesthetic education, helping to indicate what may be important features of aesthetic detail to research within the sport of gymnastics.

Theorists who have attempted to explain meaning in language and interpretation of personal knowledge (Wittgenstein, 1953, 1958; Langer, 1957; Polanyi, 1962; Elton, 1967; Hospers, 1967; Best, 1975a; Margolis, 1983; Van Camp, 1996), have provided an approach within aesthetics for the analysis of the use of language that help to create the rules and conditions for gymnastics. Principally, this has allowed the “aesthetic object” (Elton, 1967), that results from interpretations of instructions, interpretations of the stipulated rules and interpretations of reports of other gymnastic performances, to be studied from an informed aesthetic point of view.

Within the context of rules and conditions that define gymnastics, practitioners seemingly intend to create an aesthetic object, of what may be for them, gymnastic beauty. Works by theorists concerned with aesthetic beauty (Croce, 1922; Newton, 1950; Santayana, 1955; Carrit, 1962; Sparshott, 1963; Janaway, 1993; Brand, 1999) have provided underpinning knowledge from which to comprehend a notion of aesthetic beauty which may apply to gymnastics. These ideas have been used to analyse research by other authors who have considered aesthetic beauty in gymnastics specifically (Lowe and Bird, 1972; Lascari, 1974; Lowe 1976, 1977; Hulme, 1977, McFee, 1977; Powers, 1977; Best, 1978b; Gauthier, 1983; Brasier, 1988; Cheales, 1991; Sun-Jianjun, 1991; Li, 1999).

This investigation draws upon a qualitative research methodology to analyse observations of the gymnastics world and the points of view of practitioners from different cultural backgrounds who have contributed to gymnastics at international level. Authors such as Glaser and Strauss (1967), Roche (1973), Haralambos and Heald (1985), Hammersley (1990), Strauss and Corbin (1990), Atkinson (1991), Mann and Stuart (2001), Sparkes (1991, 1992, 1998), Layder (1993), Cote *et al.* (1993), Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), Dale (1996), Davidow, (1998); Silverman (2001) and Wengraf (2001) have provided theories and strategies in qualitative research to conduct this study. Published qualitative research which

involved gymnastics coaches (Cote *et al.* 1995, 1995a, 1995b; Cote and Salmela, 1996) has also provided methodological reference from which to conduct this research into the aesthetic of Men's Artistic Gymnastics.

1. Introduction

1.1 Sequence of thesis presentation and development of this research.

Chapter one has the task of leading the reader through the study and establishing a foundation for comprehending this research. This is achieved by rehearsing some of the arguments from the M.A. (Palmer, 1999) and flagging up some of its data findings in order to clarify the research question here and identify how the start point of this research was realised. Some terms and stances adopted by the researcher are also clarified at this point, including the notions of objectivity and subjectivity.

The methodology discussed in chapter two identifies the nature of the problem being researched and the kind of explanation sought which has in turn indicated the kind of data to be collected. This section explains that qualitative data will be collected by appropriate research methods and therefore indicates a means for analysing how that data may shed light upon the topics being studied. Therefore, the methodology has been explained early in the study as it provided underpinning knowledge and a direction for the researcher to think critically about aesthetic evaluation in gymnastics and to analyse data in an appropriate way. Also, perhaps more fundamentally the methodology presented early in the thesis reflects an adopted stance or view of the world which has helped the researcher to identify a) what counts as data in the field and b) to direct the researcher to relevant literature to build this body of research. The methodology chapter outlines the ontological and epistemological assumptions concerning the "interpretive paradigm", which distinguishes the philosophical and sociological foundations for this study. Sparkes (1992) states that:

According to interpretivists, a 'God's eye view' of the world is impossible. All we can ever have are various points of view that reflect the interests, values and purposes of various groups of people.

From this interpretive stance, the area of Phenomenology, which looks at everyday taken for granted situations and views them as problematic in order to gain an insight into man's consciousness and construction of realities, has been identified as an initial aspect of methodological thinking in this research. Phenomenology and symbolic interactionism appear to have similar aims, arguing that the social world cannot be understood in terms of simple causal relationships and they reject the methodological stance of positivism. This is because it is claimed, human actions are based upon, or infused by social meanings, that is, by intentions, motives, beliefs, rules and values (Hammersley and

Atkinson, 1995). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) also state that the view held by symbolic interactionists seems to be that people *interpret stimuli* and these interpretations are continually under revision as they unfold, shaping their actions. As a result the same physical stimulus could mean different things to different people - and indeed to the same person at different times. Therefore, investigating socio-aesthetic interpretations may be central to understanding how the aesthetic beliefs of practitioners may be formulated, concerning *how well* from their informed point of view, gymnastics was performed. Consequently, this research has been structured upon a Grounded Theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) which according to Cutcliffe (2000) is "rooted in symbolic interactionism" wherein the researcher attempts to determine what symbolic meanings, artefacts, clothing, gestures and words have for groups of people as they interact with one another. Morse and Field (1995) point out that symbolic interactionists stress that people construct their realities from the symbols around them through interaction and therefore, individuals are active participants in creating meaning in a situation. The processes by which meanings are constructed and interpretations made of aesthetically defining features in gymnastics are of principle interest to this research.

In chapter three the methods of data collection used in this research are discussed as they draw upon ethnographic fieldwork strategies i.e. participant observation has been utilised to develop a "rich description" (Layder, 1993) of aesthetic evaluation within the gymnastic world. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) describe this method of research as:

In its most characteristic form it involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in peoples' daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research.

However, the analysis of gymnastic behaviour and analysis of the conditions for that behaviour (i.e. not only it's description) help to define the aesthetic features within gymnastics, which are in turn, evaluated in some way by its practitioners. A contention of this research being that the aesthetic evaluation of gymnastic products are pivotal to guiding gymnastic behaviour on the international stage. The emphasis to draw theory from data also points to a grounded theory approach because it theorises about the behaviour under study i.e. goes beyond description, and consequently becomes a method for developing aesthetic theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Methods of data collection have included structured observation, participant observation with compilation of field notes from conversations and observations in the field, video and Internet research and formal in-depth interviews. The research process has progressively

developed the concepts identified as a grounded aesthetic model from the M.A. research (Palmer, 1999). Analysis and theorising have been supported by an ongoing review of literature as topics and themes emerged from the data.

Chapters four and five analyse the concepts of history and intention in gymnastics as they appeared to underpin practitioner's understanding of what it means for them to be involved within the sport at international level. The data then led onto the ostensibly objective areas of rules, skill and technical understanding. These areas were then contrasted with ostensibly subjective conceptions of standards, skilfulness and technique respectively. This process of contrasting was important because it reflected the division in the data between what practitioners appeared to understand as an objective and subjective comprehension of aesthetic features in gymnastics. This dichotomy of understanding was reflected in their interpretation and explanation of performances, appearance qualities, gymnastic duties, gymnastic aspirations and aesthetic ideals. In so doing practitioners were simultaneously formulating and pursuing their own conceptions of perfection in gymnastic performance guided by their interpretation of a gymnastic ideal, tactical possibilities and restrictions and opportunities presented by the rules as they saw them. A clarification of the stance regarding objectivity and subjectivity adopted in this research is offered later in this chapter. However it is sufficient to point out now that the educated reasoning behind all aesthetic judgements may make them objective judgements. Consequently, Best (1974, 1979) points out that the "status of reasons" is the issue to be comprehended here in that the reasoning for aesthetic judgements is as valid or objective, as those accorded to science may appear to be. That is, the processes of reasoning in science and the arts are so similar they should be accorded equal status in education. Therefore, a notion of subjectivity which infers that no opinion can be superior to another is fallacious and absurd as it renders untenable any critical discussion when the knowledge of being right and the concession of being wrong is valueless. That is subjectivity, in the sense that "anything goes" presents a pejorative sense of the term because it may deny accountability in that area for that kind of judgement (McFee, 1992).

Chapter six details how, as the research and data analysis progressed, a process of selection and rejection of gymnastic actions appeared to be at work within the gymnastics world. This selection process was analysed with reference to an aesthetic theory of taste (Newton, 1950) which seemed to provide an explanation of selection events 'on the ground'. The notions of "fashionable" and "classic" (Newton, 1950), when applied an aesthetic evaluation of actions in gymnastics, seemingly helps to

explain the filtering or sieving function of taste which offers an account for why some actions appear and later disappear from the overall stock of gymnastic actions. For example, the more recent versions of the F.I.G. Code of Points (Zschocke 1989, 1993, 1997; Fink, 2001) indicate that the popularity of some actions appear to fluctuate between Codes, with the possible risk of exclusion from the total stock of legal elements. A further indication of selection was that some National teams preferred different elements and combinations to others in their performances which seems to have resulted in a kind of corporate cultural identity in style of gymnastics which could be indicative of a manner of performing, for example, a Russian style of work on Pommels or a Cuban style on High Bar. This being noted by personal observation at the major events attended throughout the research. However, at this stage in the research, the phenomena in the data being collected on the ground appeared to diverge from aesthetic theory, which could be applied reasonably to understand events in the gymnastic world. The data indicated that the researcher was at this point and therefore would have to return to the field because practitioners were finding it difficult to understand how concepts of aesthetic taste might activate discrimination between gymnastic actions and performances. It was now apparent that a new method of data collection was required to research beyond the aesthetic model whilst maintaining its relevance and accessibility to the gymnastics world. This phase of the research detailed in chapter seven involved face to face interviews during which expert practitioners provided a commentary on video footage from the 2000 European Championships in Bremen, Germany. After the resulting transcripts were analysed they seemed to provide some interestingly different perspectives upon the gymnastic products at international level.

In chapter eight conclusions are drawn from the body of research which present the gymnastic world with some implications, should they wish to acknowledge them. Some recommendations are made which may go some way towards meeting the implications envisaged.

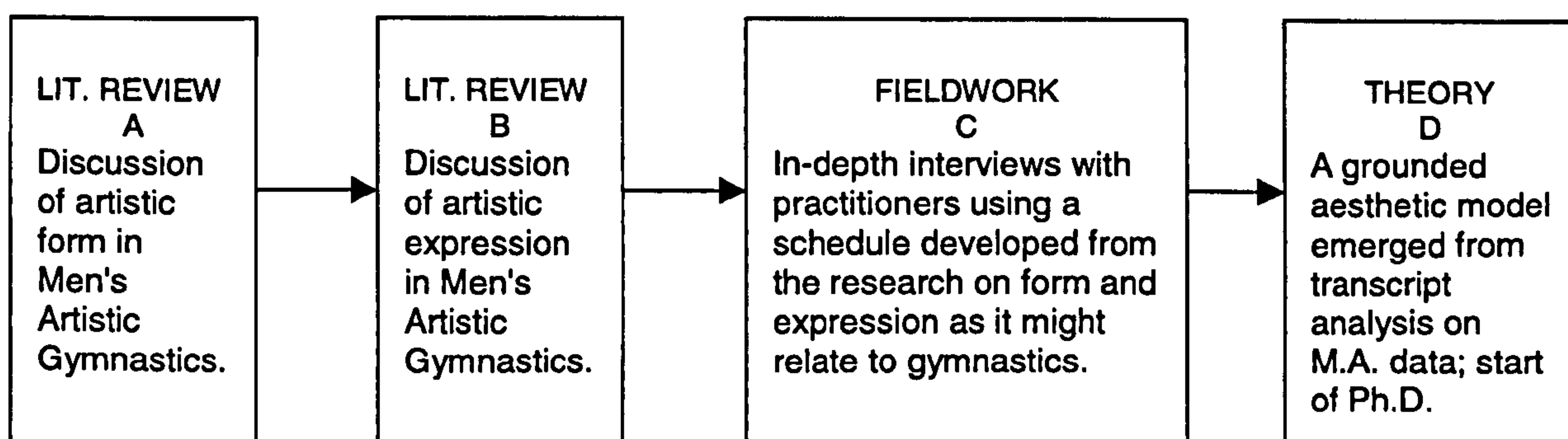
1.2 Clarifying the rationale of the research question and Identifying the start point of this research.

As mentioned above, this investigation has developed from the researcher's M.A. thesis, which related some artistic theories of form and expression to Men's Artistic Gymnastics. The focus of the M.A. research was to examine whether an *artistic* understanding of Men's *Artistic* Gymnastics was held or

referred to by its practitioners in order to comprehend and evaluate the aesthetic of their sport. This investigation does not reanalyse data from the M.A. study, however the first course of action does stem directly from its data findings. In order to identify the start point of this investigation it seems appropriate to rehearse some of the arguments from the earlier study in order to way-mark for the reader how the M.A. research initiated the current study.

The overview being that the M.A. data indicated that practitioners did not comprehend their gymnastic activities as artistic in relation to formal artistic theories such as, symbolism, minimalism, unity, form, content or expression. However, M.A. data analysis did reveal concepts that were important to practitioners because in their view, they had a direct affect upon the appearance of gymnastics. These concepts were formed into a grounded aesthetic model of appearance in gymnastics within the conclusions of the M.A. study. This model discussed later, became effectively the start point of the Ph.D. in relation to the analysis of aesthetic evaluation, as opposed to artistic evaluation on the international stage. The following sub sections provide a brief overview of some of the M.A. arguments concerning an artistic notion of form and expression as they might relate to gymnastics. This section has the purpose of indicating how the concepts within the aesthetic model were eventually arrived at. That is working backwards, the concepts within the aesthetic model were identified from in-depth interviews with practitioners which were conducted from a schedule which itself was derived from the research on form and expression in art, related to their sport. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. Schematic to illustrate development of the M.A. research (Palmer, 1999) towards Ph.D.



As a theoretical stance when researching the M.A. the researcher kept an open mind to the possibility that practitioners of Artistic Gymnastics might draw upon some artistic theory or criteria in their evaluation of performance despite its contextual presentation as a sport. It was felt that if the researcher was open to such possibilities, there could be more to offer the gymnastics world in terms of a broader or new perspective from which they could judge and comprehend their artistic products.

However, it may be instructive at this juncture to consider a statement by Lowe (1977) who draws attention to the level of knowledge about aesthetics as it may apply to the Artistic Gymnastics fraternity. He states that:

The criteria of aesthetic excellence have either eluded experts in gymnastics, or else the attempts of those experts to apply aesthetic criteria to gymnastics have proven barren on account of a fundamental lack of comprehension of what constitutes aesthetic performance in human movement.

This Ph.D. research revealed that practitioners did in fact have an acute sense of aesthetic awareness and possessed highly critical eyes to discern aesthetic excellence in their sport. Critically however, this level of awareness seems to be realised and shared within the gymnastics world using their own language, conventions, norms and meanings which Lowe (1977) may not have been privy to. Therefore in hindsight, one criticism of the M.A. research which may be levelled could relate to the inappropriateness of bringing artistic criteria to bear upon a seemingly non-artistic enterprise; which may have been the trap which provokes Lowe's comments. However, the M.A. findings led onto a more grounded inquiry about aesthetic evaluation in gymnastics as the Ph.D. sought to utilise the language of gymnastics to tease out and reflect accurately an aesthetic understanding in the sport.

A) Discussion about artistic form as it might relate to Men's Artistic Gymnastics from the M.A. (Palmer, 1999) - an overview.

A concept of form could be considered to relate to an object in many different ways, depending upon the interests, values and beliefs of the evaluator. A notion of form in relation to functionalism and idealism was discussed to open the debate on ways of seeing form and what might count as good form in gymnastics. For example, was good form when the gymnast [just] "did his job" to complete an action; a functionalist view or did good form relate to a judgement referring to idealistic values of how well the action was performed. Form was also considered from a procedural point of view whereby performing a number of actions in what is stipulated as the correct sequence might be considered as good form. Form could also be considered from a collective point of view, i.e. a gathering of form in final presentation. This view of form might pay less attention to process but focus on the end product. That is, only what is presented may be of interest, not how the presentation is achieved. For example, in synchronised swimming the display above the surface of the water is all that may be judged, the efforts below the surface are not gradable aspects of the performance. Form was also considered from a physical perspective when physical condition or a state of physical being is all important, for

example the concept of being “in form” or “on top-form” would be relevant to gymnastics in this instance. This perspective might consider the process as well as the product of the performance as being equally important. Form could also be considered from a structural point of view. For example, as in the standard forms of folk songs, verse and chorus, or a standard structure of a sonnet or of a symphony. This notion of form indicates that a standard in terms of structure might be significant in recognising the form of the display, i.e. what might be expected. For example, when preparing to judge, a judge will expect to evaluate a routine which contains the minimum requirements regarding the number and difficulty of actions that a gymnastics routine should comprise. These actions are currently categorised [by difficulty] as four A’s, three B’s, two C’s and one D (Zschocke, 1997).

Form might also be seen as a criterion based evaluation device that has particular kinds of recognisable feature. For example in art, concepts such as perspective, balance, mirror and golden mean may help the observer to evaluate the work. These could be regarded as features of structural form. However the object might also be recognised as having surface features such as colour, line, texture, dynamic and rhythm. These features of form at the surface may be revealed as a result of the artist’s ability to utilise his particular technique in the creation of the display. In Artistic Gymnastics both structural and surface features may be evident in a performance. Some examples of the **structural** form features might be those aspects of the overall display which are determined by the stipulated rules. For example, the ordering of the difficulty requirements in a routine as mentioned above, or, with regard to use of apparatus such as on the Pommel Horse when the gymnast has to use the neck, saddle and croup during his routine. (This terminology is obsolete now although the concept of using all parts of the Pommel Horse still remains as a requirement). Also that all the apparatus pieces are designed to standard measurements and used at specific settings such as Floor size and Vault height may be further examples of form in gymnastics which help the observer to recognise a competitive gymnastic performance.

Examples of **surface** form features in a performance might be the timing of elements and connections within the routines. Also the strength and flexibility, or lack of it, displayed by the gymnast, and the dynamics of actions where the utilisation of weight, lift and space affect the perceived linkage and fluency of the performance. Some of these surface features of form might appear similar in essence to the notions of originality, harmony and rhythm outlined in earlier editions of the F.I.G Code of Points (Gander, 1979) and then rejected by the current F.I.G Code of Points (Zschocke, 1997).

Terminology often associated with the evaluation of Artistic Gymnastics, such as grace, beauty, virtuosity, elan and elegance, may describe what a person perceives through emotional arousal when they observe a “moving” (pleasing) gymnastic performance. However these terms appear to have non-definable parameters and have seemingly proved to be too problematic for the F.I.G. to define in a manner which their judges could use to calculate scores for performances. Practitioners often appeared to dismiss such qualities as subjective, in the pejorative sense of the term. That is not to say that such features are not definable as features of form. Many practitioners actually use these terms to describe verbally the quality of performances to others (pers. comm.).

The implications of aesthetic form in the guise of virtuosity and gracefulness etc. relying upon human senses for their perception were discussed, as recognition of these qualities seems to require that learning about form in this sense will have taken place before hand in order to evaluate it. Thus the comprehension of all sense data information, including that stimulus which “moves” the observer emotionally might be learned, indicating that education is an important process for understanding a form-related concept of beauty in a gymnastics performance. For example, one's appreciation and evaluation of form (structural and surface) may rely upon ones ability to recognise it when it is displayed in a performance. Therefore, that one's judgement may be culturally bound. A challenge for the F.I.G. would be to devise an evaluation method to credit the gymnast for how well he displays his gymnastic form and not to reject surface features of form as unreliable, superficial or fanciful indicators of aesthetic quality.

Other notions of form discussed in this section were those of a mathematically ‘pure’ form which may relate to a technical understanding of form in gymnastics (Humpries-Owen, 1968). This led onto a discussion about the implications of perfect form in relation to Plato's theory of Ideas where everything is made from a timeless mould that is eternal and immutable (Gaader, 1997). The balance between form and content in art was discussed in relation minimalism. This being seen to pose a significant challenge to an artistic notion of gymnastics by considering how a reduction in content which can be interpreted in various ways was seen as a pure presentation of artistic form (Shahn, 1957). That is, reducing the content in a display may purposefully inhibit the ability of the evaluator to make imperfect evaluations of the work. An opposing argument to this was to consider how artistic content in gymnastics might portray symbolism and develop its potential to convey meaning. This area of the investigation was couched initially in the expression section of the work.

B) Discussion about artistic expression as it might relate to Men's Artistic Gymnastics from the M.A. (Palmer, 1999) - an overview.

In order to broaden the debate for relating a notion of expression to Artistic Gymnastics, an explanation of what the terms “expression”, “express” and “expressive” are seemingly used to mean was provided. For example, it was mentioned that expression might be equated with the ability of a gymnast to exhibit such qualities as grace, elegance, originality, elan, harmony, rhythm or virtuosity in order that the overall display might be said to *express* some additional character or feature, beyond the technical demand of the actions themselves. Danto (1971) provides a clarification of this issue by isolating the notion of expression from the overall performance. He states that expression is that which accounts for the possibility of artistically distinct performances of the identical work. With reference to music, he explains that:

Expression is what the performer contributes in his capacity as a collaborative medium through which the noted score is transmuted into sound. If the score defines the work then the performance is work plus expression. Expression is that which remains when we subtract work from a given performance and since work is constant, artistic variations from performance to performance are due to variations in expression.

This point has a clear correlation to when Compulsory routines were a part of competition when all gymnasts were required to demonstrate how skilful they could be with a standard set exercise. This situation is discussed later in the thesis.

The discussion then proceeded to consider art as a language, as understanding the language of Artistic Gymnastics was of central interest to this M.A. research. Best (1974) claims that art is like language in that it is an intentional activity when both aesthetic meaning and linguistic meaning are ultimately determined by human intentions. With reference to meaning he states that “we interpret the movement, we see it in a particular way and how we see it depends upon complex associations and connections with a whole cultural background” (Best, 1974). An issue here for Artistic Gymnastics may be to determine how the artist might convey meaning through the [symbolic] actions of Artistic Gymnastics. The concept of symbolism in art was then discussed, as there appeared to be some important issues to be considered when relating the notion of meaning in art and what it might mean to be artistic related to the named activity of Artistic Gymnastics.

The concept of medium in Artistic Gymnastics was explored as it might help to develop further an understanding of the artistic implications for the sport under an expression theory. Aldrich (1963) draws the distinction between the artist and the artisan when he claims that the artisan produces the

materials for the artist. However he continues that, “the artist does something uniquely special with the materials, such as creates or acts in a particular way that is emotionally stimulating to either the artist, the audience or both” (Aldrich, 1963). This statement seems to imply that the artist, as opposed to the artisan, might use the material in some skilful and ingenious way, which perhaps exudes a confidence which may in turn “radiate a brilliant inner experience”, such as quoted in the definition of virtuosity in the F.I.G. Code of Points (Gander, 1979).

The concept of medium appears to relate to, and depend upon the skills, interests and beliefs of the artist to manipulate something during their distinctly artistic activity. In terms of Artistic Gymnastics, there are many parties who contribute materials, which are utilised by others to construct an aesthetic in the sport. However, this begged the question of exactly who is being *artistic*, in the emotional and creative sense of the word, amongst those who were using the materials which make up the final display. Namely the F.I.G., the judges, the coaches, the gymnasts and perhaps the audience, all of whom appear to be involved with interpretation of actions in Artistic Gymnastics at some point in time. Identifying who is the artist may be important for crediting the right person for their work.

The implications of an aesthetic emotion in gymnastics were then discussed to investigate who might be expressing artistically in Artistic Gymnastics. Explanations of the criteria for risk, originality, virtuosity and rhythm (F.I.G Code of Points, 1979) state how the judge might be emotionally moved if they recognised such features in the exercise. In artistic terms, according to these criteria, the judge may have been the artist at this time, as he was seemingly required to express through the process of judging, whereby his awarded score might have been his artistic expression of the performance. To illustrate this point the following extracts from the F.I.G. Code of Points are cited:

With reference to risk, **“The judges knowledge and capacity for feeling as a performer gymnast should place him in a position to participate mentally in exercise being evaluated”** (Gander, 1979).

With reference to originality: **“The exercise in question is especially pleasing and awakens a feeling of beauty”** (Gander, 1979).

With reference to virtuosity: **“The performance deeply impresses us so that our very souls are moved”** (Gander, 1979).

With reference to rhythm: **“From a quality point of view, care is to be taken that the whole exercise is rhythmic, versatile and interesting. Exercises which are rhythmically monotonous and lack expression are to be correspondingly penalised”** (Appelt, 1979).

These criteria appear to trend towards an artistic notion of judging in Artistic Gymnastics because of the emotional impact which it is inferred that the judge might feel when evaluating a performance. However, they apparently fail to indicate how gymnastic actions might show symbolism or otherwise qualify as being of artistic value for scoring purposes.

The technical content of the current 1997 Code was discussed as it appears to be predominantly form based in the sense that actions can be measured (by angles, distances and times) whilst still claiming to be artistic both in name and value. The 1997 Code states “The Mens Technical Committee voted in favour of the retention of the basic values of gymnastics such as beauty of movement and aesthetics as well as harmony and the correct rhythm of movement” (Zschocke, 1997). This terminology, stated as basic values does not appear to be defined in the 1997 Code of Points. It is seemingly important for the F.I.G. to present a point of view which might serve as its philosophy in relation to how they conceive artistically, the named activity of Artistic Gymnastics at a particular moment in time. It would appear that this point of view has to be well defined in order for the activity to be well defined. This might allow others to recognise valued artistic aspects of the performance in the context of the stipulated rules.

C) In-depth interviews with practitioners using a schedule developed from the M.A. research on form and expression as it might relate to gymnastics (Palmer, 1999).

The questions on the interview schedule were developed from the research on form and expression and transpired to be a productive method for exploring the level of aesthetic knowledge and personal experiences held by expert practitioners. This was because the research on form and expression provided the researcher with reasonable ways of comprehending an appearance of objects or performances presented for aesthetic evaluation. Without this knowledge it would have been difficult to realise the significance of practitioner’s explanations. The questions transpired to be at an appropriate level of complexity for these highly skilled professionals who reported that formulating answers to these questions was challenging and interesting for them. Figure 2 is an edited version of the full interview schedule to indicate here the kind of questions asked.

Figure 2. Edited version of interview schedule used in M.A. research (Palmer, 1999).

Introduction: Initial questions.
Do you think that the appearance of Artistic Gymnastics has changed over the last 30 to 40 years? If yes – a) in what basic ways? And b) Due to which basic factors? What things do you particularly enjoy about the sport of Artistic Gymnastics? What qualities do you think it displays or develops compared to other sports? Can an Artistic Gymnastics routine be regarded as beautiful?
Aesthetics and Artistic Gymnastics.
What do you understand by the term form in Artistic Gymnastics? Does form relate to skill and technique in Artistic Gymnastics? – Give specific examples if required. Do you think that aspects of form in a performance are easy to recognise? – How do you recognise it? Do you think the idea of art sits comfortably with gymnastics? – Explain.
Rules and judging in Artistic Gymnastics.
Do you think the F.I.G rules (1997) have moved towards a more objective system of scoring and differentiating between levels of performance? If so, why? Is the exercise content able to be interpreted in your view? Do you think interpretation of the exercise content should contribute to the overall score given. Do you think the FIG have rejected R.O.V. in scoring but still hold dear its values in terms of art?
Art and Artistic Gymnastics.
Does the performance of a gymnastics exercise communicate anything? How does it make you feel when you watch a particularly good or bad or indifferent performance. (Do you reflect, compare, feel elated or depressed) Do you think the feeling the judge has about a particular performance will affect the score? – Or should affect the score. Can creativity be rewarded within the current rules e.g. new moves?

Each respondent was able to comprehend, construct and explain their point of view fully in a response. Their answers were often illustrated with examples to clarify their understanding. Evidence of this was displayed in the transcripts by the quantity of detail provided in response to all of the questions asked. Each interview was approximately fifty minutes to one hour in duration which allowed the respondents to explain fully their understanding of terms. (Transcribed interviews were the only field data collected for the M.A. over and above researching the literature review.) The interview schedule was generally adhered to throughout each interview. However, the methodology allowed certain avenues of inquiry to be followed as they were presented if the topic seemed interesting and relevant to the research. Some questions posed did in fact deviate from the interview schedule which, on reflection was an valuable opportunity to gather full data on the topics under consideration in this research. The responses in the transcripts also prompted some new areas of interest regarding evaluation in Artistic Gymnastics, which could be the subject of a further research study.

This tactic of flexibility in interview technique was most beneficial at various points during the meetings because it exposed the practitioners to broader conceptions of aesthetic understanding. For example,

during the interview with the gymnast he said that, “Bad form is obviously easy to recognise”. The interviewer was then able to ask, “Could bad form [as you see it] be regarded as artistic?” in order to examine further the respondents understanding of the term form. This elicited the response “No” followed by explanation of the term in the context of his experiences in Artistic Gymnastics. However, it did prompt the gymnast to think very carefully about the concept of form and that there might be more than one kind of form which may be relevant to artistic appreciation and Artistic Gymnastics. For example he thought of the concept of being on top form as a possible additional kind of form to technical form.

This style of questioning was utilised in all three interviews. Any ‘new’ ideas which were offered, or concepts which emerged unexpectedly, were actively pursued because they were interesting and directly relevant to the main inquiry of the interview. This interview technique allowed very full and detailed data to be gathered from all the respondents concerning their understanding of specific terms, which could be placed in the context of their professional involvement in the sport; i.e. from either a judging, performing or coaching perspective.

D) Overview of data analysis of the M.A. transcripts (Palmer, 1999).

The data from the interviews was categorised initially into five areas from which a grounded model of aesthetic concepts emerged. These initial categories were (1) form, (2) technique and skill, (3) expression, (4) communication and meaning and (5) rules and judging, and were identified by colour coding in the transcripts. See Figure 3.

Figure 3: Colour coding: The key used to identify responses in M.A. transcripts (Palmer, 1999).

UNDERLINED AND BOLD – Interview Schedule Questions.

The prepared questions from the interview schedule are highlighted in bold type and underlined in order to indicate where they appear in the transcripts. The questions and dialogue which occur between the bold underlined type are exploration and clarification of points raised by the respondent during the interview.

1. BLUE - Form in Artistic Gymnastics

2. VIOLET -Technique and Skill in Artistic Gymnastics

3. GREEN -Expression in Artistic Gymnastics

4. TEAL -Communication and meaning in Artistic Gymnastics

5. RED -Rules and Judging in Artistic Gymnastics

Within the category Form in Artistic Gymnastics it was revealed that practitioners understanding of form focussed predominantly upon ideal body shape and bodyline, for example the judge's comments were typical of respondents when he explained:

Form is line. Straight line, lack of bent legs where they are not meant to be bent, pointed toes, extended arms, head held with great position – it's just the form of the body.

However, it could be said that there does not appear to be an internationally shared conception of ideal form in Artistic Gymnastics. That is, there may be national/cultural standards of form or body shape due to differing ideas about style between different countries. For example, the judge went on to speak about the Japanese gymnasts who appeared to exhibit a slightly different body shape in their performance compared to the Russian gymnasts and that these various styles might appeal more, or less to different judges during a competition.

Researcher: Form, so for you that's the shape of the body.

Judge: Yes, the shape of the body, and again it's different countries that have different ideas of the shape, so it's again ...

If as a judge I was judging say the Japanese gymnast who have a different technique to the Russians, I could be one that's saying, "oh, I prefer the Russian style" and maybe deduct the Japanese, and then there's the Japanese judge who may have his own preferences.

This expert practitioner's understanding of form in Artistic Gymnastics appears to be closely related to the concepts of technique and skill in a gymnastic performance. In fact, form was constantly referred to as a technical aspect of performance. The maintenance of good form also appears to be a pre-requisite for the successful execution of actions, particularly if they are perceived to be of high quality. Therefore maintaining good form during a performance may constitute a skilful performance in the eyes of the judge, coach or fellow performer, because the gymnast appears to have mastered some difficult actions in their quest to win at competitions – subject to the approval of style by the judges. Consequently, it might be said that the concepts of Form and Technique and Skill are inter-related but may also depend upon the stipulated rules for clear definition in order that a shared international understanding of form might be achieved. A dilemma for the F.I.G. appears to be that judges demand standardisation of body shapes as depicted in their Code of Points but may reward for variation in performance if it is in accordance with the stylistic preferences of some of the judges. The F.I.G. may feel a concept of ideal aesthetic form draws Artistic Gymnastics closer to a concept of perfection because there may be identical examples of form exhibited at competitions, i.e. identical body shapes and body lines. However, this situation seems problematic to achieve theoretically and impossible to realise physically if in fact, it is at all desirable in the first place.

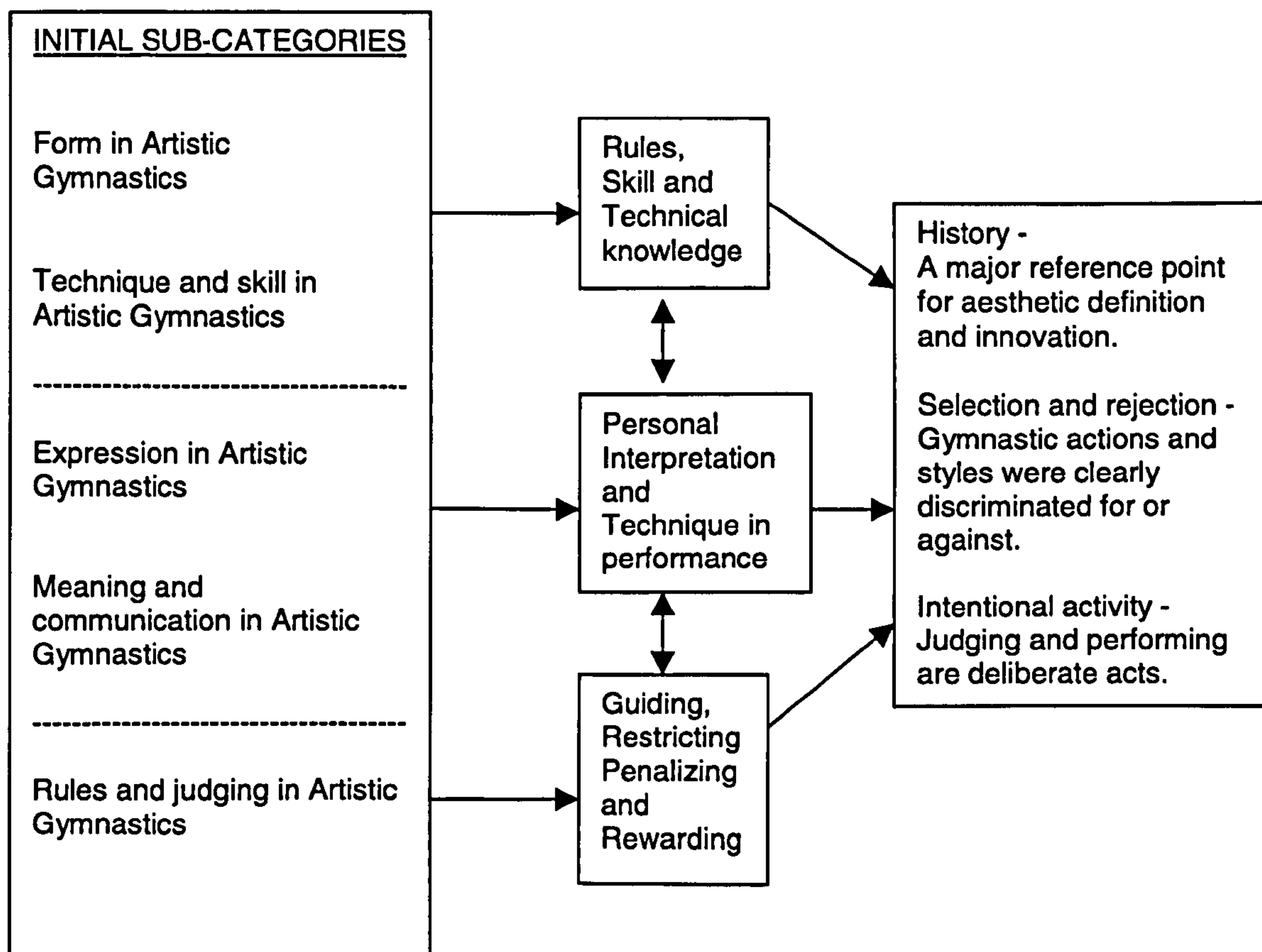
The next two categories for consideration were those of Expression Communication and Meaning in Artistic Gymnastics. All the respondents acknowledged that a beautiful or very poor performance had some emotional impact upon them at some stage during their role as judge, coach, performer or spectator. However such emotional feelings appear to be regarded by the expert practitioners, as being too subjective (pejorative sense) to be of any formal value when scoring a performance. Interestingly, two respondents in their roles as judges stated that if watching a performance makes a judge feel good, they may be more likely to give the gymnast the "benefit of the doubt" when awarding deductions for certain elements. It may be that the emotional feelings which a judge experiences when scoring does affect his overall score but not in any formally acknowledged or stipulated way. This may be a factor, which the F.I.G. could consider to address possible bias in scoring because personal feelings may be overlooked as important aspects of aesthetic judgement.

With respect to meaning and communication within Artistic Gymnastics, all the respondents said that a performance did communicate something. However there was no notion of symbolism or message reported by the respondents which may limit the meaning which an Artistic Gymnastics routine might be said to have within the stipulated rules. The respondents stated that a performance by a gymnast communicated the mental and emotional state of that gymnast. For example, the gymnast stated that "it communicates how good you are". The coach and the judge stated that they could tell if a gymnast was having a good competition or not by the way the gymnast carried himself and their relative success at performing their routine. These descriptions of perceived emotions of performers seemingly amounted to the respondents understanding of communication in Artistic Gymnastic exercises. However, they do appear to constitute factors within an expression theory, which might affect the emotions of the judges and therefore affect the final score which they submit.

The transcripts indicate that the rules and judging in Artistic Gymnastics are a much-debated issue both in terms of the development of the sport and the decision making at competitions. The current rules (1997 Code) have been described by the respondents as containing "too much subjectivity" and at times have been ambiguous and difficult for them to work with. Especially when deciding the degree of error and therefore the amount of deductions which may be awarded for a performance. The new A and B Jury format for judging Artistic Gymnastics was instigated as a result of claims of inaccurate scoring which may have been a consequence of opportunities in the rules allowing a "flexible interpretation of the standards". However, according to the respondents, the current 1997 F.I.G. Code

of Points does not appear to have solved many of the problems experienced in judging, particularly at international levels of competition although it was acknowledged as being an improvement on the previous Code of Points. Figure 4 indicates how the transcript analysis developed these initial categories towards a skeletal theory of aesthetic in gymnastics.

Figure 4. Development of categories identifying aesthetic features in gymnastics (Palmer, 1999).

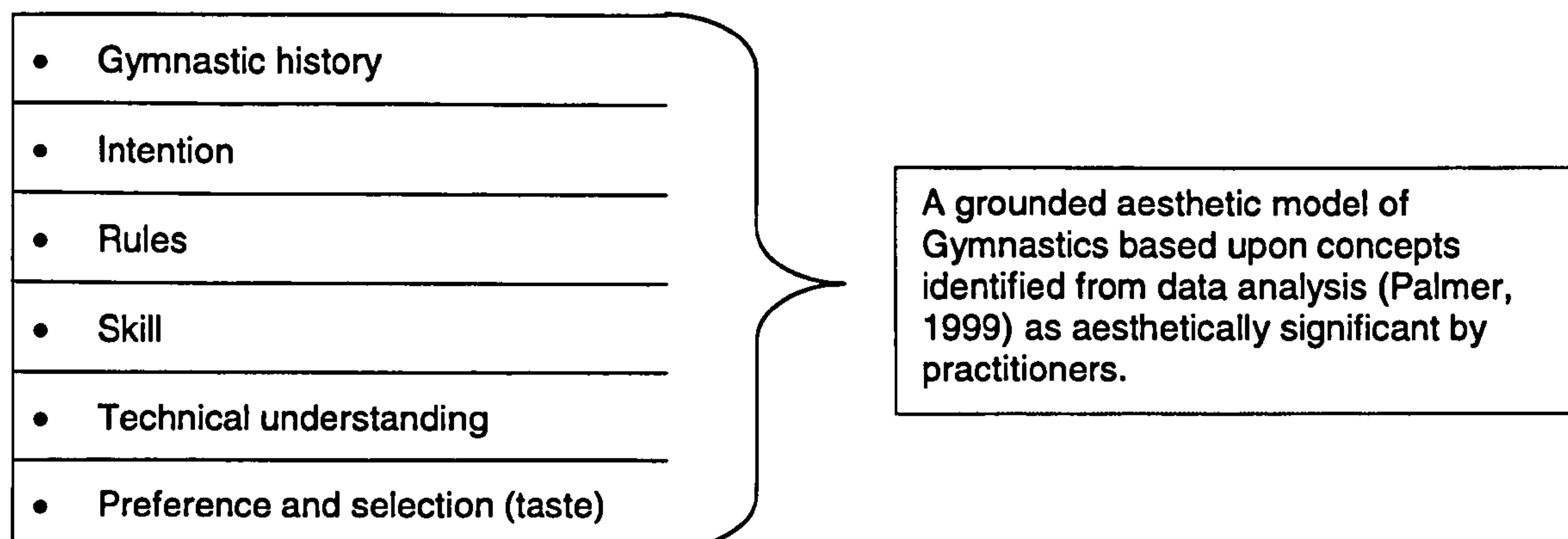


The M.A. data revealed that aesthetic understanding by practitioners was concealed or enveloped literally and completely in their own terms and language. Further research would seek to explore some meanings in this gymnastic language and reflect back to the gymnastics world a level of aesthetic insight, which they may accept as valid representations of their world. Figure 5 indicates the concepts formulating a grounded aesthetic model that provided the start point for this investigation.

The category of history in gymnastics seemed particularly important because it provided respondents with a stock of knowledge *from their world* to explain aesthetic details of their sport. Some of their references went back to the Greek origins of gymnastic activity, and the pre-codification uses of gymnastics (F.E.G. established 1881) ranging up to current day practices to explain appearances and conventions in their sport. A notion of tradition in gymnastics competition and a sense of traditional

gymnastic action seemed to have a particularly strong aesthetic influence for defining and giving meaning to respondents' explanations of gymnastic protocol. Also, making reference to historical features and milestones in gymnastic development seemed to be utilised in place of formal artistic criteria to explain the appearance of gymnastics. Therefore aesthetic detail revealed by researching the history of gymnastics would make a significant contribution to the investigation stemming from this grounded notion of tradition and history.

Figure 5. A grounded aesthetic model of Gymnastics - skeletal form.



With regard to intention, all practitioners who contributed to the M.A. research came over as very self-assured and totally dedicated to their sport. The researcher realised and witnessed that they would stand by their point of view and defend it to anyone who challenged it. Moreover there was a feeling that they were keen to broadcast their views through the research project to either confirm their views with others or influence others opinions. Whatever the practitioners motives were there was a strong sense of intention underpinning their convictions in Artistic Gymnastics. Their activities of coaching, judging and performing appeared to involve clear, decisive, deliberate acts which were not accidental. This phenomenon was revealed through the process of fieldwork and was therefore included in the grounded aesthetic model for Ph.D. as a significant area for further investigation.

The category Personal Interpretation and Technique in Performance led the researcher to contrast rules, skill and technical with standards, skilfulness and technique respectively as all these terms featured in gymnastic vocabulary and appeared to have some shared meaning between practitioners when differentiating or discriminating about issues in performance. If, as indicated by the M.A. data, gymnastics is conceived as a non-artistic enterprise, the above concepts of rule, skill and technical would feature in an aesthetic model from which to consider the aesthetic of gymnastics, given that there is no formal aesthetic theory of gymnastics.

Intrinsically linked to this, and emerging simultaneously from the M.A. data was a research hunch concerning a possible socio-aesthetic bias or preference in aesthetic evaluation. This idea was based upon practitioners accounts of situations and interpretations within the gymnastic world, reported during in-depth interviews carried out in 1999 (Palmer, 1999). However, research into the possible inequity of the judging and competition process was not the purpose of this study. Rather it was to examine the aesthetic constitution of gymnastics as practitioners understanding of this could be affecting their evaluations in a way that they may not appreciate or acknowledge.

1.3 Stance of this research concerning the notions of objectivity and subjectivity in the aesthetic evaluation of gymnastics.

As mentioned in Section 1.1, the stance adopted in this research towards the term subjective is that it is not used in the sense that “anything goes” (McFee, 1992). That is to say that the pejorative sense of the term is understood as explained by McFee (1992) and that the destructive influence of a “resort to subjectivism” upon reasoning in education and the arts is recognised as “disastrous” as explained by Best (1979). Both authors warn to the pitfalls of subjectivism, in the sense that “anything goes” and they explain how judgements in the arts and education can be objective. The stance adopted in this thesis towards these concepts is not contrary to those of Best (1979) and McFee (1992) whose theories assist in exposing what may be dangerous misconceptions in the gymnastics world concerning what they claim is subjective and how they actually assess objective features as they see them.

The following is one explanation of objectivity and subjectivity in a gymnastics context with the purpose of indicating how the term is commonly [and mistakenly] used by practitioners and thus demonstrating how it is meant to be considered in this thesis. The text is illustrated with examples from situations witnessed during this research. However, an adapted example from Best (1979) in his essay on the Arts, Objectivity and Education highlights the consequences of a subjectivist view at this point and some implications for the subjectivist gymnastics practitioner. He points out that:

I was told of one subjectivist dance professor [*read gymnastics coach or judge*] who, commendably, recognised the consequence that criticism is unjustifiable since no opinion can be regarded as superior to any other. Hence she was able to raise no objection when some of her students [*read gymnasts*], as their dance performance [*read gymnastics performance*], simply sat on the floor in the studio eating crisps [*read sat underneath the Parallel Bars eating crisps*]. [my italics]

A common misconception of the term subjective in gymnastics appears to be that it infers that a judgement is an essentially private and individual feeling which may be a) inaccessible to others and b) not verifiable through scientific or technical means denying others their freedom to test the judgement and refute or agree with it. This seems to be the understanding held by some practitioners who in their daily exchanges with colleagues might argue, “well that’s just your subjective opinion” inferring that it counts for nothing in any final evaluation and can therefore be dismissed. Consequently, discussions about beauty, grace, elegance, harmony, virtuosity and rhythm in gymnastics often denigrate into the “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” argument, in a subjective sense that “anything goes”. This dismissive tactic is on the grounds that something more ‘concrete’ may be required from them to make that judgement seem objective and therefore acceptable. The F.I.G. Code of Points is often the ‘solid’ point of reference in these kinds of discussions. Many avenues of philosophic discussion open up at this juncture, however it is sufficient to point out here that judgements made not on the basis of measurement but on the basis of observations by an informed person are objective (McFee, 1992).

The researcher would agree that beauty or virtuosity to use gymnastic parlance, is in the “eye of the beholder” but in the sense that the judgement is a personal interpretation made from a relevant stock of knowledge which is derived from an informed background of education i.e. it is a tutored understanding. Moreover, the reasoning for that judgement can be shared with others to identify that which may be beautiful or virtuous, with the real possibility that they may be wrong. Therefore, reasoning for or against a point of information may emphasise the “status of reasons” as objective criteria for an aesthetic judgement (Best, 1974; 1979). Similarly, Rowe (1999) illustrates this point in his essay entitled Objectivity of Aesthetic Judgements when he discusses five strict conditions, which in his view must be fulfilled before one is allowed to assert, “this is a good piece of work” rather than simply reporting one’s experience of “I like this work now”. Consequently, the aesthetic evaluation of for example, virtuosity, harmony and rhythm in gymnastics may be made against specific criteria for those qualities, similar to earlier F.I.G. Codes. The point for the F.I.G. being that these aesthetic qualities have not disappeared from gymnastics performance just because the criteria for them have been removed from the Code and also that practitioners may still perceive these qualities and react to them in a manner which is currently unaccountable for by the formal rules. The fact that an informed

and educated practitioner at international levels of the sport can offer sound reasons for their judgement infers that their judgement is an objective one.

Sound reasoning about subtle aesthetic features may come about as a result of a practitioner's ability to identify gymnastic styles and communicate about for example, harmony, elegance and lightness of touch. This knowledge may be realised from their verbal explanation of visual stimulus aided by visual nomination through the act of pointing; ostensive definition (Hospers, 1967) to help identify aesthetic features when concise verbal explanation alone may be difficult. These modes of communication appear to be utilised 'naturally' by practitioners in their daily exchanges concerning the aesthetic quality of performance. These acts of identification may confer an objective status to a notion of tutored understanding where some definite identification of for example, "elegance" as opposed to "grace" is made as evidenced in the data. This level of identifying, communicating and reasoning indicates that the argument that aesthetic judgements are subjective (in a pejorative sense) is a fallacious one because one view is clearly not as good as any other as there may be only a finite range of acceptable interpretations on an issue which are reasonable and correct at this high level of the sport. This appears to be the issue demonstrated by the limited number of reasonable interpretations which can be made about the duck-rabbit picture (Wittgenstein 1953; Best, 1974; 1979; McFee, 1992). An example in gymnastics being that a well executed Kovacs performed by Ivan Ivankov (Belarus) on High Bar would be incorrectly described as flat, a near miss or sloppy; rather that high, 'explosive', 'easy' and plenty of time would be nearer the mark for a good example by this gymnast.

Problems concerning objective judging reveal a further misconception in the gymnastics world stemming from a limiting understanding of what constitutes objective in their sport. The hunger for 'objective clarity' in judging; all accountable by number, becomes evident at elite levels of competition or at least at competitions under full F.I.G Code. In these situations, when there may be greater extrinsic rewards at stake, there may be more discussion and perhaps greater disagreements over fine detail of execution and interpretation of aesthetic quality. That is, where critical tenths make the difference between Gold and no medal at all, many judges are able to identify what actions were executed in a routine but often differ on how well they were performed. Unfortunately, when these kinds of debates occur, reasoning about fine aesthetic detail such as virtuosity, grace, elegance and harmony seems to become relegated in importance as they appear too difficult to account for by

number (a simplistic view), despite them often being the primary force for their protestation over fine detail in the first place.

It should be noted that a difference of opinion held by some practitioners at competitions might be motivated by something other than the aesthetic quality of the performance. This could expose dubious tactics to exploit weaknesses in a complicated system for short-term gain; cheating, which seems to render as pointless any discussion about aesthetic quality however it may be conceived. The point here is that this kind of professional mulling over of possibilities, even if it is centred upon perceived degrees of virtuosity or harmony in a performance, does not make the judgement a subjective one, in the sense that "anything goes". The fact that a quality in gymnastic performance such as virtuosity can be interpreted incorrectly seems to infer that aesthetic judgement is not a subjective matter. Rather that it is a matter of reasoning from the informed and educated perspective of an expert which makes it an objective assessment. In support of this Gauthier (1983) and Fink (pers. comm.) reported that judges can agree upon aesthetic qualities recognised in a performance but the nationalistic interests at competition may compel judges to differ upon the quantity of quality i.e. how much virtuosity.

Within the science community, comparable levels of theorising and disagreement can be found in disciplines where it may be assumed perhaps mistakenly, that hard immutable fact is the sole 'objective' constituent of their language. For example, at the most advanced levels of physics there may be a great deal of conjecture and disagreement at a theoretical and mathematical level, inferring that the objective truth may be as illusive for the expert physicist, as it is for the expert in gymnastics. At advanced levels of gymnastics and physics, observation and theorising by the human agent may expose the apparent fallacy of realising pure objective truths beyond agreeing upon the basics within a discipline.

A mistake by the F.I.G. may be that assessment is often conflated with measurement where measurement may yield the objective truth as they see it. However practitioners may need to understand that things which can't be *measured* can be objectively *assessed*. It may be that the more sensitive, highly informed and experienced judges are better at assessing aesthetic features and giving reasons for them as part of their evaluation process which incorporates a sense of 'measuring' the actions of the gymnast. The anomaly in modern-day gymnastics competition seems to be that hardly any measuring takes place at all, in the objective sense of the word such as calculating angles,

time and distances to aid evaluation. All 'measurements' are made through interpreting sense-data information from visually observing the gymnast. No technological devices are used to assist the judges in their evaluation of each element performed by the gymnast. From this perspective of 'measuring' there may be no independently verifiable objective truths realised by judges with a result that all their judgements are something other than objective as they see it. This may be the opposite of how they wish their judgements to be perceived or believe them to be. That is, practitioners may in some way delude themselves that their evaluations are derived from objective measurements to enforce accurately the exhaustive lists of degrees, seconds and tenths of deductions for the most minute of biomechanical errors. That is not to infer that these errors should be ignored, or indeed that their assessment is wrong. Rather to point out that their judgement does not derive from an objective measurement in a technological sense. It appears to be the case that their assessment relies totally upon the interpretation of sense-data information in relation to various rules which are themselves subject to personal interpretation. These interpretations may help the judge to identify what actions were executed, who is then required to decide (in isolation) how well or to what qualitative degree the action was performed and then, to transmute that "feeling" to a number value. Put to the F.I.G. in this way, their evaluation of their evaluation process might be said to be a wholly subjective affair, in the sense that for them, anything might go!

A potential 'tripwire' in gymnastic understanding may be that practitioners have adopted the term "technical" as a by-word for objectivity to combat subjectivity as they see it. This element of gymnastic language has emerged from the M.A. data and is included in the grounded aesthetic model for further research in this study. The dilemma presented here seems to be one of identifying exactly in what sense, the evaluation process could be said to be objective or technical as all the assessment is seemingly derived from personal interpretation of sense-data information. This clarification may be important because as stated above and discussed later in the thesis, the F.I.G. made deliberate moves to make the evaluation of performances "more objective" in their view (Zschocke, 1997). These "improvements" to the Code might only expose further the possibility of their misconceptions, which could be addressed through some programme of aesthetic education.

The issue of objectivity and interpretation seems to be important to measuring and evaluating aesthetic features in gymnastics. McFee (1978) offers a simplified example to illustrate interpretive notions of measurement by stating that:

It is possible to measure the temperature of something in two ways; which might be a thermometer (objectively) or touching it by hand (subjectively). If the only possible way of measuring it were by hand it would simply be inappropriate to dismiss the practice as subjective, in the sense that “anything goes.”

This example highlights that judgement of aesthetic features in a performance may be based upon ones knowledge and aesthetic emotions as a judge to recognise features of the work. Therefore, personal interpretation of these feelings should not be dismissed by the F.I.G. as they are seemingly essential to some sense of objective aesthetic evaluation in gymnastics. McFee (1978) offers further explanation to highlight this point, “if one offers an interpretation which is not answerable to, or based on perceptible features of the work one is offering an objectively incorrect interpretation”. This understanding may be important as “perceptible features” of gymnastics performance, in addition to identifying named actions and visually estimating angles and periods of hold, includes aesthetic qualities such as grace, elegance, elan, illusion of ease, rhythm, virtuosity, harmony and originality. The basis of this claim is that all practitioners interviewed said that they recognised these kinds of qualities and could explain them in a way that had meaning for them and therefore, for others who were similarly educated.

A stance in this research is that the gymnastic world and the aesthetic features within it, is a perceived world laden with meanings and conventions, which the human agent has invented resulting from his observations with the intention of stabilising his understanding of that world (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). From this stance, a notion of tutored understanding within a culture may be understood. To illustrate this, an example with regard to measuring temperature, to remain within the theme, may reveal that the experts of the day gave their names to a unit of measurement which they identified through their empirical observations such as [degrees of] Fahrenheit, Celsius, Rankine, Reaumur and Kelvin (Wikipedia, 2003). That is, their interpretation of their data may have led them to invent a unit, which if they could persuade others in their community to use it regularly enough, might over time establish a standard measurement. From a person's ability to influence and convince others to adopt the unit and its label, some sense may emerge as to education about standards thus enabling sensible discourse on a matter from which communication and further research may result. However, the fact that there are five kinds of degree units for temperature indicates that there must have been some different interpretations about the same phenomena “temperature”. This gives rise to what appears to be different understandings of the same thing dependant upon the beliefs, values and interests within the culture or discipline. For example, in the United States the Fahrenheit scale is

widely used for everyday applications. Elsewhere it is often convenient to use the Celsius scale for everyday applications such as for weather forecasts or central heating settings. The basic unit of temperature in the International System of Units (SI units) used in science is the kelvin (K).

The points being made here are that these different units of temperature have been superseded by new interpretations of the phenomena “temperature” as research and reasoning, standing on the shoulders of later research and facilitated by communication in specialised fields, has brought about new ways of seeing. Also, perhaps significantly, all these interpretations may be equally right but equally different, but not different in the sense that “anything goes” (McFee, 1992). These points may be important to recognising subtle differences in the aesthetic style of gymnastics at the highest levels of competition where multiple “objectivities” - all correct but all slightly different are on display. Therefore, it makes sense to recognise as objective the cultural styles exhibited by Russian and Japanese gymnasts as reported by the judge above. Furthermore, interpretations of cultural stylistic differences may be assessed objectively using the language and conventions for understanding stylistic difference in gymnastics. This may be identical in manner to which the differences between Fahrenheit, Celsius, Rankine, Reaumur and degrees kelvin may be recognised using their language of mathematics.

Education in a formal and an informal sense may be seen to contribute to the notion of a tutored understanding. The F.I.G. and National Governing Bodies attempt to formally educate about gymnastics through their judging and coaching courses. However, as a consequence of training for many years from a very early age, gymnasts within a given culture may have learned informally, the stylistic norms of performing gymnastics within that culture. This may be an example of what Berger and Luckman (1967) call “intersubjective sedimentation” when a sense of personal history emerges from sharing a common biography and experiences, incorporated in a common stock of knowledge. This may be equated with picking up a regional accent within a common language. Consequently, those who are educated to ‘see’ with particular eyes may readily recognise stylistic differences in gymnasts from other countries. A socially tutored understanding may point to a socio-aesthetic evaluation of others’ performances where the notion of intuition from years of tuition (McLuhan and Foire, 1967) may explain [objectively] interpretations of aesthetic preference. For some practitioners a judgement of stylistic difference may seem arbitrary to their evaluation, however their judgement may not be *more* objective for ignoring this kind of aesthetic information.

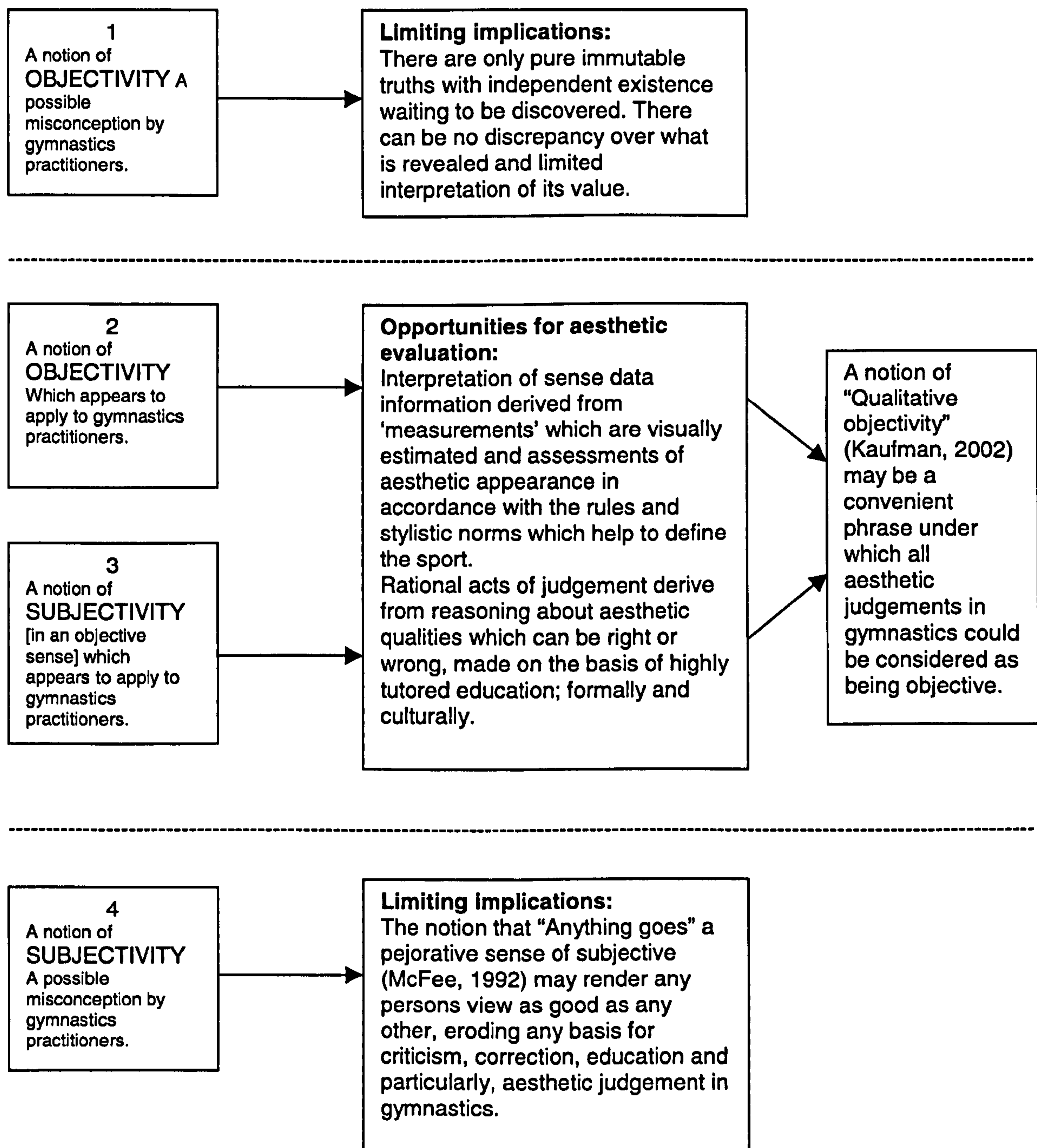
McFee (1992) highlights the problem that when discussing objectivity and subjectivity there seems to be three explanations but only two titles. That is, there seems to be two understandings of “subjective”; a sense where human perceptual powers and feelings are used to inform judgements and a sense where “anything goes” - a pejorative sense. The former non-pejorative sense is that which is inferred in this thesis by the researcher as it indicates his objective understanding of interpreting aesthetic features in gymnastics. Due to this potential for confusion McFee (1992) suggests that it may be good advice to excise the word from one’s philosophic vocabulary which seems an attractive option. However, the word subjective is a feature of gymnastic vocabulary used frequently by practitioners when discussing other peoples’ interpretations of rules, skills and technical features of performance. Its omission might be regarded as an inaccuracy in this research where a focus upon language is important. McFee (1992) suggests that inventing a new title might be helpful to bridge this apparent gap in labelling of categories of subjectivity such as the “unattractive term” offered by Hacker (1976); “anthropocentric judgements”. Alternatively, Kaufman (2002) proposes the term “qualitative objectivity” which seems to embody the understanding of subjective being suggested here and investigated in this thesis as indicated in Figure 6 below. This figure also serves to highlight what appear to be some misconceptions concerning objectivity and subjectivity in gymnastics.

The first sense of objective in the top section of Figure 6 (1) indicates that absolute objectivity in judgement may be an illusive ideal which seems attractive to the F.I.G. principally for them to reduce abuse of aesthetic judgement in scoring. A key issue raised here seems to be that the desire for objectivity is confused with combating abuse of aesthetic judgements i.e. their variance at competition. This notion of objectivity if regarded as scientific and technical may be an ideal, which is not suited at all to the situation in gymnastics, if it is to science which again may be questionable. This may be due not least to the lack of technology for accurate measuring in gymnastics but also for the intrinsic requirement of interpretation by a human agent to decide upon preferences and then to deliberately differentiate between performances offering sensible reasons to justify his decisions.

The middle section of Figure 6 (2 and 3) represents what the researcher understands as objective in gymnastics concerning its aesthetic evaluation. Confusion of terms and meanings may arise as the F.I.G. appear to reject important aspects of aesthetic evaluation seen by them as subjective, but seen by the researcher here as objective. For the researcher, all aesthetic judgements in gymnastics are seen as rational objective assessments including the nominally ‘subjective’ areas of for example,

originality, harmony, grace and rhythm. This understanding of objectivity in aesthetic evaluation appears to present valuable opportunities for judging in the sport rather than limitations resulting from a mistaken view of objectivity. That is, that all judgements are accountable for by number resulting from practitioner's yearning for pure measurements as being representative of irrefutable fact in aesthetic appearance.

Figure 6. Diagram to illustrate meanings and misconceptions of "subjectivity" and "objectivity" in this study.



The bottom section of Figure 6 (4) indicates that the use of the word subjective has powerful negative connotations for the researcher concerning the evaluation of gymnastics. This may expose further a misconception of subjectivity by gymnastics practitioners because, if they worked out the logical implications of subjectivism, there would be no sense at all in dismissing anything on aesthetic grounds.

A summary of potential misconceptions in Figure 6 may be instructive if, as asserted by the F.I.G., they are actively pursuing of a notion of pure objectivity in as in 1. In their pursuit of this ideal they may reject important aesthetic phenomena under their notion of subjectivity as in 4. In actuality the disposition of their sport appears to place them at 2 and 3. However their current position on objectivity and subjectivity appear to reject the idea that aesthetic judgements are objective and therefore reject 2 and 3. (It is assumed that the researcher's position is clear here as position 2 and 3). Clearly, if the F.I.G. do understand the consequences of subjectivism as in 4 there would be no point in rejecting anything. The difficulties of policing abuse in aesthetic evaluation seems to be a different issue which should not result in the short-sighted labelling of useful aesthetic detail as "subjective" in the sense that "anything goes". This might ensure that notions of for example, rhythm, harmony, grace and elan are not simply rejected on the basis that they are too difficult to understand or police.

2. Methodology

2.1 Position of this research in qualitative methodology

This section explains where, methodologically, the research is positioned and indicates the direction and development of the study as a whole. It also indicates the kind of problem being researched and therefore, the kinds of explanation sought and in so doing, makes clear what decisions have been made at particular points and why certain courses of action have been followed. The nature of the problem being researched concerns everyday meanings, symbolism and interpretation of aesthetic detail that may be communicated by practitioners using verbal, written and non-verbal communication, such as attitude, posture and gesture during competitions, or outside such specific environments. Whilst gymnastics is not presented as art, interpretations of subtle aesthetic phenomena may be possible which appear to be more artistically orientated compared to mechanistic interpretations of biomechanical efficiency. For example, interpretations of grace and elegance in performance may be deemed more 'artistic' in essence compared to interpretations of angles, times and distances. This is a misconception of understanding the appearance of gymnastics. Best (1985) makes the point that, "whilst sport can be the subject matter of art, it makes no sense to say that art could be the subject matter of sport". That is, an endeavour becomes artistic when it utilises a language or form of language to envisage and render visible to the world an idea, belief or point of view, in such a way that a perceiver may recognise and interpret that expression for themselves provided that the perceiver is sufficiently educated within the particular artistic convention being utilised. The context of presentation of gymnastics and the kinds of knowledge drawn upon for its evaluation seem to confirm that gymnastics is not an artistic enterprise, but an aesthetic one. Best (1985), discussing the aesthetic of sport in general continues that:

I remain if anything, even more convinced that sports are not forms of art. That does not in the least devalue sport. On the contrary, to judge it by artistic standards (if that made sense, which I deny) would devalue sport. Superb aesthetically, sport can undoubtedly be. Why not judge it by its own standards, including aesthetic standards?

This research adopts the view that gymnastics is a wholly aesthetic enterprise and considers how aesthetic meaning and understanding within the sport could be created and interpreted by its practitioners. The researcher found extensive evidence in documents, reports and personal

commentaries that aesthetic interpretations were being made about performances concerning notions of, for example, gracefulness, elan, illusion etc. These interpretations could affect personal conceptions of gymnastic perfection and aspiration, and also, competition outcomes in a way that may be unaccountable in the stipulated rules.

Interpretation of gymnastic meaning may indicate an applied and “intuitive” (McLuhan and Fiore, 1967) evaluation of the aesthetic object. Therefore, a methodology, which stems from the philosophical area of phenomenology (Brentano, 1924; Husserl, 1931; Heidegger, 1962; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Gadamer, 1976, 1989) may provide an appropriate means of researching the inter-subjectivity of practitioners to make sense of their gymnastic world (Berger and Luckman 1967; Schutz, 1967). This ontological position informs the way in which gymnastic knowledge could be recognised within this inquiry; it's epistemology, and as Koch (1999) states, “lead the researcher to an appropriate methodology” which is an appropriate way to deal with the data whilst being cognisant of the position of the researcher in the world to collect and analyse that data. Research into the construction of subjective reality, interpretation of social meaning and the evaluation of aesthetic quality, positions this study within the “interpretive paradigm” (Sparkes, 1992). Figure 7 identifies the philosophical assumptions relevant to the interpretive paradigm and indicates its relationship to other research paradigms.

Figure 7. Assumptions underlying the positivist, interpretive and critical paradigms, in Sparkes, A. (1992) *Research in Physical Education and Sport*.

Schulman (1986) coined the term paradigm for what Sparkes (1992) identifies as the collective term most frequently used to describe a research community, i.e. "a community of scholars who share similar conceptions of proper questions, methods, techniques and forms of explanation". Burrell and Morgan (1979) clarify the essence of the interpretive paradigm by stating that:

The interpretive paradigm is informed by a concern to understand the world as it is, to understand the fundamental nature of the social world at the level of subjective experience. It seeks explanation within the realm of individual consciousness and subjectivity, within the frame of reference of the participant as opposed to the observer of action ... It sees the social world as an emergent social process, which is created by the individuals concerned. Social reality, insofar as it is recognised to have any existence outside of the consciousness of any single individual, is regarded as being little more than a network of assumptions and intersubjectively shared meanings. Everyday life is accorded the status of miraculous achievement. Interpretive philosophers and sociologists seek to understand the very basis and source of social reality. They often delve into the depths of human consciousness and subjectivity in their quest for the fundamental meanings, which underlie social life.

Therefore an approach within the interpretive paradigm may enable the researcher to explore the meanings shared by practitioners to make sense of aesthetic phenomena in their specialised gymnastic world. Sparkes (1992) states that the interpretive approach embraces a range of research traditions such as phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics, naturalism, ethnography, grounded theory, ethnomethodology and qualitative research which indicate further sociological methods by which the aesthetic of gymnastics could be researched.

It may be that judges, coaches and gymnasts have an understanding of symbolic meaning allowing them to communicate their aesthetic preferences for kinds of gymnastic action. Berger and Luckman (1967) claim that the social world is a symbolic world where man shares symbols through intersubjectivity (shared knowledge of meaning). However, whilst the concept of sharing symbolic meaning in gymnastics may help to establish some kind of communication between practitioners, it may not imply that practitioners agree upon a resultant concept of symbolism, or aesthetic evaluation. Rather, the concept may provide them with a basis for making individual decisions, which could be regarded as for example, *tactical*, managing the sporting situation, or *technical*, coaching an action in a particular way. These kinds of decisions may be informed by personal conceptions of gymnastic knowledge and could alter the aesthetic appearance and evaluation of gymnastics at a given point in time. Therefore, a process of discrimination between aesthetic styles of gymnastics may be evidence of what Popkewitz (1984) claims as the unique quality of being human, that being found in the symbols which people invent to communicate meaning, or an interpretation of the events of daily life. The creation of knowledge in the gymnastics world may determine decisions and actions, which

account for what Wolcott (1990) understands as the continuous construction of the social world. A socially constructed understanding of meaning in gymnastics may result from interpretations of gymnastic behaviour. These interpretations may motivate practitioners to pursue what they conceive of as their aesthetic ideals, given that an aesthetic ideal may result from their personal interpretation of gymnastic experience. On this point Smith (1989) states that:

The meanings we assign to the intentions and motivations of ourselves and others becomes social reality as it is for us. In other words, social reality is the interpretation.

The importance of personal interpretation for constructing social reality may explain the practitioner's conceptions of their place and duties in the gymnastic world. Significantly, Smith's (1989) statement may highlight the "qualitative objectivity" (Kaufman, 2002) implicit in both the interpretations to produce gymnastics and the judgements that can be made about aesthetic quality presented in performance.

In order to observe the gymnastics world and develop an understanding of the aesthetic created within it, a comprehension of the relationship between the researcher in that world and the phenomena being researched is required (Koch, 1999). This relationship highlights the division between the phenomenology of Husserl (1931) from that of Heidegger (1962) and Merleau-Ponty (1962). Husserl applied dualist and positivist beliefs to his proposals for pure phenomenology (Roche, 1973; Hallet, 1995) which required the researcher to engage in phenomenological reduction, or bracketing, to sensitise them to possible bias that might affect data analysis. Husserl believed that the suspension of beliefs and preconceptions about the world might enable the phenomenon to be seen and understood in its primordial state (Corben, 1999). However, Heidegger (1962) and later, Gadamer (1976, 1989) considered phenomenological reduction, or bracketing (to a transcendental level), to be impossible because "we are too much beings in the world to achieve such a state". Heidegger (1962) developed theories of existential phenomenology as a hermeneutic style of social research which was an understanding and interpretation of human existence "as it is, as being-there, as being-in-the-world and as being-with-others". Gadamer (1989) refers to the hermeneutic circle as including the researcher and the respondent as co-researcher within the world they are trying to understand. This methodological stance enabled the researcher, to devise methods of data collection and analysis which involved regular contact with practitioners in order to clarify and understand how their meanings, interpretations and actions related to the environmental context to which they pertain. Roche (1973) continues that, "Heidegger himself interprets human existence as having temporal structure, as being a constant projection towards the future and a constant re-assessment of the past". This point is

significant because the research process has followed a chronological sequence of gymnastic events and theorising from a historical perspective in order to understand aesthetic development in the sport. The distinction between phenomenological approaches is important to this research because of its retrospective nature and is therefore suited to a Heideggerian and Gadamerian approach. This approach is clarified by Annells (1999) as being when the meaning and experience of the phenomenon may vary, according to the individual, as also can the interpreted understandings vary, according to the interpreter. Therefore a bracketing interview was not attempted at the start of this research, as the exercise may have been counter-productive in this context. The reasons for this were two-fold. Firstly, because the researcher was using knowledge of aesthetic theories in an attempt to understand an aesthetic in the gymnastic world. In the absence of any formal training in aesthetics for gymnastics practitioners, an aesthetic understanding of the sport may not be developed beyond its current limits without 'new' ideas being brought to the subject. Secondly, because the researcher is not involved with making value judgements about the quality of aesthetic presented. Rather he is interested to understand *how* any reasoning for good or poor in gymnastic performance might be constructed at a personal and cultural level. The researcher was aware of what his preconceptions were concerning the appearance of gymnastics in order to see, from an aesthetic point of view, how the aesthetic of the sport might be understood by for example, practitioners from other countries. This may be part of the discipline required of an aesthetician to make sense of appearance (Newton, 1950; Shahn, 1957, Hospers, 1969; Berger, 1972). This disciplined approach to conducting research has enabled the researcher to consider features in aesthetic phenomena without making value judgements about aesthetic quality. Also, the researcher is not a judge or a coach and has no experience as a gymnast at the level being researched. This seemingly results in few gymnastic presuppositions to be bracketed away compared to Dale (1996), Beech (1999) and Roberts (1999) who had direct personal experience of the phenomena in their studies.

Berger and Luckman (1967) claim that society exists as both objective and subjective reality and that any adequate theoretical understanding of it must comprehend both these aspects. The researcher's sense behind the split here is that aesthetic evaluation is a matter of "qualitative objectivity"; the term "subjectivity" has non-pejorative force and that "objectivity" relies upon personal interpretation. Whilst the terms objective and subjective may be misleading, they serve to highlight an imbalance and misconception in understanding about evaluation in gymnastics. Also, the terms were used regularly

by practitioners encountered during this research and are therefore not avoided here. Further to the clarification made in Section 1.3 about objectivity and subjectivity in this research, a fundamental contention of this study is that there is a strong bias of understanding about evaluation towards what practitioners appeared to regard as objective or technical judgements. That is, accounting for angles, times distances and recognising elements and connections. This is compared to what practitioners appeared to regard as a subjective understanding of the phenomena that contribute to its aesthetic. A further misconception may be exposed here as many practitioners regarded aesthetic evaluation as something different to technical evaluation. The main technical objective understanding of gymnastics appears to be represented by the F.I.G. Code of Points and the scoring protocols which practitioners should adhere to. This document stipulates the rules for judging, scoring, competing and gymnastic skill content. The information it contains guides the production of gymnastic actions for use at competition. However, at competitions personal evaluations will be made by judges and other spectators as to *how well* gymnastic actions are combined and *how good* they thought the overall performance was. One of the ostensibly technical objective tasks for judges during their evaluation process is to use a numeric mode of communication (Gross, 1974) to formally ascribe value and communicate to others, their understanding of gymnastic worth. This endeavour to evaluate and quantify aesthetic value of gymnastic performance may quickly establish a basis for competition. However, a personal conception and interpretation of aesthetic quality seemingly underpin judging decisions and preferences in the first instance. That is, the use of numbers in scoring may not make the task of judging an objective process. Observations during this research have indicated that in relation to the complex framework that has been constructed for the sport to exist, a socio-aesthetic evaluation of beauty and or, perfection in gymnastics could be the first reaction of practitioners from which they make sense of the performance. That is, their initial reaction and personal notion of *how good or how poor* the performance was. It is an aim of this research to reveal aspects of this kind of understanding that could bring balance to practitioners' conceptions of aesthetic quality in gymnastics. Gaining an insight into the possible meanings of everyday gymnastic language used by practitioners may allude to how an aesthetic understanding or shared meaning could be achieved. These taken-for-granted kinds of knowledge (Schutz, 1967) may in turn, allow practitioners to go about their duties without constant explanation of their reasoning for various comments, points of view or actions. This may be evidence of what Schutz (1967) called "recipe knowledge", for example, how declarations of

form, beauty, execution, grace and elegance in gymnastics could be agreed upon. However, such an agreement may only be superficial for ease of communication because at a personal level, a different understanding of aesthetic quality may be inferred by the notion of gymnastic beauty. Consequently, analysis of the lived experience may shed some light upon assumed meanings in the gymnastics world and indicate how practitioners engage in the “social construction of their reality” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). Therefore an important element of this research has involved observing the gymnastic world and considering how it may create special gymnastic meanings and visual features from which to comprehend its aesthetic. The practitioner’s understanding of these meanings and features may direct his actions, which could provide some explanation of his gymnastic behaviour. However, whilst gymnastic behaviour may produce the *appearance of gymnastic action*, it is the quality conceived in its appearance that seems be of principal interest at competitions. Therefore an explanation of gymnastic behaviour per se (Salmela, 1983; Jones *et al.* 1993; Hardy and Parfitt, 1994; Cote *et al.* 1995, 1995a, 1995b) may not fully explain conceptions of aesthetic quality in gymnastics. Consequently, within this research, there has been a need for analysis of gymnastic behaviour in order to question further the aesthetic it creates. This kind of reasoning has informed the research process and has helped the researcher to identify from the data, the direction in which the project should proceed, and possible methods to utilise for data collection, analysis and aesthetic theorising.

3. Methods

3.1 The initial research action explained. Structured observation or interviews - a methodological dilemma

Having established what kind of data should be collected; qualitative / phenomenological data, the first research action was to decide what format that data should take in order to investigate the concepts identified in the aesthetic model of gymnastics (Figure 5) previously discussed. A period of structured observation, using participant observation techniques, was identified as the initial research action. Therefore qualitative data, recorded in a format synonymous with field research such as field notes of observations, was collected at the outset rather than carrying out in depth interviews. This was because an aim at the start of this research was to achieve an overview of the aesthetic make-up of the gymnastics world, from which practitioners' contributions to that world might be understood. Also interviewing to initiate this research may have been inappropriate because the inevitably small sample of points of view may not have been representative of the gymnastic world at international level. Rather, they may have been personal accounts of how that practitioner comprehended their duties within *their* gymnastic world. Interviewing would be a valuable contribution at a much later stage, but was deemed to be an insufficient base from which to form an analysis of aesthetic evaluation upon from the start. Additionally, the formal situation of interviews had the potential to influence respondents to provide what they could interpret as appropriately formal responses. Therefore, reliance upon interview data from the start could potentially have been misleading to the whole investigation of aesthetic evaluation in gymnastics. On this point Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) state that:

The interview represents a distinct setting, and it follows from this that the participant understandings elicited there may not be those which underlie behaviour elsewhere.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) claim that the staged interview scenario establishes roles and expectations, which could influence the data elicited from respondents. The researcher was aware of this potential impact before the interview phase was carried out and designed an interview format accordingly. That is, the researcher knew when to enter an interview phase, what kind of aesthetic comment might further the project at its stage of development and how the amount of data and therefore data analysis could be controlled. It was decided that if interviews were carried out at the

start of the research, there was a risk of overlooking the aesthetic significance of responses due to the under-developed state of the grounded aesthetic model (Figure 5).

A central data-collection task was to gain access to aesthetic phenomena in the gymnastics world at international level. That is, aesthetic phenomena which could be observed first hand at competitions and other events that was representative of their world, indicative of the problem being researched and that might point to a reasonable explanation of aesthetic evaluation. Therefore, data that showed practitioners interpreting meaning from the conditions to produce, perform and evaluate gymnastics was collected during the structured observation period. The period of structured observation may have avoided the problem encountered by Dollard (1957) when he set out to research the personality of Negroes in the "Deep South" USA. He thought that collecting a few life histories to learn about the manner in which the Negro person grows up, would be sufficient for his study. However he states that:

I was compelled to study the community, for the individual life rooted in it. *This insight put an end to the plan of collecting Negro life histories in a social void.* Negro life histories refer at every point to a total situation.

This observation came as a very unwelcome perception, since it necessitated getting a perspective on the community and the county and informing myself incidentally, on many apparently remote matter. [my italics].

The implications for this research were similar to those realised by Dollard (1957) in that practitioners' personal accounts relating to aesthetic phenomena risked being collected in an "aesthetic void" and could be potentially misleading and erroneous. At the inception of this research a void of aesthetic understanding seemed to exist for two reasons. Firstly, because the MA Independent Study (Palmer, 1999) analysed gymnastics in the light of formal artistic theory which could not explain clearly, major aesthetic aspects of the sport. For example, it was noted that formal artistic theory is not utilised intentionally by the F.I.G. in performance evaluation, or by practitioners in performance creation. Secondly, because there is apparently within the sport, no formal aesthetic theory to comprehend Men's Artistic Gymnastics over and above the F.I.G. Code of Points itself which, does not purport to be an aesthetic theory as such. Consequently, the research question in concise terms shifted from, what is artistic about gymnastics? (in the MA research Palmer, 1999) to, what is aesthetic about gymnastics? By inductively developing the body of research (Parahoo, 1997), using ethnographic methods of data collection and systematic analysis, the theoretical void of aesthetic understanding would gradually be filled, expanding the aesthetic model to a comprehensive, grounded explanation of aesthetic detail in the sport.

Personal accounts from practitioners in the form of interview transcripts were part of the data contributing to the overall understanding of aesthetic in gymnastics, within the bounds of this thesis. However, they were collected at a later point where the practitioners dialogue was a more effective means to explore further an aesthetic understanding of gymnastics. The progressive development of the aesthetic model, to the point where aesthetic taste, selection and rejection of gymnastic actions were analysed, indicated that in-depth interviews with practitioners was an appropriate next step in data collection. This was because aesthetic concepts and theories being generated by the researcher appeared to be diverging from the practitioners understanding of aesthetic in gymnastics 'on the ground'. It was estimated also that the aesthetic model was developed sufficiently to contribute to the analysis of interview transcripts. In a manner of speaking the "void" had been sufficiently filled to make sense of data in the form of practitioners descriptions and personal accounts. Therefore, an interview format was designed that was felt to be appropriate to this stage of research. It was appropriate in terms of being (a) a means of researching responses to the visual image, by experts within the field, and (b) a means of reducing/eliminating the potential of interviewer bias in the light of the development of the aesthetic model to date. Consequently the research progressed in a meaningful, logical manner that was well grounded in terms of data collection strategies, data analysis and theory development towards an overall understanding of aesthetic in Men's Artistic Gymnastics.

3.2 Identifying data sources in order to develop the skeletal aesthetic model

The researcher has carried out structured observation of gymnastic behaviour over a three-year period (1999 to 2002), involving ongoing data collection, reviewing of literature, data analysis, and theorising about the aesthetic of gymnastics. The research process had the aim of achieving a well-developed area of study in order to comprehend an aesthetic resulting from the monitoring of gymnastic behaviour. The research developed systematically and chronologically following the F.I.G. calendar of events. During this research qualitative data was collected from a range of sources which have included:

- F.I.G. Code of Points (rules and conditions); past, present and draft proposals.

This period of research has spanned the transition between the 1997 Code and the 2001 Code presenting excellent opportunities to track and review the outgoing Code and the development of the new rules for 2001-2005.

- F.I.G. documentation; letters, updates, clarifications on rules and conditions.

This data indicates how the world governing body has sought to either clarify its meanings and interpret what has been produced in the gymnastics world as a result of its' directives. The tenor of these documents has underlined the research strategy adopted here.

- Samples of national documentation, e.g. from Great Britain, Canada and the United States.

This data has indicated the intent of some nations to interpret the F.I.G. rules in order that their concept of beauty in gymnastics might be performed legally and hopefully, be valued with equity. This may be seen to develop a cultural identity in gymnastics, if only in the majority of cases, by pointing out the faults/implications of others' preferences.

- Contact with officials at, for example the F.I.G. Men's Technical Committee, the U.S.A. National Gymnastics Judging Association and the British Gymnastics Men's Technical Committee.

Opportunities for meetings, interviews, conversations and dialogue have contributed to gleaning informed points of view concerning aesthetic detail in gymnastics. This kind of data has been collected from international and national practitioners and recorded in field notes.

- Gymnastic presses (National and International).

Internet web sites and Internet publications of gymnastic press have provided a ready source of data for noting international trends, descriptions, news and predictions for competition success at international level.

- Peer review journals.

Papers concerning aspects of judging, coaching or performance in gymnastics have been utilised to develop theory within the emerging aesthetic model.

- F.I.G. Brevet Course; international judges assessment course 2001 Code of Points. Lilleshall National Sports Centre, 18th-21st January 2001.

This provided a valuable insight to the assessment of international judges wishing to officiate during the 2001-2005 cycle.

- Personal observation of competitions at Regional, National, Commonwealth, European and World levels, including Grand-Prix events.

The opportunity to observe the visual aesthetic of performances at all levels of competition has been a valuable source of data. Field notes taken during events and analysis were made in conjunction with the emerging aesthetic model. Events attended were:

REGIONAL LEVEL

National development Plan (NDP) National Championships, Lilleshall, 2001, 2002.
North West Open, Liverpool, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002.
London Open, 1999, 2000.

NATIONAL LEVEL

English Championships, Stoke, 2001, 2002.
British Championships Stoke, Wigan, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002.

INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Glasgow Grand Prix 2001, 2002.
International Event, Great Britain v Croatia, Liverpool, 1999.
Commonwealth Games, Manchester, 2002. Competitions attended: Team, All Round and Individual Apparatus (5 days)
European Championships, Bremen, Germany, 2001. Competitions attended: Team, All Round and Individual Apparatus (7 days).
World Championships, Ghent, Belgium 2001. Competitions attended: Team, All Round and Individual Apparatus (10 days).

- Meetings and conversations with practitioners at competitions and major manifestations.

Personal contact with practitioners from U.S.A., Canada, Portugal, China, Russia, Ukraine and Argentina has provided a rich source of event data and evidence of national perspectives. Field notes of observations, conversations, descriptions and analysis of performances were taken.

- National judge and coach symposiums, Great Britain (annual).

Data from these events has enabled the researcher to track Great Britain's responses to (interpretations of) F.I.G. rulings and follow developments in gymnastics at National level. Typically, practitioners have been outspoken at these symposia expressing their beliefs, desires and aspirations for gymnastics as well as exposing the tensions, pressures and compromises they see for development and improvement of "the gymnastics system" in Great Britain.

Symposia attended were:

Men's Artistic Judging Symposium 1998, Birmingham University, 17th November 1998.

Judging Symposium 1999, Liverpool, 30th October 1999.

Men's Artistic Coach / Judge Symposium 2000, Birmingham University, 14th October 2000.

British Gymnastics Judging Symposium 2001, Birmingham University, 13th October 2001.

- Video evidence of performances from major competitions attended during this research.

Analysis of performances which were observed live by the researcher but also recorded on video, has been a useful reference during the theorising process; particularly with regard to the concepts of skill/skilfulness and technical/technique in the Aesthetic Material section.

For example:

2000 European Championships, Kunstturn, Bremen, Germany.

2000 Olympics, Sydney, Australia (video only).

2001 Glasgow Grand Prix, Scotland.

2002 European Championships, Men's Artistic Gymnastics, Patras, Greece.

2002 Commonwealth Games, Manchester.

2002 European Championships, Patras, Greece (video only).

2002 World Championships, Debrecen, Hungary (video only).

- Gymnastic literature: Historical, cultural and technical information.

Analysing gymnastic history from the perspective of the emerging aesthetic model provided a fresh insight for a foundation to consider the aesthetic of the modern day sport. Significantly, gymnastic actions may only be comprehended (gymnastically) in the light of that which has preceded it. Consequently, analysis of historical development presented two valuable aspects of the gymnastics phenomenon; a physical aspect, such as the biomechanical progression for execution, and a temporal aspect, which may include cultural purposes for gymnastics, beauty interpretations and differences in gymnastic knowledge. Historical, cultural and technical information seemed particularly relevant to aesthetic concepts of classic and fashion when applied to the gymnastics situation as some kind of selection through taste appeared to be at work in the gymnastics world.

- Aesthetics literature.

The analysis of aesthetic theory has enabled the researcher to consider a central question about gymnastics, "if not artistic then how aesthetic?" This has helped the emerging aesthetic model to be grounded in the data whilst being informed by established aesthetic theory.

- Formal in-depth interviews with international practitioners.

It became important when collecting interview data to elicit expert's comments upon experts. An appropriate means of collecting new data to further the study at this point was to ask expert practitioners to give verbal commentaries to a video recording of randomly selected performances from the 2000 European Championships at Bremen, Germany. All the

respondents were either officiating at that event, or had direct input to the gymnastics performed. All of the respondents in the interview sample are highly respected international practitioners whose opinions are influential at national and international levels. The data was transcribed and analysed in data sets:

DATA SET ONE - COACHES

Paul Hall	International Performance Coach, British Gymnastics National Staff Coach, F.I.G International Brevet Judge. Lilleshall, UK.
Neil Burton	International Performance Coach, British Gymnastics National Staff Coach, F.I.G. International Brevet Judge. Lilleshall, UK.

DATA SET TWO - JUDGES

Gary Kirby	F.I.G. International Brevet Judge (category 1), High Performance Coach. Liverpool, UK.
George Predescu	F.I.G. International Brevet Judge, British Gymnastics National Staff Coach, International Performance Coach. Former Romanian National Team Coach. Leeds, UK.

DATA SET THREE - GYMNASTS

Kanukai Jackson	Commonwealth Champion 2002 - British Team. Lilleshall, UK.
Craig Heap	English Champion 2002 - British Team. Commonwealth Gold Medallist, Olympian. Lilleshall, UK.

PILOT - SOLO COMMENTARY

Hardy Fink	Deputy President F.I.G. Mens Technical Committee (2002). President F.I.G. Men's Technical Committee (2001 Code). Vancouver Island, Canada.
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These data sources indicate that the researcher had access to documentation and contacts with personnel at National and World governing body level and was able to gain an insight to some of the factors and political pressures influencing decisions at these levels, such as the controversial development of the 2001 Code of Points. The researcher also had access to the aesthetic products presented in competitions at National, European, World Championships and Commonwealth Games levels. The stylised aesthetic appearance of performances at these competitions could have been a nation's reaction and response to demands made by the F.I.G. for them to compete. This provided a visual reference of what may have been, if the performance was successful, evidence of their interpretation of aesthetic perfection in gymnastics and was observed first hand at competitions.

The aesthetic evidence in the data collected from these sources could be separated into three distinct areas. Firstly, that which *caused* practitioners to act in order to present their concept of gymnastic beauty to the world, for example, interpretation of rules and conditions, cultural preferences and physical strengths and weaknesses of their gymnasts. Secondly, data which was aesthetic evidence of what practitioners actually *produced* at competitions i.e. a nation's gymnastic response to causal conditions. For example, there were sixty-four countries competing at the 2001 World Championships (Schoenmaekers, 2001) which provided extensive comparative evidence of different styles of

gymnastics performed globally (personal observation). Thirdly, data that was evidence of aesthetic evaluation of the gymnastic product was collected, which manifested itself in many different ways such as, commentaries, official scores, insider accounts of preference for style at a personal or national level. This approach to data collection has allowed an analysis of what is being asked of practitioners in the gymnastics world, to be contrasted with what is physically produced at competition and in some circumstances, what was thought about it in terms of the aesthetic quality and its subsequent evaluation by expert practitioners. The ongoing analysis was based upon the aesthetic model outlined in Figure 5 that provided aesthetic parameters for this study to make sense of the aesthetic objects presented.

The list of data sources above indicates the disparate range of situations that important information has been collected from. Consequently, various methods of collecting data have been utilised by the researcher. Documentary evidence was a major contributor of data during the structured observation phase from which visual aesthetic features could be identified, even if this was not the primary purpose of the document. For example books, reports and biographies have included written descriptions and pictures of gymnastics which have helped to identify themes considered significant to the concept within the aesthetic model being studied, such as the aesthetic themes identified in the History section. Other kinds of documents, published and unpublished, such as rules and national directives, have evidenced an intent to act and produce an aesthetic in gymnastic action which became equally important data as the aesthetic model was developed. Information that was logically connected in some way to affecting the aesthetic of the gymnastic product, or affecting the evaluation of it was data of interest to this research. Similarly, Gamst (1980) drew upon a vast range of documentary sources in his research on locomotive engineers. He states that:

Some documents are published, for example rule books, time-tables, technical manuals for use of equipment and instructional, regulating, and investigating publications of many kinds used by railroads, trade unions, government and other firms. Unpublished documents include official correspondence, reports in mimeographed and other forms, railroad operating bulletins and circulars, train orders operating messages and sundry other items.

Likewise an extensive range of gymnastics documentation was analysed because of the gymnastic behaviour they appeared to stimulate amongst coaches and judges and the resultant aesthetic presented by gymnasts. Also, following up and clarifying points in documentation has often led to personal contacts for the researcher. Throughout this investigation the researcher contacted key practitioners at international levels, initially to verify basic points of information such as details about

the history of gymnastics. These enquiries not only clarified the point in question, but often yielded a great deal more information, which would prove relevant to the study as it progressed. Significantly, the dialogue set up with these key informants brought the researcher into contact with practitioners who were responsible for producing, implementing and in some cases enforcing the conditions within the documentation they produced.

3.3 Data collection strategies: participant observation

The philosophical background of phenomenology, set in the context of the research question, has helped to identify methods of data collection and analysis for this study. Layder (1993) points out that symbolic interactionism favours research methods and strategies such as participant observation, in-depth or semi-structured interviews and documentary evidence. This research has utilised these methods with participant observation being the principal strategy at the start. An observational approach to research has been described in various ways such as fieldwork, ethnography, case study, and qualitative research (Burgess, 1984) wherein the main assumption underlying these qualitative methods is that the "social world must be discovered and that this can only be achieved by first-hand observations and participation in natural settings" (Hammersley, 1990a).

The researcher used participant observation in the various formal and informal settings, encountered throughout his research. The nature of these settings and situations determined whether the researcher revealed his identity and intent to gather data or not. In some instances, such as at judging symposiums, meetings at training camps or competitions, the researcher's identity and intent was concealed by not being openly revealed to the group concerned. The deceit was not always pre-meditated, although helpful at times to pass as a fellow judge, coach or associated professional to gain access to a given situation and make covert observations. Instances when the researcher's identity and intent were revealed, such as during one to one conversations, presented equally valuable opportunities to collect data. This overt scenario helped to assure respondents that the research was not sponsored by any national organisation (opposition) and that their points of view contributed data to an independent enquiry, which was genuinely concerned with understanding their conception of aesthetic quality within their sport. Consequently, the researcher was not perceived as a threat, competitively or politically, and many practitioners were keen to explain their experiences,

beliefs and opinions concerning aspects of aesthetic evaluation, technical aspects of performance, or agreement, or otherwise with judging decisions. Consequently, strategies to collect data varied along a continuum of participant observation depending upon the closeness of the researcher to the group, situation or individual being researched.

Gold (1958) and Junker (1960) identified different fieldwork roles, which vary between the extreme poles of complete-participant and complete-observer from which data may be collected under the general heading of Participant Observation. In the complete-participant role the researcher's activities are wholly concealed, having total contact with those they are observing by becoming an accepted member of the group. In the complete-observer role the researcher has no contact with the group, observing them from afar. However, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) point out that:

Paradoxically, complete observation shares many of the advantages and disadvantages of complete participation. In their favour they can both minimise problems of reactivity: in neither case will the ethnographer interact as a researcher with members being studied. On the other hand, there may be severe limits on what can and cannot be observed, and the questioning of participants may be impossible.

Operating between these two poles, the researchers' participant observation has predominantly been observer-as-participant, a position of comparative detachment (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) but at times oscillated to participant-as-observer depending upon the situation in which the researcher found or positioned himself. An example which illustrates the pendulum nature of fieldwork roles was experienced whilst spectating at international competitions. From the stands, observation notes and theorising in the field could be readily carried out and notes were recorded in detail depending upon the company that researcher had at the time. A shift between fieldwork roles indicated that the researcher was aware that the opportunities for gathering data and the kinds of data 'on offer', alter with the company kept within the stadium. Also that the consequences of, and opportunities for, recording his observations in an accompanied situation were altered. At the 2000 European Championships in Bremen, and the 2001 World Championships in Ghent the researcher was able to operate as observer-as-participant, noting and recording his observations freely from the stands throughout the whole week of each event. However in contrast, at the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester, the researcher was able to sit and spectate in the company of members from the English and Scottish gymnastics squads whilst their team-mates competed for their country on the podium below. This was an instance when the researcher deliberately left his writing equipment in the bag as both the gymnasts around him and the gymnasts performing became rich sources of data. Adopting a

participant-as-observer field role in this situation afforded an insight to gymnast's behaviour in an off-podium but competition context. Listening and talking to gymnasts who perhaps significantly, were in the company of fellow gymnasts not coaches and judges during a major competition, provided interesting evidence of their everyday language and meanings pertaining to how the aesthetic of the live performances may be understood from a gymnast's point of view. All field notes were completed after the event.

Observer-as-participant

When open access to gymnastic products and practitioners was available the fieldwork role of observer-as-participant was adopted, being a position of comparative detachment (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) and the researcher's identity and intent could be revealed. This allowed two-way questioning and dialogue about the research topic and relevant examples in gymnastics to clarify aesthetic meaning and understanding. In environments such as the gymnasium or during conversations, field notes were usually completed after meetings as note taking or recording at the time was impractical and would have been distracting. The advantages of this stance to data collection were similar to those detailed by Bonner and Tolhurst (2002), in their accounts as nurse researchers using participant observation where Bonner was positing herself "inside" and Tolhurst "outside" the research situation. As an outsider (observer-as-participant) Tolhurst found that questioning and clarification of routine, everyday actions and meanings could take place. Also, that the revealed position of the researcher allowed subjects to confide in the researcher with certain thoughts or points of view that they may not want to divulge to their work colleagues. Finally that, as Alder and Alder (1994) point out, the outsider role has the advantage of not judging practitioner's capabilities, or professional values. When the researchers' interests and intent were revealed and he had been accepted by practitioners, or rather that his questions related to a sensible enquiry and their opinions were genuinely sought, the freedom for the researcher to openly ask practitioners for clarification of their everyday understandings seemed to lead quickly to the kind of advantages cited above. There were occurrences when practitioners may have perceived the researcher as being someone who could be spoken to in confidence if, for example, a difference in opinion existed between practitioners and that they were not going to be judged or confronted for what they had to say.

A disadvantage of this outsider, observer-as-participant role in fieldwork, was that sometimes, the researcher was overwhelmed with a mixture of information of a behavioural and aesthetic nature, from which the aesthetic meanings had to be extracted. The researcher's duty in these and all fieldwork situations was to listen, watch and record and take from it detail that was relevant to the research topic only. The strategy for organising field notes discussed below helped to minimise "researcher effect" on the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994) by allowing the researcher to remind himself, through the use of notes and memos what his position was, why he was there, what was relevant detail and how he should behave and respond as a researcher, such as being taken into confidence or observing from a privileged position. From a research point of view and beyond being a sympathetic ear for whatever political circumstances surrounded an issue, the interest for the researcher during any exchange of information was always the aesthetic understanding he was able to develop from what the expert practitioners had to say on a particular issue. In this manner a professional approach to conducting research and handling informant information was developed that was respected by practitioners who were contributing data or were likely to contribute data later in the study.

Participant-as-observer

In certain situations a fieldwork role of participant-observer was adopted, being a position of comparative involvement (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). At these times the researcher assumed the role of a pseudo gymnastics practitioner as far as other practitioners present were concerned, which altered the researcher's fieldwork role. This more covert method of experiencing the gymnastic world usually affected the researcher's ability to record information but with the advantage that the inherent deceit of the participant-as-observer role preserved the social balance and natural proceedings in a given situation. That is, if the researcher's identity and intent was revealed to all present, practitioners may have behaved differently towards each other and the researcher, perhaps perceiving him as an informant for another group, or feeling they had to explain points in greater detail for the benefit of their visitor's understanding. In either case this "reactivity" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) of practitioners towards the researcher may have influenced the situation and therefore the quality of the data gleaned from such "natural experiences". Situations where the participant-as-observer fieldwork role was adopted were, for example, as cited above at the 2002 Commonwealth Games and being privy to dialogue between practitioners and at seminars and judges

meetings. In contrast to the fieldwork situation at the 2002 Commonwealth Games when recording field notes immediately was problematic, were the judge's symposiums and seminars where note taking was synonymous with the lecture theatre environment they were staged in. The participant-observer fieldwork role was preserved because these formal situations had the advantage that being seen to be writing on pads of paper were accepted and expected practice by those attending the meeting, allowing detailed field notes to be made undetected. Very full data was collected on such occasions where observations and theorising could take place as events unfolded 'on the ground'. However, the researcher was mindful that aesthetic details or concepts developed by him at a symposium were only part of the overall aesthetic picture of gymnastics and that his ideas could not be discussed with practitioners during this relatively covert situation. There were no gymnasts to perform for visual reference at these meetings, only coaches and judges who were discussing, interpreting, arguing, and making sense of gymnastic material, which contributed to their [cultural] definition of a gymnastic product. The researcher gleaned aesthetic details from practitioner's language at these events which provided details for developing a) the aesthetic model (Figure 5) and b) his hunches concerning cultural influences in aesthetic evaluation and performance of gymnastics. Several strategies were utilised to minimise "researcher effect" (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and reduce participant response to the researcher which Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) term as "reactivity", during participant-as-observer episodes of fieldwork. Firstly, the recognition of the relationship that already existed between the participants and the researcher was noted within field notes and helped to overcome some of the potential problems of being an "insider" highlighted by Bonner and Tolhurst (2002). Secondly, through being reflective and critically examining aesthetic assumptions and research actions in relation to data collection and analysis, the potential for researcher effect was minimised. The writing of personal notes and memos in field notes helped the process of reflection on given situations in order to focus upon aesthetically relevant material in the data. This included providing details of the context of the study, reflecting upon the researcher's reactions to people and events in the setting, reflecting upon his relationship with the participants and examining the way he felt when undertaking participant observation and interviews, and finally, by providing reasons for personal decision making (Gerrish, 1997; Lipson, 1984; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

3.4 Structured observation: organising field notes

A method of organising field notes was adapted from Schatzman and Strauss (1973) who argue that data should be recorded in distinct packages of material according to whether they constitute Observational Notes (ON), Theoretical Notes (TN) or Methodological Notes (MN). This proved to be an effective way of structuring and sorting data collected during the observational phase of research. The researcher was able to select and record significant observations and theorise about them as they occurred which has been central to expanding the detail within the aesthetic model identified. Burgess (1982) developed a similar structure of organising field notes, which he termed as Substantive field notes, Methodological field notes and Analytic field notes. However the conceptual operations within this and other interpretations of organising field notes (Spradley, 1979; Kirk and Miller, 1986; Hughes, 1994) seemed similar in essence to that of Schatzman and Strauss (1973) which was adopted as the model for use in this research. Schatzman and Strauss (1973) explain that:

ON Observational Notes are [descriptive] statements bearing upon events experienced principally through watching and listening. They contain as little interpretation as possible and are as reliable as the researcher can construct them. Each ON represents an event deemed important enough to be included in the fund of recorded experience... An ON is the who, what, when, where and how of human activity. It tells who said or did what under stated circumstance. If the observer wishes to go beyond the facts in the instance he writes a theoretical note.

TN Theoretical Notes [theorising] represent self-conscious controlled attempts to derive meaning from any one or several observation notes. The observer as recorder thinks about what he has experienced and makes whatever private declaration of meaning he feels will bear conceptual fruit. He interprets, infers, hypothesises, conjectures, he develops new concepts, links these to older ones, or relates any observation to any other in this presently private effort to create social science.

MN Methodological Notes A methodological note is a statement that reflects an operational act completed or planned: an instruction to oneself, a reminder and a critique of one's own tactics. It notes timing, sequencing, stationing, stage setting or manoeuvring.

By applying this sequence of structuring field notes, "packages" of data could be identified which contributed directly to aesthetic theorising and developing ideas within the aesthetic model. Schatzman and Strauss (1973) clarify that a package of data is an abstract rendering, in brief paragraph form which tells of a single, distinct event (ON), then draws an inference (TN), or makes a tactical decision (MN). Examples of field notes made when the researcher adopted observer-as-participant and participant-as-observer fieldwork roles are given below.

Example of field notes: Observer-as-participant fieldwork role

These field notes were made whilst spectating at the 2001 World Championships in Ghent, Belgium Team Competition, 29th October 2001 whilst adopting an observer-as-participant field role - a position of relative detachment (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

ON: Teams from Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, Turkey and Korea are competing in this round - 2.00-4.00pm.

I have a good vantage point being close to the competition podium but fairly central in the stadium - I have a good overview to see all the teams as they rotate.

The team from Mexico seem to stand out visually for some reason. Their gymnastics is not extremely high in difficulty terms but as a team they seem well co-ordinated, well matched compared to the others.

All Mexican gymnasts did Vende swings on Floor, all did Magyar hop on Pommels, on Parallel Bars all did a drop-chute action before their dismount sequence.

All the Mexican gymnasts have different individual routines but include repetition of certain elements, which are common to all. The other teams competing this afternoon did not do this so apparently.

I have watched gymnasts from over sixty countries, 4 gymnasts in each team, in the last two days - this team had a very strong aesthetic team image.

TN: The Mexican team seems to have a corporate image to their performance, which is impressive compared to the other teams on display.

Initial impressions - looks very tidy, co-ordinated, together, traces of similarity but all different.

There seems to be an expectation set up in me (spectating) that each gymnast in the Mexican team would perform a visually similar action.

Something that identifies them with that team.

Strong aesthetic impact as a team but difficulty is relatively low in world gymnastic terms.

This collective image seems to identify them as a team rather than a group of individuals.

There may be some kind of aesthetic synergy in that the visual affect is greater than the sum of its parts.

The repeating of aesthetic material seems to leave a national signature that identifies them as a team.

The expectation of team image set up by watching this Mexican team seems to influence what I am looking for in other teams.

MN: I can make these observations from this secluded position in the stand and they seem quite apparent from this vantage point.

I am quite detached, a fly on the wall so to speak.

I wonder if judges down on the podium see this 'corporate image' as clear as I do? And how they respond to it?

Is there is an expectation set up by judges for a team aesthetic? I must think of a way to find out if a judge recognises aesthetic team image. I am unable to question right now as the competition is going on and I can't get access to them from here. Nor is this the time or place to interrupt others duties and viewing and of the competition. Any questions will necessarily be reflective.

May have to reveal my research role in asking such questions or may get ignored - suspicion of being sponsored or just an idealistic gymnastic crank! Will have to think of a social setting and situation for such a conversation to take place - it should be relaxed, unthreatening allowing the practitioner to talk freely, uninterrupted allowing them to reflect, formulate and verbalise their opinion - I'd like to know their opinion on this aesthetic point.

Interestingly, this situation did arise later in that week at Ghent when the researcher visited the hotel where the American officials were staying in the evening after their Team Competition. Whilst waiting to talk with the Americans the researcher took the opportunity to introduce himself and his interests

(observer-as-participant) to the Portuguese Women's gymnastics judge, with the intention of discussing the concepts of cultural/corporate image. Her response recorded in field notes read as follows:

ON: Portuguese judge absolutely adamant that cultural visual image exists in gymnastics - in both men's and women's gymnastics but particularly obvious to her in the women's sport.

She stated, [her words exactly] that she, "could tell which culture and usually which country a gymnast comes from in terms of their historical, religious and social gesture patterns without seeing the leotard or flag".

She proceeded to demonstrate with her arms and hands some examples of subtle gesture noticed from gymnasts from catholic countries. This Portuguese judge had clearly thought about cultural influences presented to her in gymnastics, that she has judged over the years.

She went on to state, as if evident for all to see, i.e. to her it was obvious that; the USA have ignored their strong cultural traditions in contemporary dance and ballet in gymnastic presentation whereas other countries utilise their cultural identity to the full.

In her words about the aesthetic style in USA... "They embrace Hollywood, it's all Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, entertaining, but not deeply cultural, ...it's superficial and glitzy". She continued that... "They have not tapped their cultural dance heritage" and seemed to be shaking her head, indicating that it's shame that a great opportunity for them to develop a significant style in gymnastic performance, is being missed.

The opportunity to gather this data was presented by chance and seized upon in an observer-as-participant field role in the relaxed surroundings of a hotel suite alluded to in the previous MN which was made at the gymnastics stadium. The researcher was aware of how valuable this opportunity was and was keen to conduct the exchange appropriately. He was conscious not to lead the Portuguese judge into making the kind of specific comments she did make about religious and social gesture and the Hollywood interpretation of aesthetic in American performance. Her comments were offered independently and in response to the researcher's general enquiry as to whether gymnasts displayed any apparent aesthetic differences in terms of cultural image that did not conflict with the rules directly. This was noted in methodological notes for this fieldwork episode.

In contrast, the meeting with the American officials in the same hotel environment later that evening was pre-meditated and socially engineered. The meeting continued the theme of exploring cultural identity in gymnastics, by talking with Bart Connor (ex-Olympian), Nadia Comaneci (ex-Olympian) and Butch Zurich (F.I.G. Judge for U.S.A.). During the early stages of this 'chance' meeting the researcher operated a participant-as-observer field role but had to gradually reveal his interests and intent as the opening question of "What is artistic about Gymnastics?" became more difficult for these practitioners to answer. To open this situation the researcher posed as a deeply curious but seriously interested professional who was trained and educated as a dancer and was keen to learn how they understood the aesthetic of their so called, artistic sport. Adopting this position of apparent ignorance deceived them and tricked them through their politeness, to give the enquiry more thought and explain in detail

their [cultural] point of view. The researcher's continual querying of explanations offered by these practitioners necessitated that the researcher adopt a more overt position of questioning, moving towards an observer-as-participant role, if he was not to jeopardise the meeting altogether by causing them to become frustrated by their inability to provide satisfactory answers, and leave. Nadia Comaneci in fact reached this point and walked away in exasperation, saying "you can't compare gymnastics with dance, dance has no rules". This indicated to the researcher that revealing his genuine interests completely was a prudent strategy to develop the meeting further and continue gathering field data from this rich source with the remaining practitioners. This conscious decision was recorded in the methodological notes for this fieldwork episode.

MO: An underlying strategy of this research is to *look within* the gymnastic world to develop an understanding of its aesthetic. Not to bring too many artistic or aesthetic concepts and theoretical language from the outside which could lead to rejection of me, and my ideas.

In essence, my task is to reflect back to practitioners, like a mirror, my aesthetic analysis of phenomena within their gymnastics world.

If the reflection becomes too distorted (by aesthetic language and concepts) it risks being rejected by the very people it relates to. But - don't want to slavishly pursue mass acceptance of my ideas by all practitioners. Aim - that experts within gymnastics might relate positively to the aesthetic details presented to them.

Nadia did not seem particularly expert in this regard.

To say "you can't compare gymnastics with dance" seems absolutely correct contextually, but to ground this claim on her belief that "dance has no rules" is perhaps inept and ignorant revealing a very low level of knowledge about dance.

Successful appeal and relation of my research might be achieved if practitioners recognise the concepts, language and examples used to illustrate my points within the aesthetic analysis of their sport.

The contextual bounds of gymnastics should to relate to the aesthetic argument presented.

Therefore, comparisons with other aesthetic sports or even other disciplines of gymnastics are of limited use to practitioners of Men's Artistic Gymnastics. They always seem to say, "Yes well that's all well and good for women's gym, ballroom dancing or figure skating, but this is about men's gymnastics".

Nadia Comaneci's comments and reaction during this fieldwork episode were a useful reminder as to where the 'physical' limits of aesthetic understanding might be for some practitioners and the boundaries of relevance and acceptance of aesthetic debate (and therefore me) within their sport.

Her comments may have been made out of relative ignorance of *artistic understanding in dance*, which may have provoked her emotional outburst (embarrassment?) and departure from the group (rejection?)

Her reaction may have been based upon her inability to discuss her performance in artistic terms of dance, with which she was commonly associated as a gymnast.

Nadia's reaction was a useful indicator for me during fieldwork to gauge my strategy to collect data in the field. I.e. when to reveal my position as researcher and how to raise aesthetic issues with practitioners in a way (accessible language) that provides useful data.

By using gymnastic language, context and examples I found I was engaged as a researcher by practitioners and my ideas were not dismissed as fanciful.

The American concepts of artistry in gymnastics, athleticism in gymnastics and a national aesthetic concept of gymnastics were discussed with these eminent figures within the gymnastic world which did bear a great deal of "conceptual fruit" (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973). By mid-point in that meeting

the researcher's interests and intent were fully revealed (observer-as-participant) when Butch Zurich explained that in his opinion, "the rules (2001 Code) don't allow us to produce the kind of gymnastics we would like to see". This seemed to be a very interesting socio-aesthetic point of view that qualified and confirmed points made about American gymnastics within this thesis under the rules and standards section.

Example of field notes: Participant-as-observer fieldwork role

The following field notes were made whilst attending the F.I.G. Brevet assessment course at Lilleshall, 18th January 2001 when the researcher adopted a participant-as-observer field role - a position of relative involvement (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

ON: Presentation in main lecture theatre at Lilleshall National Sports Centre. About 40 practitioners present to take this judge assessment. Some of our national coaches are also judges being assessed for this Code.

Speaker reports that under the new Code (2001), straddling of legs is to be deducted in certain circumstances.

No straddle lifts to handstand, must always be a pike lift.

Refer to Code for verification - quote, "if it's not in the Code its not allowed".

Different kinds of straddling of legs affects deductions and Special Requirements.

Kinds or situations for straddle of legs? When is it "typical" and when is "atypical"? -

Clarification - quote, "it's judgement call, if straddling makes the move easier then deduct".

This ruling seems to have provoked a great deal of confusion and shaking of heads but the context of this course is an assessment and these people seem to accept the rule in hope of passing the exam rather than it being a forum to discuss their beliefs and implications of the rule - this would have been the normal course of events at national judges symposiums where no international assessment was at stake.

TN: Straddling of legs is a basic aesthetic shape that visually occupies more time and space than the other basic shapes of gymnastics, tuck, straight, pike, straddle.

Straddle is a splayed out shape - a larger aspect of body is presented - guides the eyes to furthest points, spreading of 'wings', illusory - ease of action.

Bigger space and time occupied but with some elements biomechanically easier to do than in straight shape eg. front planche straight compared to front planche with straddle.

Risk - Straddle shape could be phased out completely - elements at risk Flairs, shears, straddle planches, straddle lifts to handstand - affects straddle elements most apparatus.

Risk that gymnasts will not perform them because they are not worth doing as devalued (by number) and will be deducted despite looking impressive and gymnastic.

This straddling issue is discussed here as a technical issue but it seems to be more than that. It is a rule issue with associated problems of evaluating the visual image which include:

- perception/conception - understanding the values of that shape in a gymnastic context,
- judgement and appreciation of difficulty as an aesthetically defining factor of the sport - all getting labelled at this event as technical aspects of judging.
- What does technical actually mean here for these practitioners in terms of the specific examples and specific gymnasts they make reference to?

Taste selection and sieving out fundamental aesthetic material, devaluing the straddle shape, reducing the shapes with which the gymnast has to work - motivation for this? - Making gymnastics more difficult to perform in order to make it easier for judges to score.

Aesthetic monotony from pursuing difficulty results in reduced range of shapes on display, to make scoring easier.

This seems like naive motivation from an aesthetic point of view.

Aesthetically seems a bit drastic - gymnastic shape sieved out and lost forever. Reduces ability to show variety within the performance gymnastically i.e. range of shapes and elements reduced that the gymnast's body is capable of exhibiting i.e. occupation of time and space that was the preserve of the gymnast is minimised in this way.

MN: Within this formal situation my participant-as-observer field role seems quite obvious to me in the here and now. In a way it is socially defined by context i.e. it is an assessment course to which I do not contribute nor am I being assessed. I know I can't ask for clarification or point out aesthetic consequences to the sport or aesthetic consequences of their interpretations for fear of causing an imbalance in the proceedings and therefore the data I am collecting.

My role is to observe, listen and record. I make sure I am sat to the side of the lecture theatre so as not to distract people or draw attention to myself but close enough to the people so as to appear part of the group. If someone asked "what's he doing up the back there" my cover would be gone but more importantly I would have disrupted their formal setting and therefore my data under this strategy for field work.

I think these experts are talking in aesthetic terms about the straddle issue and many other aspects for the new Code (2001) such as Rings and strength moves, but they don't seem to realise the formal aesthetic significance of what they are saying. They are talking aesthetics but not using aesthetic language. Their gymnastic language alludes to their understanding of appearance but would happily disregard the notion that gymnastic language is aesthetic language in their world.

The degree of self-reflection on my strategy and the aesthetic content being discussed seems much greater in this situation for me as a researcher than in any other to date only because it is a lecture theatre and I am free to think my thoughts - no contribution and no demands to interrupt me, I am a fly on the wall.

This data will help development of the aesthetic model and could be allied with data findings from other sources - possibly collected using different strategies in fieldwork.

The method of data collection during this fieldwork episode was clearly defined by the formal context of the meeting and therefore the appropriate conduct of the researcher as a visitor to that situation. The field role of participant-as-observer demanded that the researcher appeared to take part in a similar manner to the judges and coaches around him. This was listening attentively and giving an outward appearance of being studious. However, if the researcher were asked for a gymnastic contribution to the meeting (as opposed to an aesthetic point) his role would be exposed by the superior knowledge [in gymnastics] by all those attending. This, whilst not posing any personal danger, would disrupt the natural proceedings un-necessarily and potentially affect the data that might otherwise be collected from this essentially private meeting of gymnastics experts, who were being assessed for their F.I.G. Brevet.

3.5 Data collection strategies: Interviews

Various interviewing strategies have been used throughout this research to collect data in a verbalised format, predominantly from face-to-face meetings with expert practitioners. All respondents interviewed had significant responsibilities at international levels of competition for judging, coaching

or performing. One of the main purposes for collecting interview data was to complement the other forms of qualitative data used in this study, which added to the breadth of ideas or validated existing concepts, which were developing the aesthetic model (Figure 5). Additionally, data from formal interviews highlighted some 'new' areas of aesthetic conception by practitioners in their sport, to progress the study beyond the aesthetic model at that point. It was recognised that in order to research the aesthetic appearance of gymnastics, as opposed to some other aspect of the sport, such as psychology or coaching knowledge (Jones *et al.* 1993; Hardy and Parfitt, 1994; Cote *et al.* 1995) that data from a wide range of sources which contributed to the overall aesthetic of the sport was required. Therefore, research activities prior to the formal interview phase provided the foundation upon which the formal interviews were designed, as well as providing a knowledge base for the researcher to analyse the interview data he collected. In this manner, it could be claimed that the reasons for interviewing and the concepts for analysing the dialogue were truly grounded in the data as part of the evolving research process. Further practical questions concerning the strategies behind selected methods of data collection were; what the data would be used for in the plan of research as it progressed and how the researcher could control the amount of data he collected. This helped the researcher to avoid becoming "lost in the data" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) and helped to identify relevant sources of data as the research developed.

The strategy to collect data progressively from a number of different sources and using different methods, was partly imposed by the F.I.G. calendar of events but was also a conscious decision by the researcher in order to establish a logical sequence to the topics presented in this research and therefore, present a structured picture of aesthetic detail to the gymnastic world. Consequently, at identifiable points, the researcher was able to collect qualitative phenomenological data in a particular format in relation to the topic area, from which he could progress to another topic and data format, as the development of the study dictated. The importance of building an understanding of the aesthetic of gymnastics before progressing to formal interviews as a data collection method, is highlighted by Burgess (1982a) when he states that:

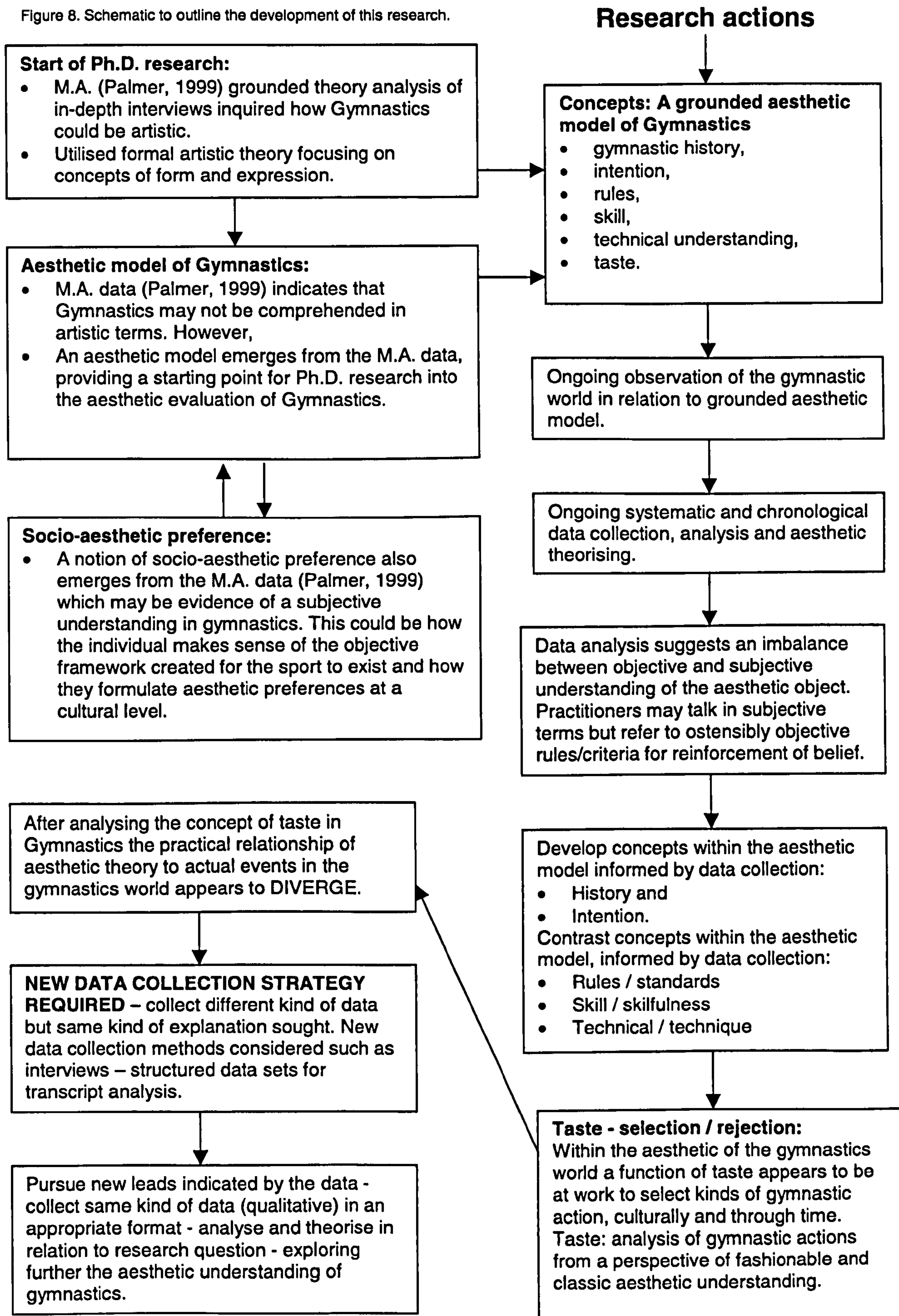
Researchers require a knowledge of technical terms and an ability to ascertain cultural meanings, if they are to obtain detail, verify statements, elucidate contradictory data, and obtain information that will allow them to evaluate their informants' statements. In short, researchers need to ascertain meaning and get access to unspoken elements of social life. Researchers need to be able to decide what questions to ask and how to ask them, if they are to get at gossip and move beyond generalisations in the course of conversations with informants.

Figure 8 details the stages of the research process up to the point where a new data collection strategy was developed i.e. formal interviews.

Prior to this formal interview phase, interviewing at gymnastic events was taking place informally as part of participant observation as noted the field notes above. This distinction may be typical of what Chenitz and Swanson (1986) identify as Informal and Formal interviewing techniques in grounded theory. The informal interview is likened to an everyday conversation for the purpose of both collecting and validating data, and the formal arranged interview frequently falling between the structured and unstructured design (Chenitz and Swanson, 1986). May (1991) also alludes to the difference between interviewing in Grounded Theory and Ethnography compared to Phenomenology where in Phenomenology, formal interviews may be repeated over time as an important aspect of their research design (Mischler, 1979; Munhall and Oiler 1986; Seidman 1991). However, a feature of Grounded Theory and Ethnography is the use of informal interviews in participant observation, often leading to one-off formal arranged interviews which was the case in this research (May, 1991). An unstructured approach to both informal and formal interviewing was utilised by the researcher which is considered the "best means of securing the personal and private concerns of the respondents" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This also means that more than one style of interviewing has been employed, appropriately, which may be indicative of grounded theory or ethnographic data gathering techniques compared to other research disciplines (May, 1991).

A great deal of valuable informal interview data was contributed by practitioners from a wide range of nationalities over the duration of the study. This was perhaps a better representation of the culturally diverse, gymnastic world than might otherwise have been achieved with this data format (interview dialogue) than if the research were based solely upon formal interviews at the outset. The number of informants and contacts increased over time due to the gradual development of interest in the research at international level. For example, over the three-year period of study, interview data was contributed by English, American, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Hungarian, Romanian, Ukrainian, and Canadian practitioners. This verbal interview data complemented field data in other formats such as records of visual aesthetic products of coaching, performing and evaluating gymnastics, field notes of observations and experiences, and an extensive range of documentation relating to gymnastics.

Figure 8. Schematic to outline the development of this research.



With regard to interview design, Wimpenny and Gass (2000) point out that unstructured interviews which are formal and in-depth, frequently have a guide or schedule which covers the themes which are to be developed in detail by the respondent. In this manner the researcher sought to follow the major concerns of the respondent by allowing them to develop their point of view on an issue they saw as relevant to the topic in hand. The schedule developed for formal interviews was structured upon the visual image of gymnastic performance which required minimal verbal questioning by the researcher allowing the respondent to explain fully in their terms, what they were seeing and how they made sense of it. This seemed an appropriate method of investigating the aesthetic perception and conception of elite gymnastics performance by experts within the sport.

The design of the formal interview in this research.

The use of formal interviewing was intrinsically linked to the stage of research development and was purposely designed to yield what was anticipated to be, aesthetically relevant information but different or additional to that which was already collected. Also, in the light of the development of the aesthetic model to date (prior knowledge) an interview design which reduced the potential for interviewer bias and reactivity was devised. A method of targeting the respondent's attention at specific visual examples and aspects of gymnastics to elicit a certain kind of comment (aesthetic comment) within an unstructured interview, was a particular challenge which was met by posing the 'questions' visually. That is to say that implicit of viewing the image was the enquiry, "Please explain to me what you see and what you think of what you see". This was achieved by asking respondents for their running commentary on an edited video of footage from an event at which the researcher carried out extensive field research and the respondents contributed to directly as coach, judge or gymnast. Therefore, both the researcher and the respondents had direct personal experience of the examples on the video, upon which the respondent was commentating. This helped to keep the interview in a sensible context for a practitioner that was relevant and interesting for them i.e. the selection of visual subject matter from a major international competition ensured that the topics and stimulus was pitched at the right level for the respondents. A very important and fundamental point about this interview design was that it invited **experts to comment upon experts**. This enabled the researcher to elicit genuine comments about the aesthetic appearance of gymnastic performances featured on the video, from the people who produced some of them and evaluated some of them at that event. Also, by reference to visual

images, interview time was not wasted by respondents explaining irrelevant points of detail due to their judgements of whether the researcher could understand their complex and specialised answers. Nor was time wasted by the researcher asking repetitive questions. This situation was anticipated by the researcher when considering what kinds of question could be asked of experts and what kinds of answer might be useful to the study i.e. those which were gymnastically informed for this level of investigation and were therefore aesthetically relevant.

Basic instructions were outlined verbally at the start of each interview in response to the common question from the respondents of "What do you want me to do?" In this manner the instructions and the order of clips served as an interview schedule. The unstructured interview schedule for the respondents was therefore transparent, understandable and posed no hidden agenda for the respondents. Explanation from the researcher involved structuring his request as an instruction, which related to all fifty clips on the video. These instructions were required only once at the start of the video allowing the rest of the time to be completely devoted to respondent dialogue. The researcher's instructions were:

Please explain to me what you see on the video, and what you think of what you see. If you think of your task as giving me a running commentary on each clip, that would be great. I am interested to learn how you understand the appearance of these gymnasts and their routines. Just use your own language and say exactly what you want to say about each clip. We can stop the video at any point if you wish to explain a point in more detail.

During the video/interview, there was some questioning from the researcher, which pursued interesting comments as they arose. An endeavour of the researcher was to ask questions to elicit aesthetic comment but without using the word aesthetic. This was because early field research indicated that many practitioners became 'experts' in aesthetics when asked about the aesthetic of their sport which made accessing their expert knowledge in gymnastics more difficult. On a number of occasions information offered in response to an aesthetic question was misleading because it was so emotionally embellished and over generalised about gymnasts or gymnastic nations. That is, when asked for aesthetic explanation practitioners would often rationalise and their comments would typically lack reference to what they actually do. Therefore, the researcher's questions were deliberately specific to a point raised by a respondent and took the form of prompting questions (Parker, 1994) which were descriptive in nature and phrased in the participants vocabulary where possible. Therefore, in terms of the researcher's questioning technique, the question "Why?___" was avoided as it was seen as an invitation to rationalise and generalise on issues which may have yielded

"empty data" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) and could potentially render feelings of prejudgement and prompt defensive responses (Argyris, 1982). An example of pursuing a line of aesthetic enquiry without using the term aesthetic was when GG's use of the term "special" was explored during his interview. The researcher asked, with reference to Andreu Vivo, a gymnast from Spain, what was special about his performance on the High Bar:

CP - Is there anything special about this chap I should know?"

(Interviewers non-specific use of the term.)

GG - Mmm I think he is a very special P Bar worker is Vivo.

(Respondents use of the term very special seems to relate to this gymnast on a different apparatus - this sparks interest.)

CP - Right.

GG - Very, very special P. Bar worker.

("Very, very special", reconfirmed - Vivo's ability to demonstrate an aesthetic of specialness on P Bars, not High Bar is recognised - reputation. There may be degrees of specialness - "very" as opposed to "very, very", seems to be a definite conceptual understanding for GG which was explored in relation to other gymnasts during his interview.) [My italics for explanation].

The respondent GG recognised immediately that in world performance terms, this gymnast was not "special" on the apparatus shown on the video clip. However, the quality of specialness seemed to be attributed to Vivo on other apparatus i.e. the Parallel Bars. Specialness seemed to be an aesthetic quality in gymnastic performance, which was readily identifiable by this practitioner by denotation. Therefore questions, using the term "special" (respondent's vocabulary) were used with reference to other gymnasts at points throughout the interview with GG. This revealed a definite recognition of an aesthetic quality called "special" for GG and a positive kind of aesthetic discrimination. GG was able to evaluate to degrees of specialness and say if a gymnast or particular performance was or was not "special". Also, interestingly, GG was deliberating and predicting whether certain gymnasts, on the basis of their potential as young performers would be able to exhibit specialness in the future, commenting "he could be special". Deeper investigation into what the term meant quickly resulted in repetition of description indicating that the term was perhaps an example of Shutz's (1967) "recipe knowledge". It seemed to be a term that helped practitioners to get through their day, it related to a quality, which seemed definite for experts who shared the same level of knowledge and experience enabling them to identify or agree upon it. However the term could take too long to explain accurately in each individual case. Pursuing the term further may have embarrassed the respondent, serving to alienate the researcher and demote him from an assumed and credited level of gymnastic knowledge

by respondents, which may have helped to create the opportunity for the interviews to take place in the first instance. In subsequent interviews the concept of "special" as an aesthetic descriptor was explored with the careful use of questioning. This post-interview dialogue led to significant and interesting aspects of aesthetic understanding in gymnastics to be revealed.

The end of the video signalled the end of the commentary but not the end of the interview. Concluding questions, comments and explanations often revealed a great deal of personally held aesthetic beliefs, conceptions, preferences and understanding which was a natural extension of the aesthetic theorising by the respondent in relation to what they had just seen. This was valuable supplementary data alluding to how a respondent made sense of phenomena in their gymnastic world.

Formal interviewing: Data production and data handling

In the planning phase for formal interviews, it was envisaged that using a visual stimulus, pitched at the right level for respondents, may provoke specific feelings, memories and points of view to be verbalised which would provide appropriate data for exploring an aesthetic understanding of gymnastics. The video footage had to be of sufficient length for the unstructured interview to yield useful information but not so long as to waste respondent's time and efforts in their commentating and the researcher's time in transcribing. The video footage lasted for forty-five minutes. It consisted of fifty clips of elite gymnasts randomly selected from over five hours of videotape from the 2000 European Championships in Bremen, Germany. Each clip was edited down to the salute at the start of the performance to the salute after the dismount, with a four-second pause between each clip. There were approximately eight clips of gymnasts performing on each of the six apparatus. Clips were selected from the Team, All-round and Individual competitions. During the interview, the audiotape was left to run whilst the respondent provided their commentary on the video footage which was played simultaneously, with the volume on the television muted. Whilst the video footage ran for forty-five minutes, the formal interviews varied in length from fifty minutes to over two hours. During the interview the researcher had a blank copy of the transcription table (order of gymnasts in the video) on which he was able to note reactions, intonation, gestures and body movements and any other non-verbal communication demonstrated by the respondent. There was no major outside distractions during any of the formal interviews. All the face-to-face interviews took place in offices at gymnasiums, which seemed to have the benefit that practitioners were in their place of work and so, were

environmentally in-context and mentally focused to comment upon gymnastic performances on the video. Each interview was transcribed in full and verbatim and initial coding carried out before progressing onto the next respondent. This allowed the researcher to theorise progressively about common themes as they emerged. This helped to develop interviewing skills and to draw upon new emerging ideas but without appearing to lead the respondent in interview questioning or comparing one respondent's comments with another during the interview. The aim of the interview was to provide the expert practitioner with a stage and freedom to explain in their own terms what was presented to them. The success of data production during this phase of the research may therefore have rested with selecting the right material to present to experts and generating a non-judgmental atmosphere of being free to comment and educate the researcher concerning their aesthetic beliefs and understanding. The researcher was able to create an interactive situation of respondent as co-researcher (Gadamer, 1989) which was informative for both and in some cases, seemed to be a process of self-discovery for the respondent.

In terms of handling transcribed data, Wengraff (2001) and Silverman (2001) recommended a table layout with three columns in which to record transcribed comments, initial coding and non-verbal behaviour or communication. Figure 9 illustrates the layout of the transcription table adapted for this research to include the running order of the gymnasts. This play-list was a useful reference for the researcher who had to learn the gymnast's names in order to become familiar with their performance characteristics as described by the practitioners being interviewed.

A strategy to help manage the formal interview process was establishing a system of data sets to assist with data analysis and also, to provide some control over the amount of data collected. The structure of data sets is discussed in detail in the data analysis section for formal interviews. The duration of the video footage was also a useful control feature to manage what could have become an endless conversation producing unmanageable quantities of data. The end of the video also signalled to the respondent when they were likely to be released which was an important practical consideration for these eminent professionals in the gymnastics world who kindly made time to contribute data to the study.

Figure 9. Extract from the transcription table to illustrate how dialogue from formal interviews was organised.

HIGH BAR			
Running order of Gymnasts on videotape. Names / Apparatus	Field note observations. C.P.	Tape commentary. CP - Interviewer CD - Interviewee	Analysis: Initial coding and meaning units
1. High Bar: Szilveszter CSOLLANY HUN		<i>Observing videotape ... pause in dialogue.</i>	
2. High Bar: Sergej PFEIFFER GER			
3. High Bar: Alexander BERESCH UKR			
4. High Bar: Alexei BONDARENKO RUS			
5. High Bar: Ivan IVANKOV BLR			
6. High Bar: Andreu VIVO ESP 2001 FIG Code Glasgow Grand- Prix 14 th -16 th Dec 2001			
POMMELS			
Running order of Gymnasts on videotape. Names / apparatus.	Field note observations. C.P.	Tape commentary. CP - Interviewer CD - Interviewee	Analysis: Initial coding and meaning units
7. Pommels: Alexei NEMOV RUS			
8. Pommels: Eric CASIMIR FRA			
9. Pommels: Victor CANO SEGURA ESP			
10. Pommels: Alexei BONDARENKO RUS			

Formal Interviewing: Validity and verification

A number of strategies have been adopted to ensure validity and verify data collected in this research. Silverman (2001) states that validity is another word for truth and that the complaint of anecdotalism often questions the validity of much qualitative research. Therefore interview data, both formal and informal, have been used to complement data in other formats contributing to an overview of aesthetic of gymnastics, generated by the sum of data in this research. Bryman (1988) highlights the nature of this complaint, which could have resulted from an over-reliance upon interview based data in this study. He states that:

There is a tendency towards an anecdotal approach to the use of data in relation to conclusions or explanations in qualitative research. Brief conversations and snippets from unstructured interviews are used to provide evidence of a particular contention. These are grounds for disquiet in that the representativeness or generality of these fragments is rarely addressed.

The issue of developing a truthful and accurate representation of aesthetic in gymnastics was a key issue for this investigation, particularly if it was to be recognised and accepted by some of the expert practitioners in the gymnastic world. Therefore, an underlying strategy to *ensure* validity was to collect data from a range of sources that were seen as representative of aesthetic phenomena within the sport from which practitioners may construct aesthetic conceptions and understandings. Consequently, in terms of research design, the researcher always had a clear understanding of what he was asking practitioners, or 'asking' of documentation and why he was asking it. This helped to direct the study as a whole in terms of presentation of aesthetic theorising and what research action to follow next. The researcher was able to 'ask', or read from the data what might be aesthetically relevant data to collect next and where it could be collected from, in order to develop the aesthetic topic and the study itself. This enabled the researcher to have sensible and relevant questions to ask experts in gymnastics rather than asking ill-conceived questions and attempting to fabricate a story out of the answer they provided. On this point Tukey (1962) advises that, it is "far better an approximate answer to the right question, which is often vague, than an exact answer to the wrong question which can always be made precise". This approach to asking research questions had two main benefits. Firstly it was educative, helping the researcher to discover the importance of some data and therefore to disregard other data or information. Secondly, the process of aesthetic theorising about gymnastics was kept in touch with events, meanings and understandings in the real [gymnastics] world. In this manner the researcher was able to refine his research activities becoming aware of when to alter data

collection strategies and when to consider alternative data sources as the research developed. This is highlighted here because there seems to be an issue of validity in the qualitative research process and design as well as validity in the data collected.

An important aspect of validity, concerning the design of formal interviews, was the issue of parity of formal gymnastic knowledge held by respondents at a specific point in time. That is, it was important to invite well-qualified and experienced practitioners who coached, judged or performed at that competition to commentate on the footage because the performances were given, defined and evaluated by the rule context set by the 1997-2001 F.I.G. Code of Points. Hence potential respondents were practitioners who could commentate on the selected footage in the context of that Code. This transpired to be a significant consideration when interviews were carried out as all respondents made utterances to the effect that, "under the previous Code that was excellent but now it's not so good". These kinds of comments were indicators of how quickly the sport moves forward and how rapidly its aesthetic may be altered with every new Code (four-year cycle).

Data and data analysis from formal interviews was verified at respondent level and at research level. At respondent level, as each transcript was completed it was returned to the respondent to check through and feedback before the researcher proceeded to interview the next practitioner. They were checking their transcript to verify that an accurate transcription of the interview dialogue had been made. This helped to assure the respondents that their statements and general sentiments were not being falsified. Respondents were also verifying the coding carried out in the right hand column of the transcript table. Respondent verification helped to involve the coach, judge or gymnast in the research process by giving them an opportunity to alter, correct or make additions to their transcript if they wished to. There were also follow-up interviews with respondents for clarification of comments and discussion of emerging categories, which created further opportunities for corrections, alterations or additions to be made. Reason and Rowan (1981) argue that good research goes back to the subjects with tentative results and refines them in the light of the subjects' reactions. This process often took place at gymnastics competitions with the added benefit that the researcher was invited to observe from increasingly privileged positions, such as the judges table, during competitions. These opportunities to verify transcribed data and collect new data through participant observation resulted from closer contact with the respondents who were allowing the researcher to have a more detailed and privileged glimpse into the pressures and character of their gymnastic world. The increasing levels

of trust between respondents and researcher seemed to lead to richer data as verification and clarification offered refined perspectives on statements and points of view. The opportunity to follow-up data with respondents was a positive aspect of the research, which rapidly led to new data collection opportunities. This seemed to be a good indicator of the health of the research project in that it had started in the right place by developing the aesthetic model (Figure 5), to arrive at this point; regularly verifying interview new data. The impetus of the study was now escalating in its 'own' new directions towards further data collection opportunities but with the benefit of established aesthetic parameters for controlling data collection and managing the study as a whole. At a research level all transcribed data was checked through by a fellow researcher to verify that it was an accurate account of each interview. Independent coding was also carried out, without reference to the researcher's categories, which helped to guard against researcher bias (Burnard and Morrison, 1994). This was a useful strategy for verification, which helped the researcher question why certain aspects within a transcript were being identified and why certain categories of aesthetic understanding were becoming significant.

A further strategy to check the validity of data collected from the formal interviews was devised which would also yield valuable data for the study. This involved staging an 'interview' without an interviewer and was made feasible because the questions were implicit of the visual image as explained above. Mr. Hardy Fink, a world authority on gymnastics, who was also at the event in Bremen 2000 but not known to the researcher at that point, kindly agreed to contribute data to the study in the form of a solo commentary in 2002. The initial intention behind the method was to investigate if researcher bias or reactivity had affected the data collected in face-to-face interviews. The same video was used and was sent to Mr. Fink by post with written instructions as outlined above. The first time the researcher met Mr. Fink was after he had completed his commentary. The relative anonymity of the researcher to the respondent was lost at that meeting which seemed to re-affirm a major reduction of interviewer bias on the data he offered, which could not be repeated in this case. This 'interview' served as a pilot method of verifying and corroborating data and was seen as an appropriate extension of interview method. The pilot solo commentary provided some very interesting results with the respondent making new points about gymnasts or situations and independently confirming other respondents' points recorded in earlier transcripts. The fact that the content of this solo commentary was similar to that gained from earlier face-to-face interviews indicated that the data gained from all interviews was

reliable to use in the study. This pilot solo commentary was carried out in Canada and tapes forwarded to the researcher during the Commonwealth Games, Manchester, 2002 where Mr. Fink was officiating as Head Judge.

Data Analysis: Structuring and controlling the interview process

In total, seven commentaries were collected and transcribed verbatim. The first six were in-depth formal interviews being carried out face-to-face, which allowed some interesting comments to be questioned further by the researcher. These six interviews were structured into three data sets. Within each data set, the transcripts were contrasted and analysed for similarities and differences to help with categorisation and generation of themes. The first data set consisted of commentaries from two coaches, the second data set two judges and the third data set two gymnasts. The seventh transcript was the pilot solo commentary outlined above. A disadvantage of the solo commentary was that the researcher, by his deliberate absence, could not question points raised during the commentary although verification was sought post-interview by meetings at competitions or via email. A controlling factor behind the strategy of data-sets was to collect interview data, analyse them and see what could be learned from them. Then, if further interviews were indicated by the data as the next research action, another structure of data sets could be established. Additionally, the inclusion of judges, coaches and gymnasts within the data sets was seen as being more representative of the interests of the practitioners who contribute to the overall aesthetic of gymnastics compared to, for example, interviewing gymnasts only.

All the audio tapes were transcribed by the researcher. This was an ideal time to carry out coding as when hearing the tape for the first time, "a flood of memories and thoughts are provoked" (Wengraf, 2001) which helped to sensitise the researcher as to what the respondents were actually saying i.e. sensitivity to aesthetic significance. All the field information recorded during the interview concerning the respondent's reactions and non-verbal behaviour were transferred to the transcript at this point also. This all helped to create a vivid memory of each interview experience which in turn helped to identify important aspects of meaning and codes. Transcripts were analysed using a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Mackenzie, 1994; Wainwright, 1994) whereby methods of coding were used to narrow down and identify significant aesthetic themes emerging from the data. An overview of the steps involved with moving from the interview transcripts towards a grounded theory is

presented in Figure 10. Interview findings are presented after the section on taste; selection and rejection of aesthetic material in gymnastics which is representative of the unfolding avenues of investigation which this research has followed.

Figure 10. Overview: Steps in the grounded theory analysis of interview transcripts (Wainwright, 1994).

<i>INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT</i>
Theoretical sensitivity (overview analysis)
Open coding (line by line analysis)
Theoretical notes (short notes)
Axial coding (group codes into categories)
Theoretical framework (summary diagram)
Core category (unifying concept)
Grounded theory
<i>GROUNDING THEORY RESEARCH REPORT</i>

4. Historical Development of Gymnastics: A Cultural Phenomenon

4.1 History of Men's Artistic Gymnastics, a socio-aesthetic context for this research

An outline of gymnastic history from a socio-aesthetic perspective may be significant for two reasons. Firstly, because the history of gymnastics provides a specialised body of knowledge, which can be drawn upon to evaluate the new, in so far as gymnastic innovation may only be understood in the context of that which has preceded it. Secondly, because the history of gymnastics may indicate a tradition of constantly changing cultural preferences for different styles of physical action in gymnastics over time.

Simpson (1986) claims that art and games are “determined by their cultural context”. Similarly, Margolis (1980) claims that, art and games are “culturally emergent” phenomena because they appear to be “wrapped in a net of social practices and values which cannot be easily demarcated within a clear boundary”. The emergent style of sport and art as they evolve within a given culture, may be intrinsically linked because they are influenced by the values, attitudes and beliefs held by people from that culture. Consequently the individual beauty concepts or socio-aesthetic preferences which may be developed could become the intra-cultural norms or cultural reference point from which other artistic products could be judged. Within the sport of Men's Artistic Gymnastics, an individual preference on aesthetic grounds for this or that kind of style in performance may be sufficient or all that can be drawn upon when a judge has to choose between extremely close contestants.

Gracyk (1990) claims that “education refines one's experience and so one's natural likings become preferences for specific objects”. One may claim therefore, that personal taste and judgements of stylistic appearance might be said to be a product of education; if education is understood to be a product of culture. A key issue being that cultural beauty concepts might be said to be culturally bound and also be an influence upon gymnastic activities within and outside the particular culture. Men's Artistic Gymnastics is both internal to a particular culture and a cross-cultural activity. That is to say that within a given culture people may look with the 'same eyes' or same set of aesthetic values due to their particular education and cultural history in gymnastics. From this point of view, there may be an intra-cultural ideal, or cultural concept of perfection in gymnastic action. Outside of this situation, the many varied aesthetic values within gymnastic education and cultural history affecting gymnastic

nations are brought together during international competition in the modern day sport. This may imply that for the observer there will be inter-cultural differences in opinion concerning the aesthetic appeal of a given performance. This may ultimately affect the evaluation of the performances. Problems in evaluation, i.e. problems in achieving an international consensus for scoring, seemingly arise from the divergence of intra-cultural ideals during international competitions. Therefore, claims of "bias in scoring" and "unreliable judging" have been made in the past (Ansorge and Scheer, 1988; Zschocke, 1997) which may be evidence of socio-aesthetic preferences for a certain style in gymnastics performance. Consequently, a consideration of the cultural history of gymnastics from its codification may help to indicate some of the motives for using certain kinds of actions or disciplines under the generic term "gymnastic exercise". The historical development of gymnastics has seemingly determined its aesthetic appearance over time.

4.2 International Gymnasts Federation (F.I.G.) 1881 to present day: The genesis of Men's

Artistic Gymnastics

The increasing use of Swedish and German styles of gymnastics for sport and leisure in Europe, and eventually around the world, led to a corresponding increase in the number of Gymnastics Festivals or Fetes. These events, also known as Gymnaestrada were commonplace in Europe during the mid to late 1800s (Harvey, 1903). The displays at these gatherings would soon develop into the notion of a competition, although no standardised rules for international gymnastics competitions would be devised until 1949 (Gander, 1979). Furthermore, an international standard format for an Artistic Gymnastics competition would not be agreed by all participating nations until 1964 at which point the four year "judging cycles" were initiated (Gander, 1979). This indicates that a considerable degree of innovation and development in gymnastic action was effectively unregulated as it occurred long before there were any agreed aesthetic criteria to evaluate performances. This may be demonstrated by the fact that there were no standard international rules for either judging, apparatus design or competition format for over fifty years, despite there being international competitions during this time. This is not to claim that no rules existed for international competitions as gold medals were won in various disciplines. Rather to indicate that the rules were decided upon on the day and that they were a mixture of objective and subjective evaluations for that competition. For example, objective

evaluations such as timed rope climbs and subjective evaluations such as how well mass drill exercises were structured and synchronised.

In 1881, the Bureau of European Gymnastic Federations (F.E.G.) was inaugurated. Then, in 1896 under Baron Pierre de Coubertin, gymnastics was a part of the first Modern Olympic Games. However, whilst the F.E.G. was recognised by the International Olympic Committee (I.O.C.) from the outset, it did not manage its own Olympic discipline at the Games (Huguenin, 2000). This may account for the huge disparity of events, types of apparatus, uniforms and numbers of gymnasts in a team, which each country could enter at the Modern Olympic Games (Figure 11).

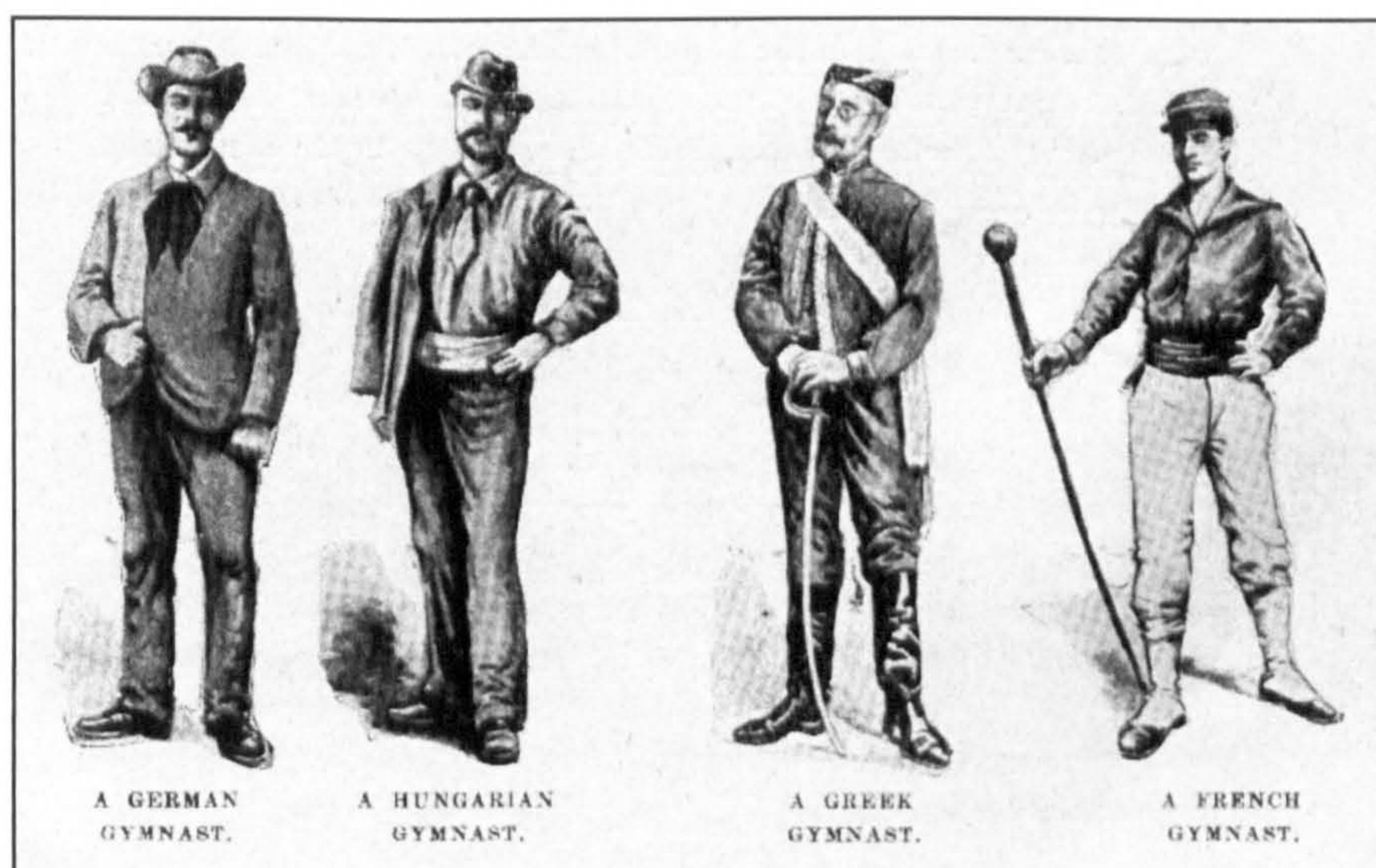


Figure 11.

There was a huge disparity of standards in all areas of gymnastics. There were different types of apparatus and competition format. The number of members in a team would vary hugely from nation to nation. There were also the different styles of clothing, which each gymnast might wear.

The figure depicts gymnasts in lightweight versions of military clothing denoting their nationality. This style of clothing would be worn during a competition or gymnastics festival. (Harvey, 1903).

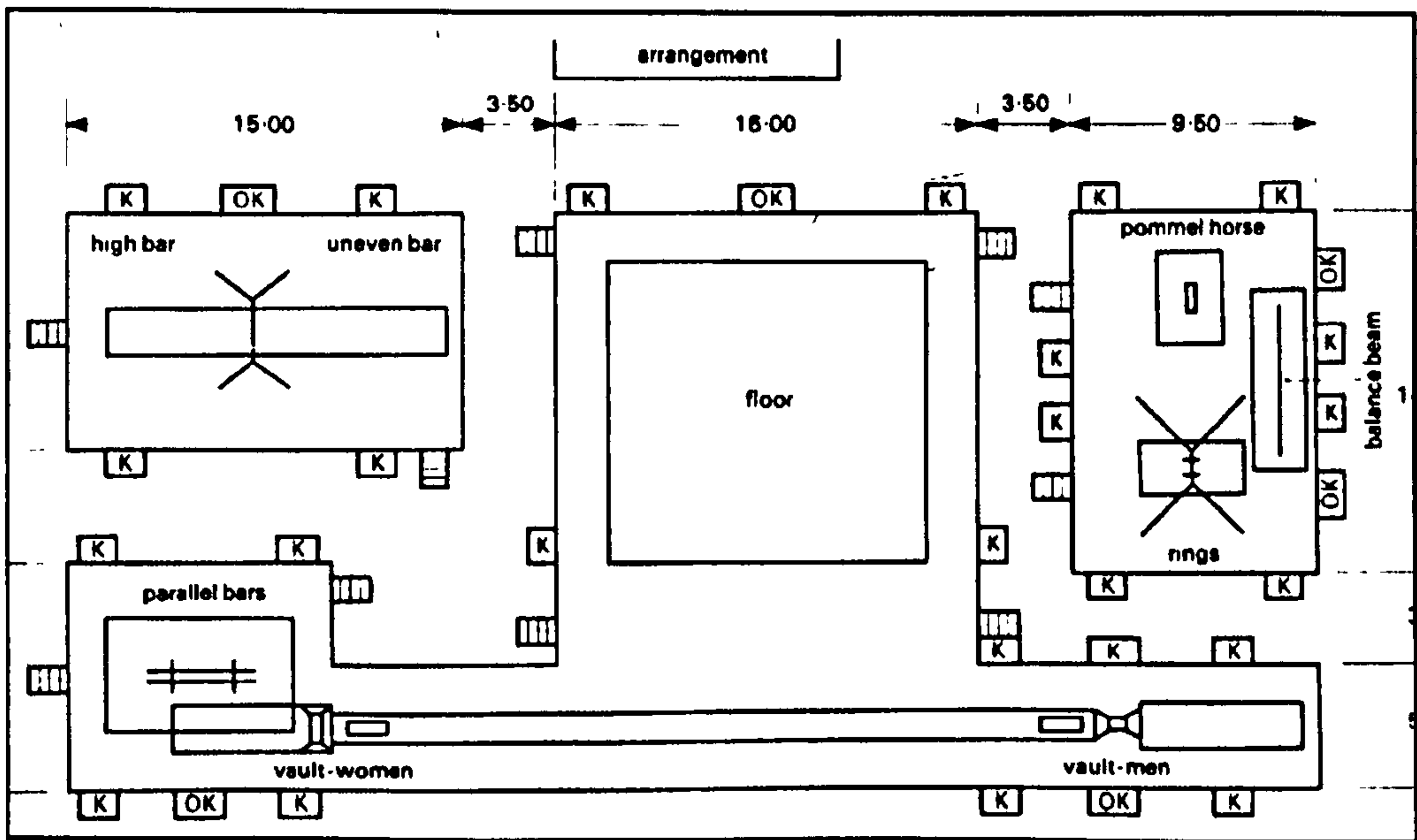
In 1921, the F.E.G. were transformed into the Federation International de Gymnastique (F.I.G. - world governing body), who appear to have achieved some degree of standardisation in the gymnastic events of this time, albeit only in types of apparatus at the Olympic Games. The F.E.G./F.I.G. also established bi-annual world championships, which have been held since 1903. These show fractionally more evidence of standard apparatus towards that which would be recognised in a Men's Artistic Gymnastics competition today (Huguenin, 2000a). However, it is interesting to note that Pole Vaulting was a gymnastics event at the World Championships until as recently as 1954, at which point

all athletics events in gymnastics were dropped and there was a stabilisation of the men's programme (Goodbody, 1982). This became known as the Olympic Order or the standard working order of apparatus, which includes Floor, Pommel Horse, Rings, Vaulting Horse, Parallel Bars and Horizontal Bar (Stuart, 1978) (Figures 12 to 18). However, as mentioned above, there is no evidence of internationally standard rules for apparatus design, or judging criteria, before 1949 (Gander, 1979). The consequence of this confusion up to the post-war era was the "fiasco" at the 1948 London Olympic Games where participating countries brought so much of their own gymnastics apparatus that the competition had to be staged "like a three ring circus" (Killanin and Rodda, 1976). Gander (1979) in the F.I.G. Code of Points states that:

The London Games would prove to be decisive in the creation of a uniform and all-comprising regulation because the differences between scores awarded by different judges were so great that inaccurate judging was unavoidable.

The growth of German Gymnastics in Britain (1900 to 1950) was impeded compared to the rest of Europe and America because of its political associations with Germany. During this period, the sport of men's apparatus gymnastics in Britain was kept alive by the Y.M.C.A.s (Young Men's Christian Association), working men's clubs and latterly, the Army (Prestidge, 1988).

However, from the 1850s to the onset of the First World War, the German style of gymnastics was extremely popular in Britain. The Wenlock Olympian Games were an annual event at which the Birmingham Athletic Institute (B.A.I.) and the German Gymnastics Society (G.G.S.) would compete for the coveted Pentathlon Award, which was the blue riband of British sport at that time. The 'German' gymnasts were predominant victors over the athletes because, "the gymnast's ability to perform skills of dexterity i.e. the field events, would be superior owing to his advantage of regular training and practice in the gymnasium" (Prestidge, 1988). The popularity of German gymnastics increased in Britain and by 1860 there were over 12,000 members affiliated to the Myrtle Street Y.M.C.A. in Liverpool alone (Prestidge, 1988). The Amateur Gymnastics Association was inaugurated in 1888 (stemming from the B.A.I. and G.G.S.) with a national competition set up for the Adam's Shield (Prestidge, 1988). However, political developments towards war with Germany meant that German Gymnastics went quickly out of favour in Britain and only the dedicated few mentioned above continued to practice this style of gymnastics privately.



From a cultural point of view, the history of gymnastics in Britain during the first half of the last century is significant because it provides an example of the disparate political pressures and the uniquely British educational and sporting ideals, which may have influenced the appearance of the named activity of Gymnastics. That is to say that people within and outside of British culture may have conceived gymnastics differently. The principal nations responsible for the early instigation and innovation of their own gymnastic styles were Sweden and Germany. These countries interpreted their political agendas differently and tailored their own styles of gymnastic activity to meet and reflect their educational and sporting ideals (Krüger, 1996). It could be said also that the combination of political pressures and educational and sporting ideals concerning gymnastics in Britain was unique to Britain, because of British national circumstances during this period of history. Therefore, a distinctly British cultural conception of gymnastic activity may have been formed because of the *purpose* for utilising gymnastics in a particular way. This purpose was justified as being educational and presented an aesthetic which was indicative of the British interpretation of Swedish Gymnastics, i.e. a military notion of drill in gymnastics (Holmstrom, 1949). This approach to exercise was used as a standard model to maintain the health of the young at school and to prepare them for wartime duties. After the Second World War, a British notion of Educational Gymnastics emerged through the Physical Training Colleges, which promoted a creative and expressive style of gymnastics to complement new theories and practices of Physical Education. A popular conception of what gymnastics was in Britain may have been cast by the purpose for the activity at a given point in time, which in turn may have provided some means and perspective, based upon personal experience, from which to appreciate and evaluate the aesthetic of performances.

Similarly, other nations developed their style of gymnastics, which they believed enhanced their own cultural ideals and embodied their concepts of perfection in gymnastic action, such as Germany and the "strength through joy" work ethic. An expression of national character through a perceivable gymnastic style may have been used to either win at gymnastics competitions and/or satisfy a purpose in society if the two were different. Sweden, Germany and Britain were some of the first nations to develop the activity of gymnastics in their own distinct way because of their nationalistic motivation and interpretation of political, educational and sporting ideals. This appears to have resulted in intra-cultural conceptions of gymnastic ideal, or perfection in gymnastic action, which may have provided a basis to inform their socio-aesthetic preference. Eastern Block and Asian countries may have had

similarly unique influences during their gymnastic history's causing them to develop their own styles in gymnastic performance (Holmstrom, 1939). Some of these styles would become progressively dominant on the world stage of competition after the Second World War.

The Swedish style of gymnastics was introduced informally into the British Physical Education system from the 1890s (Davis *et al.* 1991). At that time, Physical Education may be seen as being a female dominated profession and had different values to those in sport and was required to adopt a politically acceptable method of teaching. Consequently, the Swedish style of educational gymnastics was the preferred pedagogical method and was formally promoted by the Board of Education from 1909 onwards (Board of Education, 1927). Swedish Gymnastics was taught in Women's Physical Education Training Colleges such as, Chelsea College (Eastbourne), Dartford College (London), and later at I.M. Marsh College (Liverpool) (Prestidge, 1988). Representatives from Women's P.E. Colleges, such as May Fountain, (Chelsea College of Physical Education) formed the Ling Association who advised the Board of Education at that time and was responsible for promoting Ling's work in schools via the women's colleges (Bjorksten, 1926). Formally placing Swedish Gymnastics on the school curriculum would serve to promote the Swedish system of gymnastics for its perceived physical and psychological benefits and neglect the German style of gymnastics because of its negative political associations and perceived disadvantages for the physical development of the child. This appears to have been the principal factor, which may have impeded the development of the sport of Men's Artistic Gymnastics in Britain.

The impact of this transition and preference in style of gymnastics, from the independent sporting practice of German Gymnastics (sport gymnastics club) to the inclusion of Swedish Gymnastics in British schools (institutionalised educational gymnastics) was significant, culturally and aesthetically, in two ways. Firstly, that the physical appearance of the named activity of Gymnastics changed from the specifically strength-orientated German apparatus work, to the less vigorous free-flowing floor, wall bar and beam exercises which helped to maintain a general level of fitness. This would alter the aesthetic appearance of gymnastics in Britain and therefore, the popular aesthetic conception of the activity as a whole, largely due to its purpose in education. For example, with the implicit aim of improving fitness for war, Swedish Gymnastics would be taught in British schools because of its "ordered corrective movement which had the benefits of minimising the risks of overstrain, especially on the heart, and assisting weak and under-developed pupils" (Board of Education, 1927). Secondly, that a distinctly

British version of Educational Gymnastics, would become intrinsic to developing concepts and ideals in the British Physical Education system from 1909 until after the Second World War. A legacy of this trend in education is that a great deal of Swedish style gymnastics equipment can be seen in school gymnasiums throughout Britain today.

The use of only the Swedish style of gymnastics in education over this time may have created a socio-aesthetic preference for kinds of physical action in gymnastics, simply because the pupils had not had the opportunity to try other types of gymnastics that exist. In retrospect, a decision of political/socio-aesthetic preference in gymnastic styles was made at the onset of the First World War. A key factor was that the government of the time could choose *what* gymnastic style to allow in schools. Having opted to recognise only one system of gymnastics, a popular conception of *how* gymnastic action should be performed may have been formed by people at an early age. Because of the strict regime for performing Swedish Gymnastics and the intra-cultural lack of comparison in styles of gymnastics up to and after the Second World War, the *what* and the *how* in gymnastic performance in Britain, seemingly come closer together. That is, the stylistic way a specific action might be performed contributed to recognising it as *the* gymnastic action. This may be an example of a socio-aesthetic conception of a typically British gymnastic action at that time.

It is interesting to note that, Irene Mable Marsh, the founder of the I.M. Marsh College, was a member of the Myrtle Street Y.M.C.A. in Liverpool, practising German Gymnastics (Royle, n.d.). The comparatively late accreditation of I.M. Marsh College, in 1933, was seemingly based upon the Board of Education's prejudices against the German system of gymnastics being used as a formal element within a Physical Education training programme. Consequently the Liverpool Physical Training College (forerunner to I.M. Marsh College) operated independently until June 1933, when the Swedish system of gymnastics was introduced there based upon Elli Bjorksten's methods of teaching published in 1926 and 1932 (Royle, n.d.). A distinctly British cultural concept of Educational Gymnastics appears to have evolved as a result of promoting the ideals of Swedish Gymnastics and combining them with theories in dance. Elli Bjorksten, an exponent of the Swedish system of Physical Education, taught in England by invitation from the Ling Association. She claimed that:

A carefully thought out aesthetic element in gymnastic teaching will help to oust the idea of physical training as the development of crude muscular power resulting in an aimless exhibition of strength and skill.

This appears to be Bjorksten's (1932) main criticism of the German style of gymnastics. From her point of view, strength training would destroy the possibility of a delicately adjusted mental control of bodily movement, "the object of which is to purify and clarify our feelings by giving them an outlet in beautiful and disciplined muscular movements" (Bjorksten, 1932). These kinds of ideals for gymnastic action seemed particularly well suited to British ideals in Physical Education at the time and became merged with the dance theories of Rudolf Laban (1879-1958). Laban settled in England in 1938 and began to lecture on his style of dance and his system of dance notation called Choreutics, known generally as Laban notation (Mackrell, 1994). The application of Laban's theories of weight, space, time and flow "which could be applied to all forms of human movement" (Hutchinson, 1974) were applied to the concept of Swedish Gymnastics in an educational context. At this time Swedish Gymnastics and Dance were major subjects at I.M. Marsh Physical Education College and its staff were some of the first to develop this approach to Swedish Gymnastics (figures 19 to 22). From the combination of these theories a distinctly British concept of Educational Gymnastics emerged which would be researched and implemented nationally and internationally (Pallet, 1965; North, 1973; Sharpe, 1979; Lathrop and Drake, 1996; Nilges, 1999; Lathrop, 2000). Some of the products of this research and continued belief in the value of Educational Gymnastics is evidenced in the Physical Education National Curriculum document under the heading of Gymnastic Activity (D.f.E.E. 2000).

One of the first men's Physical Education Colleges to use gymnastics formally was Carnegie College, Leeds set up in 1938 (Webster, 1940). Typically, the gymnastics tutors were ex-Army P.T.I.s (Physical Training Instructors) who taught predominantly the German style of gymnastics (Monrow, 1959). This teacher training initiative in men's gymnastics seems to have allowed, albeit in a small way, the apparatus work associated with German gymnastics to be used within the British education system for the first time. However, the majority of gymnasiums in British schools were equipped predominantly for Swedish Gymnastics. As a result, the German style of apparatus work may have slowly reached a wider audience and appealed to the young men of the post-war era who may have been interested to pursue the sport further as a competitor in what soon became known as Men's Artistic Gymnastics. Conversely, it is interesting to note that during the Second World War, Adolf Hitler displayed equally little patience for Swedish Educational Gymnastics as he vigorously pursued a regime of eradicating all traces of Swedish Gymnastics equipment from schools and colleges in Germany.

The wall bars, balance beams and boxes were taken out and burnt and replaced with High Bars, Parallel Bars, Pommel Horses and Rings (Powell, 1971).

These political preferences for different styles of gymnastics may have caused a claim that one system was more beneficial or simply appeared more attractive than the other because of what each system represented politically. Whilst political preference may not constitute an aesthetic feature of Artistic Gymnastics itself, it does seem to have been the basis for a strong cultural preference in styles of gymnastic activity. The consequence of this chequered history of gymnastics in Britain has been that the development of Men's Artistic Gymnastics was slow in relation to our sporting competitors where the sport of gymnastics "commands the popularity that football does in Britain" (Burrows, 1963). The next major development from an aesthetic perspective, towards what is now called *Artistic Gymnastics*, was caused by the entrance of the Soviet Union and Japanese gymnasts at the 1952, Helsinki Olympic Games (Powell, 1971). Goodbody (1982) states that:

1952 marks when Eastern European countries simply transformed the sport. The emphasis is now on beauty, grace and choreography (*particularly in women's events*) and tends away from strength, power and sustained movements. [my italics]

Gymnasts from the Soviet Union appeared to have capitalised upon a ballet style who attempted to make even relatively simple moves "look elegant and graceful" (Goodbody, 1982). This ideology may have started a new kind of interpretation of both men's and women's gymnastics i.e. an 'artistic' one, and was exemplified by the successes of Boris Shaklin and Larissa Latynina (a former ballerina) from the Soviet Union during the 1950s and 1960s (Goodbody, 1982). The physical discipline required of a balletic style in gymnastic actions may have promoted a kinesthetic awareness in gymnasts, which may have been previously under-developed. For example, aspects such as control, posture, composure, balance and timing, choreography and body tension to aid biomechanics. These performance characteristics seemingly enhanced the rapid advancement of difficulty in new gymnastic actions and promoted the concept of performance for entertainment. The Russian and Japanese Artistic gymnasts seem to have been particularly innovative, creative and expert in this regard because their increasingly impressive performances became the standard by which the skill and aesthetic of other competitors would be measured and compared (Burrows, 1963; Fink, 2002). A relevant aesthetic point from a historical and cultural point of view may be that much of Asian dance was and is very acrobatic in nature. Consequently the Asian gymnastic concept may relate strongly to rebound tumbling and skilled acrobatic actions that appealed to them. Similarly, the German

gymnastic concept was typified by strength and power and the Swedish gymnastic concept by swing and flow. These varying cultural developments of physical emphasis in gymnastic actions may have influenced observers to label their speciality as an artistic example in gymnastics performance. This may have forced the F.I.G. to quickly re-appraise how the sport could be judged and scored at competitions.

The technical development of gymnastic actions, i.e. the advancement of **difficulty** may have changed the aesthetic perceived in a performance, which for some proponents of this element of appearance may have enhanced the 'artistry' they perceived in the performance. The use of the term artistry at this point may have been a convenient description for practitioners to label new actions, which they found impressive because they challenged what had gone before. The term may have been employed resulting from general association with their personal reaction to something that is pleasing but not necessarily understood in artistic terms. That is, the term artistic may have been used to refer to something they perceived as valuable and outstanding in gymnastic action, but not necessarily because they were expert in applying artistic concepts to understand and comprehend gymnastic actions. For example, the Tsukahara Vault revealed in competition during the 1960s challenged what had gone before on this apparatus. The point being that new gymnastic actions may have been leading the rules and outpaced them as the aesthetic criteria to evaluate the new actions had not yet been developed in a comprehensive way. Consequently, a new gymnastic action, which was particularly risky or performed in a new style, and was regarded as pleasing to the eye by the judges, may have stood a good chance of becoming a winning strategy for a gymnast, simply because it was so different to actions performed by other competitors. Zschocke (1997) points out that:

The stormy development of Artistic Gymnastics during the post-war era and the better comprehension of technique through instruction, urged for the creation of a uniform and all comprising regulation.

A new code was issued for the 1954 World Championship, which was predominantly concerned with the analysis of *difficulty*. The level of difficulty in gymnastic actions remains a major part of aesthetic evaluation because minimum requirements of difficulty in gymnastic actions have to be performed in a routine. However, the concept of identifying difficulty as a performance feature for aesthetic evaluation was soon expanded upon to include other features such as Risk, Originality, Virtuosity, Harmony and Rhythm (Zschocke, 1997). The criteria for the judges to evaluate these features in a performance appear to have been artistically orientated as discussed above in section 1.2 (Gander 1975, 1979).

However, they may have been regarded by the F.I.G. as the natural development of the rules because they included what were perceived to be the essential artistic criteria which were required to evaluate the sport as it appeared to them at that time (Gander, 1979). The 1964 F.I.G. Code of Points was the first to label gymnastics as Men's Artistic Gymnastics (Fink, pers. comm.). However, the word *Kunstturnen* (Artistic Turning or Artistic Gymnastics) had been used in Germany for many decades before 1964. Fink (pers. comm.) reported that a 1919 Encyclopaedia of Gymnastics defines "Kunstturnen" as the apparatus branch of the sport as distinct from recreational or general gymnastics. Kunst, in German, means art.

Under the new international name of Men's Artistic Gymnastics and its new criteria, performances perceived by the judges to demonstrate Risk, Originality, Virtuosity, Harmony or Rhythm features could be awarded bonus points. Successive F.I.G. Codes were expanded with new gymnastic actions frequently being added to the gymnast's repertoire of skills, which could be performed legally in a competition. Methods of applying the new artistic criteria were also developed in an attempt to evaluate routines accurately, avoiding the "marked differences in scoring and incorrect judgements" experienced during the 1948 London Olympic Games (Gander, 1979). However, these 'artistic' criteria have seemingly highlighted the differences in international opinion concerning the distinctly artistic quality of an Artistic Gymnastics performance, and therefore, have perpetuated the difficulties in achieving an international consensus in scoring. Consequently, the criteria for Risk, Originality and Virtuosity were removed from the stipulated rules in 1993 because of the "unsatisfactory awarding of bonus points" (Zschocke, 1997). The apparent variations in scoring during this period may have been having a similar effect on competition outcome, to that experienced at the 1948 London Olympics. This may be because it was perceived that a section of the rules and therefore a margin of the score were based upon an arbitrary personal preference (i.e. subjective in their sense that for them, "anything goes"; a serious misconception) and was therefore open to abuse. For example, prominent British judges have stated that "in the past if you wore a Russian or East European leotard you were automatically awarded bonus marks for Risk, Originality, Virtuosity, Harmony or Rhythm" (Palmer, 1999). Inaccurate judging at competitions was identified as a major problem by the F.I.G. and there has been an ostensible shift in the F.I.G.'s ideology concerning processes of judging and scoring "towards a more objective system evaluation" (Zschocke, 1997). This statement also seems to indicate a misconception of how objectivity in aesthetic judgement is understood in gymnastics as it might

apply to its current methods of assessment. The mistake may be to think that this misconceived notion of objectivity may combat abuse and cheating.

The final aesthetic milestone to date, which has affected the appearance of gymnastics, is grounded in rule changes affecting competition format. Of particular significance has been the removal of the Compulsory Exercises in the 1997 F.I.G. Code of Points (Zschocke, 1997). Until 1996, gymnasts performed set routines called Compulsory Exercises, i.e. an identical sequence of gymnastic actions. This allowed the performance of each gymnast to be compared with the stipulated requirements of the routine specified in the F.I.G. Code of Points. It is important to note that the scoring process in a competition is criterion referenced rather than norm referenced. That is to say that a score is calculated and awarded immediately after each performance by reference to the criteria within the F.I.G. Code of Points, rather than allowing all the gymnasts to perform their routines first and then comparing them with each other so that the best routine can be identified. Because each gymnast was required to execute the same sequence of actions on a given piece of apparatus, any differences perceived in a performance may have been attributed to the gymnast's personal interpretation of the set routine. This might have allowed the judges to recognise and differentiate between particularly skilful and perhaps artistic interpretations of the standard set. This may have alluded to the extent of artistic endeavour in gymnastics by the gymnast should the judging process have been norm-referenced. The final competition score for a gymnast would be out of 120 points which comprised of marks out of ten for six pieces of apparatus, 60 points for both Compulsory Exercises and Voluntary Exercises. Voluntary Exercises are routines of individual construction, which may allow the gymnast to exhibit the full range of his gymnastic abilities including the execution of extreme difficulty beyond that required in the Compulsory set. Within the Voluntary Exercise, the gymnastic actions had to meet basic technical difficulty requirements, however, the composition, linkage, timing and degree of risk in specific actions such as catches and dismounts would be of individual choice. The freedom of the Voluntary Exercise appeared to allow the gymnast to display an extremely high level of skill, which might otherwise go un-detected and possibly un-rewarded due to the additional burden of performing the Compulsory Exercise during a competition.

Compulsory Exercises were eliminated after the 1996 Olympic Games (Zschocke, 1997) with the result that, competitions under the 1997 F.I.G. Code of Points would be based solely upon a voluntary style of routine. A new system of judging protocol was established to accommodate this new

competition format. The introduction of an A jury and a B jury would jointly calculate the score for each performance, the final cumulative score for a gymnast now being out of sixty points (Zschocke, 1997). The A jury calculates the numerical values of difficulty for the gymnastic actions performed in a particular sequence. This is known as the Start Value. The B jury has responsibility for evaluating the exercise presentation with regard to "technical, positional and aesthetic execution" (Zschocke, 1997). The B jury score for performance errors, is subtracted from the A jury score (value of actions without errors), to arrive at the final score out of ten. Zschocke (1997) states that:

The introduction of these juries provides a great simplification of judges' functions and must also be seen as a method of assuring a more objective evaluation.

However, in the same document he also states that the Men's Technical Committee "is in favour of retaining the basic values of gymnastics such as beauty of movement and aesthetics as well as harmony and the correct rhythm of movement" (Zschocke, 1997). The anomaly being that these "basic values" appear to require, in order to be comprehended, the 'artistic' criteria for Risk, Originality, Virtuosity, Harmony and Rhythm which were rejected in the 1993 Code but apparently retained as non-scoring ideals in the 1997 F.I.G. Code of Points. It will be part of this research to enquire how various features of performance might be valued differently by various practitioners and whether such an aesthetic preference could affect a competition score.

In terms of establishing aesthetic criteria for judging, it may be significant that similar claims for improvements in judging standards and a simplified processes of judging have been made in nearly every F.I.G. Code of Points since 1949 up to and including the 2001 Code (Fink, 2001). The issues concerning aesthetic criteria and judging protocols continue to be fiercely debated for the new 2001/2005 F.I.G. Code of Points. After reaching the fourth draft of this 2001 document, it was abandoned and the process of re-designing a more internationally acceptable set of aesthetic criteria for judging Men's Artistic Gymnastics was started in October 1999. This new draft Code for 2001 was circulated to all nations in March 2000 and was rejected by April 2000 due to international disagreements concerning aesthetic ideals, scoring values and judging procedures for the 2001/2005 cycle. Time became extremely limited for the F.I.G. who had to develop another 'acceptable draft' Code by August 2000 which should have been internationally agreed before the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney (Fink, 2000a). The 2001 Code was passed some five months later in January 2001. Ten months after the 2001 Code was published (Fink, 2001) it was significantly reviewed following the

2001 World Championships in Ghent, Belgium. A Code which is acceptable to all, to evaluate in detail the aesthetic of gymnastics performance, has proved problematic to achieve.

4.3 Summary: Main aesthetic features, which emerge from gymnastic history

In summary, what has constituted the content of gymnastics has been extremely varied and diverse over its history and may have included too many disparate activities to be comprehended in an internationally standard way. Distinct cultural interests in gymnastics may mean that the concept of perfection in gymnastics performance may be intrinsically linked to the cultural aesthetic values of the practitioners who create, perform and evaluate their routines. Such aesthetic values may not be shared by other nations. If this is the case it may be difficult to achieve anything more than a cursory understanding of a performance which is currently manifested by the robotic exercise of calculating a score for elements and combinations which are executed.

The meaning of the term gymnastics as opposed to for example, acrobatics, in terms of Men's Artistic Gymnastics may be difficult to understand because the name Men's Artistic Gymnastics is not descriptive of the type and character of the activities that are performed under that title. The F.I.G. is the governing body to other sports which have names that are descriptive of their type and character for example, Sports Acrobatics, Trampolining, Tumbling, Sports Aerobics and Rhythmic Gymnastics. The title Artistic Gymnastics or Olympic Gymnastics does not denote a genre of physical actions over and above the events which practitioners and spectators have grown accustomed to performing and observing under the given title. Therefore the concept of Men's Artistic Gymnastics may have to rely upon cultural interpretation in order that the content can be comprehended in some way, presumably in an artistic one as denoted by its name.

Since 1964, standardised rules, apparatus design and competition format has allowed all participating nations to share a standard concept of competition in Men's Artistic Gymnastics at a superficial level. However, a shared world-aesthetic of gymnastics may be beyond comprehension due to the socio-aesthetic preferences for gymnastic style developed by home nation practitioners. That is to say that gymnastics is internal to a particular culture but is also a cross-cultural activity; nationally held aesthetic ideals may not be internationally shared in relation to the concept of perfection in the

competitive arena. However, there appear to be four main aesthetic features that emerge from the history of gymnastics, which have become physically evident in gymnastics performance.

Strength as an aesthetic feature

Emanating from Germany and epitomised by the “strength through joy” work ethic from Jahn (Prestidge, 1988). The aesthetic of gymnastics may be regarded as a social concept within which the utilisation of muscular strength is one feature. The majority of observers will understand what muscular strength means such as “the ability of the muscle to exert a force against resistance” (Whitehead, 1975). However, the way muscular strength is utilised within a gymnastics context means that strength may become an admirable quality i.e. an aesthetic feature of the appearance of for example, strength elements in a Rings routine. The obvious display of muscular strength in a controlled manner during the execution of static positions and mobile lifts, may have been the preferred style of the German gymnasts because of the individual demonstration of physical power and independence in performance. On behalf of the spectator, there may be the admiration and respect for the unfolding and accurate awe exhibited in strength work and the impressiveness of swinging skills, which utilise strength for their execution and ease of action. The feat of performing difficult strength actions with apparent ease, such as a crucifix on the Rings, may have a particular aesthetic appeal if one's preference and appreciation thereof is specifically for this kind of body conditioning and production of these kinds of actions. Harvey (1903) points out that many of the German strength skills were performed in isolation or with only a limited number of linked actions due to the “tremendous strength demands made upon the gymnast”. This would have resulted in performances of relatively short duration.

The fluency of motion as an aesthetic feature

Emanating from Sweden through the work by Pehr Ling and epitomised by the flowing, freestanding floor exercises performed by teams of gymnasts, as opposed to the individual performances noted above. Gymnasts in a Floor display of Swedish Gymnastics have numbered up to 10,000 participants such as at the Great Gymnastic Festival at Hamburg in 1898 (Harvey, 1903). The flowing Swedish style was the antithesis of the strength-orientated, German style. This may be illustrated by the kind of language used to describe the ideal performance of Swedish gymnastic actions. For example,

Bjorksten (1926) claimed that "to get beauty in gymnastics it is essential to do the exercises not only with certainty, but also with ease, grace and spirit". Other concepts associated with the Swedish style were the "economy of power" and having a "developed sense of rhythm" (Bjorksten, 1926). The interpretation of the complete performance from a compositional point of view also appears to have been an important feature of the Swedish style of gymnastics. Bjorksten (1926) states that "the concept of beauty in physical motion implies the idea of some perfectly co-ordinated whole". The Swedish perception of the *gymnastic routine* may have been understood to be a structured, relatively prolonged sequenced body of work in which graceful linkage and elegant presentation was a fundamental element of style throughout the whole performance. Consequently, displays of Swedish Gymnastics such as Floor routines were of longer duration than the German apparatus exercises, due to the less extreme rate of energy expenditure during a performance. For example, Swedish Floor exercises were similar to body conditioning routines as may be used in aerobics and callisthenics currently, but without the extreme levels of strength, flexibility and rebound agility required in men's Floor routines under the current rules.

The influence of a balletic style as an aesthetic feature

Emanating principally from Russia, the notion of bodyline, body shape and design of skilled actions as may be seen in ballet, has seemingly contributed towards what might have been understood as form in gymnastic actions. The concept of maintaining good form in gymnastics at this time (1950s onward), appears to have been related to achieving the *desired* body shapes, i.e. those shapes associated with a ballet style, during the performance (Burrows, 1963). From a Russian perspective, the maintenance of good form may have been regarded as having two important roles. Firstly a functional and biomechanical role that allows difficult actions to be completed safely, and secondly, a beautifying role that causes those actions to appear in what may have been conceived as a graceful and elegant manner. The notion of expression in a performance may have also become a popular interpretation of distinctive beauty in gymnastic exercises at the time. Powell (1971) states that "Soviet gymnasts were able to express in their performance a quality of character which was previously restricted". This is not to claim that beauty in gymnastics is dependent upon the maintenance of good form or a balletic style. Rather it is to point out that the notion of form and expression may have become significant features of gymnastic appreciation at this time because the Russian gymnasts appeared to accentuate them

during this phase of gymnastic history. A balletic style may have been combined with complementary theories in dance such as those proposed by Laban (weight, space, time and flow) to provide an effort analysis. Consequently, a concept of choreographing performance in gymnastics may have emerged, helping to bring a balance to the presentation of gymnastic routines. From a given cultural perspective, the specific contents of the routine may also have been matched with the personal and physical qualities of the performing gymnast in an attempt to accentuate these features. Former Soviet Union teams appear to have been particularly adept at this in the eyes of their commentators (Powell, 1971; Coote, 1972; Killanin and Rodda, 1976; Coote, 1976; Goodbody, 1982; Emery, 1984). This may be one practical example of manipulating a balletic style which if applied to gymnastics could gradually alter the appearance of the aesthetic object on the international stage. By altering the performance of each gymnast, the overall aesthetic of gymnastics would slowly alter also.

Military heritage as an aesthetic feature

Men's Artistic Gymnastics appears to have an aesthetic heritage which is very martial in essence, indicated initially by the mass drill displays on Floor with lifts and balances which utilised a military style of deportment in their execution. Also the creation of pyramids and "tableau" (Wooten, 1934) were a significant part of the gymnastic repertoire (Figures 23 to 26). These displays required a military style of discipline and parade-like co-ordination to execute the mass balances safely, with their formulated and synchronised entrances and exits (Harvey, 1903; Hawtin, 1934; Wooten, 1934; Prestige, 1988). A theme of military bearing may still be evident in gymnastics in relation to physical deportment in performance, such as stepping into corners and drill-like linkage ideas as well as providing the sport with a structure of presentation that may now be part of the aesthetic form of gymnastic competition (Figures 27 and 28). For example, military traditions of marching, saluting and presentation including dress codes, communication and showing respect, appear to have become engrained in gymnastic protocol, to the extent that their infringement can incur severe penalties under the stipulated rules (Zschocke, 1997; Fink, 2001).

The gymnasts and judges are required to march on to the podium and present themselves in lines at the start and finish of the competition (Figures 29 to 32). The gymnasts are also required to march to each piece of apparatus and present themselves to the judges in lines for 'inspection' at the start of each rotation (Figures 33 and 34). This process will be repeated for all six rotations with the gymnasts usually being accompanied by marching music, which has a 2/2 beat. Saluting is also an important and fundamental method of communicating the gymnast's readiness to perform and the judge's readiness to observe the gymnast. Every gymnast should give a salute, on each piece of apparatus they use. The gymnast's salute is a raised straight arm whilst stood at attention with an open palm facing forwards, eyes looking towards the person they are saluting to. The gymnast is also required to signal to the judges that they have completed their performance which may be both arms raised and straight, or else a tidy signal to indicate they have finished on the apparatus (Figures 35 and 36).

The development of aesthetic features such as strength, fluency, acrobatic, ballet or military bearing within a particular culture may have helped to establish a gymnastic concept and perhaps a national identity in *their* gymnastic action. As a result, the arguments concerning what counts as a gymnastic action may automatically incorporate evaluative detail such as, who performed it, when and where they performed it, which in turn may have some bearing upon the final judgement of how well the action was deemed to have been performed. Therefore an understanding of gymnastic style may be intrinsic to recognising the gymnastic action in the first instance. A reference to stylistic value i.e. socio-aesthetic preference, during a process of evaluation may be the cornerstone from which all other evaluations could be made.

It appears that what counts as Men's Artistic Gymnastics today may have evolved from an amalgam of the various styles, standards and influences from different international contributors to gymnastics throughout its history. Notably, gymnastic history itself appears to have involved a great deal of political, social, national and aesthetic compromise, which has also determined what style of actions may be preferred by different cultures at a particular moment in time. Consequently, an established point of view, or stated philosophy from the F.I.G. which underpins the way in which they conceive the activity of Men's Artistic Gymnastics, could go some way towards achieving an international consensus about how to properly evaluate the aesthetic products of their sport. This point of view seemingly has to be well-defined in order for the sport to be well defined. It is hoped that this research may contribute towards such an understanding.

5. Aesthetic Material of Men's Artistic Gymnastics

5.1 Aesthetic Heritage: A foundation for understanding the sport of Men's Artistic Gymnastics

The previous section indicated that gymnastics has had an extensive cultural and aesthetic history and that the term gymnastics was used generically to refer to a wide range of activities, which appear to have been utilised for different purposes depending upon the motivation of the sponsor. Taking an overview of gymnastic history, it could be said that the sport of gymnastics since 1964 might be conceived as the latest development in gymnastic history. That is to say that Men's Artistic Gymnastics may have evolved to such an extent that the surface features of the sport appear to bear little resemblance to the gymnastic activity which preceded it. However, analysis of the history of gymnastics indicates how categorisation and identification of gymnastic actions may have occurred, prior to any formal rules for gymnastics being devised, which would later define the activity of gymnastics more rigidly. Early categorisation may have taken place by the mere fact of grouping kinds of physical actions, which were deemed similar at the time, under the title of Gymnastics. This may have indicated a general context for gymnastic activity, for example, actions such as twisting, balancing, swinging, somersaulting, body motifs or feats of strength. Examples of these skills are depicted in historical records and can be identified and associated with contemporary actions in gymnastics today. These kinds of actions may have been regarded as evidence of the early aesthetic features of gymnastics, which could have constituted an aesthetic heritage of gymnastic actions within a particular culture. Consequently a largely, though not entirely, acrobatic theme in physical actions could have contributed towards an identity for gymnastics as it developed and changed throughout its history.

Gymnastic history also provides a reference point from which to recognise and judge gymnastic innovation. McFee (1977) has explored the concept of movement as the medium of gymnastics and he points out that:

It is not just any movement, which is important to recognising gymnastics, it is gymnastic movement and that this kind of movement might be distinguished by what they do under the title of "gymnastics" and what has been done before.

That is to say that a gymnastics performance might be recognised as such, within the context of gymnastic history which qualifies McFee's (1977) point that "the revolutionary too is rendered

intelligible by reference to what has happened before, against which it is a reaction". This may be the case when a gymnast develops an innovative or revolutionary new move. From a cultural point of view, the specific gymnastic history of competing nations may be very diverse and consequently may have affected what gymnastic actions they perceived as attractive and those that were not. A situation such as this might have formed a historical basis for style in gymnastic actions and therefore a cultural preference on aesthetic grounds for certain kinds of gymnastic action or ways of performing the action. For example, an exhibition of the clearly defined Swedish system of Gymnastics at the second Lingiad 1949 (Holstrom, 1949).

Gymnastics has developed extensively in terms of biomechanical knowledge and apparatus design and presently involves a complex system of rules and judging protocols which are applied to evaluate some of the most breathtaking feats of physical strength and agility. Historically, it seems wholly appropriate that gymnasts' skill levels should become highly evolved in the competitive arena as they may lead to sporting success whilst pushing the boundaries of their sport forward (Fink, 2002). However, the skills in gymnastics are exhibited in the context of its stipulated rules, which are themselves a relatively new phenomena. Whilst the new rules are becoming very complex in terms of grouping and categorising they do not appear to have an underlying philosophy, or any other discernible theory of aesthetics which may help practitioners who inform the F.I.G. to develop or understand their sport in new ways. The only tangible reference point for clarification and verification of the visual gymnastic product appears to be the recent history of gymnastic skills, which have been performed legally within the four-year cycle of the Code of Points. This F.I.G. document outlines a few aesthetic ideals for the sport although its main function is that of providing a descriptive list of the current legal gymnastic actions for use in competition. Consequently, the sport of gymnastics may require substantially more than a four year historical and descriptive record of similarities in gymnastic action to identify what might be gymnastic in the future. It is a task of this section to highlight some of the key concepts in gymnastics, which might constitute its aesthetic heritage and its aesthetic material which may subsequently broaden an aesthetic understanding of the sport. This in turn may allow knowledgeable observers to identify how future innovations in the sport could be distinctly gymnastic. Identifying what kind of physical actions count as Artistic Gymnastic actions may become an important point of evaluation if so called gymnastic innovations prove to be as drastic as those that have taken place in gymnastic history, most notably during the period of the Modern Olympic Games. For

example, a decision could have been made by the F.I.G. as to how the actions of pole vaulting, rope climbing or latterly ballet actions once counted as valid and distinct gymnastic actions.

The introduction of the word Artistic in the name for Men's Gymnastics in 1964, appears at first glance to instigate some of the problematic issues concerning how the sport of Gymnastics might be comprehended as being artistic and how the artistic product of a gymnastics performance might be sensibly evaluated. However, the introduction of the word Artistic appears to acknowledge, promote and reflect accurately the kind of discussion and conjecture which the gymnastics fraternity currently engage in, i.e. debates of aesthetic value and artistic merit in a performance (personal observation). It may be sufficient to point out here that the simplistic removal of the word Artistic from the title of gymnastics may not eliminate the problematic area of aesthetic evaluation and scoring in this cross-cultural sport. This may be because gymnastics is currently evaluated by combining a quantitative record of *what* actions are performed, with a quantification of qualitative factors. That is to say that part of the evaluation of a gymnastics routine involves a judgement of aspects with non-definable parameters, such as harmony and rhythm and an attempt to quantify the qualitative is made by means of a judgement of *how well* the actions are executed within a routine. For example, virtuosity in a gymnastics performance is one example of a quality with non-definable parameters, which requires recognition and a personal judgement of aesthetic value, converted to numeric worth from a judge. In his article on virtuosity in men's gymnastics, Gauthier (1983) points out that many top judges would in fact recognise when a gymnastic routine was performed with virtuosity. However, the problem Gauthier claims is that, the judges then have to decide exactly how much virtuosity was displayed so that a score can be awarded (Gauthier, 1983). The notion of *how much virtuosity* seems to have been a controversial issue that may have caused judges to differ and their scores to vary so greatly in the past. Whilst virtuosity, originality, rhythm and harmony are no longer aspects of the stipulated rules, it appears to remain part of the judging panel's responsibility to make an objective judgement of *how well* the actions were performed and what the routine looked like as a complete gymnastic performance in its own right. It is important to note that the comparison of performances does not officially arrive at a score for a gymnast, each routine is scored independently, immediately after the performance. It seems that judgement of virtuosity and other aspects with non-definable parameters in a gymnastics performance may not disappear from the judging process simply because these words are removed from the stipulated rules. This may be central to the challenge of understanding aesthetic

evaluation more comprehensively and realising its full contribution to scoring in Men's Artistic Gymnastics. On this issue McFee (1977) advises that "to dismiss the issue as subjective is to fail to grasp the important features of reasoning and rationality". Whilst the F.I.G. may prefer a notion of purely objective measurement of gymnastic performances as alluded to in Figure 6 (1), an evaluation of aesthetic aspects with non-definable parameters, Figure 6 (2 and 3) seemingly has to take place almost by default, because that kind of judgement appears to be inherent in deciding how good performances of gymnastics are. Therefore, an analysis of objective aesthetic features, Figure 6 (2 and 3) may provide a base from which to discuss how actions within the sport might be comprehended, assessed and perhaps even valued as being distinctly gymnastic, beyond simply 'measuring them'.

In summary, the foundation for aesthetic evaluation of gymnastics, which the aesthetic heritage of gymnastics provides may be the notion of *how well* in performance. That is to say that historically notions of *how high*, *how fast* and *how far* have, over time been "sieved out" (Newton, 1950) whereby only the notion of *how well* has survived. Whilst gymnastic actions occupy time and space their measurements are not the ultimate or sole determinants of the quality conceived in performance. Therefore their heritage becomes all the aesthetic features which constitute the *how well* in performance. For the gymnast, the *how well* in performance has to be trained for as much as the *what to do* and *in what context*. However, the notion of *how well* has an implicit evaluative dimension of gymnastic actions for which there may be degrees of importance and consequence depending upon the situation for the gymnast and/or the context of performance such as *how well* in a display situation, *how well* in training and *how well* in competition. The people who dictate and decide *how well* in performance may draw upon disparate kinds of knowledge and experience to formulate their personal aesthetic evaluation of *how well* the gymnastics was performed. For example, gymnastic beauty may be in the eye of the coach, judge or other observer and may be informed by cultural norms etc. For example, American concepts of athleticism in gymnastics. That is, problems in aesthetic evaluation of Men's Artistic Gymnastics exist as they are an integral part of a cultural aesthetic heritage.

5.2 Gymnastic intention, movement and gymnastic action: the act of performance and the act of judging

It may be that a precise definition of the term Men's Artistic Gymnastics is difficult to achieve because the meaning of the term has many different connotations, depending upon the interests of each practitioner. For example, gymnasts' interests may range from the demonstration of the most difficult gymnastic actions at the peak of physical fitness, to showing mental resolve to deal with the pressures of competition. Notably for judges and coaches, interests may rest in the judging protocols of aesthetic evaluation, which importantly, provide a means for deciding competition outcome.

Whilst a definition of Men's Artistic Gymnastics may be useful, it seems unlikely to be agreed upon by all participating nations. However, just because a term cannot be defined it does not mean that practitioners do not know what it means for them, because it is possible to give denotation of Men's Artistic Gymnastics i.e. it is possible to point to the activity and label it and name aspects or features within it. If it is possible to identify gymnastic activity in this way, it may be that an indication of what constitutes the material of gymnastics can be made. Initially it can be said that gymnastics is an intended physical action. The philosophical notion of intention in human action seems to be a problematic one, which is centred upon the mind-body problem (Warner and Tadeusz, 1994). However, it may be sufficient to point out here that one does not perform gymnastic exercises accidentally. Intentional gymnastic action appears to be the product over which judges preside in order to determine what a performance looked like in the context of the rules (Best, 1978). Their judgement being expressed by means of a score (currently out of ten) which is their sole method of formally differentiating between performances. Therefore an analysis of the necessary conditions for intentional human action in gymnastics may provide a basis for understanding action in the sport of gymnastics. This analysis assumes a monist theory of the human condition and that the notion of free will and volition in physical actions is relevant to the debate. This may help to highlight the responsibilities of the gymnast, coach and judge in their respective roles and that the decisions they make in the context of gymnastics carry moral and ethical consequences for which they may be accountable. The intentional gymnastic acts carried out by these practitioners may be rendered publicly visible as a result of the *gymnastic decisions* they make as they carry out their individual gymnastic duties. The seemingly vast range of decisions involved with the production and evaluation of different

performances might be said to constitute part of the aesthetic material of gymnastics. That is, they are decisions of a gymnastic and aesthetic nature, which cause practitioners to act in a distinctly gymnastic way. These factors seem to affect directly the appearance of gymnastics and how it might be understood from an aesthetic and artistic point of view. That is to say that under a monist theory of the human condition, Men's Artistic Gymnastics does not achieve its distinctive appearance as a result of any other forces or influences, other than intended, deliberate gymnastic actions in the context of the rules laid down by the F.I.G.. These conditions may be seen to apply to the act of performing, judging and coaching gymnastics.

McFee (1977) as stated above attempts to narrow the concept of movement in order to identify gymnastic movement, as opposed to any other kind of movement, by stating "it is not just any movement which counts as gymnastic movement". However, Best (1978) explains the term "movement" in greater detail because in his opinion, it does not take sufficient account of the contextual considerations which may define the movement, nor does it imply the moral responsibility implicit with intended action. For example, Best (1978) states that:

A causal explanation may be provided of a movement involving a person's foot coming into contact with another person's leg. However, such an explanation is not the same as an account of his *action*, which might only be clarified by the attribution to him of his intentions. "He kicked me" would be an account of his actions for which he would take responsibility in a particular context.

Best (1978) points out that movement has an empirical dimension and that action is conceptual. In theory, the dimensions and biomechanics of any movement can be measured objectively because it occupies time and space, although it is the context in which the movement occurs that is implicit to understanding it as action. For example, a dancer who performs a technically good back somersault in their dance performance does not become a gymnast because of the context in which the feat is exhibited, and vice versa for gymnasts. Conceivably, a wide range of physical skills may qualify as gymnastic action when performed in the context of Men's Artistic Gymnastics. Therefore, an understanding of distinctly gymnastic action may require more than merely objective methods of measurement.

Both empirical and conceptual dimensions of *movement* and *action* appear to be important in evaluating gymnastics. The distinction between them provides a means to define what might be errors in a performance and what was intended; down to the most minute detail, for example, a pointed toe or extension of the leg in a single action. With regard to a gymnast's performance, deliberate or

intentional gymnastic *actions* may be understood as being actions, which were intended to be performed at that particular point in a routine. Conversely, accidental or unintentional *moves* may be understood as being movements which were not intended to occur at that particular point in a routine and may be penalised. For example, a gymnast may accidentally fall from the apparatus, which may be regarded as an unintentional move and be deducted accordingly. Or they may dismount from the apparatus at the planned point, which may be regarded as an intentional action, which in turn may be rewarded (by not being deducted) if performed 'perfectly'. The current process of judging appears to require judges to differentiate between intentional gymnastic action and unintentional gymnastic movement. Additional information in the 2001 F.I.G. Code of Points appears to qualify this point in a way that previous Codes failed to explain, for example:

The gymnast is expected to show his intended position or performance so distinctly and conspicuously as to leave no doubt about the intent (Fink, 2001).

However, it seemingly remains a subjective task for the observer to decipher between intentional action and unintentional movement; a decision that may be subject to socio-aesthetic influence whereupon the observer may demonstrate a preference for a certain kind of aesthetic product. This point appears to be recognised, by Fink (2001) who states that:

Some elements have a *special purpose or effect* and if such purpose is *conspicuous* and *aesthetic* it would be exempt from the usual amplitude requirements. [my italics]

For example, the Puck shape used for multiple twisting somersaults which is a very open tuck allowing the gymnast to twist and rotate rapidly during the skill. This puck shape has a special purpose but may exhibit an aesthetic which is questionable for some observers. Whilst this shape may biomechanically, make a greater number of twists and rotations feasible it is a corruption of the elegant bodylines displayed in the straight shape traditionally exhibited in twisting somersaults. However, *aesthetic intent* in gymnastics may be revealed by the interpretation of the element(s) (or the rule) in such a way that the performance, according to the performers or observers socio-aesthetic background, may be recognised as appealing or otherwise, which may then be credited as having a "special effect", or pleasing aesthetic. These statements appear to acknowledge in part the influential force which socio-aesthetic preferences have upon judgements in gymnastics.

With regard to the act of judging the performance, the process of differentiation is facilitated by reference to the extensive tables of deductions specified in the F.I.G. Code of Points (Zschocke, 1997). The deductions of one tenth, two tenths and four tenths are awarded for each element and

combination as may be commensurate with the extent of error. In the 2001 Code (Fink, 2001) the deductions were altered to one tenth, two tenths and three tenths. Nevertheless, the task of achieving an accurate and standard measurement of gymnastic movement (degree of error) is perhaps the weakest link in the judging process. This is because the number of deductions a judge might award, appears to be decided by a process of mere estimation, or simply guessing in a worst case scenario, particularly if a judge happened to miss something whilst writing. The six judges of the B Jury appear to predominantly rely upon their fallible perception of gymnastic movement to identify mistakes which are expressed by their deductions from the sum total of gymnastic actions; a figure arrived at by the A Jury (i.e. a Start Value for intended elements and connections). However, without the aid of a declaration of intended exercise content, it becomes a further task for the judging panel (A Jury) to observe and calculate the values of elements and connections, special requirements and bonus combinations, as they are performed in order to arrive at a Start Value. Over and above a stopwatch on the Floor and the boundaries for each piece of apparatus, the judging panels are not aided by any technological measuring devices, which might help them to arrive at physical measurements of gymnastic actions and movements during a performance. Additionally, there appears to be an increasing degree of specialist knowledge required to discern between intended gymnastic actions and unintentional gymnastic movements when observing a performance of a complete routine. For example, the task of identifying and scoring a gymnast who omits an element or special requirement from their routine, requires the observer or judge to have an increasingly detailed knowledge of legal gymnastic actions, routine construction, deductions and score values for specific elements and connections. Consequently there may be different levels of aesthetic evaluation in gymnastics, which may cause the observer or judge to appreciate the performance at different levels, and perhaps score the performance differently, depending on their experience, gymnastic knowledge, and aesthetic preference for style in gymnastic actions. Fink (2001) appears to concede to the difficulties of evaluating aspects of gymnastics with non-definable parameters by stating, with reference to "perfect end positions", that, "The judge must at all times use his gymnastic knowledge and gymnastic sense in his evaluation of the exercise".

The potential for inconsistency in judging at competitions may be compounded by the large number of judges who will observe and score each performance of an individual gymnast during the course of a full international competition. For example, there are eight judges in a panel for each piece of

apparatus and six pieces of apparatus in a competition. There are also eight separate competitions: the Team, the All Round and six Individual Apparatus competitions. Additionally there are usually six gymnasts in a team and at the 2000 European Championships there were 40 teams competing (Lotz, 2000). The F.I.G.'s judging protocols appear currently to rely upon the collective personal experience of at least forty-eight judges from all nations. Each judge is required to make individual interpretations of the rules and the routines in order to recognise and differentiate between movements and actions during performance. The score they arrive at may be regarded at best, as their best-informed opinion of what they saw, expressed in numeric terms.

From this melee of gymnastic intention and personal interpretation, an independent score for a performance has to emerge which represents its value at that precise moment in time. However, it seems to be a difficult task to decipher exactly what actions the gymnast meant to perform, without a declaration, particularly if the flow of a routine is disrupted, although perhaps relatively easier to detect what he did not mean to do. By comparison, the sport of competitive Trampolining requires declarations of Voluntary Routines and Compulsory Routines. Both kinds of routine are required within the competition format for this sport (Pickup, 1998). Before a Trampolining competition, it is the competitor's responsibility to ensure their actions are tariffed correctly on their Competition Card, i.e. the total value for the number of twists and rotations is calculated, and "submitted to the Difficulty Judges at least two hours before the competition starts" (Pickup, 1998). If a trampolinist does not perform the actions as listed on their Competition Card the performance will be penalised in accordance with the rules for each kind of routine. In gymnastics there is declaration on Vault only, although the gymnast is not penalised for not attempting the declared vault. Hall (pers. comm.) offers an expert practitioner's point of view concerning declaration for intended content of gymnastic routines, which may clarify the issue under present evaluation protocols:

You postulate that pre declaration of routines might be a good option. It is the mark of a good gymnast that adaptation and split second decisions can be made dependant upon the situation. Routines can be changed at will if injuries, tactics, risk or safety have any bearing on the outcome. Therefore, if you accept pre-declaration, you should not deduct if a gymnast departs from his prescribed routine after judging what is required at that particular manifestation.

The issue of pre-declaration and concerns for safety was also raised by Neil Thomas (Palmer, 1999) who, as an international gymnast had autonomy to alter the content of his routine if he felt for whatever reason he would not be able to execute the element or complete the routine. However, such a decision may or may not have stemmed from a tactical competition strategy. Hall (pers. comm.)

comments on the issue of pre-declaration, which may highlight opportunities for instrumental and tactical gamesmanship in gymnastics:

Declaration may create an opportunity for an *unscrupulous coach* to always submit a pre-declared Start Score of 10.00, regardless of what the gymnast is really going to do, since this will have a psychological effect on the judge of assuming greater skill than the gymnast may actually be capable of. Such a coach might even submit a completely different routine so that the judge becomes totally flummoxed and simply accepts what is written before him. For this reason, pre-declaration can never work, deductions for wrongly written submissions must be seen as wrong.

However, men's gymnastics used to have a form of declarations in the past with the requirement for Compulsory Routines (pre-1996), as discussed in the previous section. Under this system the judges knew in advance what actions were in the routine, similar to the Trampolining example outlined above, given that competitors executed the same gymnastic content in their performance of the routine. This standard prior knowledge will have negated the requirement of recording *what* actions were performed allowing the judges to concentrate on *how well* the actions were executed, which may be a more efficient method of utilising the judge's expertise to evaluate the quality of a performance. An example of this in Britain is the National Development Plan (Hall *et al.* 2001) which requires young gymnasts (8 years to 16 years) to perform set routines. This seems to be a reasonable way of discriminating between gymnasts at Regional level given that there is usually a great range of gymnastic ability on display.

It is also conceivable that technology could help to record and measure the actions of the gymnast as he performs them. This might be achieved by digitally recording a performance and programming a computer to recognise angles, times, pauses, twists and rotations (Cigna, 1983; DeLeva, 1985; Manoni, 1985; Mitchell and Lopez, 1996). At a more basic level of technology, there is currently no video-playback of performances to help judges in their decisions, they have to rely solely upon their own notation of gymnastic symbols (Tombs, 1997) and their fallible memory of *how well* they think each action was performed. These tasks of recording appear to burden the judges un-necessarily, distracting them from making their decisions about *how well* the gymnastic actions were executed from their aesthetic point of view. It might be an improvement in judging protocol if the decision-making process was supported by some declarations or other objective data arrived at by the use of technology. Research carried out twenty-two years ago by Puhl (1980) indicated that scoring with the aid of video replay was more consistent and statistically showed less variability compared to scores for a live performance.

Finally, the aspect of moral responsibility implicit of intentional gymnastic actions seems to be equally relevant to the gymnast, coach and judge alike. All three parties appear to have acted in a deliberate way, which may define the appearance and outcome of a gymnastics performance. That is to say that the gymnast *meant* to perform in a certain way, the coach *meant* to train the gymnast to perform in a certain way and the judge *meant* to evaluate the performance of the gymnast in a certain way. The timing sequence of who acts when is seemingly important in understanding the kind of action they may elect to undertake. In terms of evaluating a gymnastic performance, the actions of the judge start when the gymnast performs his routine, given that the actions of the coach produced the performance by years of prior training. However, the outcome of the judges' actions may depend upon their motives, sense of duty and aesthetic preference for style in gymnastic action. Consequently the scores they *mean* to give may vary, sometimes to a large extent (Ansorge *et al.* 1978). The F.I.G. Code of Points outlines the Guidelines for Judge's Control under which sanctions can be awarded for violations of the Code. For example, violations include:

Intentional violation of the code, intentionally giving an advantage or disadvantage to one or several teams or one or several gymnasts and repeatedly giving scores which are too high or too low (Zschocke, 1997).

It may be that, on occasions the skill of the judge is to intentionally violate the F.I.G. Code of Points without being detected. That is to say, to act intentionally in accordance with the violations detailed above without incurring any sanctions, in order to be seen to support their home nation, or support other nations, as a result of some private deal or compromise. Judges are part of a national team, not separate from them and they may advise coaches and gymnasts from their home nation during the training and planning process of routine construction. The advice from judges may help to achieve maximum value for special combinations or requirements in a routine, which would be good practice in the preparatory stages for a gymnast. Therefore, the loyal judge may have a vested interest in seeing the gymnasts from his home nation achieve the *best score possible* given that there will be some variance in scores due to the perceptual methods of evaluation. Research by Ansorge and Scheer (1988) revealed that, "both male and female judges were biased in their scoring of gymnasts and that judges scored gymnasts from their countries higher than the remaining members of the panels".

Plessner (1999) carried out similar research and found that "depending on the difficulty of the judgement task, a significant placement effect was found". It is interesting to note that Plessner's (1999) research was carried out over three Codes (changes of rules) after Ansorge and Scheer (1988)

and five Codes after Ansorge *et al.* (1978), but had similar findings that bias in scoring was evident and a placement effect was found in the judging process. Whilst the F.I.G. may claim that all judges will act impartially (Zschocke, 1997) it could be that there is a range of [im]moral and [un]ethical decisions, which the judge might make to intentionally bring about certain results in a competition. This may depend upon their motives and sense of duty towards a particular gymnast or country at that moment in time. Consequently there may be scope for cheating, coercion, threats and deals amongst competing nations, which clearly opens the moral and ethical debate concerning the fairness of competition which may render judgements of aesthetic value as a secondary consideration and not the primary one. It may be sufficient to point out here that if a judge's decision is not totally concerned with the evaluation of aesthetic detail in a performance, it may be a decision concerning something else. The recent revelations of Olga Korbet (former Russian gymnast) during a television documentary indicated a high degree of cheating within women's gymnastics judging at that time (1972-1980). Larissa Latynina (former Russian gymnast, currently an F.I.G. Judge for Women's Artistic Gymnastics) commented during the programme that, "judges knew in advance who would win. I [Latynina] would hold informal discussions with the other judges before the competition to decide how to apportion the medals" (BBC2, 2000).

Following research into judging bias, Scheer, Ansorge and Howard (1983) claim that their research results "provided evidence, which suggests that gymnastic judges can be influenced by factors unrelated to the routines they actually see". This research was later followed by a similar psychologically orientated study by Ste-Marie (1996) which found "no support for the hypothesis of unconscious influences attributing to bias in scoring". That is to say the act of judging appears to be a conscious, intentional act and the score, whether high or low, may be a reflection of the judge's sense of duty, level of gymnastics knowledge and/or their personal aesthetic preference for different styles in gymnastics performance. Ste-Marie (1996) does not appear to acknowledge these factors as possibilities for bias in scoring. The issue of cheating is mentioned at this stage of the research as it may affect the scores awarded and therefore the perceived aesthetic value of the performance. It is interesting to note that during the Apparatus Finals of the 2000 European Championships it was noticeable that the majority of people in the stadium looked primarily to the score board for confirmation or otherwise, of their personal aesthetic beliefs (personal observation).

A current problem for the F.I.G. appears to be that of achieving an international consensus regarding scoring in the 2001 Code of Points. There have been many attempts to achieve standardisation in scoring by various practitioners for example, Fie and Dietz (1994) (American), Fenner, Strelitz and Spriggs (1990) (British) and Feng (1997) (Chinese). However, these initiatives may be regarded as an attempt to influence practitioners internationally to apply the same standards conceived by practitioners from a given nation and apply a similar set of judging ideals to their own home situation. For example, what motivation might there be for the Chinese to adopt the American interpretation of the rules in the knowledge that the Americans have a vested interest to interpret the rules in their particular way and vice versa? It appears that each nation may be at liberty to interpret the rules in their own way and present their concept of ideal gymnastics performance to the world. The dilemma for evaluating the aesthetic quality of routines on the international stage remains and the accompanying conjecture over 'correctness' in Men's Artistic Gymnastics continues towards the 2000 Olympics as discussed by Normile (1997). Individual gymnastic intentions may be based upon a culturally derived set of aesthetic beliefs, forming a personal preference for styles in gymnastic action. These factors may constitute a cultural opinion, which may or may not be enhanced by numerical values, deductions and re-categorisation of elements in successive F.I.G. Code of Points. This may be the situation for the proposed 2001 F.I.G. Code of Points on which the Americans appear to have had a large input to date (June, 2000). The Draft 2001 Code has been rejected by many of the national gymnastics federations around the world because it may reflect an American style of gymnastics, which they appear not agree with.

An understanding of intention in gymnastics has provided a perspective for analysis of the actions that practitioners may follow. Gymnastic action may be constituted from a finite range of intentional actions, which define the aesthetic of gymnastics to some degree. This philosophical position to considering the aesthetic of gymnastics has forced an inward and detailed analysis of gymnastic appearance, causing the researcher to question what he is observing and why it may have its distinctive appearance. This has been the stance from which the examination of rules, skill and technicality in men's gymnastics has been conducted. Focusing upon these areas, as aesthetically defining factors has allowed a greater insight of the aesthetic foundation of the sport as a non-artistic enterprise.

5.3 The rules, skill and technicality in gymnastics as aesthetically defining factors in the sport

The aesthetic material of gymnastics may be rendered visible by the physical performance of the gymnast. Aesthetic evaluation of this material may depend upon recognition of aesthetically defining factors. At a *fundamental level*, the aesthetically defining factors of gymnastics are the requirements within the stipulated rules, the constituent gymnastic skills and the technical or largely biomechanical features of the performance itself, for example, calculating the Start Value. At a *higher level*, recognising aesthetically defining factors such as elegant linkage, original combinations, performance quality, maintenance of illusion and beauty in gymnastics may identify a gymnast or style of performance contributing towards a personalised, comprehensive evaluation of the quality of the aesthetic object as perceived, for example, a notion of *how well* in performance. One function of such aesthetically defining factors being that they determine what qualifies as Men's Artistic Gymnastics as opposed to Women's Artistic Gymnastics, Rhythmic Gymnastics, General Gymnastics, Sports Aerobics, Sports Acrobatics and Tumbling and Trampolining which are the eight different sports within the gymnastic family, governed by the F.I.G.. However, all these sports rely upon the aesthetic evaluation of the appearance of their performance to differentiate between competitors.

Aesthetically defining factors provide a context for Men's Artistic Gymnastics to exist, be recognised and be practiced. For example, within the F.I.G. Code of Points, practitioners have explicit guidance about the content requirements of routines to meet scoring criteria within the rules, such as the number of elements and combinations of elements to be performed which satisfy the Special Requirements for each piece of apparatus. Therefore the rules guide the process of routine construction, which has an impact upon the aesthetic appearance of gymnastics. Routine construction is essentially a task of building up a sequence of actions, which meets the stipulated requirements to qualify for a high score; ideally a Start Value of 10.00. A limiting factor of this task is the repertoire of actions, which the gymnast is able to perform **safely** in competition. The F.I.G. Code of Points document seems largely dedicated to this cataloguing task by providing an extensive range of elements which can be selected to be performed in a routine on each piece of apparatus. The 2001 Draft Code contained 1434 elements for all apparatus (Fink, 2000a). The term **safely** in this instance clearly refers to avoiding injury, however it also has an important aesthetic dimension in common gymnastic parlance. The term **safely** may be a comment upon the gymnast's ability to execute the

action(s) cleanly, confidently, consistently and in control when under pressure at competitions. For example, Fink (2001) states that, "the gymnast must include only elements that he can perform with complete safety and a high degree of aesthetic and technical mastery".

Upon observing a performance, an emotional response by spectators and judges, such as being impressed or unimpressed, may be evoked. A personal response (or expression) to the performance may be an equally important aspect of the material of gymnastics because it may form the basis for a higher level of aesthetic judgement given that gymnastics may not exist in its current form without personal aesthetic judgements. Clearly the rules set out parameters to guide and inform aesthetic judgement, however there may be levels of enjoyment, appreciation and evaluation which help to guide an understanding of what is observed. When the routine has been constructed, practised and mastered it may be safe to perform at competitions when a higher level of aesthetic appreciation and aesthetic evaluation may occur by both spectators and the judging juries (notably the B jury), which goes beyond merely monitoring *what* elements were executed. Aesthetic features with non-definable parameters may be displayed in a performance by virtue of *how well* the routine is performed and may be commented upon using descriptive language such as grace, beauty, artistry, elan, poise, lightness of touch, originality, rhythm, harmony, courage, incredible flight, awe of controlled strength, demonstration of being a master of ones craft performing extremely difficult actions with apparent ease. These [subjective] notions of what may be aesthetic beauty in gymnastics appear to be perceived as an integral consequence of observing the physical performance of the routine, which was designed for that specific gymnast. That is to say, that simply visualising the performance of a routine in, for example, written form cannot produce the aesthetic features that are manifest as a result of physically performing it. It may be reasonable to assume that the majority of routines begin in a written form as their content is selected from the F.I.G. Code of Points which itself is in written and diagrammatic form. The written routine may then be transformed into an aesthetic object in gymnastic terms due to physical attempts to perform it. The routine in a written format will have its own aesthetic, which contributes to the appearance of the performance by planning and ordering the sequence of its content. This is similar to the way in which notes written on a musical staff or Laban notation of a dance can have there own aesthetic. This is because it is possible to read the information and if the reader is appropriately educated, they can imagine what the performance might be like without seeing the dance, listening to the orchestra or watching the gymnast perform the actions. It is the aesthetic

quality of the performance itself, which is of principal interest to competition outcome. Therefore an essential part of the aesthetic material of gymnastics is revealed by individual "live" performance. As Gracyk (1997) explains in the context of music:

Crudely, by musical performance I mean a public situation in which an audience attends to the actions of one or more performers, during which specified sounds are intentionally generated for the express purpose of being attended to as music by the audience.

The immediate visual display of the performance may indicate the perceived levels of expertness and control, which might be attributed to the gymnast by the spectators and practitioners through descriptive language such as: strong, solid, crisp, clean, explosive, precise and dynamic etc.. If the opposite were the case then descriptive language such as: sloppy, weak, heavy, fighting for balance, loss of tension, low flight, and slow reactions might be used to describe the perceived aesthetic of poor control during the performance. If an aesthetic evaluation is being made about a performance at a *higher level* which may in some cases be the sole consideration for determining competition outcomes, it seems important that significant notions of aesthetic material evidenced by descriptive language are considered in the evaluation process. Whilst much of this kind of language used above does not feature verbatim in the F.I.G. Code of Points it may be inferred by the interpretations of the scoring protocols which are set in place, for example the F.I.G. illustrations provide only an outline view of how an action should look. The implicit application of this nominally subjective language, allied with years of detailed gymnastic tuition, may constitute a high level of gymnastic knowledge for a practitioner to make objective judgements. Consequently, the expert coach, judge or gymnast may make an intuitive decision, which is based upon years of tuition and experience of learning, creating and executing gymnastic acts in the differing cultural contexts for gymnastics competition i.e. as an intra-cultural and inter-cultural phenomenon.

A practitioner's interpretation of rule may become their standard which they apply in a gymnastic context. This is to indicate that international standards may differ, being a cultural response to international rules. Practitioners may manipulate their actions to achieve the most advantageous outcome in a competition depending upon for example, what level the competition is at, who is judging and where it is held. These conditions may also affect the appearance of gymnastics as it might be performed at any one time. For example, many gymnasts perform their "safest" routine combinations at the Olympics compared to the European Championships due to the high risks involved with jeopardising a title or medal position. I.e. the consequences of a relatively minor mistake at an

Olympic final are usually decisive upon competition outcome. The performances by the same gymnasts at these two major competitions do appear somewhat different with a bias towards caution and safety at the Olympic Games (personal observation). Therefore it could be said that a significant part of the aesthetic material of gymnastics comprises of the physical performance of the gymnast and the general descriptive language which might be shared with contemporaries to make sense of performances. Part of the expertise of the judge in gymnastics may be to translate his initial perceptions of the performance, i.e. his interpretation of sense-data information, to specific descriptive language and then on to an accountable score by reference to, and interpretation of the criteria within the Code of Points. Additionally, his experience as a judge may inform him whether the score offered will be acceptable by the Head Judge at a particular International competition.

The use of descriptive language by practitioners around the world may indicate how their personally held interpretations of perfection might be applied to gymnastic performance. This may help them to perfect individual style in gymnastic execution. Such a coaching initiative may be tailored specifically to the physical characteristics of the gymnasts in a particular country. It has been observed over time that gymnasts from specific countries have particular strengths and weaknesses on different pieces of apparatus which may be due to their general physical characteristics (Powell, 1971; Stuart, 1978; Goodbody, 1982). For example, many of the Chinese gymnasts are particularly good at twisting and swinging on apparatus because they are slim and dynamic. Gymnasts from Scandinavian countries are particularly good on Vault because they are taller and faster, whilst many of the Korean gymnasts are good at strength elements as might be performed on the Rings because they have shorter levers. This may be a stereotypical image of gymnasts from around the world, however it is logical that coaches should build routines around gymnast's strengths wherever they happen to lay in order that they have the greatest possible advantage at competition.

For practitioners from individual countries a notion of perfection in performance may be allied to their particular specialisms, which they may be able to excel at and exhibit in a special or different way, compared to their competitors. This may be one facet of their socio-aesthetic preference and cultural gymnastic understanding. Another facet may be knowledge of what kind of judgement is acceptable at international competition if the preferred style of performance is not sufficiently valued by the rules. Consequently, routine content may be altered to elicit the best possible response (score) at international events.

Gymnastic innovation is only valid and recognised in the current context, norms and conventions for Men's Artistic Gymnastics. Therefore innovation at the rule-setting level may affect the physical aesthetic product and the aesthetic response to that product. The rule changes have to be ratified and validated by the Men's Technical Committee (M.T.C.) at F.I.G. who will formulate and circulate the new directives to gymnastic federations around the world. The ensuing interpretation of new directives may promote an altered aesthetic concept of gymnastics, which may be different to that envisaged by the M.T.C., (as was the case for Pommels under the 2001 Code, Fink, 2002 pers. comm.) For example, changing the numerical value of specific elements listed in the Code of Points (Fink, 2001). In this example, interpretations of reclassification may have affected the aesthetic of the sport at two levels. Firstly, the development of a bonus system to reward extreme difficulty may have promoted a culture of risk taking and execution of tricks, which can be perceived in the aesthetic of competition performance in comparison to that produced under previous Codes. Secondly, the aesthetic of gymnastic linkage may have been devalued in preference for the difficulty and risk taking elements that are being rewarded. In this manner the rules may be valuing isolated skills more highly than the linkage between the skills, however it is the linkage which provides a gymnastic routine (linked skills akin to a body of work being presented rather than constituent parts). A biomechanical perspective is that that levers and forces, applied within an energy and time framework have to be mastered in order to produce a skill. This process is repeated within linked skills to produce a routine. Each element has its own aesthetic produced by a combination of rule and skill mastered by the gymnast, displayed by his own interpretation of biomechanical forces. This may point to aesthetic differences between technical requirements and technique of performance, which has its own particular language to identify aesthetic features of execution (descriptive of aesthetic conceived). Linkage has its own aesthetic language to identify features such as fluency and rhythm. Compositional and constructional features have their own aesthetic language such as logical and seamless in performance. The somatotype and cultural heritage of the gymnast may also help to define cultural preference, having their own aesthetic language to identify cultural and aesthetic features, for example a Ukrainian expression to denote the courage and determination of a gymnast was "Red Bull" (personal observation). All of these contribute to an overall set of aesthetically defining factors, which help to define the sport for its practitioners and followers.

The re-designing of gymnastics apparatus with greater rebound qualities allowing the gymnast to go higher for longer also has an impact on how a gymnast is able to exhibit their expertise. For example the introduction of the new-shape vaulting table for all competitions from 2001 may promote innovation in the future (Colarossi, 2001). The evolving frameworks of gymnastic knowledge e.g. rule and skill and re-design of apparatus with improved rebound qualities may determine the appearance of the gymnastic performance at a given time. *The important point being made is that altering the conditions which determine the appearance of gymnastics, alters aspects of its aesthetic by default.* Therefore the aesthetic of gymnastics may be a constantly changing concept at national and international levels. The motivation to compete internationally seems to be one of the driving forces, which propels forward a nation's gymnastic development. The rate and direction of gymnastic development shown by one nation may affect profoundly the actions of practitioners from other countries when they are preparing for future competitions. This may be the difference between being a world leader in gymnastics and being led. Nations who have been innovative may have manipulated or interpreted the material of gymnastics to produce what they believe is the most attractive form of gymnastics for them. This may be a collective effort on behalf of a nation to produce a distinctive style of gymnastics within the context of the rules. Achieving this may require new methods of coaching, specific training regimes for the gymnast and new ways of evaluating the action within the rules. These initiatives may be strategies for manipulating the material of gymnastics to create the desired aesthetic in performance. In this manner the bar is raised not only in terms of physical difficulty but also conceptually. New gymnastic actions or combinations of actions may require new aesthetic evaluation criteria to assess them objectively.

Altering the rules alone can be the catalyst for changing the appearance of routines as well as the rules changing to accommodate new gymnastic actions. For example, changing the official interpretation of the repetition rule, or devaluing gymnastic actions to make them not worth attempting will determine the presence or absence of specific content from routines and therefore change their appearance in the future. Under the new 2001 F.I.G. Code of Points there are changes to skill requirements and therefore changes to technical demand, which in turn means there will be a new aesthetic appearance to performances under that Code. Therefore the new Code will change forever what counts as Men's Artistic Gymnastics with regard to skill requirements, technical demand; routine construction, composition and form requirements i.e. its whole aesthetic appearance.

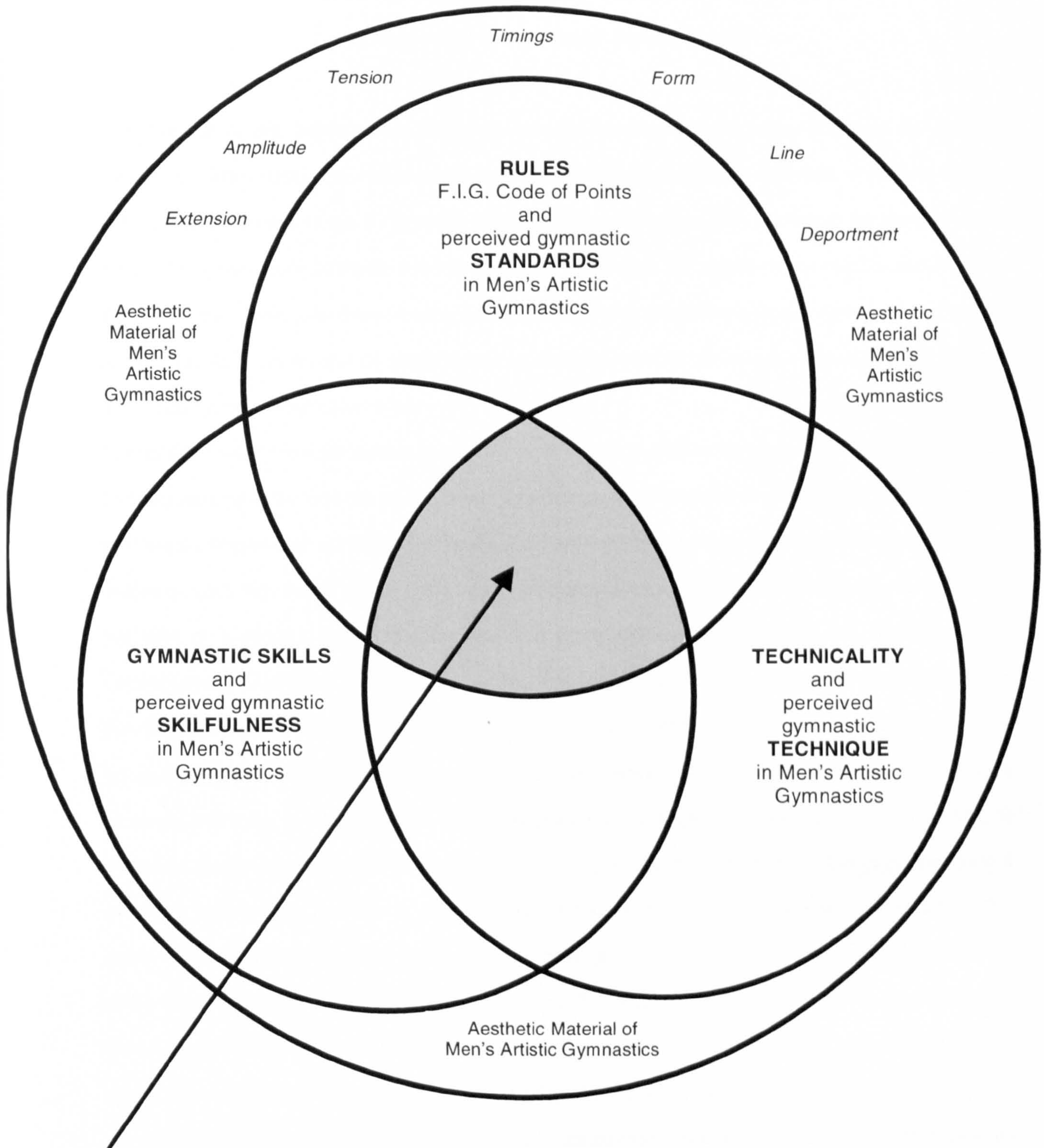
To become expert at manipulating and understanding the material of gymnastics may be to become a master of ones craft. The judge, coach and gymnast all have important contributions towards exhibiting the national mastery of their craft at international competition. The aesthetic of the gymnast's performance is the result of a collaborative team effort where all the team members have their own responsibilities and areas of expertise. However, whilst the act of coaching and evaluating may help to define the routine, the individual gymnastic performance is seemingly central to the majority of aesthetic debates and judging decisions in gymnastics. These areas of responsibility appear to overlap with each other because they have the common goal of producing and comprehending the best performance possible in order to win at competition. That is to say that the team members are manipulating the same concepts constituting the aesthetic material of gymnastics but in different ways, see Figure 37. There seems to be a number of inter-related concepts, which constitute the material of Men's Artistic Gymnastics. The concepts of rule, skill and technicality appear to be mutually dependent at a surface level. However a different relationship and wider set of useful and instructive meanings may emerge when they are analysed in greater depth. Consequently, the differing conceptions of standards, skilfulness, and technique in gymnastics may account for some of the differences in the way a performance might be perceived culturally. All of which appears to stem from an individual understanding of intentional gymnastic action.

The shaded area on Figure 37 represents an outcome, such as a gymnastic product, that may be the common albeit un-written understanding of aesthetically defining factors in a given country. This may be the best acceptable outcome resulting from the collective aesthetic preferences, political compromises and scoring interpretations in Men's Artistic Gymnastics.

The relationship of each concept will be analysed in the following order:

- The relationship of rules in gymnastics to standards in gymnastics practice.
- The relationship of gymnastic skill to gymnastic skilfulness.
- The relationship of technical aspects of gymnastics to technique in gymnastics.

Figure 37: Aesthetic Material of Men's Artistic Gymnastics and the inter-relationship of gymnastic rules, skill and technicality as aesthetically defining factors.



The shaded area represents an outcome, such as a gymnastic product, that may be the common albeit un-written understanding of aesthetically defining factors in a given country. This may be the best acceptable outcome resulting from the collective aesthetic preferences, political compromises and scoring interpretations in Men's Artistic Gymnastics.

5.4 The relationship of the concept of rule to that of standard in Men's Artistic Gymnastics

**“There can be no fixed standard of beauty where there is no
common fund of experience” (Newton, 1950)**

The purpose of this section is to point out how the concept of rule helps to define the sport of gymnastics. The relationship between rule and standard in gymnastics is analysed to indicate that the cultural interpretations of the F.I.G. rules may bring about differences in gymnastic perception, which in turn may contribute towards a socio-aesthetic preference for styles in gymnastic performance. Before turning directly to these issues some philosophical discussions about rules in sport will be considered, as it seems that no set of rules can actually cover all conceivable cases in sport. That is, there may be no perfect set of rules.

D'Agostino (1995) provides a critical account of formalism in games by examining “means and ends” and exposes what he regards as the weaknesses and consequences of adhering to a purely formal and literal interpretation of rules. That is, the most efficient means of achieving an end are importantly limited in ways they would not be if the task were purely a “technical” exercise for example, in football the task of scoring a goal might be achieved more efficiently by shooting the opposition first. Consequently, a notion of challenge and enjoyment within a game may be derived from overcoming the unnecessary barriers set in place by the rules. For D'Agostino however, the formalist thesis fails because of its difficulties with dealing with penalties and violations of the rules. That is, if it is possible to violate the rules of a game, then the game ceases to be a genuine example that game. This he states, is the “problem of Platonism”; the problem of realising perfect forms of the game because it may only be humanly possible to achieve imperfect interpretations of the game. D'Agostino (1995) deals with these problems by, amongst other strategies, proposing his Dichotomization Thesis in which he contrasts constitutive rules with what he calls “regulative rules”. Constitutive rules provide a formal framework for a game to exist and be played; they give structure to the activity and help to make the contest fair (Lumpkin, Stoll and Beller, 1994). D'Agostino's regulative rules are all the penalty invoking rules, being a development from the constitutive rules and he stresses that they are not one of the same thing; a rule can be either constitutive or regulative but not both at the same time. From this premise the constitutive rules are not violated and may therefore preserve formalism in

games, as the regulative rules would address violations. However, D'Agostino (1995) concedes that his theory cannot completely eliminate its Platonistic implications and he proposes a separate account of games that avoids formalism which he calls the "ethos" of games.

D'Agostino's (1995) explanation of an ethos of a game is that it consists of set of unofficial, implicit conventions which determine how the rules of that game are to be applied in concrete circumstances. The ethos of a game stems from its formal constitutive rules. For example, a referee recognising that a foul has been made may allow play to continue in order to "play the advantage" on the understanding that this is what both sides would wish for. In this manner the constitutive rules are interpreted by the ethos of the game in order that all participants play it in an "acceptable way" (D'Agostino, 1995). This may have the effect of making the game more exciting to watch which he states, might be in the interests of both the players and promoters.

Lehman (1988) also attacks a formalist account of rules in games to advance his idea of "good sportsmanship", that being a kind of behaviour which "transcends the rulebook". Lehman (1988) takes issue with the logical incompatibility thesis, this being the notion that cheating and competing are incompatible and appears to support the idea that non-sanctioned activity is a "concession to utility". He illustrates his point by stating that there is simply no practical way for the officials to see everything that occurs and that the game would probably be much less enjoyable to watch if all infractions were punished. Lehman (1988) seems to be appealing to what he regards as a common-sense notion of how to play games when an 'acceptable' level of cheating may be taken advantage of under the banner of initiative to exploit loop-holes in the rules or to deceive officials.

It is this kind of implication which Morgan (1995) appears to take objection to when he examines and refutes the attacks on formalism made by the "contextualists" Lehman (1988) and D'Agostino (1995). He points out that violating the rules in the name of sportsmanship or, on an account of ethos in games is ill founded. This Morgan says, is because formalism not only recognises the distinction between playing and playing fairly but has an intelligible way of deciding a) what constitutes playing a game and b) what constitutes playing a game fairly and that the same cannot be said of the "anti-formalist alternative" such as ethos (Morgan, 1995). However Morgan (1995) concedes that an account of the social context in which games occur has to take place if it is to be a fully satisfactory theory of games. Despite his concession Morgan (1995) points out that the ethos stance does a disservice to games on the grounds of conflating moral standards with social standards whereby the

social context, being emphasised by the ethos may perpetuate the status quo of the state of affairs in which a sport finds itself at a particular moment in time. A consequence of this stance is that the moral development of conduct in the game is impeded because the morality of certain behaviour might go challenged, such as violence in a sport, because it may have become the social norm. The point being made by Morgan (1995) is that our moral horizons need constant expansion and that through a system of self-appraisal, a sport may realise an avenue by which to alter 'acceptable' behaviour on the grounds that it is now regarded morally as unacceptable or even anti-social. Therefore, recognising a behaviour as being in need of correction may be all the motivation a sport requires to envisage a 'new' moral view towards which an improvement of the current state of social affairs, ethos, may be predicted.

Suits (1995) in his essay *The Elements of Sport* examines the basic elements of games and contrasts them with the additional elements of sport as he sees them. This led to his claim that all sports are games but not all games are sports. Suits' (1995) definition of games stemmed from a notion of the *lusory* attitude (from the Latin word *ludus* for game) from which the basic elements of games could be pointed to. The sequence of elements in games he identifies were a) a desire to achieve a specific state of affairs, a pre-lusory goal, an end which b) would be achieved by using means permitted by the rules, *lusory* means where c) the constitutive rules proscribe more efficient means in favour of less efficient ones and, d) where the rules are accepted because they make the playing of the game possible, this being the *lusory* attitude. Suits' (1995) attempts to differentiate between games and sports when he explains the second part of his claim that "not all games are sports". That is that sport includes the basic elements of games in addition to some other features which indicate that sport is a particular kind of game. Chiefly these are that sport is a 'game' of mental and physical skill, being an activity that has attracted a wide following and therefore has a certain level of institutional stability. However, for Suits (1995) the seriousness of sport highlights an important element of "playing" in leisure pursuits, which lifts the notion of personal dedication to games (or sport) beyond that of simply playing for the sake of playing; diversion, entertainment or exercise. That is, for some sports people, the game may take on an extraordinary level of seriousness whereby the pursuit in question may cease to be merely a game for that person. This led Suits (1995a) to review his position on his thesis that "all sports are games" by examining levels of play and work concerning amateurism and professionalism in sport.

Suits (1995a) essay "The Tricky Triad: Games, Play and Sport", explains how rules may be utilised differently in different sports and identifies two varieties of sports; what he called "*athletic games*" and "*athletic performances*". The emphasis upon the word performance inferred that an aesthetic element to a sport such as gymnastics or diving required judges to "assess quality and artistry" against shaped ideals of performance rather than utilising means-limiting rules. The main point here appears to be that the different manner in which rules may be utilised by either "judges" to assess the quality of means, or by "law enforcement officers" to rule out more efficient means towards an end, may indicate how observers are to comprehend the sporting endeavour and to appreciate and evaluate the pursuit within the context of the rules. The rules of performance sports may therefore indicate that one is to "see" aesthetic qualities in order to evaluate the endeavour rather than measuring the distances and speeds of an "athletic game". Therefore, if the rules dictate that a manner of "looking and seeing" is required to assess a performance they could (and arguably should) permit a more comprehensive range of objective interpretation of performance to assist further in ways of learning to "look and see" and evaluate in acceptable ways within gymnastics.

From an aesthetic content point of view Best (1978) distinguishes between aesthetic sports and purposive sports when in purposive sports, similar in essence to Suits (1995a) "athletic performance" the gap between means and ends is greatly reduced almost to point of "ideal unity". Best (1978) points out that from a purely purposive point of view any way of winning, within the rules, will do, whereas not any way of winning will do as far as aesthetic considerations are concerned. This is not to indicate that the gap between means and ends is wide open for aesthetic sports such as gymnastics as there are stringent guidelines defining what is and what is not a recognisable action; a means to an end in a gymnastics competition. Rather that the rules for gymnastics should provide a comprehensive means for understanding and assessing the aesthetic excellence of a performance which importantly comprises of how well the gymnast performs, not only what they perform. This kind of detail in rules may be instructive to gymnastics practitioners indicating how they may learn to recognise aesthetic features of excellence in performance, including features with ostensibly non-definable parameters, rather than narrowly listing what actions a routine included and deducting for biomechanical errors.

The qualitative nature of this investigation has revealed a "social context" of acting within, and reacting to, the rules in gymnastics. This is because the research has focused upon practitioners' behaviour in response to the stipulated rules to understand the aesthetic appearance which results directly, but

also indirectly. That is, in response to the aesthetic products from other nations resulting from their interpretation of the rules. Consequently an “ethos” (D’Agaostino, 1995) of how to make the F.I.G. rules work in ones favour seems to have evolved and be revealed in this research by dint of being exposed to that kind of behaviour in the gymnastics world. Significantly, this behavioural response may be culturally defined, as an interpretation of stipulated demands may help to bring about differing aesthetic styles of performance. This might be understood as a nation’s socio-aesthetic response to the rules, which may be marked by its time in history, in that the possibilities for interpreting the demands of the Code seem to alter every four years, with each new Code. The investigation discovered evidence of what might be called “sportsmanship” like behaviour, that which “transcends the rulebook” (Lehman, 1988) in the guise of “instrumental behaviour” (Diggs, 1972) which may be regarded as a degree of manoeuvring within the rules. This led to research to consider a notion of standards as cultural interpretations of the rules, which are discussed in this section.

The F.I.G. Code of Points are the stipulative rules which specify a) the conditions for gymnastics to be practised and b) lists the items of content and their value, for use in competitions. The content (elements and connections) can be arranged in many different ways to suit the needs, preferences and abilities of gymnast's worldwide. A simplistic analogy may be that the F.I.G. Code of Points states what is available for use similar to an instruction manual for a Meccano set. However, the manual cannot record in detail the wide variety of combinations in which the content can be arranged and used. Therefore a product of interpreting the rule(s) may be individual understandings resulting in particular standards. Individual standards may stimulate differing courses of action which practitioners follow that contribute to the unique aesthetic of a given performance. Consequently the interpretation of the stipulative gymnastic *rule*, may result in an individual comprehension of gymnastic *standard* which may not take the rule totally out of context, rather that it is a personal understanding of the rule requirements. For example, during the 2001 International F.I.G. Brevet assessment course (judges licence) a statement was made “in our country the rule means this” in order to clarify a point of discussion (personal observation). This was seemingly an example of cultural interpretation of rule to realise a standard about which practitioners could achieve a consensus. Further interpretation of rules took place as the document was analysed and interpreted by the home nation in order to recognise which features or actions were regarded as positive, pleasing and feasible for them to achieve (British Gymnastics, 2001). This process of selection and interpretation may help to create a national stylistic

appearance under a given Code, which could identify a national standard. For example, when home decisions are weighed carefully against the definitive example of how the F.I.G. identify, value and score aspects of a gymnastic performance. This may be in order to gauge how the national gymnastic product could compare on the international stage. At the Brevet assessment meetings many differences in opinion (aesthetic judgements of gymnastic worth) were expressed amongst judges and coaches from the United Kingdom with respect to the F.I.G. ruling on a given issue, for example, there was strong reaction to the aesthetic of the new Rings routines with de-valued swinging actions and increased value for static strength elements. The re-valuing of elements on the Rings will drastically alter the aesthetic appearance of routines between 2001-2005 compared to routines under the previous Code.

Analysis of the relationship between rule and standard may provide an understanding of how cultural differences in aesthetic evaluation could affect the final scores awarded. That is to say, whilst an outcome of applying the *rules* may be that gymnastic performances are evaluated in some way, the evaluations themselves may be arrived at by reference to personally formulated *standards* in gymnastic performance as a result of differing interpretations of the F.I.G. rules.

A contributory factor towards the formulation of personal standards may be the inaccurate translation of language in its written form from the original F.I.G. Code of Points. Anomalies in translation may help to demonstrate that practitioners, having no reasonable alternative, may have to rely upon a personal interpretation of the F.I.G. rules in order to construct their formal comprehension of Men's Artistic Gymnastics. The F.I.G. overcomes this problem to a limited degree by identifying in diagrammatic form what body shapes are required for actions to be recognised. See Figure 38. However, these diagrams can only catalogue the stock of actions permissible within a Code as it seemingly falls to instructions in written text to direct practitioners how to construct routines and evaluate the actions. That is, whilst rudimentary diagrams may be easier to understand at first glance and copy, they may on their own be grossly insufficient information from which to convey the procedural requirements for staging and participating international competition. The F.I.G. has three official languages, English, French and German with French being the Mother language. Translation between these European languages can present mis-understandings requiring constant re-clarification of points within the rules with the Men's Technical Committee of the F.I.G..

An outcome may be that assumptions and interpretations are made by practitioners which seem sensible to them based upon their gymnastic education, which are not stated as F.I.G. rulings because of the deficiencies of their language translation. For example, at a basic level stipulating gymnasts attire (German to English translation), is the fact that there is not a word in German for leotard and the word jersey is used. Under this ruling, if a gymnast performed in a jersey, “a knitted woolen pull-over” (Fowler, 1986) as explicitly requested he would receive 0.2 deduction for “unsportsmanlike conduct” on each piece of apparatus affected (Zschocke, 1997). Problems with accurate translation of the F.I.G. Code of Points may be exacerbated by the fact that there are 122 member Federations (Ziert, 1999) worldwide who require equally accurate translations of the F.I.G. rules in order to compete internationally. Achieving a thoroughly accurate (literal but sensible) translation of the rules into another language may require an immense degree of linguistic clarification within the four-year cycle of a Code which may not be achievable within this time-scale. This may help to make the case for the practitioners increasing reliance upon their personally formulated standards, which are their interpretation of the rules. A relevant personal observation of this language translation issue was made at the U.K. International Brevet course mentioned above (British Gymnastics, 2001) when Vladimir Zaglada, a coach from Russia currently employed by British Gymnastics, offered clarification on a point which was causing considerable confusion amongst the British judges and coaches. He achieved this clarification by reference to the F.I.G. Code of Points translated into Russian, which had explained the point in a different way. Significantly this may be a common example of different phrasing between languages because each of the member Federations from around the world are responsible for their interpretation, translation and clarification of the F.I.G. rules which might only be realised to varying levels of accuracy and parity. Consequently all the practitioners involved appear to have the challenge of producing and evaluating a gymnastics routine for international competition by reference to an ostensibly non-standard set of F.I.G. rules, particularly where finer detail is concerned. Member countries of the F.I.G. have the opportunity to clarify their interpretation and understanding of the rules with the Men’s Technical Committee, using one of the official languages recognised by the F.I.G.. The National Gymnastics Judges Association of America have used this avenue of communication frequently throughout the course of the 1997-2001 Code for example, the Additional Interpretations documents from the N.G.J.A. reached their twentieth update with reference to the 1997

Code, which may be an example of excessive rule clarification sought within the English language (Zunich, 2000).

As a rule-governed activity gymnastics produces an aesthetic in performance which for some may be the central feature of contemplation and evaluation. A socio-aesthetic comprehension of gymnastics might be achieved by considering different kinds of rule that help to define the sport, which could be used to create and evaluate the central features of the aesthetic object. The specialisms of all practitioners involved appear to overlap to some degree although the practitioners' personal notion of rule will be a premier guiding feature for their actions, which help to produce and define the aesthetic object for them. Such rules indicate different kinds of knowledge about gymnastics depending upon the interests, values and aesthetic beliefs of each practitioner. The following interpretations of the functions and kinds of rule, as they may affect all practitioners, may contribute significantly to the overall understanding of the material of gymnastics:

- Some rules have a *stipulative* dimension, which indicate the limits of time, space, number, apparatus, environment and elements, which can be performed legally.
- Other rules have a *procedural* dimension, which indicate how to conduct gymnastics and what to do, such as officiating at competitions and the specific responsibilities for all practitioners concerned.
- The stipulated rules provide an example of *practice*, with provision of the ideal image and detailed technical requirements to meet scoring protocols.
- The rules have an *aesthetic* dimension, which determine the content of a routine and therefore contribute to the aesthetic of the performance, which has definable and non-definable parameters.
- The rules have an *ethical* dimension, which indicate what is polite behaviour or conduct, for example, the salutes between gymnast and judge. They also address cheating in terms of rule infringements, violations, appeals and punishments.
- The rules have an *evaluative* dimension, which indicate what counts as correct and what counts as negative features of performance.
- The rules have a *mechanical* dimension, which indicate the laws governing motion and the biomechanical requirements of specific actions for them to count as such and score.

These are some features and functions of the rules for gymnastics, which each practitioner might be guided by in order to create and define the aesthetic of their performance. The functions of rules listed

above indicate a range of concepts that might be implicitly inferred by those stipulated in the content of the F.I.G. Code of Points. If the F.I.G. Code attempted to stipulate for and provide examples of every possible combination of gymnastic action and its evaluation, it would seemingly become a document of unusable bulk. Therefore the Code of Points seems to rely upon the fact that, because of their previous experience and knowledge of gymnastics, the practitioners just know 'intuitively' what is gymnastically aesthetic and how to 'manage' the rules to evaluate the performance in an acceptable way. These actions may stem from a personally conceived point of view, which may constitute an individual's socio-aesthetic perspective of gymnastic perfection, i.e. their high, but personalised, standard of gymnastic education.

As stated earlier, the stipulated rules for gymnastics are a relatively new phenomena in the overall history of gymnastics activity itself. However, as the sport continues to evolve developments in rules and apparatus design for gymnastics will always be in a permanent flux of change. A key factor towards a constantly evolving aesthetic, appears to be that the F.I.G. Code of Points provides public knowledge of the stipulated rules, which before 1949 were ad hoc and created at the judges conference immediately prior to competition. This would have been the situation for all international competitions between the times of, for example, the 1896 to 1948 Olympic Games. Since 1949 public knowledge of the conditions by which a performance was likely to be judged, allowed (in theory) all practitioners to prepare for competition because they were and are armed with information that they were previously unaware of. This may have introduced a further problem of how to understand and interpret the information one has in a way that has parity with practitioners worldwide and simultaneously to ones advantage.

One basic outcome of the F.I.G. Codes of Points has been to stabilise the men's gymnastic programme, particularly since 1964, allowing observers to recognise Men's (six piece) Artistic Gymnastics specifically. However, the F.I.G. rules still change every four years with the advent of each successive code. The main difference being that, in principle, they are internationally agreed beforehand. However, the number of nations participating in international competition has steadily increased which has perpetuated the challenge for the F.I.G. in terms of judge education and equal perception of standards in performance. A critical factor to gauge the effectiveness of rules may be the achievement of parity in international understanding and application of the rules for fair competition to take place. One outcome of the current situation may be that practitioners from all participating nations

could interpret the rules in an individual way in order to create and evaluate the routines of their own gymnasts, whilst simultaneously developing their technical knowledge and judging expertise to evaluate the performances of their competitors (in theory with parity). This kind of gamesmanship seemingly has the potential to manifest itself as double standards with respect to the application of the F.I.G. Code of Points at International competitions.

Rawls (1972) states that “the rules of practice are logically prior to a particular case”. In other words, rules come before practice because without them there would be no practice. For example, there is only Men's Artistic Gymnastics because there are stipulated rules that identify the activity. The rules for Men's Artistic Gymnastics circumscribe gymnastic behaviour and the rights and duties of all practitioners. The stipulated rules indicate what sorts of actions are appropriate and provide an ordered framework for competitions to be staged. *In short the F.I.G. Code of Points attempts to tabulate what counts as Men's Artistic Gymnastics. A variation from this being that many countries have devised their own versions of the F.I.G. Code of Points to develop gymnastic proficiency in the young, which have typically been used as a preparation for competition under the full Code. For example, Britain has its own Junior Code of Points (Hall, 2001) and a National Development Plan (Van Hoof, 1996; Hall et al. 2000).*

The stipulated rules also define the gymnastics apparatus and what counts as their valid use, for example a gymnastic vault always begins with a take-off from two feet. Environmental requirements, zones and limits of performance areas are also specified in the Code. This is of particular importance to Floor and Vault where crossing marked boundaries will incur deductions. The F.I.G. Code of Points specifies the evaluation procedures and judging criteria for identifying *what* actions were performed and, scoring *how well* they were executed in the routine. To this extent the F.I.G. Code of Points attempts to explicitly prescribe *what is* and *what is not* allowed to go on within a competition and how to objectively score a performance, for example, Article 19, Determination of Technical Execution and Body Position Errors states that, “All deviations from the *correct position* are considered errors in execution and must be evaluated accordingly by the judges” [my italics] (Zschocke, 1997). The F.I.G. also logically encourages all practitioners to use the Code of Points to guide them as they construct their routines and prepare for competitions. As such the F.I.G. Code of Points document may constitute an ethical code of conduct for all practitioners and an expectation of the sort of sporting behaviour that is required within each judging cycle.

Electing to participate in gymnastics and abide by the stipulated rules carries a moral obligation to conduct oneself by the rules. In other words, implicit in the intentional gymnastic act is the moral responsibility to compete fairly. This notion has two facets. Firstly there is the gymnastic obligation to compete fairly, honestly and without cheating, and secondly, the gymnastic obligation *to be seen to* compete fairly by not incurring any sanctions or punishment for violations of the rules. The latter may provide some leeway for gymnastic gamesmanship or tactical management during a competition. For example, it may be possible for gymnasts to cheat by deliberately performing badly akin to match fixing or off-podium cheating by psyching-out the opposition during intervals. A coach may act in a similar way by forcing the gymnast not to perform well or by pressurising both the gymnasts as they perform and the judges as they carry out their duties (personal observation). Similarly a judge may cheat by attempting to provide a value at the extremes of the scoring tolerance in order to bring final scores up or down. One notion of competing fairly may depend upon the interpretation of the judges' duty at that particular moment in time. Wettstone (1978) analysed gymnastics judging and proposed a specific code of ethics, which may have been pertinent to the sport at that time. However, judging protocol has changed dramatically since then towards, ostensibly, a more objective and accountable system of scoring. Judges now appear to have an increased burden of decision making during a competition due to the increasing amount of information they have to deal with and the number of evaluations they are required to make. Consequently, it may be that it is the gymnast's scores which compete (judges competing against judges) as much as the gymnasts physically contest for medals. Therefore, the judges of a particular nation may be as actively involved with competing for their home nation as their gymnasts are (Ansorge and Scheer, 1988). As masters of the craft of judging, the judges main interest has to be that of evaluating the appearance of the performance in accordance with the stipulated rules. Therefore the judges priority is to be expert with the rules (knowledge of rule and application of rule) in order to fulfill his evaluative duties. This may not be the same order of priority for coaches and gymnasts whose primary task is to produce the performance.

The F.I.G. Code of Points provides a framework for scoring the overall aesthetic of performances in gymnastics. That is to say that the F.I.G. attempt to prescribe how aesthetic features with definable and non-definable parameters might be evaluated. The desired effectiveness in judging protocol by the F.I.G. may imply that a set of gymnastic standards be adhered to which are un-written but implicitly assumed as a result of having extensive experience in gymnastics as a performer, coach or judge.

This experience might allow the practitioner to understand the following statement in a distinctly gymnastic way, which is not explicit in the rules, by drawing upon a high level of individual gymnastic education. The Men's Technical committee voted in favour of retaining the following principle:

The retention of the basic principles of gymnastics such as beauty of movement and aesthetics as well as harmony and the correct rhythm of movement (Zschocke, 1997).

However, it may be that each practitioner's experience and preference is fundamentally different in the way they may regard beauty, harmony and rhythm, which, in their opinion may or may not be integral to gymnastic performance. When the final scores are given to the thousandth of a mark these currently unaccountable differences in opinion on aesthetic grounds may drastically affect the outcome of international competitions. That is to say that numerical accounting exists but aesthetic explanation to account for the minute numerical difference does not. In support of this Fink (1999a) states, with reference to ties or nearly identical scores in competitions, that:

There is no objective way of discriminating among performances. It is only the presence of six B judges and the artificial 0.05 provision that prevents even more ties.

Fink's (1999a) statement appears to infer that under current protocols, discrimination between performances may be an arbitrary decision of a subjective nature in the pejorative sense that "anything goes" (McFee, 1992).

The F.I.G. Code of Points contains an increasing volume of information to help judges fulfil their duties of impartially differentiating between gymnastic movement and gymnastic action. Consequently the rules are becoming increasingly complex and prescriptive in order to 'measure' in fine detail the range of actions being presented in a routine. Teryokhina (1997) investigated mistakes in judging and found that the quality of judging can be influenced by:

The limited volume of information which a judge can process; the fatigue of judges leading to less concentration and attention; the socio-psychological factors (reaction of onlookers, acceptance attitude of certain standards, the influence of stereotypes) and the perceived imperfection of competition rules.

Teryokhina (1997) also states that, "the essential interferences can be brought into the competition process by the judges' preconceived nature", which may be an indication of socio-aesthetic preference. Ste-Marie (1996) reveals that Teryokhinas' (1997) "preconceived nature" may not be an "unconscious influence attributing to bias in scoring" (Ste-Marie, 1996). Rather that judges predisposition to favour certain styles in gymnastic performance may be due to their consciously constructed, socio-aesthetic preference for style in gymnastics. The statement by Larissa Latynina, mentioned above (BBC2, 2000), may be further evidence of what might also be understood by as

“preconceived nature”. Additionally, under the current rules it is seemingly an impossible task for the judges to impartially differentiate in an accountable way between minute differences in movement and action in accordance with the written guidance. This may be because the guidance simultaneously requires them to make personal evaluations of aesthetic worth which do not appear to contribute in an accountable way to the final score awarded. For example, Article 17, Construction of an Exercise, states that:

The construction of an exercise should support a *harmonious and rhythmical* presentation and *guarantee the flow* of all movements in a *fluid form* as well as take into consideration the *structural variety of gymnastics* (Zschocke, 1997). [my italics]

This appears to be a complicated statement because there is no explanation offered of what these terms (italicised) might mean in the context of a performance. It is seemingly only the judges reference to personally conceived standards in gymnastics which might help him to make sense of this statement, and which may be disputed by others. A similar criticism can be made of many of the statements in the current F.I.G. Code of Points which may indicate that the F.I.G. still relies upon judges to make increasingly personal interpretative judgements which are difficult to formally account for to decide final scores and medal positions at international competitions (Wanvig, 1984).

It may be that whilst the stipulated rules seem 'cast in stone' being non-negotiable, gymnastic standards may be inferred by the rules, having an implicit dimension which may be culturally determined, i.e. being of a “preconceived nature” (Teryokhina, 1997). Gymnastic standards in evaluation from this point of view may arise from a personal interpretation of the rules, which may in itself be a private act beyond stipulation in the F.I.G. Code of Points. Diggs (1972) refers to this as instrumental activity and may constitute concepts such as tactics and strategy in gymnastics, for example playing the Code whereby the easiest of the gymnastic elements in each category of difficulty are selected to form a routine. Diggs (1972) states that:

Although game rules are not themselves instruments, they support as it were, a considerable amount of instrumental activity, much of which logically could not be carried on without them. To play a game is typically to follow the rules of the game *and* engage in this instrumental activity; a “good player” does more than just follow the rules. Even one who “loves the game for its own sake” derives his satisfaction from the kind of *instrumental* activity which the rules of the game make possible.

Instrumental activity may be manifested as individually conceived gymnastic standards and may occur in all areas of the sport, including routine construction, tactics used during a competition and beliefs concerning the beauty or style which may be perceived in a performance and reflected in a score. The application of individually conceived gymnastic standards appears to be fundamental from a

developmental point of view, allowing nations to develop their own concepts of ideal performance in gymnastics. Accompanying this may be the nation's concept for the ideal scoring of their gymnasts routines i.e. they may have interpreted the rules in a particular way to arrive at a given score. This "instrumental activity" (Diggs, 1972) may bring about differences in scoring, but also provide visual evidence of the variety of gymnastic combinations in performances, which can be witnessed at international competitions. That is practitioners from a given nation may have interpreted the rules and their gymnasts' performances of their actions and believe their combination and calculation to be of a certain value. Their interpretation of the performance may be contested by other practitioners for a number of reasons, not least their differing understanding of the presentation. However, all participating nations [judges] are interpreting one set of stipulated rules during a competition: the current F.I.G. Code of Points, which may mean that one nation perceives beauty in a gymnastic performance, in accordance with the rules, differently from another. Consequently differences in aesthetic opinion will seemingly always arise. This may serve to perpetuate the instrumental activity in gymnastics indefinitely, regardless of regular rule changes and inter-continental courses for judges and coaches. It could be that the application of individually conceived gymnastic standards may be a key feature of gymnastic innovation, which helps to maintain the appeal and survival of gymnastics internationally.

Instrumental activity may also be evident during the subjective measurement of risk during a performance as well as the subjective measurement of the gymnastic actions themselves. (Subjective in the qualitatively objective sense (Kaufman, 2002), Figure 6). Whilst there are clearly stated rules as in Article 19 above, it may be a judges individual comprehension of standard which helps him to decide how much risk has been taken, but also what is a deviation, and what is the correct position, from his point of view. For example, there is a one tenth deduction for deviation in a hold position on the Rings for up to fifteen degrees of error and two tenths deduction for sixteen to thirty degrees of error (Zschocke, 1997). Without the aid of measuring apparatus either one tenth or two-tenths deduction could seemingly be given for a borderline case. If the gymnast made similar mistakes throughout his routine, an individual judge's score could differ dramatically from the rest of the judging panel. This problem of inconsistency and instrumental activity was highlighted when a Head Judge at an international competition was reported to have advised a British judge, when accounting for his low score by saying, "it's no good being correct, if you're the only one" (Palmer, 1999).

Instrumental activity in gymnastics judging infers that relative standards of measurements may have to be used which in turn depends upon the judges' personal experience or opinion. Ultimately, different levels of gymnastic education may affect the aesthetic evaluation of what is presented at competitions. Zschocke (1997) in Article 12 of the F.I.G. Code of Points, "Basis for the Construction of Exercises", indicates that the high degree of personal interpretation required by judges to implement the rules may appeal to a sense of standard in gymnastics in order for them to be comprehended at all:

The content of all exercises must conform to the capabilities of the gymnast. The degree of difficulty of an exercise must never be escalated at the expense of correct form and technically correct execution. The following principle is valid: A gymnast must be in full and complete control of his body. For the execution of exercises in competition, one of the most important concerns is the prerequisite of safety, elegance and flexibility for an aesthetic performance.

In summary, it appears that the stipulated rules for gymnastics may provide a framework for the activity to exist. This framework may allow practitioners to ostensibly define features of gymnastics at a surface level and for those with a more detailed level of gymnastic knowledge to recognise a number of specific elements and combinations performed by elite gymnasts. However, the F.I.G. Code of Points does not appear to explain in accurate detail what its aesthetically orientated statements mean in relation to the tables of deductions. The rules seem only able to prescribe in written or diagrammatic form, what the boundaries are for deductions to be made. An outcome of this situation appears to be that the F.I.G. may rely upon practitioners' personal experience and expert opinion to interpret the rules and make a judgement according their own gymnastic standards. Also, the scoring decision, which a judge makes would ideally be based upon the level of excellence and expertise demonstrated by a gymnast in his performance, rather than any other political pressures they may be under in their role as judge. Consequently, a personally conceived notion of gymnastic standards may be what is actually required for the stipulated rules to be implemented in some way during international competition.

5.5 Interpretation of international rules to national standards - an example of instrumental activity at national and international levels

A recent example of "instrumental activity" (Diggs, 1972) which was intended to manipulate the rules at national and world governing body level were the numerous attempts by the National Gymnastics Judges Association (N.J.G.A.) of America, to interpret the F.I.G. rules in order to conduct gymnastics

in a way that appeals to them. A problem incumbent of this individualistic drive to interpret the rules may be the threat of isolating the American style of gymnastics from the rest of the world. A potential solution to this problem would be to persuade the Men's Technical Committee of the F.I.G., who represent the remaining 121 Gymnastic Federations around the world (Ziert, 1999), to comply with and support the recommendations of the Americans. The American preference in this instance was for a bonus-orientated system of scoring which encouraged gymnasts to throw "big tricks" i.e. to attempt gymnastic actions with extreme difficulty and high risk in order to gain bonus marks (Fink, 1999a). The 1997 F.I.G. Code of Points does have a bonus element in scoring but was not extensive enough for the Americans who wished to expand the possibilities for crowd pleasing sensationalism in gymnastic performance (Galimore, Scheer, Graham, Zurich, Bjerke, Allen and Sasvary, 1998). Another significant feature of the Americans' strategy was to keep the scores below, but close to the 'perfect ten'. This has been the situation leading up to the publication of the 2001 F.I.G. Code of Points, chiefly through the efforts of Adrian Stoica (Romania) and Jacky Fie (U.S.A.) who are representatives on the Men's Technical Committee of the F.I.G..

There have been three discernible facets to the instrumental activity of the American gymnastics fraternity to influence the aesthetic evaluation of the sport internationally. Firstly through devising numerous interpretations of the F.I.G. rules, secondly through publishing research concerning the bias of judging protocol and thirdly through promoting a system of scoring predominantly based upon the award of bonus marks. The latter may be a result of the two former points but may also be a socio-aesthetic preference for the kind of gymnastic performance, which the Americans believe, is most appealing and would be the best for the future of the sport for them on the international stage.

Interpretations of the F.I.G. Rules

The N.G.J.A. have published twenty successive documents of Additional Interpretations of the 1997 F.I.G. Code of Points, which may be regarded as the official American standards for judging Men's Artistic Gymnastics. In the twentieth Additional Interpretations document, Zurich (2000) states that "there are approximately 25 new or changed interpretations since document No.19 and No.19a". He asserts that "these interpretations are in effect immediately for the USA season, this is an official N.G.J.A. document which supersedes all previous versions" (Zunich, 2000). This vast amount of official re-interpretation of the F.I.G. rules, within one judging cycle 1997-2001, seems to highlight the

dissatisfaction that the Americans have had with the established F.I.G. Code, possibly due to its perceived inability to reward sufficiently, the American style of gymnastics performance. This instrumental activity to create official American standards appears to have the main aim of justifying the award of bonus points in the widest possible set of circumstances. For example, in the document Additional Interpretations No. 20, there are six statements which attempt to clarify the 1997 Repetition Rule alone which are followed by twenty four examples of elements and combinations on all apparatus to help establish the point (Zunich, 2000). This particular example of rule interpretation shows that the Americans may have a problem with understanding what counts as repetition in gymnastics, despite clarification from Hardy Fink, then President of the F.I.G. (Zunich, 2000). These documents indicate the considerable efforts of the N.G.J.A. to produce national standards from the international rules in order to justify how and why they would score certain actions legally in competitions at home and abroad. It is seemingly important that national interpretations of the F.I.G. rules, made by the N.G.J.A., are verified as legitimate by the world governing body (the F.I.G.) which has been the case (Zunich, 2000). This will have been an important factor if scores provided by American judges were to have some parity with those generated by judges from other countries. The implication of this broad range of interpretations for the award of bonus points may be that American gymnasts would score more highly in home competitions compared to internationals or overseas Grand-Prix competitions.

Research concerning bias in judging protocol

There has been extensive research published by the Americans through the 1980s and 1990s, into bias in judging and bias in scoring at gymnastics competitions (Ansorge *et al.* 1978; Scheer *et al.* 1983; Scheer and Ansorge, 1987; Ansorge and Scheer, 1988; Scheer and Cowan, 1991; Wileyto, 1992; Sands and Kipp, 1992; Ste-Marie, 1996). It is interesting to note that John Scheer was president of the N.G.J.A. until 2000 (now Vice President) and may have had a vested interest in demonstrating the bias inherent in the F.I.G. judging process which the American team had to compete against both at home and abroad. This research may have been part of the strategy adopted by the Americans to manipulate the rules in order that their gymnasts stood a better chance of achieving international success in the future. Peter Kormann U.S.A. Olympic Coach, stated that "Operation Flip-Flop was an overhaul of everything from routines to attitude" (Armour, 1996). This initiative stemmed from the poor level of success experienced by the American men's gymnastics team since their gold medal at the

1984 Los Angeles Olympics. Kormann states that the overhaul “included improving the consistency of American judges so that gymnasts know exactly what to expect, instead of earning a different score at every competition for the same routine” (Armour, 1996). In addition to standardising internal levels of judging, it may have been conceived that the American gymnasts were disadvantaged by the F.I.G. rules on the international stage because their particular talents i.e. preference for sensational gymnastic tricks and feats of athleticism, were not being recognised in scoring under F.I.G. rules. Kormann stated in 1996, that “the Americans have adjusted their routines, adding new tricks and increasing their difficulty so that the men’s routines are now as *tough* as those done by the Russians, Chinese and Ukrainians” (Armour, 1996). However, there may be other aesthetic considerations, which determine an Olympic gold medal winning performance, over and above that of performing equally *tough tricks* as the opposition.

The physical improvement to perform tough gymnastic routines and the investigations into bias in judging may have further boosted the motivation of the N.G.J.A. to interpret the F.I.G. rules and promote a bonus system of scoring. It may have been conceived that innovations in physical performance may only be complimented by innovations in judging criteria. To this end, the N.G.J.A.’s continued dissatisfaction with the 1997 F.I.G. Code of Points was publicised by Galimore *et al.* (1998) who claimed that “refinement of the rules of gymnastics is crucial to the existence of the sport”. The Americans published recommendations for a bonus system of scoring which were justified because from their point of view; “men’s gymnastics has become boring, routines look too much alike and creativity and uniqueness have been lost” (Galimore *et al.* 1998).

Promotion of a bonus mark system of scoring

The third aspect of instrumental activity by the Americans has been the conflict between the promotion of a bonus orientated Code compared to an Additive system of scoring. The Additive system of scoring was developed and proposed by Hardy Fink for the 2001 Code. The bonus orientated Code aimed to remove and/or devalue about fifty percent of the easier elements in the 1997 Code with the aim of encouraging gymnasts to attempt more sensational, difficult and risky actions to build up their score from bonus points (Fink, 1999a). Alternatively, the Additive system of scoring would be a new way to calculate scores by “allowing any mastered skills to build the score” (Fink, 1999a). Hardy Fink’s

main criticism of developing the bonus system further is that “the present bonus system allows only extreme difficulty to build the score” (Fink, 1999a). Fink (2000a) clarifies his point by stating that:

The development of the bonus system is fatally flawed because all must focus exclusively on the easiest ten point solution; then the demands are increased and the solution is devalued; and so on, over and over, until the downward spiral of increased demands and diminished possibilities kills the sport.

However Galimore *et al.* (1998) believe that a number of benefits emerge from expanding the potential of the bonus system which they believe are vital to the success of gymnastics, particularly in America:

The rules should encourage creativity and excitement in our sport. In our discussions, the basic questions come up repeatedly: What type of elements do we want to see in gymnastics? What produces excitement in the arena? In Floor exercise, for example, do we want to see a forward salto full twist to a direct forward salto to a direct forward salto with 1 1/2 twists, or would we rather see a triple back salto? Clearly, the triple back salto would create much more excitement in the arena than the forward tumbling series.

In this example, however, the rules discourage the very skills we would like to promote! Obviously, we need to construct rules, which will encourage the kinds of skills and routine construction we would like to see.

Significantly, a financial benefit of the socio-aesthetic preference for the kind of skills the Americans would like to see is the increased media attention (Television Rights etc.) which might be anticipated if gymnasts have to “throw big tricks” to be awarded high bonus scores for their routines. For example, if gymnasts executed a crowd-pleasing triple back salto in preference to a “boring” forward tumbling sequence. A critical factor of this strategy, to generate public appeal, is that scores should remain below but close to the “perfect ten” in order to be understood by American television viewers and other spectators. Galimore *et al.* (1998) state in their conclusion that:

We further believe that the best gymnasts of any era should be able to score near the top of the 10.0 range. Like it or not, television and money have huge influences on sports today. Peter Diamond, N.B.C. Senior Vice President of Olympic Programs, was asked what the effect on television viewers would be if a world champion in gymnastics scored in the 7’s for a winning routine. He said, “Our generation of spectators grew up on Nadia’s 10’s. Excitement is created in a gymnastics arena by the fact that occasionally a gymnast can score near perfection. A winning score in the 7’s would be ‘disastrous’. A score above 10 would not be understood. The education required would be enormous, perhaps even impossible.

This point appears to be important for the success of gymnastics in America because the whole sport there is economically driven and the majority of gymnastics clubs in the U.S.A. operate as businesses in order to survive (McMahon, 1999). Any changes, which risk damaging the public appeal, or popular conception of Artistic Gymnastics, might be detrimental to the profits of gymnastics businesses in the U.S.A., on which they depend. Conversely any changes, which enhance the popular conception of the sport, might be advantageous for gymnastics businesses overall. McMahon (1999) states that:

Gymnastics club owners and managers [in the U.S.A.] are having to utilise a business perspective in order to maintain financial viability. Gymnastics clubs are becoming gymnastics

businesses and gymnastics club members (gymnasts) are now being referred to as customers or clients and maintaining their satisfaction in order to retain their membership has become paramount to club survival.

Feeney (1995) confirms the importance of the underlying economic foundation by stating that “I learned that a business is a business no matter what type it is. The business and sport of gymnastics has many unique factors that have to be considered, but it is still at its root a business”. Therefore, any changes to the rules which might increase the public appeal of gymnastics and therefore profit margin may be in accordance with a sensible business ethic by which the gymnastic business can survive in America. Feeney (1995) clarifies the consequences of the business perspective for gymnastics in the U.S.A. by stating that:

The ultimate reason for failure in most gymnastics clubs is the fact that although many gymnastics practitioners are good coaches, many do not possess the necessary business acumen to treat and run their gymnastics club as a business.

Taylor (1999) highlights the importance of an astute business approach to managing a gymnastics club and offers the analogy in the title of his article “A Code of Points for Gymnastics Marketing” to help club owners publicise and expand their businesses. Taylor (1999) details how effective self-promotion through the Internet will, in his view, be a key factor for the survival of a gymnastics business. He attempts to grade from A to E the kind of marketing strategies used by gymnastics clubs, with A being the easiest, emulating the grading of gymnastic elements in the Code of Points. For example, A would be black and white descriptive posters in local newsletters, C or D would be having an internet web site and E, “is positive word of mouth from happy customers” (Taylor, 1999). Taylor (1999) concludes by claiming that:

In the very near future we will all communicate via the Internet. If your competitor is working on their “D” marketing skills, you need to as well. It’s almost an event requirement with up to a 0.20 deduction for failure to include the Internet in your *marketing routine*.

It would appear that the concept of gymnastics in America is intrinsically linked to business ideals and that the successful gymnastic business may rely upon the appeal of the sport to attract people to pay to participate or spectate. The central aim of the instrumental activity that the N.G.J.A. have demonstrated in this example, may be to generate greater public appeal for sensational gymnastics performances in order for the sport to flourish upon the profit margin foundations which appear to have been set in place within American culture. This may be in their view, a self preservation measure which might be achieved by promoting an expanded bonus orientated system of scoring; i.e. a development of the 1997 F.I.G. Code of Points.

There was a great deal of instrumental activity (coercive political manoeuvres) at international level during 1997-2001 to bring about the introduction and eventual demise of both the Adrian Stoica *Bonus* orientated Code and Hardy Finks' *Additive* Code which were in relative opposition to each other. Finks Additive code was accepted by the Men's Technical Committee (M.T.C.) at the F.I.G. but later rejected. Fink (2000a), then president of the F.I.G., specifies how far through the process of acceptance his Additive Code had progressed before it was rejected:

Many will ask, "How could this happen?" How could the new 2001 "Additive" Code be rejected by the M.T.C. after it was endorsed by a 17-9 majority at an F.I.G. symposium, endorsed and proposed (based on existing M.T.C. decisions!) by an independent F.I.G. Judges' Work Group, endorsed by the F.I.G. Coaches' Work Group, the F.I.G. Scientific Commission, twice by the large majority of the F.I.G. Executive Committee as directives and thereafter as repeated statements; endorsed by the F.I.G. President repeatedly in speeches, writings and actions, once (though only by a 4-3 majority) by the President F.I.G.-M.T.C., by the F.I.G. Office and the other four F.I.G. sports by petition of representatives from 28 Federations, and endorsed and promoted by me as one who has warned for many years of the flawed logic and inevitable dead end of a bonus based Code?

Given this situation, Fink (2000a) then highlights the instrumental activity, which in his view accounted for the rejection of the Additive Code, which he had proposed. Fink (2000a) concludes that:

In partial answer: From the first day, Jackie Fie, the Women's Technical Committee President from the U.S.A. was categorically opposed [to the Additive code] as were representatives from Romania and Japan – all three, as luck would have it, are on the M.T.C.. The U.S.A., assisted most extensively by [Adrian] Stoica and to a lesser extent by other M.T.C. members, used its considerable human and financial resources for a relentless year long campaign of vilification, misinformation, intimidation and influence to force compliance with its wish. The logical and technical was over-shadowed – indeed demolished – by the political and financial. This M.T.C. Code [Stoica bonus code] is a typical reaction in a time of shifting paradigms – some believe strongly in the new; others cling to the old (usually out of fear or self-interest) and thereby unwittingly help to demonstrate its shortcomings. Those shortcomings are now there for all to see.

It is interesting to note that aspects cited by Galimore *et al.* (1998) to support their case for changing the rules, are similar to aspects cited by Fink (1999a) and Fink (2000) in his argument against the changes which were proposed. I.e. that the changes proposed by each party would accentuate what they believe are negative, detrimental and non-aesthetic outcomes of each parties respective Codes. For example Galimore *et al.* (1998) state that "Men's gymnastics has become boring [under the 1997 Code], routines look too much alike and that creativity and uniqueness have been lost". However, Fink (1999a) claims, similarly, that the bonus system has caused or contributed to the following problems:

Monotonous or nearly identical routines; forcing difficulty; no evidence of a gymnasts improvement over time; attrition; injury; too many ties or nearly identical scores; disappearance of most A,B,C skills and loss of new skills; frequent rule changes; inability for federations, coaches, gymnasts to plan for the long term; rules that are insufficient for the best and are too hard for most for the rest; loss of artistry and quality in performance for middle and junior gymnasts.

This indicates that there may be strong socio-aesthetic beliefs about what may be perceived as appealing in men's gymnastics, particularly if both parties are claiming that each others system creates boring, monotonous gymnastic performances. An example to support each parties claims may be the similarity in appearance of Voluntary routines currently performed since the abolishment of Compulsory exercises in 1996 and the instigation of the 1997 F.I.G. Code of Points. Fink (1999a) states that:

The majority of gymnasts do the same optional sequences, connections and sometimes routines. The present code [1997 F.I.G. Code of Points] has already produced compulsory type optional routines and the fans of gymnastics are becoming bored.

Whilst both parties appear to agree that a major alteration in the rules is required to change the appearance of the gymnastics performance, they are fundamentally at odds as to *how* to go about establishing that difference within a system of rules.

Essentially, it appears that the Additive system of scoring would include all gymnastic actions instead of focusing on the most difficult actions to qualify for bonus points. Executing a combination of the most difficult gymnastic actions under one Code and then devaluing them when they are superseded or when they are performed too commonly, may alter the appearance of the gymnastic performance in a significant way. However, change under an Additive system of scoring may be in keeping with the "basic values in gymnastics" as stated by Zschocke (1997):

Without them one would have to fear that gymnastics will slide into sensationalism and result in the demonstration of more and more tricks.

In connection with this is the notion that the 'perfect ten' may represent perfection in gymnastics performance. As gymnastics has developed the number of difficult elements and connections which various gymnasts are able to perform has increased dramatically. Therefore, it seems to be an inevitable consequence that the scoring system should go beyond ten in order to score the new range of actions thereby discriminating between gymnasts in a more meaningful way. I.e. the range and complexity of gymnastic actions is increasing whilst the margin for scoring them would be relatively decreasing if the upper limit remains at ten. Under the Code proposed by Adrain Stoica the constant devaluing of gymnastic actions to keep the scores below but close to ten would appear to be a retrograde step not least because of the difficulties in achieving an international consensus about what actions to devalue and by how much.

In dealing with this example of instrumental activity it remains to point out that the high degree of political manoeuvring has not really changed things dramatically from the 1997 to the 2001 F.I.G.

Code of Points, as much as the implementation of an Additive Code may have done. The 2001 F.I.G. Code of Points still has a strong bonus element for score calculation but may be perceived by some to be an improvement on the previous Code due possibly to the level of opposition aroused to the alternatives.

The notion of skill and gymnastic skilfulness will be considered next as it is seemingly an integral feature of the material of Men's Artistic Gymnastics.

5.6 The relationship of the concept of skill to that of skilfulness in Men's Artistic Gymnastics

“Skill is not necessarily art, but all art requires skill” (Lowe, 1977).

An explanation of the relationship between skill and skilfulness in gymnastics may reveal some aspects of socio-aesthetic perspective, which could make a positive contribution to the aesthetic education of the gymnast, coach and judge alike. As Lowe (1977) implies in the quote above, gymnastic skill alone may not count as art, although distinctive gymnastic performances may be produced by a skilful display of gymnastic actions. The distinctly skilful gymnastic performance may provide some evidence of gymnastic style in performance. That is to say that if the gymnast has, not only the ability to execute the skill, but the ability to perform it in a slightly different way to his competitors (without incurring deductions), he may be credited with a level of skilfulness which may distinguish him from other gymnasts. For example, performances by the Greek gymnast Loannis Melissannidis on Floor are stylistically different to those of his competitors.

A problem however, is that the meanings of the words skill and skilfulness and other variations of the terms can be vastly problematised through semantics, depending on how a practitioner understands the terms and chooses to apply them in a given context. The terms could relate to a wide range of meanings and situations and may therefore be easily disagreed upon. For example, the word skill could be used to refer to a specific element listed in the F.I.G. Code of Points, such as a Dislocation, which is classified as an A skill on the Rings. Or it might be a descriptive comment on the gymnast's ability to perform the action, for example, “the gymnast has a high level of skill on the Rings”. The notions of skill and skilfulness may be difficult to understand accurately, because they can infer both a quantitative and qualitative comment upon gymnastic ability and the resultant aesthetic achieved where preferences, histories and perspectives for that point of view may not be fully explained, shared or valued. For example, a comment such as, “that was a very skilful performance” may not be equally comprehended due to the wide (but finite) range of interpretations of “what could it mean to say skilful in terms of Men's Artistic Gymnastics?” Significantly, this question may appeal to a common understanding of skilfulness, which may not be commonly held by all practitioners. Best (1978) highlights potential problems associated with personal conceptions and interpretations of human action when he points out that:

Since such ideas [about skill and skilfulness] are inaccessibly private, it is obviously absurd to suggest that I could somehow examine the idea symbolised in your mind by the words in order to discover whether it corresponded with the idea symbolised in my mind.

Consequently differences in opinion concerning the aesthetic of gymnastic skilfulness will continue to be enjoyed. The terms skill and skilfulness can therefore be ambiguous terms, which are purposely avoided by some experts. Pye (1971), in his book *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* states that:

"Skill" is a word not used in this book. It does not assist useful thought because it means something different in each different kind of work. At all events "skill" is ordinarily used to refer to an uncertainly distributed group of disparate things. Like "function" you can make it mean what you please.

Similarly, the F.I.G. do not use the terms skill or skilfulness within the Code of Points (Lylo, 1979; Zschocke, 1989; 1993; 1997). Their omission of the terms appears to be compensated by reference to elements (skills as specific gymnastic actions) and groups of elements ranked for difficulty such as A,B,C,D,E, Super E and Pure E (Fink, 2001). The omission of the term skilfulness may have been compensated for by the F.I.G. in their instructions to the B-jury; i.e. "The judges of the B-jury are responsible for the evaluation of the exercise presentation with regard to technical, positional and aesthetic execution (5.00 for technique and position)" (Zschocke, 1997).

It may have been conceived by the F.I.G. that focusing on specific terminology and avoiding ambiguous, qualitative words such as skill and skilfulness would be an appropriate strategy towards a more objective and therefore accurate interpretation of the Code. However, it is the recognition of qualitative features of gymnastic skill and skilfulness that appears to constitute one of the main functions required of judges to fulfil in their role as official arbiters of quality in gymnastics performance. I.e. their perception of sense-data information followed by their evaluation of aesthetic appearance resulting in their judgement of *how well* the actions were performed. Therefore a reasoned explanation of an understanding of distinct gymnastic skilfulness may be what is required for both A and B juries to interpret certain areas of their Code in a more informed way. Explanations for qualitative areas of evaluation (skilfulness) were provided in earlier F.I.G. Codes in the defining paragraphs for Risk, Originality, Virtuosity, Harmony and Rhythm (Gander, 1979). Currently, in the absence of similar explanations, a decision from the B Jury in favour of perceived gymnastic skilfulness may be regarded as an arbitrary one, merely to separate scores. The provision of 0.05 of a mark is allocated for such a decision within the rules. Fink (1999a) states that:

At world and Olympic level, many gymnasts attain a Start Value of 10.00 [A-jury] and most have almost identical deductions [B-jury]. *There is no objective way of discriminating among their performances* [my italics]. Those that can do more cannot be rewarded for it. It follows

that ties will be inevitable. It is only the presence of six B-judges and the artificial 0.05 provision that prevents even more ties.

Therefore an aesthetic evaluation of the skilfulness perceived in a gymnast's performance could have some contribution to his overall success. An attempt to accentuate "skilfulness" may alter the appearance of the aesthetic object and depending on the level of aesthetic education within the judges panel, affect how it is perceived and how it is scored.

The relationship of gymnastic skill to gymnastic skilfulness may be reduced to separating the content of a routine (identifying constituent skills) from considering the distinct way in which the content was performed (skilfulness) to give the overall appearance of the object; *the gymnastic performance*. Therefore, the notion of gymnastic skilfulness may be another way of indicating a gymnast's personal interpretation of the requirements of particular skills during execution.

Identifying the gymnastic skill(s) (specific elements) during a performance is a complex and difficult task of human comprehension. The judges do not know what skills they are going to see prior to a performance yet they have to record them in detail and provide a score within ninety seconds of the gymnast completing his routine. From a skill point of view, the routine may be regarded as a series of motor controlled actions within the executive programme of a routine. Knapp (1963) offers a definition of *skill*, which appears to provide a workable basis for understanding motor control with regard to the repetition of physical actions. She states that, "Skill is the learned ability to bring about predetermined results with maximum certainty, often with the minimum outlay of time or energy or both". This definition seems to be a reasonable premise from which to study consistency of execution in gymnastics and there have been many psychological studies focusing on the improvement of *skill* learning within the sport (Ille and Cadopi, 1999; Magill and Schoenfelder-Zohdi, 1996; Roethlisberger, 1980). Schmidt (1991) details the skill's classification system typically used for psychological research in sport (open and closed skills and discrete, continuous and serial skills). According to Schmidt (1991) a performance of gymnastics would be classified as a closed-serial skill. A closed skill because the actions are executed in a "stable and predictable environment" and serial skill because a gymnastics routine consists of a "group of discrete skills strung together to make up a new more complicated skilled action". A discrete skill being an action, which has an "easily defined beginning and end" (Schmidt, 1991). In this context a single gymnastic action might be classified as a discrete skill similar to the way in which the gymnastic elements are listed in the F.I.G. Code of Points. These skills or elements might then be linked to form a serial skill or routine. The A-jury has the responsibility

for identifying individual skills within a series of skills (elements and connections) and calculating their value to arrive at the Start Value. Zschocke (1997) states that:

The judges of the A-jury are responsible for the registration and evaluation of difficulty (2.40), special requirements (1.20) and the awarding of bonus points (1.40): 5.00 in total.

However, the “registration and evaluation of difficulty” of men’s gymnastic skills is not a straightforward process because judges are not permitted in theory, to estimate what skills the gymnast attempted during his performance (a declaration of the routine might assist here). Rather they have to score precisely what they see which may be more difficult to account for and difficult to know exactly what the gymnast’s intention was.

The aesthetic appeal of the final product may rely upon the gymnast’s ability to execute the selected elements of the routine in an expert and perhaps individual way. This may be a measure of his distinct skilfulness to perform and link the selected skills. Gardner (1983) in his chapter on bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, states that:

Over the years the highly skilled performer has evolved a family of procedures for translating intention into action. Knowledge of what is coming next allows that overall smoothness of performance, which is virtually the hallmark of expertise.

An evaluation of the individual “hallmark of expertise” which an elite gymnast displays (i.e. his skilfulness) seems to require special education to understand this dimension of evaluation to give the performance full credit for its aesthetic. Otherwise the aesthetic which is created through performance may become merely incidental to the performance and therefore secondary to the process of scoring the elements and combinations which are executed. Under these conditions Men’s Artistic Gymnastics would cease to be an “aesthetic sport” and become a “purposive sport” (Best, 1978), such as football. In a purposive sport any perceived aesthetic in performance is incidental and does not contribute to the outcome of the contest, i.e. only the number of goals scored, not *how* they were scored measures the competitive outcome of a football match.

The relationship between skill and skilfulness may be an important one because it could provide an insight to understanding the distinct character of a performance, over and above the descriptive function of identifying the specific actions executed within the routine. An understanding of gymnastic skilfulness may by default, allow a socio-aesthetic dimension to be recognised in a performance, which could enhance variety in gymnastics. For example, it has been commented that ascending gymnastic countries such as France, have developed a corporate image by using actions and developing a style that identifies them from others (Hall, 2000). A British Junior Code of Points has

been initiated (Hall, 2001) which allows some experimentation in this regard may be a good long term strategy towards increasing the level of hard skill accomplishment in addition to developing a level of personal skilfulness in their execution.

It could be argued that the skilfulness of a gymnast is exhibited when he performs particular skills in his own unique way. This case is perhaps made clearer by reflecting back to when the competition programme included Compulsory routines which consisted of exactly the same sequence of actions for each gymnast. In this situation, the endeavour of gymnasts may have been to show how individually skilful they can be so that they appear sufficiently different on aesthetic grounds to win the competition.

As Compulsory routines are no longer a requirement at international competition, individual Voluntary type routines are constructed using only the legal actions within the current code (Fink, 2001). This situation may have led to the somewhat mechanical reproduction of gymnastic elements within a routine, as they appear in the F.I.G. Code of Points. The successful completion of the element may be all that is required for the gymnast to qualify his claim to be awarded the full value for it. Whilst the execution of extreme difficulty in gymnastic actions is part of the evaluation criteria it cannot account for the overall aesthetic judgement if men's gymnastics is to remain an aesthetic sport as opposed to a purposive one (Best, 1978).

A relevant, albeit early comment about the aesthetic of gymnastics performance being more than mere "exhibitions of strength", was made by Bjorksten (1937) an exponent of the Swedish system of Physical Education:

A carefully thought out aesthetic element in gymnastic teaching will help to oust the idea of physical training as the development of crude muscular power resulting in an aimless exhibition of *strength* and *skill* [my italics].

Strength training would destroy the possibility of a delicately adjusted mental control of bodily movement, the object of which is to purify and clarify our feelings by giving them an outlet in beautiful and disciplined muscular movements.

Bjorksten (1937) appears to have been repulsed by the concept that sheer physical strength might become the sole focus of training in gymnastics. Under the 2001 Code of Points (Fink, 2001) the utilisation of sheer strength to execute extreme difficulty appears to be the sole requirement to execute a large range of gymnastics actions. Strength training is a major part of a gymnast's training programme today and its utilisation by some gymnasts appears to be towards what they may conceive as, the beautifying of gymnastic action in the modern day sport. However, the notion of skilfulness in gymnastics may also imply concepts such as grace, elegance, balance, elan, poise, sense of timing,

rhythm, originality, virtuosity, harmony which involves the impressive use of controlled physical strength to execute difficult actions with apparent ease. This kind of terminology seems to be relevant when analysing the skilfulness of a performance because the words are more descriptive of the character that practitioners may perceive in a gymnastics performance. However these qualities may not be measurable in an objective way and it may not make sense, currently, for practitioners to discuss gymnastics formally in this way at all.

The introduction of a new move; a new gymnastic action for use in competition, may indicate that a detailed understanding of the qualitative areas of aesthetic evaluation are required to sensibly evaluate the aesthetic object, given that it comprises of gymnastic skilfulness and skill(s). The F.I.G. set out clear guidelines for the introduction of a new move in a competition routine in order that it can be scored sensibly. Upon the execution of the new move the notions of skill and skilfulness may become inseparable because only one gymnast has the ability to execute the skill in his routine. Therefore his skilfulness during execution defines the skill itself, as no other gymnast is able to provide a comparison. This situation appears to change after the action has been copied and it becomes more popular. As a result variations in performing the action may become evident and theories may be generated which isolate the action as a skill or element. As the skill is experimented with, theories of good and poor execution may emerge which are a result of both biomechanical experimentation and developing concepts of stylistic presentation and interpretation of the action. Successive examples of the skill may then be regarded as departures or improvements from the original 'perfect' execution of the action when it was introduced. Logically (and ironically) the original performance can become regarded as a poor example of *how* to perform the action i.e. a retrospective example of how not to perform the action. Therefore the notion of perfection in gymnastic execution is an evolving concept which may rely upon the distinct skilfulness of a gymnast in order for the skill to become established as a gymnastic element in the first instance. A good example of this is the development of the Tkatchev, which is a release and catch action on the High Bar. The feasibility of the action was first calculated by Russian sports scientists who proposed a biomechanical theory explaining how the action could be completed. The action is a swing forward with a vault backwards over the bar straddling the legs to finish in a hang position. Since Alexander Tkatchev first performed the action in the late 1970s, it has been copied and developed to such an extent that it can be performed in various shapes such as straddle, pike and stretched positions and also with full twist. The Tkatchev action

may often be combined with another release and catch element or followed by other actions of extreme difficulty in order to gain bonus points. I.e. for many elite gymnasts the action is now extensively developed and combined with other elements rather than being a stand-alone skill in terms of scoring as it may have been when it was first performed.

Each new move can normally be identified by the surname of the gymnast who first performed it. The act of naming the action after the gymnast may serve to identify the skill in a unique way, by providing a definitive example of the gymnastic skilfulness inherent of the original performance and therefore the performer. Under this theory any copies of the Tkatchev would not be a Tkatchev because it is not performed by Alexander Tkatchev. However, it is possible for another gymnast to emulate the biomechanical sequence of the original action such that it looks similar to the original action and may be labelled a "Tkatchev" for the task of identification. It may transpire, over time, that the gymnastic skilfulness or aspects of individual style and interpretation admired in the perfect original performance becomes deductible aspects of poor execution in subsequent performances of developed and worked copies. As expertise at executing the action improved, a Tkatchev in the stretched position was developed. This occurred years after the original Alexander Tkatchev performance and consequently has a different aesthetic appearance to a straddled Tkatchev because it is a different action, although its ancestry and genesis can be traced back to the original Alexander Tkatchev action. A further evolutionary step is that the Tkatchev action is altered to such a large extent that it is given a new name by the gymnast who performs it first because it has a completely different aesthetic appearance. This is the case for a Lijukin, which is a Tkatchev stretched with full twist to hang. The circle of aesthetic evolution is initiated once more as the skilfulness of Valeri Lijukin defined the original performance of *his* action.

It is an interesting artistic anomaly that the worked copies of original actions may be regarded as improvements in terms of biomechanical execution and appearance with the result that the original is almost discounted. However the worked copies [improvements] may lead to the creation of new, original actions to perpetuate this cycle. Throughout the F.I.G. Code of Points there are many examples of naming an original action followed by development of that action to create a new move and therefore a new aesthetic which is identified by a new name. For example, on High Bar the Gaylord becomes a Pagan, on Floor the Li Yuejiu becomes a Lou Yun and on Rings a Guczoghy becomes an O'Neil (Zschocke, 1997). In each case it seems to be the distinct skilfulness of the

gymnast which defines the original action followed by working and experimenting with the action to create new moves in the future. The copies executed between and leading up to each innovation help to improve upon the original may be a contradiction in artistic terms whilst being simultaneously, the logical way forward to develop increasingly difficult actions within the sport. The process of building difficulty into gymnastic routines will require constant innovation, which means by default, that individual gymnastic skilfulness will be constantly on display, defining the appearance of the actions themselves. Therefore the recognition and evaluation of distinct gymnastic skilfulness to execute gymnastic skills, whether they be new or established moves in the Code of Points, seems to be a major aesthetic element defining the performance of gymnastics.

The current judging procedures are predominantly concerned with scoring copies of established elements (skills). However, the sensible evaluation of gymnastic skilfulness may require knowledge of performance qualities with non-definable parameters (grace, elan, virtuosity etc.) to be recognised and be given value in some way that usefully contributes to the competition outcome. In this manner the aesthetic of men's gymnastics may be evaluated more comprehensively as it may incorporate an assessment of individual skilfulness required to produce and therefore define the aesthetic object. A potential development towards addressing this seemingly overlooked aspect of gymnastics judging, may be the creation of a C jury who would be responsible for evaluating these aesthetic features of a performance. The A and B juries could continue to fulfil their specific roles in the evaluation process with the additional evaluation of qualitative aesthetic features from the C jury. Towards achieving this the members of the C jury would be educated and be expert at recognising aesthetic features in gymnastics in order to reward the gymnast for his display of skilfulness which under current evaluation procedures is seemingly passively admired as an incidental feature of the sport. In contesting this notion, Hall (pers. comm.) makes a valid practical point that:

Under current evaluation protocols (Fink, 2001), the extension of the judging panel to include a C jury might only serve to accentuate the bias in judging and its capacity for abuse. Particularly in addition to that which may already exist due to the numbers of judges involved in evaluation and the potential for inconsistencies due to the statistical combinations of eight judges on six pieces of apparatus.

However, the aesthetic evaluation of gymnastics is seemingly a wholly qualitative exercise which encompasses the 'measurement' of the appearance of skills, as well as assessing and evaluating the perceived quality of appearance of the gymnast's individual and personal ability to perform the actions. For the F.I.G. a notion of objective evaluation of skills may involve [narrowly] the recognition of visually

obvious features that cannot be misconstrued by members of the judging panel. This may only serve to overlook significant aspects of skilfulness that help to create the aesthetic object.

The initiation of a C jury, may require an extension of the scoring range beyond 10.00 to accommodate their contribution to the scoring process whereby each jury could provide a score out of ten, which are combined to provide a final score out of 30.00. The point being that the current reductive system of scoring and the ceiling of 10.00 appear to restrict the evaluation process and provide an incomplete, and perhaps naive evaluation of the aesthetic of "Exercise Presentation" which is currently the responsibility of the B jury. If Men's Artistic Gymnastics is to remain an aesthetic sport as opposed to a purposive one (Best, 1978) then the creation of a C jury, which recognises and gives value to skilfulness; aesthetic features with non-definable parameters and compositional form features, may be a reasonable recommendation from this research.

The following section will analyse and contrast the concepts of technical and technique which may provide further insight to the aesthetic features of the sport and therefore enhance the understanding of the aesthetic material of gymnastics.

5.7 The relationship of the concept of technical to that of technique in Men's Artistic Gymnastics

"Appearance is everything" (Winters, 1991)

In Men's Artistic Gymnastics, the *appearance* of the aesthetic object could be said to be the principal focus for evaluative attention. An understanding of the aesthetic features which contribute to the appearance of the performance may therefore lead to a more comprehensive and perhaps enlightened evaluation of the aesthetic of gymnastics. An analysis of the concepts of technical and technique appear to make such a contribution.

The task of this section will be to point out how the terms technical and technique might be comprehended better, in order to highlight some of the aesthetic implications of using these terms in gymnastic evaluation. The terms technical and technique are used commonly within the F.I.G. Code of Points (Zschocke, 1997; Fink, 2001) and are used widely within gymnastic parlance and research literature dealing with Men's Artistic Gymnastics (Kuang, 1993; Fie and Dietz, 1994; Takei *et al.* 1995; Zhu, 1997; Wang, 1997; Brewin, 1998, Arampatzis and Brueggemann, 1998; Yeadon and Kerwin, 1999; Li, 1999). However, in many instances the terms appear to be used interchangeably despite their distinct and separate meanings. The disparate definitions of the terms may indicate the scope for a socio-aesthetic interpretation of gymnastics to be made from a technical and technique perspective which would be similar to the way in which standards and skilfulness in gymnastics, may also contribute to a socio-aesthetic understanding of the sport.

A definition of technical provided by Fowler (1986) is: "*Technology, technical terms or details of, or in particular art, science or craft etc.*" A definition of technique by the same author is: "*A mode of artistic expression in music, painting etc., mechanical skill in art, means of achieving ones purpose, especially skilfully*". The dissimilarity between the meanings of technical and technique indicates that from an aesthetic point of view, it could be misleading to use the terms interchangeably when discussing men's gymnastics. At a fundamental level, a concept of technical may help to identify the end product in a basic and perhaps skeletal way, whilst a concept of technique may provide some individual means to perform and exhibit the end product in an especially gymnastic way. A combination of technical requirement and aspects of personal technique seemingly contribute to the aesthetic

appearance of gymnastics - given that *performance* may be more than mere technical execution of gymnastic elements.

A relevant perspective upon the relationship between technical and technique is provided by Winters (1991). He claims that the engineer is dealing with "first order properties" that support an outward appearance, which may be similar to the technical insight and expertise required to coach, judge and execute gymnastic actions. Winters (1991) states that:

The engineer is a scientist and his understanding of a building is scientific. The engineer understands the materials used, the nature of those materials, their capacities, their strengths, their weaknesses. He understands the structure of the building and has knowledge of the geotechnics involved and has a comprehension of the durability and efficiency of the work in front of him. But to say he is a scientist is to bracket his discipline within the aims of science. One aim of science is to dispense with appearances. Science describes reality as it is and not as it appears. It goes deep and in doing so it leaves appearance at the surface, according to some scientific principle of unity. His concern is with the inherent nature of things and this necessarily requires of him that he looks further than the surface of that which is present to him.

According to Winters (1991) the engineer is dealing with the substantive features of the technical in engineering and construction, for example the capacities of the materials to perform their function successfully within the proposed structure. This may be a similar technical process to that carried out by some expert practitioners i.e. they have a great deal of knowledge about the physical limits and capabilities of the materials (gymnasts) to perform the tasks required of them. Also, in fulfilling his duties, a gymnastics practitioner in an engineering capacity would be guided by the rules and conventions pertinent to his discipline of constructing, recognising and valuing the underlying reality of the aesthetic object they help to produce. Part of the judge's technical function during a gymnastics competition is to recognise and inspect the constituent elements performed in a routine and decide if they have been executed to the required technical standard. Likewise, part of the technical input of the coach may be to construct routines for a particular gymnast according to the rules and conventions in the F.I.G. Code of Points. Ideally this technical input would equip the gymnast with a range of actions, most efficient and high scoring combinations which he is able to execute most consistently.

In contrast to a technical understanding, through the constant practice and perfection of the routine as a whole, the gymnast may be able to develop a surface appearance of *performance* qualities which may exhibit his particular technique of linking the sequence of elements which have been constructed for him. By drawing upon his skilfulness as a gymnast he may be able to develop his technique to create a surface appearance or impact with his routine which is different from other gymnasts and particular to him. This may be one understanding of a gymnast's technique as a "mode of artistic

expression" (Fowler, 1986) which seemingly could be coached or developed in some way that enhances the aesthetic appearance of the overall performance. Winters (1991) contrasts the interests of the technical engineer with the technique of the architect to create and manipulate the surface appearance of the aesthetic object when he says:

The architect is an artist and as such his interest remains there on the surface; in the look of the thing. For him the appearance is everything and his discipline is constrained not by the search for an underlying [technical] reality, but by a critical search for the appropriate solution to an aesthetic problem.

This may infer that technique in gymnastic performance may be like a second-order veneer of personal signature, a way of doing, which is supported by the technical framework of routine construction, being the underlying reality. The analysis of routine construction may allow the judges to decide the extent to which the performance meets technical difficulty, combination and execution requirements as stipulated in the rules, whereas the technique of performance may provide the surface appearance of an individual display. The *appearance* of a gymnast's technique may create the first impression or aesthetic impact upon the observer which could help to differentiate between gymnasts who perform the same, or extremely similar, elements in their routines and have an identical Start Value of 10.00.

Confusion between the technical and technique may arise because of the potential differences in conception between *what* constitutes technical ideal or technical perfection in gymnastics. This may be complicated further by different conceptions of *how* an individual gymnast physically exhibits perfection through *their* technique of performance. This situation may be highlighted to some extent by the new move scenario, whereby the technical detail of an action only emerges over time, perhaps years, because it is shrouded by, or embedded in, the personal technique of the gymnast who performed it first. That is to say that the technical model of optimum biomechanical efficiency to execute an action may only be established by virtue of an increasing number of attempts by a wide variety of gymnasts. Consequently, successive alterations may be regarded as technical improvements upon the original, progressing towards what may be conceived as technical perfection in gymnastic execution. As a result there may be a strong bias in practitioners' gymnastic education, towards a technical comprehension of their tasks in coaching, performing and judging. Which is to say that a practitioner who is trained to "look with technical eyes" may only be able to recognise aspects of technical detail in the display. In so doing they may not recognise or may look through a gymnast's technique at the 'surface' paying it only cursory attention in order to appraise the technical features of

the display, which they may understand in greater detail. However, the combined aesthetic evaluation of a) technical features during the execution of gymnastic actions and b) the aspects of personal gymnastic technique to individually display the technical, seemingly contribute towards a notion of gymnastic perfection in a performance. This may present an interesting challenge for the education of many gymnastics practitioners in the future. The question begged seems to be one of, how can value and credit be given for a greater range of aesthetic features over and above the technical, which constitute the impressive spectacle of a gymnastics performance which is presented for our enjoyment and appreciation?

In order to develop the concept of the technical it seems logical to research what meaning the term could have in the context of the sport. In the first instance there may be a difficulty in language, because whilst there is lexical definition of the term technical (Fowler, 1986), there does not appear to be an ostensible definition for the term within the sport. However, it may be possible to point out substantive features, which can be associated with the term technical, in order to provide the term with some meaning (Wittgenstein, 1958). **The biomechanics of gymnastic actions, specialised gymnastic language and contrived written symbols** may provide some of the substantive features, which can be associated with the term technical as it is used in Men's Artistic Gymnastics.

The biomechanics of gymnastic actions as an aesthetic component of "technical"

A simple analogy of the biomechanics of gymnastic action may be that a machine could be comprehended and commented upon as being technical to a greater or lesser extent, depending upon the high or low level of mechanical complexity within it. Therefore, a comment from a gymnastics practitioner about technical features in gymnastics, may be a comment upon some aspect of the biomechanics of gymnastic action in their respective roles of either performing, coaching or evaluating that action. However, biomechanical *complexity* alone may not logically equate to what is understood as technical in gymnastics. Biomechanical *simplicity* in gymnastic action may also be regarded as a technical aesthetic feature. For example, a Cross or Crucifix on the Rings is an incredibly physically demanding action but biomechanically quite simple to execute and therefore evaluate, compared to for example, a complex dismount with multiple twists and multiple rotations. Figure 39 is taken from the F.I.G. Code of Points to show the technical detail for the Cross and L-Cross as stipulated in the 2001 Code (Fink, 2001). The Cross, or Crucifix may be executed from hang [or support] position, raising [or

lowering] the body with straight arms until the arms are horizontal with shoulders and between the Rings. Additional technical detail for the evaluation of this action includes predominantly, the angle of the arms to the body, the duration of the hold for 2 seconds and not rolling the wrists on the Rings (Felipe, 2000; Fink, 2001). Figures 40 to 45 indicate the extent to which gymnasts may satisfy these technical aesthetic criteria in their performances of the actions.

The concept of a technical biomechanic may be understood further by reference to the realms of technology. For example, machines fail to work properly if the components are not connected in a logical and often critical order. A logical order of components, or sequence of events, may therefore be comprehended mechanically, as being technically correct if the machine works. Likewise the gymnastic action may be comprehended as being technically correct if the sequence of biomechanical events are executed logically with the result that the action is completed successfully. Successful in the context of the technical may mean that the element is recognised by the judges and its performance is within the permissible tolerances for measuring its execution, allowing a score to be awarded. Therefore, the use of the term technical may relate in part to the range of biomechanical movement possibilities which the human body is capable of to execute gymnastic actions, including established skills and the potential for new skills. Interestingly, successful technical execution of the same elements could arguably produce a greatly varying aesthetic if performed by gymnasts of different ages, size and shape.

Increased biomechanical understanding of gymnastic action may contribute to the breadth of technical details for evaluation and differentiation purposes, which may be developed subsequently as the actions are analysed in greater depth. In a competition, elements are connected to form a routine giving rise to additional biomechanical analysis, which may add to the technical criteria for evaluation purposes. For example, when two actions are connected, the first may have to be executed in a particular way in order to maintain momentum, or accelerate for the second element to follow, such as in long swing preparation for a dismount from the High Bar. Analysis of the biomechanics of both the individual elements and the connection of elements may result in a number of critical technical/biomechanical features, which identify an element specifically as well as the increased value for combinations of elements for example, D+D=E. This is an important technical feature in the scoring protocol for awarding bonus points, called "connection bonus" (Fink, 2001).

Resulting from the processes of biomechanical action to connect elements, the aesthetic of individual elements may alter due to the additional evaluation of how well they were connected. Therefore, one understanding of a gymnast satisfying aspects of technical detail, as stipulated in the Code, may be his meeting the biomechanical demands of performing recognisable body shapes as featured in the Code, but with the intended elements connected in a routine.

The Code of Points attempts to define perfect body shapes with written explanation, diagrammatic information and tables of deductions (Fink, 2001). Despite this level of definition by the F.I.G., achieving and recognising perfection in gymnastic performance may still be a matter of personal interpretation. Whilst *knowledge* of the technical framework for routine construction (combination of A,B,C,D,E,sE) may allow gymnastic difficulty and execution to be recognised to be measured in some 'technical way', i.e. by visual estimation, it may only provide at best, cursory guidance as to what the routine may be worth in narrow numeric terms. The assumption may be that the final score arrived at infers *how good* the overall performance was. To this end, the present scoring protocol appears to be limited by its technical ethos because it is geared towards recognising only technical detail in a performance. Consequently the numeric final score may be an incomplete assessment of the *quality* of the performance, because it may not take full account of, and give credit for, the technique of a gymnast to create a distinctive aesthetic appearance within his routine.

One understanding of the technical in this aesthetic sport appears to incorporate the measurement of body angles, body shapes, timing and landings to assist with the evaluation of the performance. This might be understood as the *measurable appearance of technical execution*, which may serve to identify the end product in a technical way. To this end the F.I.G. Code of Points document could be regarded as a technical manual to help practitioners world-wide make sense of the biomechanical actions performed within gymnastics. The Code specifies critical measurements and timings for varying amounts of deduction, for example, in terms of the permissible tolerances for degrees of angle, 0-45 degrees in support positions, time, periods of hold for two seconds, and space, such as boundaries for landing on Vault. However the F.I.G. does not utilise any form of technical measuring apparatus (technological/mechanical sense) to assist judges to determine the extent of technical faults during a gymnastic performance. It prefers instead to rely upon the individual recall and personal evaluation of what was observed from the judge's seat. This may be an area of weakness in the

F.I.G.'s argument for objective technicality in judging protocol when accounting for critical measurements of so called technical execution.

A specialised gymnastic language as an aesthetic component of "technical"

A further and significant aspect of the technical in gymnastics may be evidenced by the technical language, which has evolved to communicate critical technical detail about the sport. Some technical gymnastic language relates to the categorisation and combination of elements within the Code. Specifically these are the element categories A,B,C,D,E and Super E parts. Practitioners have to become conversant with this nomenclature to discuss the permissible and non-permissible combinations of elements, which each letter represents. Under the current 2001 Code the basic difficulty requirements in routine construction are 4 As, 3 Bs and 3 Cs (Fink, 2001). However the Code states that more difficult actions may be attempted within a performance:

Gymnasts with the necessary prerequisites and a high level of performance may show D-parts, E-parts and Super-E-parts, which will be rewarded with bonus points if shown with *technically good execution* (Fink, 2001). [my italics].

This kind of technical language (A,B,C etc.) serves to communicate technical gymnastic details in a non-representational way as it refers to categories of elements by difficulty rather than the specific elements themselves. This is amply demonstrated in the examination process for International Brevet judges who are required to answer questions using only this technical language without reference to a video recorded performance, or the Code itself. For example, question Eleven on the 2001 F.I.G. Brevet exam paper was: "What bonus is given for this series of directly connected elements on the Parallel Bars, D+D+sE+C+D+C+E?" (Fink, 2001a). The use of upper-case letters in this way indicates a kind of specialised gymnastic code, which may be comprehended as technical because it is used exclusively by gymnastics practitioners to discuss and communicate technical aspects of gymnastics, given that there is a special meaning attached to the letters which only they may fully understand.

Other methods of communicating technical details are in a written/diagrammatic form and are more representational, serving to identify the individual elements themselves rather than primarily, the categories of difficulty which the elements have been placed in. This is achieved in two ways. Firstly, through the use of symbols to represent elements in a shorthand form to record routine content and secondly, in the F.I.G. Code of Points itself which contains drawings and diagrams of each element, for example Figures 38 and 39. The diagrams in the F.I.G. Code of Points can convey technical

information about the correct execution of individual elements as well as the difficulty category they are in. However, drawing stick-men pictures to record routine content as it is performed would be a very inefficient and perhaps inaccurate method of recording exercise content for competition purposes.

Contrived written symbols as an aesthetic component of "technical" in gymnastics

As an alternative, Tombs (1997) has developed a system of unique symbols to represent elements and connections to record them as they are performed during a routine. Tombs (1997) claims that:

The use of symbols is a much quicker way of recording the content of a routine and that "the A-Jury can only do their job completely by using symbols to record routines.

Recording the exact order of elements in each routine is a requirement for technical consideration by the F.I.G. as Fink (2001) states, "To fulfil their duties properly, the A Jury are obliged to faultlessly record the exercise content". There are specific symbols for recording all gymnastic actions on each piece of apparatus. There is also classification, or familial grouping of elements, within the symbol system, which denotes a *genre* of gymnastic action rather than categorising by its difficulty. A certain shape of written symbol may also have evolved because it loosely emulates diagrammatically a certain genre of physical gymnastic action. For example, the kinds of symbols used on Floor to denote Leg Circles and Flares have a similar physical appearance and are distinctly different from symbols for other genres of gymnastic action, such as Forward Elements. (Refer to Figure 46, which illustrates the symbols used under these headings). The Leg Circles and Flares section on Floor and every other section in the symbols booklet does not attempt to categorise by difficulty because the actions listed under the specific headings range from the relatively easy to the extremely difficult. A similarity throughout the whole symbol system is the symbol for forward and backward saltos which are generic to all apparatus except Pommel Horse and may be found in the common grouping for dismounts on a given piece of apparatus (Tombs, 1997). There are also many instances when the symbol for saltos is used before the dismount in which case the symbol may denote combination with other elements, giving rise to symbols for connected actions. For example, a release and catch element on the High Bar, such as the Kovacs which involves a "double-back salto over the bar to catch" (Fink, 2001).

Disadvantages of this system may be that the use of symbols has created another language for practitioners to learn in order to record (list) in a different format, what they had already recorded or knew. Also that it cannot accurately record performance faults and account for where and why marks were awarded or deducted. Additionally the predominant usefulness of the symbols system appears to be in assisting judges in their process of recording and scoring combinations of elements in competitions. The coach and the gymnast appear to have little to gain from learning a new language of shorthand symbols compared to having video recordings of the actual performances which may be more beneficial to them.

However, advantages would appear to be that the recording tasks are accomplished more quickly during the judging process at competitions under present competition protocols (Fink, 2001) and that the symbols are internationally recognised allowing the information i.e. the list of elements performed, to be shared and scrutinised by practitioners from all nations. The distribution of information in this format may be similar to the way in which a musical staff can be read, from a technical point of view, by anyone in the world who understands the musical symbols as they are written. A potential problem with this recording process is that of human error as it continues to rely upon the fallible human perception of that which each judge observed, or thinks they observed during a performance. As there is no repeat, video play-back or declaration of a performance, the judge continues to rely upon his memory to record all the technical content of each routine. The recording function of the A Jury is very important as deductions will be taken from the Start Value they identify and are therefore accountable for its accuracy. The symbol system may help to reduce the distraction caused by the process of recording compared to previous longhand methods. However, it seemingly remains a distraction for a judge to look away from a performance in order to write, or indeed to be engaged in any manual recording activities, which might distract his full attention from the visual display of the performance.

Fowler (1986) claims that technology is an aspect of the technical. Conceivably this could be used to enhance the technical understanding of gymnastics. A digital video recording of each performance could help in the judging process during competitions and serve to record the technical content of all routines performed during the competition. This kind of technology has been available and used in research to analyse technical biomechanical detail of gymnastic actions for many years, yet not taken up and developed by the F.I.G. for use in judging and recording at competitions. Research by Manoni

(1985) attempted to specify the *quantitative* technical model of an action (an underlying reality), which could be used in the subsequent *qualitative* evaluation of the performance. He states that:

A method of computerised analysis of movement was set up on a cinematographic or television base, with the aim of specifying the quantitative parameters relating to the execution of an exercise. These parameters are indispensable for establishing one or more "technical models" to be used in a subsequent qualitative evaluation of the performance of the gymnast.

Recent research to analyse technical models of gymnastic action has exploited digital technology to the full as it has developed, for example, (Yeadon, 1994; Brewin, 1998; Yeadon and Kerwin, 1999). These findings may provide a useful tool to identify whether the technical criteria for an element have been met in execution and what aspects of the performance exceed the requirements of the basic technical model. This may allow a more objective assessment of quantifiable technical execution and qualitative personal interpretation; i.e. *technique*. Utilising this technology could also provide a comprehensive record of technical detail and the performance technique of all gymnasts at competitions whereas the symbol system appears to record only the technical framework of a routine, being merely a written list of *what* was performed. The symbol system cannot record *how well* a routine was performed. Although the symbol system does use a kind of technical language, which may be internationally recognised by judges, a visual/digital recording of each performance would seemingly negate the need for alternative forms of communication with contrived symbols. All the aesthetic detail of the performance would be available to see in the primary aesthetic language of the sport i.e. the overall aesthetic appearance of the performance itself.

In sum, the concept of technical as it may relate to the aesthetic of gymnastics appears to involve three areas. a) Comprehending and measuring in some way the biomechanics of gymnastic actions, b) the specialised language used to categorise difficulty of elements and combinations in relation to what they are worth numerically, and c) a shorthand symbol system of recording to note the technical content in a routine. In the absence of any technology to measure gymnastic execution, the functional areas (a to c) may account for the judges' responsibilities during a competition to evaluate qualitatively the technical aspects of performance. In so doing they are required to observe a performance, categorise what counts as A,B,C,D,E, Super E and simultaneously record and evaluate each element and combination in accordance with the technical criteria in the F.I.G. Code of Points. An outcome of these demands may be that technical detail can be communicated amongst practitioners, but with differing conceptions of aesthetic quality in performance. However as mentioned above, the overall aesthetic of a gymnastics performance may comprise of more than technical execution of elements.

The evaluation of individual technique could be a decisive factor contributing to the overall aesthetic evaluation of gymnastics and may therefore help to determine competition outcome more comprehensively.

Aesthetic of technique in gymnastics performance

The use of the term technique may relate to the individual endeavour of the gymnast to demonstrate how he wishes to satisfy the technical demands of the elements, which he has selected to perform in his personalised routine. Part of the gymnast's technique may be to execute his chosen elements in a unique and interesting way, which both meets the technical criteria and distinguishes his performance from others. Elements of personal technique may be accentuated by for example, the size and shape of individual gymnasts and where their best areas of performance lie with regard to personal strength, flexibility, and speed. Also aspects of personal signature during a performance may indicate the gymnast's preference "to do" in a particular way, for example, incorporating pauses, motifs and changes of speed into his routine which could be part of his preferred technique. This might be demonstrated in the speed of flicks, control of flight, and lightness of touch, which may indicate subtle differences between gymnasts. These may be some of the substantive features of technique which help to create the shades of dynamic within a performance, as well as personal and personality features that individuals bring to any solo performance, which in turn may alter the aesthetic appearance of the gymnastic product.

An individual gymnast may demonstrate his technique by punctuating the technical sequence of elements in a way that accentuates his personal style of performing. Significantly, this might be achieved by creating a surface appearance in performance that is permissible in the rules by default because it may be beyond explicit stipulation within the Code. A gymnast's personal technique may help to stake ownership on his performance in a way that identifies the gymnast with the particular aesthetic he produces, similar to an artist who signs their work or a song which is synonymous with a singer. For example, the performances given by Aleksei Nemov (2000 Olympic Champion) have an aesthetic which only he can bring to the routine. If another gymnast were to copy the routine it would arguably have a different aesthetic compared to Nemov's performance of it. Koppers (2000) provides an account of Nemov's routines. The first paragraph cited is a list of technical content, which is

contrasted by the second paragraph, providing evidence of his individual display of technique in performance. Koppers states that:

In Cottbus, March 1999, Aleksei competed in the Grand Prix finals. He opened with a very impressive pass of: round off - backflick - layout double back full. The full twist was performed exactly in the middle of the flight, take off and landing were done with perfect posture. The second pass consisted of forwards tumbling: front handspring - layout front - layout front full - layout front 1 1/2, with a jump into planche dive towards the centre of the mat, landing with stretched body on the mat.

Aleksei rests on his arms with stretched body, before setting up a very impressive series of close to the mat work, alternating between Thomas flairs, spindles, Thomas flairs and finally his trademark break-dance shoulder rolls, ending exactly in a straddled sit and striking a classic male gymnastics pose, facing the audience.

Nemov's "break-dance shoulder rolls" and his "classic male gymnastics pose" (which is a straight arm salute to the crowd with his head raised whilst in Splits position) do not appear as technical features of execution in the Code of Points but are clearly very important aspects of Nemov's technique when performing his gymnastics. Figures 47 to 51 depict Nemov and a number of other elite gymnasts demonstrating their flexibility in the Splits position during their Floor exercises. A technical feature of the Splits position may be the demonstration of leg and hip mobility. Therefore the various positions of the arms, head and torso may indicate a range of personal interpretations or techniques that are possible to individualise this static pose. That is to say that the position of the head and arms in the Splits position may be of inconsequential as the technical interests of the element "Splits" are for leg and hip mobility. However, the positioning of the head and arms is still required to be smart and in a "gymnastic manner" which, in doing so may serve to individualise a performance and accentuate personal technique. Nemov is also an expert competitor on the Pommel Horse on which he is able to demonstrate such a high level of competence, confidence and showmanship that it enhances his technique (from Koppers' (2000) point of view) and therefore signifies the aesthetic of his performance. Under earlier F.I.G. Codes (Lylo, 1975, 1979) Nemov may legitimately have been described as a "virtuoso" on this apparatus as Koppers (2000) points out:

Aleksei has a superb routine showing he is complete master of this extremely difficult and spectacular apparatus. His routine even has a touch of arrogance, as he bravely nods his head midway in the series of Thomas flares, the sign of his complete command over the apparatus only the very best display.

This kind of interpretation brought to gymnastic performance may help to differentiate between elite male gymnasts on aesthetic grounds by emphasising personal signature through their technique of performance.

This may be particularly important as the majority of the world's top gymnasts have Start Values of 10.00 and opt to perform routines which are remarkably similar because of the relatively limited choice of elements and combinations which carry maximum bonus marks (Fink, 2000a). Consequently, gymnasts from different countries may be able to alter the *surface appearance* of their routine to a greater extent, compared to the technical base-content, due to their particular and personalised way of performing it. Similarly, female gymnasts in the past appear to have exploited this more overtly in their performances, which may have contributed towards their success at the time. For example, gymnasts such as Larissa Latynina, Olga Korbut and Nadia Comaneci were perceived to demonstrate "something special" in their performances compared to other competitors. Another example was Vera Caslavskaja who, at the 1968 Olympics performed "her amazing Mexican Hat Dance routine" in the Floor Exercise (Emery, 1984) which was 'permissible' within the F.I.G. rules for women's Floor Exercise at the time (Vallancher, 1964). Male gymnasts may also purposefully develop their individual technique of performance with the aim that the aesthetic they produce will appeal to the majority of judges, practitioners and the admiring public. Consequently, a notion of socio-aesthetic preference may underpin both the choice of actions and interpretations to produce a certain aesthetic effect, or character in performance, as well as a socio-aesthetic preference being made for the kind of aesthetic effect or character that is on display. The concepts of technical and technique in Men's Artistic Gymnastics may both be socio-aesthetically derived to varying extents, although, because of constraints in the rules, there appears to be greater flexibility to alter the surface appearance of a performance by accentuating features of technique. This may be the strategy that Nemov employs in his attempt to impress observers.

The concepts of technical construction and composition of technique may help to clarify the distinct contribution each could make to understanding the overall aesthetic of a gymnastic performance. The notion of technical construction appears to be comprehended as the logical sequencing of elements and connections in a routine designed for a particular gymnast. The subsequent evaluation of routine construction may be of a biomechanical nature; measuring the physical execution of actions, and be of a legal nature; calculating the score/value in accordance with the stipulated rules. For example, meeting the Special Requirements for each apparatus, meeting stipulated difficulty requirements, calculating bonus points and permissible combinations of actions to be recognised and scored. Also the heavy deductions for repetition during an exercise may help to isolate the construction concept in

a way that is peculiar to Men's Artistic Gymnastics. I.e. men's gymnastic routines are 'built' using specific elements in a particular way, without repetition to produce a valid end product. The F.I.G. Code states the technical expectations for judging Exercise Construction, which informs competing nations of their requirement for and duty to supply standardised gymnastic content which can be recognised and scored:

The expectations for exercise construction are those aspects of an exercise that define the *essence of our expectations* and understanding of a gymnastics performance on each apparatus. Such things as using the full floor area, swinging without stops and **no repetition** etc. (Fink, 2001). [my emphasis]

Fink (2001) does not explain fully the phrase "essence of our expectations" although in the context of technical construction it may allude to the practical requirement of the gymnasts to present routines, which conform to the F.I.G.'s minimum technical requirements for international competitions. This would seemingly allow fair contests to take place because a baseline of technical parity and perhaps difficulty could be expected from all gymnasts involved in the competition.

In contrast, the concept of composition may highlight how a gymnast's technique can be manipulated to create a surface appearance in their performance which may provide in gymnastic terms, the impression of a seamless, smooth linkage between the elements of a routine. The basic premise being that gymnastic coaches can construct the routines (sequence of elements and connections) whilst gymnastic choreographers could compose and arrange the movement material which may be realised upon the technical framework that the coach has supplied.

The term composition is used advisedly at this point in order to differentiate with construction in gymnastics. The devices associated with composition in music and composition in dance, appear to provide a comprehensive range of substantive features that may help to identify subtle aspects of movement material in gymnastics, for example, through the use of canon, counterpoint, accent and tempo. The movement material of personal technique may not previously have been analysed and recorded to this level of detail in gymnastics in the way that perhaps ballet has been, for example, the full notation of Swan Lake (Woodward, 1977). However, if gymnastics was analysed to this level of detail it could conceivably realise and broaden gymnastic movement ideas for linkage actions as well as expand the knowledge base to account for and 'measure' subtle features of performance. This could provide a platform from which to design purposeful, choreographed actions to enhance a gymnast's performance technique on all apparatus (Gula, 1990). The resulting composition may subsequently be recorded in minute detail using recognised systems of notation, such as Labanation

or Choreology. Then, the manipulation of gymnastic movement material, which may previously have been regarded by the F.I.G. as subjective, unaccountable and unquantifiable could gain acceptance in the realms of technical understanding because of the ostensibly technical means of composing, choreographing and recording. Other systems of dance notation are Feuillet, Stepanov and Eshkol-Wachmann, which may also have features that lend themselves to analysing and recording movement material in gymnastics (Eshkol and Wachmann, 1958; Hutchinson, 1974; Mackrell, 1994). If transferred, these compositional tools could be useful for developing the technique of individual gymnasts. However, the term composition in art appears to imply a greater level of artistic freedom which choreographers of gymnastics do not appear to have. This may be compared to the relative freedom to compose, artistically, that composers of music and choreographers of dance enjoy during their creative and perhaps expressive process. This may be a defining point for understanding the extent of composition which may be possible in gymnastics and therefore, comprehending the extent to which Men's Artistic Gymnastics may be artistic. This point will be developed further at the end of the chapter.

The talents of choreographers have been employed by National Teams in gymnastics for many years because of their ability to enhance the surface appearance of the performance. As a result of a choreographer's guidance, a gymnast may be able to bring to his routine an aesthetic impact, which could be said to be greater than the sum of its parts. This kind of training to enhance aesthetic appearance may make the difference between that which appears as merely, a staccato sequence of technically well executed elements, compared to a *performance* which is technically well executed, maintains the illusion of ease of action and shows personal flair and individual genius in gymnastics. Mackrell (1994a) states that, "Choreography is the art of the gathering and organising movement into order and pattern". The ability to arrange *pattern* in movement may be a critical aspect of composing technique in gymnastics, which distinguishes it from technical construction because fundamentally, it may involve the clever use of *repetition* and *variation of theme* to enhance the appearance of a routine. The movement material which the choreographer may be working with and repeating, is clearly different to the technical content of a routine, repetition of which will be severely deducted by the judges. Therefore the choreographed repetition of movement material within technique may be beyond stipulated technical consideration although observers may see that the overall appearance of

the technical has been enhanced by for example, personal signature and motif which could contribute to a notion of "original" performance technique by the gymnast.

The Oxford Interactive Encyclopaedia (1997) states that, "many formal choreographic devices are analogous to those used in music, such as motif and development, canon and repetition". The close relationship of choreography with composition in music may further allude to some of the substantive features that may be available for the choreographer of gymnastics to manipulate. For example, the *rhythm* of gymnastic action can be altered by changing tempo [speed] and emphasising accent within an action or phrase. There may be motifs and pauses, such as those used by Aleksei Nemov (Koppers, 2000), which could both signal and signify to observers, the gymnast's high level of competence and confidence in his performance. There may be aspects of harmony, cadence and balance, which can be developed to create a harmonious linkage between the elements of a routine for a particular gymnast. Also Laban's theories of weight, space, time and flow (Hutchinson, 1974) may add to the choreographic terminology, concepts and devices to analyse and alter the shades of dynamic within gymnastic action in a purposeful way.

In many cases the physiognomy of a gymnast may lend itself to a certain design of choreographed action on a given piece of apparatus. For example, a tall gymnast may perform actions to emphasise his flowing lines, or accentuate his height gain or the apparent "size" of his actions, for example, Szilveszter Csollany, (Hungary), on Rings (Lotz, 2000). Conversely, a shorter, stockier gymnast may wish to emphasise aspects of explosive power, strength and speed in his performance, for example, Ivan Ivankov, (Belarus), on Rings (Lotz, 2000). Flexibility may also be an important physical attribute, which some gymnasts are able to exhibit differently to others, in a way that enhances their performance and observer's interpretation of recognised elements. For example, Alexander Kolyvanov (competing for the Soviet Union in the mid 1980s) was able to demonstrate his Y Scale balance on Floor by standing in Splits position with both arms raised to make a Y shape. This demonstrated incredible flexibility as normally, the raised leg is supported by one hand in the Y balance with the free arm extended above the head. Alexander Kolyvanov was so flexible he was able to hold his leg in a raised position without support, thereby capitalising upon his natural ability to enhance the aesthetic appearance of his Floor routine with his personal technique of performance (Hall, pers. comm.). Whilst body shape may be only one point for choreographic consideration in gymnastics it would appear eminently feasible for all gymnasts to decorate the technical content of their routine with movement

material as a personal signature which identifies the overall aesthetic of *their* performance. A gymnast may feel this is well within his interests at competition in order to distinguish his performances from those of his competitors. Consequently, a strong socio-aesthetic preference being made for one performance over another may seem arbitrary on technical grounds (if the technical content was extremely similar) but significant on aesthetic grounds as a result of individual performance technique. Felipe (2000), in his recommendation's for Rings in the 2001 Code of Points, appears to concede this point of socio-aesthetic preference for gymnastic technique by stating that an "Adjustment of +/-0.05 is available at the conclusion of an exercise to differentiate among performances". This recommendation is not accompanied by any technical explanation in the rules to help judges account for the awarding of these marks. Therefore It may be regarded as an important means for judges to recognise and express their aesthetic preference for a product of gymnastic technique. This recommendation was formally included in the 2001 Code for Rings (Fink, 2001).

Once the technical underlying reality is understood, mastered and recognised, it may be possible for practitioners to develop their ideas about features of individual performance technique which may enhance the appearance of technical execution. Gymnastics practitioners Fie and Dietz (1994) make this point clearly in the paper accompanying their technical video:

The purpose of the video is to assist judges with the judgement of *technique*, value parts and new and difficult elements and to ensure a more consistent standard of judging. Examples of *ideal execution* are shown which provide *technical models* for the evaluation of *techniques* on the Vault, Bars Beam and Floor. [my italics]

Fie and Dietz (1994) clearly recognise that some gymnast's performances appear to be different because of their gymnastic technique to exhibit individuality whilst meeting the technical demands of the elements. The examples of ideal execution, according to technical models, may provide a useful albeit rudimentary reference point to recognise technical detail but may importantly, be helpful in differentiating between features of gymnastic technique. The choreographer of gymnastics may help to create this aesthetic difference in performance technique. The quality of the aesthetic difference they are able to produce may demonstrate their genius in choreography, resulting in what may be regarded as the gymnast's genius in performance.

The perception of genius in performance may emerge from the synergy perceived of the particular actions, which a particular gymnast has trained to exhibit in a particular way. This is to say that the kind of gymnastic action and the choreographed features displayed have been matched to the individual gymnast (which may be a physiognomic consideration) in order that he can give the best of

himself as a competent professional and original gymnast, thus making his actions appear individualised, stylish and gymnastically impressive.

A relevant example which may highlight similar genius in composition matched to specific circumstances, was detailed by Jacobs (2000) concerning the musical partnership of Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe, with particular reference to their work on *My Fair Lady*, the film version. Their challenge was to compose the musical score and lyric for Professor Higgins (Rex Harrison) to sing the words / infer the sentiment "I love you" to Eliza Doolittle (Audrey Hepburn) without actually using the words "I love you". The proud Professor Higgins could not bring himself to say, "I love you". An added and very real problem for Lerner and Loewe was that Rex Harrison had no attractive singing ability whatsoever, but was a most accomplished orator. Their compositional genius was to combine the aesthetic of word and the aesthetic of music to allow Rex Harrison to infer the sentiment "I love you" by posing the spoken phrase "I've grown accustomed to your face" in an inquiring and sympathetic tone. This was set to a musical score, the timing of which enhanced the sentiment of the phrase and Rex Harrison's ability to deliver the line and to 'sing' his song. This is the only song he had in the film. The compositional genius of Lerner and Loewe allowed Rex Harrison, with his limited singing ability, to give of his best with an admirable and pleasing performance and in so doing, enhance the aesthetic of the overall production.

Similarly, an important outcome of choreographing and composing a performance for an individual gymnast may be to exhibit the gymnast as an aesthetic object in his own right. The person, through his technique of performance, may then be admired and contribute significantly to the conception of the overall aesthetic of his performance. Consequently there may be different layers of perception when contemplating the aesthetic object, the order of which may be the opposite to that experienced when the gymnast is learning and perfecting the actions. That is to say that a spectator's initial perception may be a surface one, that recognises the person as a gymnast, i.e. their personal physical appearance as an elite performer. Followed second by the their personal technique of performance which the gymnast and choreographer has developed and thirdly the technical execution of the routine as constructed. This may give rise to the situation whereby the individuality of the gymnast is an important aesthetic variable contributing to international success at competitions. A good example of this may be achieved by comparing the personal gymnastic styles of presentation on Floor by Loannis Melissannidis (Greece) and Aleksei Nemov (Russia), both of whom have very distinctive aesthetic

styles of performance. If a competitor such as Melissannidis were to perform, faultlessly, exactly the same technical content of Nemov's routine it is likely to produce a totally different aesthetic in performance, such may be the importance of personal technique to the overall aesthetic produced. The competitor, Melissannidis in this instance, might appear as the gymnast as trained automaton, i.e. the task of executing technical content designed for another gymnast may not compare with the polished, choreographed, personal technique of the gymnast for whom the routine was designed.

Variations in aesthetic appearance within the realms of the technical may also be possible, allowing a preference to be made for what may be interpreted as the technique of execution. The technical biomechanic of individual execution is required to fall within stipulated boundaries for the action to be completed successfully, for example, tolerances of $+ / - 15$ degrees of error for hold positions on the Rings (Fink, 2001). These seemingly large tolerances may accommodate the individual biomechanics of gymnasts who have varying sizes, weights, shapes and speeds at which they are able to, or choose to, perform their actions. These physical considerations may affect the technical biomechanic that an individual gymnast is best able to utilise, which in turn may affect its aesthetic appearance in comparison to other gymnasts. This could be regarded as technique within the technical i.e. different gymnasts may have different ways of executing the same action within the permissible tolerances of the rules. Consequently, the notion of a standard technical model to assess or achieve the *perfect* execution of elements may create a misconception of objectivity when evaluating Men's Artistic Gymnastics. A technical model may only emerge from the analysis of many attempts at actions by a large range of gymnasts and may therefore become the best approximation of ideal technical execution. I.e. the model is based upon the most efficient biomechanic achieved by averaging the results of all possible biomechanics.

The accuracy of such an approximation may account for the seemingly large tolerances for ideal technical execution listed in the F.I.G. Code of Points, for example 0.1 deduction for a "small error of up to fifteen degrees" (Fink, 2001). Graduated deductions per degree of error may be a more technical and objective assessment of execution if a technological means of measuring angle were utilised. Takei *et al.* (1992) Curtin (1994), Yeadon (1994) and Biggs and Nassar (1997) and have all developed their ideas towards creating technical models of perfect execution using video recording and digital analysis of gymnastic actions. Their technical models for execution of actions may only be a general guide to practitioners, giving them reference points to recognise successful technical execution. As a

result, execution of identical elements by different gymnasts may be deemed as successful in technical F.I.G. terms but may have a different aesthetic appearance due to differences in their physiognomy and personal idiosyncrasies and biomechanical preferences, or choreographed training for performing the action(s). To illustrate this point a comparative study by Arampatzis *et al.* (1997) analysed the biomechanics of elite pole vaulters at the 1997 World Championships and found that eleven vaulters utilised demonstrably different biomechanics to achieve the same end. The point being that all the competitors were performing the same action, similar to when Compulsory Exercises existed pre-1996, but utilised a significantly different [technical] biomechanic to perform it with the result that their vaults did have a different aesthetic appearance. This may be similar to how a group of gymnasts all performing the same element e.g. a Yurchenko on Vault, might use their own biomechanic to execute the element to the best of their ability and their attempts have a slightly different appearance. Depending upon the observer's conception of perfect execution, such differences in appearance may be sufficient to create an aesthetic preference for one performance over the other. The F.I.G. appear to recognise that aesthetic variations in performance, resulting from differences in personal technique, may be significant and Fink (2001) provides a basic example as guidance to practitioners to help them differentiate between the varying aesthetic produced. He says that:

It is possible to perform elements such as a Tkatchev to a handstand on Horizontal Bar but is not yet a reasonable, nor perhaps a desirable, expectation.

It is reasonable however, to expect in all cases that the element be performed ***with technique of such excellence*** that the gymnast has had time to prepare for the re-grasp, that it occur with straight arms, and that it permit continuation with a full, smooth swing. [my emphasis]

From this example, it may be that a demonstration of excellence in individual technique is to perform the Tkatchev to handstand and that, as a baseline, it may be reasonable to expect neat, successful execution as defined by the technical criteria stated.

It may be that different gymnasts could be predisposed towards, or have a natural inclination for creating a certain aesthetic, which identifies them as a gymnast and therefore their performance and style of performing; their *individuality* as a performer (Franks, 1993). This may be a combined physiognomic, psychological and cultural aesthetic consideration, contributing towards what might be understood as the aesthetic persona of an individual gymnast. When a gymnast performs, his aesthetic persona may be physically displayed by his preferred style of doing. It may be that the aesthetic persona of a gymnast is what excites observers at a surface level, helping them to form their

first impression and perhaps anticipation about the gymnast and his performance. This is to infer that the observer may first be thrilled by *how* the gymnast appears and performs his gymnastics, thereafter becoming cognisant of *what* they actually did, if they possess that level of technical knowledge.

The Rings performances during the Apparatus Finals at the 2000 European Championships appear to provide an interesting example of comparative differences in aesthetic persona between elite gymnasts in terms of identifying their personal technique of performance. A point of interest here is that this competition was adjudicated under the previous F.I.G. Code of Points 1997-2001. These rules permitted (rewarded) a greater number of swinging components in a routine than is currently demanded (rewarded) under the new 2001 Code (Felipe, 2000, Fink, 2001). Figure 52 lists the Individual Judges Scores for the competition and Figure 53 lists the Final Results.

The gymnasts ranked from first to sixth have a Start Value of 10.00 except Jordan Jovtchev, Bulgaria (fourth, Start Value 9.90). For the purposes of comparison the gymnasts in first, second, third and fifth positions are of interest because all were judged to have a Start Value of 10.00 and were therefore competing out of equal value. From a technique or surface aesthetic point of view, the performances given by Dimosthenis Tambakos (Greece), first, and Szilveszter Csollany (Hungary), second, appeared to be distinctly different, stylistically, from those given by Ivan Ivankov (Belarus), third, and Marius Toba (Germany), fifth. Tambakos and Csollany appeared to utilise a predominantly swinging style to link their strength elements, which resulted a flowing combination of actions that exhibited what appeared to be *their* unique and personalised linkage of actions throughout their routines. Significantly the technical content of their routines were different (different elements) causing both gymnasts to exhibit different linkage technique or personal strategy to show their elements within what might be termed generally, as a swinging style. Consequently the performances given by Tambakos and Csollany were quite different from each other despite their shared preference for a 'swinging style' to combine their strength elements on the Rings. From a physiognomic point of view, Tambakos and Csollany are of similar build being tall and slender compared to Ivan Ivankov and Marius Toba who are of relatively short and stocky build. It may be that a tall and slender build lends itself to a swinging style of linkage on the Rings for these gymnasts. By contrast, the performances given by Ivankov and Toba appeared to accentuate their physical strength by their staccato, skill by skill display of elements with minimal swinging.





Ivan Ivankov performed only two forward long swings before his dismount with all the remaining strength elements performed almost as static poses, there being a conspicuous lack of swinging style to link and combine his strength elements. This may have been a display of Ivankov's aesthetic persona for strength and control on the Rings exhibited through his performance technique. Marius Toba appeared to utilise a similar staccato, skill by skill technique to Ivan Ivankov (although not as well executed on this occasion) and their routines looked remarkably similar at a surface level, in a way that the performances by Tambakos and Csollany did not. An interesting anomaly here was the performance given by Jordan Jovtchev, (Bulgaria), fourth, who was judged to have a Start Value of 9.90. His performance technique appeared similar to that of Ivankov and Toba, but perhaps more impressive at a surface level because he linked a most awe-inspiring combination of strength elements during his routine. This was to the extent that he may have been penalised for having an unbalanced routine i.e. there was a clear bias towards the combination of purely strength elements as well as perhaps, not demonstrating the level of technical difficulty in combining elements that the other gymnasts did to achieve a Start Value of 10.00. However, his aesthetic persona for strength, power and control as a gymnast on the Rings appeared particularly conspicuous and obvious compared to the other finalists which may have contributed to the aesthetic he determined to create about himself as a gymnast, in order that he might be identified by that kind of performance on this apparatus (and vice-versa). This analysis is made by personal observation of the Individual Apparatus Finals and reference to video footage of the events (Eurosport Live 25th - 28th May, 2000).

In view of this situation it could be that a gymnast's technique of performance may not be guided totally by the scoring protocols and rewards for a certain style or technique in their performance. It could be that gymnasts are predisposed to develop their performance technique in their own personal way, which may or may not be favoured by the rules. That is to infer that, from a scoring of view, it may have been logical for all gymnasts to display a swinging style on the Rings, rather than predominantly static strength, because the 1997-2001 Code may have favoured that kind of action and they may have achieved greater rewards and success than they might otherwise have gained. However, they appeared not to do this preferring instead to perform in such a way that was best suited to them as an individual gymnast, all naturally having different strengths and techniques that they choose to exhibit and accentuate. Tambakos and Csollany may have been lucky in this regard because their personal technique may have given them an advantage under the 1997-2001 Code.

Interestingly, under the 2001 Code this situation appears to be reversed in that there is much greater emphasis on strength elements with many of the popular swinging elements being down-graded, for example, the tucked Guczoghy from D to C (Felipe, 2000). This rule change may favour the techniques of Ivankov, Toba and Jovtchev although they may have to execute greater technical difficulty to achieve a Start Value of 10.00 under the 2001 Code.

Significantly, it may have been that Ivankov, Toba and Jovtchev were unable to alter their performance technique because of their aesthetic persona – their evident predisposition towards and preference for, strength and power in gymnastic action. Similarly, the test for Tambakos and Csollany was to alter their performance techniques to meet the demands of rule changes for strength elements on Rings under the new 2001 Code, in order to excel at the same level of international competition. Interestingly, under a newly introduced Code at the 2001 World Championships, Jordan Jotchev won Gold on the Rings (Apparatus Finals) with a similar routine to that performed at the 2000 European Championships. Figure 54 lists the results with Csollany and Tambakos as runners up.

Csollany and Tambakos attempted to alter their routines to meet the demands of the 2001 Code but could not produce the exhibition of strength that may be the new aesthetic desired by the F.I.G. on this apparatus (personal observation). Ivan Ivankov (Belarus) came fourth on this occasion but significantly, had not altered the style of his routine from the European Championships (Schoenmaekers, 2001).

Limitations for composing artistically with gymnastic technique

In closing, analysis of the concepts of composition and expression, may help to indicate some of the limitations that the named activity of Men's Artistic Gymnastics places upon artistic creativity and freedom of expression within this aesthetic sport. The development of personal performance technique may allow a gymnast the space to exhibit how ingenious and clever he can be to interpret and individualise the elements within his routine. This could be conceived as the limit of their *artistic freedom* as a performer to alter the aesthetic they create, in a way that accentuates their strengths and gymnastic capabilities. However they are not free to express and experiment in the way that mainstream artists seem to be, i.e. those people behaving creatively and artistically in a context with comparatively less well-defined parameters, such as painters, sculptors and dancers.

These people may have a greater freedom to express their ideas, emotions and beliefs about the world in a manner, which may be deemed as being artistic. An integral element of their artistic endeavour may be to challenge the contemporary understanding of a topic by what they produce and the way they present it. Practitioners of gymnastics do not appear to have this level of freedom to express. This is because the aesthetic product of a gymnastics performance is presented and evaluated strictly in accordance with the rules as stipulated in the F.I.G. Code of Points. Consequently, radical artistic variations in gymnastic performance or even simply performing actions, which appear to be gymnastic or acrobatic but are not included in the F.I.G. Code of Points, may result in the presentation not being recognised as Men's Artistic Gymnastics – it would seemingly become a display of something else which is ostensibly related, for example, the performance of a gymnastic clown. The context of the gymnastic performance seems therefore, to be of pivotal importance. The gymnastic clown, similar to the Men's Artistic gymnast, will perform their comic routine with extreme technical precision and may decorate their performance with a great deal of personal technique in order to entertain. In this situation the gymnastic clown may only be played successfully by a highly skilled gymnast who has, in order to play the role, greater freedom to express and experiment with gymnastic action to create a comic presentation. This is what may be expected from him in this non-competitive context. This situation may be seen to occur during the Gala Night, performed by gymnasts at the Olympic Games. The context and purpose a gymnastic presentation may affect how its' aesthetic is conceived, although the demands for precise technical execution remain exceedingly high.

This constraint on artistic freedom to express may be similar to that affecting composition in other artistic disciplines where a rigid aesthetic structure defines the end product. For example in literature, a sonnet has fourteen lines, if it has more or less it would not be recognised as a sonnet. The sonnets of Shakespeare and Elizabeth Barret-Browning have become regarded as classic examples of literary composition within the traditional sonnet form. Also, within music there are seventy-six musical forms each having a distinct structure; aesthetic form, that defines their existence, such as a fugue. A fugue is a form of contrapuntal musical composition that involves the complex discussion (counterpoint / repetition) of *one* fundamental musical idea (The Oxford Interactive Encyclopaedia, 1997). The challenge and discipline of composition within these literary and musical forms may have been to show how creative and imaginative they could be within the strict confines of a given aesthetic

structure. To this extent there may be a similarity for composing and choreographing movement material in Men's Artistic Gymnastics. The F.I.G. Code of Points providing an aesthetic structure, largely in technical terms and also the norms and traditions of men's gymnastics (historical aspect) which helps to define, aesthetically, that which is Men's Artistic Gymnastics and that which is not.

Within the defining boundaries of the sport, the individual technique of the gymnast could be developed by choreographers and coaches to exhibit *their* gymnastic idea. This raises many issues concerning an artistic process in Men's Artistic Gymnastics. Palmer (1999) researched aesthetic and artistic concepts of form and expression in relation to gymnastics to consider the extent to which the named sport may be considered artistic. A selection of questions raised to explore some artistic issues were: Who is the artist? Who performs the creative act that may be regarded as distinctly artistic? And, what or who is the medium of Men's Artistic Gymnastics? From an artistic point of view it may be reasonable to say that the gymnast is performing the work of others, similar to that of musicians performing the works of composers. In this instance the coach and choreographer may have shaped and moulded the gymnast (medium) to perform their creative and artistic design within the aesthetic structure of Men's Artistic Gymnastics. The coach and choreographer could be regarded as the inspirational artists and it could be logical for their work to become the focus of artistic scrutiny and evaluation and to credit them as being the instigators of any artistic endeavours in gymnastics. However, whilst the work of the coach and choreographer may be exhibited in some way it is not performed by them, it is the gymnast's performance of it, that is of principal interest during a competition. Furthermore the gymnast may only be able to provide *his* interpretation of their work due to his unique disposition as a gymnast. The coach and choreographers work is solely in a support role, geared towards producing a tailored, well defined personal technique for an individual gymnast, who may be able to bring some additional character to their work by virtue of his physical presence and psychological state as a performer i.e. his aesthetic persona.

Additionally Men's Artistic Gymnastics is not presented as art, it is presented as a competitive sport within the context of rules and general sporting boundaries such as identifying winners and losers, fair play, acceptable conduct and medal positions which may not occur in an artistic context as significant motivating factors to take part. Nor does gymnastics utilise formal artistic theory to evaluate its products, for example theories of symbolism, form or minimalism. However, gymnastics does appear to involve an aspect of expression whereby performances are given for public contemplation, being

valued by the quality conceived in their aesthetic appearance, rather than by "purposive" means (Best, 1978) such as times, distances and heights achieved, akin to a track and field athlete. This may point towards a concept of *self-expression* in Men's Artistic Gymnastics during which the creative efforts of the gymnast are seemingly two-fold. Firstly, for the gymnast to produce an aesthetic in performance which is recognisable and legal as Men's Artistic Gymnastics, this being an expression of gymnastic competence in performing the contemporary elements of the sport. This may be a personal expression of the level of difficulty that a gymnast is capable of executing, for example, a performance of the Tkatchev to handstand position. Secondly, for the gymnast to give the best of themselves as a performer which may be an expression of their personal, physical and psychological selves which identifies their performance technique and them as a gymnast; their aesthetic persona. This may be an expression of how well the gymnast is able to personalise the technical through his technique to create an aesthetic in performance which exhibits both the gymnastic elements and the gymnast in a unique and interesting way. Therefore, it could be said that the extent of artistic endeavour in Men's Artistic Gymnastics may be attributed to the *self-expression of the gymnast to define his performance within the bounds of the sport in a way that identifies him.*

The intentional act of choreographing the movement material, which may be realised within a gymnast's routine, could provide the performer with an aesthetic distinction from his competitors. This may be a useful and or, advantageous at international competition. During a performance, an observer may interpret this distinction as individuality and excellence in technique that the gymnast displays. Their gymnastic style could be so impressive that the gymnast may be admired as a virtuoso and an *artistic* performer of Men's Artistic Gymnastics, if their socio-aesthetic experience and gymnastic knowledge allows them to make such a judgement. For example, gymnasts such as Boris Shaklin (Russia 1950s), Mitsuo Tsukahara (Japan 1970s) and Dmitry Bilozerchev (Russia 1980s) were admired in the sport for their exciting performances and individual technique as performers (Coote, 1976; Killanin and Rodda, 1976; Ziert, 2001). This could be similar to the admiration that a critic of ballet might have shown, for the unique, artistic performances of Russian ballet dancers, Vaslav Nijinsky (1890-1950) and Rudolf Nureyev (1938-1993) as they performed their choreographed versions of famous ballets (Woodward, 1977).

From a gymnastic point of view, the development of performance technique would ideally allow elements to be executed unambiguously in technical terms in order for them to be recognised and

scored whilst simultaneously expressing some exceptional flair in their style of presentation during a performance. In so doing they may alter the aesthetic appearance of the elements and combinations to the extent that observers are able to recognise them as legal F.I.G. elements but importantly, they are performed in a traditional gymnastically acceptable manner. This may indicate that the history of presentation in gymnastics is also a defining characteristic that identifies the sport and the gymnast as a performer within it. For example, traditional aspects of gymnastics that help to identify the sport may be marching, stepping, saluting and discipline in deportment to present a purposeful, neat, strong, efficient and elegant aspects of the gymnast's body. This involves physical conditioning to maintain tension in the limbs and body; toes pointed with straight arms, legs and back to accentuate the line of the body when executing all elements in a routine, particularly when transferring from dynamic actions to static balances. This is to point out that gymnasts do not have the artistic freedom to interpret elements from the F.I.G. Code of Points in anything else but a gymnastically acceptable way, which may be grounded in the history and traditions of the sport. For example, as an intentional act, the gymnast may not expect to be admired for performing in a sloppy, untensioned and gymnastically untidy way or any other imaginative interpretation, which might challenge the norms and traditions of the sport. Other imaginative interpretations of elements, such as a back somersault with one leg straight and one leg tucked, performed neatly in a gymnastic sense, would also be considered absurd by practitioners as reasoning in gymnastics and the stipulated rules require this to be the conclusion. However, from an artistic point of view, this could be regarded as a new, fresh and avant-garde interpretation which challenges the accepted norm, as has been the task of the majority of modern art (Kozloff, 1968; Shahn, 1974; Gaunt, 1975).

When observing a gymnastic performance one may perceive, from the entirety of aesthetic material on display, that features of technical and technique may be significant aspects of the display. However, if there is a bias towards comprehending the sport from a purely technical point of view, which the F.I.G. Code of Points seems to indicate, the contribution of individual performance technique to the overall aesthetic produced may be undervalued and misunderstood as merely, a beautifying by-product that may be revealed by default when executing gymnastic actions. Years of gymnastic conditioning and choreographing to create an aesthetic of individualised gymnastic technique may indicate that this is not the case.

The technique of a gymnast may identify him and his performance in a unique way by creating an aesthetic that only that gymnast can create. It is *his* aesthetic by definition. *His* excellence in technique or gymnastic mastery may create a different appearance to the performances of his competitors, all of whom rely upon a good technical foundation of skill accomplishment. This begs an important question, under present scoring protocols (Fink, 2001), that when all the technical content has been accounted for, what sets the gymnast's performances apart? In response, Hall (pers. comm.) offers an opinion, as an expert practitioner who is preparing gymnasts for international competitions:

You pose a question about how gymnasts are set apart when all technical content has been evaluated. There have been many instances when a number of gymnasts have a 10.00 Start Score in a final, and all have similar potential for B jury deductions. It is my experience that, in this case, the judge will favour the gymnast with greater difficulty or originality over the others. This **unwritten rule prevails** and has a psychological tendency to one-tenth deduction less than a stock 10 routine from other competitors.

At the 2000 Olympics in Sydney last year at least 5 gymnasts performed a 10.00 Start Score with few errors in the Pommels final, but the Gold went to Marius Urzica, who had far greater difficulty and originality than his counterparts. Under Fink's Code [proposed alternative system of scoring] he would have been around 11.6 Start Score and, whilst the rules did not allow for this, the judges were more than conscious of his mastery when calculating the final score. This may be a very powerful argument for an additive system.

This response seems to indicate that there may be a great deal of aesthetic material, which is currently overlooked, that could contribute towards a more comprehensive evaluation of the aesthetic product than is currently recognised. The performances of elite gymnasts are progressively demonstrating an increase in technical accomplishment [difficulty] with a requisite increase in aspects of personal technique. However, there does not appear to be an increase or broadening of the scoring and evaluation process to accommodate this aspect of the aesthetic they present. This may be due to a number of practical considerations in the scoring process, but the outcome under the present F.I.G. Code of Points may be that some gymnasts are unable to be awarded (rewarded) for the special aesthetic they create through their performance.

The following section will consider a creative process in gymnastics and how it might be utilised to develop stylistic gymnastic action. The concepts of fashion, style, traditional and classical, that have been used as general descriptive terms to discuss gymnastic actions in the past (pers. comm.), will be analysed as a basis for a mechanism of aesthetic taste. Analysis of these terms may reveal how a socio-aesthetic preference in gymnastic action may be formulated.

6. Cultural Selection of Aesthetic Material in Men's Artistic Gymnastics

"There is no branch of human knowledge from philosophy to social history that cannot shed light on one or other of the factors that determine the taste of man, a geographical area, a stratum of society or a decade" (Newton, 1950).

6.1 A mechanism of taste in Men's Artistic Gymnastics

The task of this section will be to examine ways that aesthetic taste could affect the selection of aesthetic material in Men's Artistic Gymnastics by considering:

- A creative process from which new and innovative gymnastic material may emerge.
- The notion of a "sieve of taste" (Newton, 1950) as a mechanism for filtering new gymnastic material and the process by which some gymnastic material may become established or rejected over time.

Analysing a mechanism of taste in men's gymnastics may identify a process of selection by which aesthetic material could become integrated into, or filtered out of gymnastic usage. This process may function upon the basis of creation and evaluation of gymnastic actions and centre around *intra-cultural* and *inter-cultural* preferences for styles of performance. One product of this highly selective process seems to be the increasingly stylistic appearance of some gymnasts who specialise on one or two pieces of apparatus solely to contribute scores to the Team Competition. Another may be "monotony of performance" (Fink, 1999a) by gymnasts who qualify for the All Round competition who are able to repeat difficult elements on various apparatus such as the double back somersault between the bars on Parallel Bars, the Kovacs on High Bar and the Guzcoghy on Rings. Also gymnasts who are able to accentuate an aesthetic feature of themselves and the sport, such as physical strength, may execute holds and elements on nearly all apparatus that perpetuate that image, for example Ivan Ivankov, Belarus. A result of playing to ones strengths as a gymnast may by default, present a stylised aesthetic in performance.

A mechanism for selecting gymnastic action appears to have been in operation at national and international levels for many years. This may be evidenced by successive Codes, National Development Plans and the recent rapid rate of change that has been documented within the sport (Atkinson, 1993; Van Hoof, 1996; Zschocke, 1997; Fink, 1999, 1999a, 2000, 2000a, 2001; Hall *et al.* 2000; Hall, 2001). The aim of these publications may have been to identify what counts as gymnastic

action from a particular point of view. For example, the F.I.G. Code of Points attempts to stipulate for Men's Artistic Gymnastics specifically, as opposed to other forms of gymnastics which exist. In clarifying Men's Artistic Gymnastics, the F.I.G. seemingly demonstrate their taste in gymnastic actions by discriminating for and against certain kinds of gymnastic material. Their preference being selected from the plethora of gymnastic material that exists. An understanding of how a selective mechanism of taste may operate could allow practitioners to recognise features of "taste" in gymnastics, so called in its passive sense, "style" in its creative sense (Newton, 1950), in a way that could inform their evaluation of the aesthetic object and perhaps, guide their creation of new gymnastic material.

As Newton (1950) points out above, a unique mixture of geographical, social and time positions may be the catalyst that helps a cultural gymnastic concept to become established and others recognised. Consequently, a national gymnastic identity or cultural concept of gymnastic action may emerge, the appearance of which may depend upon *their* history of gymnastics in relation to *their* interpretation of standards, *their* natural inclination towards gymnastic skilfulness and *their* preferred technique of performance. That is to say that the whole of the aesthetic material that constitutes a cultural comprehension of gymnastic action may have been formulated by a culturally defined creative process, which may give rise to cultural performance trends and traits in men's gymnastics. The products of this process may then by default, be subjected to a further mechanism of taste, which selects gymnastic material at an institutional level. This may then become included in each Code of Points for international competition.

A corporate image in gymnastic action; style perceived in the aesthetic object, may become evident from a creative process and thereafter a process of selection by cultural taste. This could help to identify a national team in a way that, from their point of view, may be self-promoting and within the rules because aesthetic aspects of their preferred gymnastic style may be beyond stipulation in the rules. The national teams from U.S.A., Spain, France, Russia and China currently appear to have what could be described as a corporate image by virtue of their ostensible gymnastic style in performance (personal observation). The stylistic endeavour of these teams may not have been to deliberately appear different to their competitors. Rather that they may have accentuated and co-ordinated aspects of their cultural-aesthetic material within the technical content of the performance which, as a team, displays a distinctive effect that identifies them.

Artistic Gymnastics due to the contextual requirements of the sport and therefore its artistic limitations (Reid, 1974; Lowe, 1976; Best, 1978a; Cooper, 1978; Saraf, 1980) as discussed in the previous section. With gymnastics being presented as sport not art, an emotional response to a stimulus that could eventually shape a gymnastic action may be the nearest that some gymnastic practitioners get to an artistic act within their sport. Additionally, the envisaging of a new move may be based upon more technical/biomechanical possibilities rather than emotion, although the *desire* to perform a new move is an emotional drive. This kind of motivation may help to give some form to what is envisaged by a practitioner.

Authors who have analysed the artistic act, generally with reference to mainstream art, commonly make reference to an “aesthetic emotion” as part of the concept of artistic expression (Dewey, 1934; Sparshott, 1963; Langer, 1967; Carrit, 1969; Best, 1974, Sheppard, 1987). Their theories concerning aesthetic emotion can typically be divided into two areas; the creative process of the artist and the emotional response evoked in the spectator (Sheppard, 1987). An emotional response may be an important indicator and director of the “natural likings” (Gracyk, 1990) of practitioners, who may have been involved with a creative process that has contributed to their particular stock of knowledge and experience about gymnastics, which they draw upon to make their judgements when they spectate. That is, their aesthetic emotion towards something may educate their sense of taste, through years of tuition, which may cause them to differentiate intuitively between the kinds of gymnastic material performed (McLuhan and Fiore, 1967). Newton (1950) makes a similar point about the judgement of taste when he states:

The phrases good taste and bad taste involve two variable quantities – the goodness or badness of the work of art judged (*it is in bad taste*) and the sensitivity, developed or undeveloped, of the judge (*he has bad taste*).

Newton (1950), Santayana (1955) and Sparshott (1963) propose theories of aesthetic beauty from which an emotional stimulus might be recognised and initiate a creative process that could shape, mould and produce a certain kind of gymnastic action for public display. Newton’s (1950) theory of “associations, loves and disgusts” provides an accessible account of expression that could initiate a creative process in gymnastics, from a cultural point of view. He claims that the emotional response towards something, i.e. a love or disgust, arises from a complex set of associations that help to constitute *experience*. Newton (1950) points out that:

The eye cannot arbitrate alone. Each of our senses contributes its share to the total of sensation and perception, and what results is an amalgam of experience that is far more complex than is commonly realised.

A person's stock of experience within a given culture may allow a number of associations to be made about a particular event that may elicit a particular emotional response. For example, Newton (1950) clarifies this point by stating:

The Blackbirds song has an admirable purity, but its rhythm and its intervals are too elementary to be musically interesting. Yet, associated as it is with spring afternoons, sunshine and shady lawns, it becomes part of a sum of experiences that will trap one into regarding it as beautiful.

Consequently, Newton (1950) claims there is no such thing as pure experience, only a central experience, which is either reinforced or contradicted by subsidiary experiences associated with it. He continues that loves and disgusts may be guided by experience which result in an emotional attitude towards a particular event or phenomena and that no conscious effort is required for this process of discrimination to operate. Newton (1950) concludes that:

The remarkable feature in this process is the power of the mind to arrive at a verdict, without being conscious that the evidence on which it is based comes from so many different sources.

Within a culture, an intuitive emotional response for an idea that may be transmuted to gymnastic action could be drawn from a wide variety of disparate sources in the environment. These sources may be experienced randomly i.e. geographically, socially and in time, for example, aspects of history, religion, music, films, architecture, food, bridge design, car design, house design, military heritage, art, and political stance etcetera. Within the British culture there may be aesthetic features of design that are quintessentially British that shape initial ideas to start a creative process. Similarly, features of design in other cultures such as in French or Chinese cultures, may provide a central experience (Newton, 1950), that influences the shape of their gymnastic idea and their palate of taste for the aesthetic qualities perceived in the gymnastic actions produced. The aesthetic heritage of the gymnastic idea itself such as environmental features may be like a genetic blueprint that could be reflected in the appearance of a culture's gymnastics concept. Consequently the creation, appreciation and evaluation of aesthetic material in gymnastics may be culturally defined. This point is raised in order to highlight that not just any idea may enter a creative process. It may be a culturally defined idea that progresses through a creative process that may itself be guided by cultural preference. Judgement of the new product and its place amongst established gymnastic material may also be

subject to cultural interpretation and preference, ever mindful of how the stipulated rules may dictate for that period in time.

Figure 55 indicates the stages of a creative process from the stimulus of a gymnastic idea, to a notion of newly created (unique even) gymnastic products. The kinds of gymnastic ideas that enter this process could be focused at for example, new kinds of gymnastic linkage, designing completely new actions or the consecutive linking of existing elements that were previously unconnected. A creative process such as indicated in Figure 55, might also become a teaching process from which two distinctions of gymnastic material may emerge; material that may be new to them and material that may be new to the world. For example, a teacher may guide students through a creative process to produce a product that is new to them, but not new to the world. The notion of so called, Educational Gymnastics, may be a teaching style that facilitates exploration and personal discovery of some new to them gymnastic ideas for students of gymnastics. Furthermore, this teaching style may only become possible when students have been trained and physically conditioned to perform safely and confidently as gymnasts. A gymnastics coach may take an elite performer through a creative process and develop a new move i.e. a new gymnastic action that may be new to the world for use in international competition. However, these instances are rare and may occur only once during the career of some of the world's very best gymnasts. From the distinctions of new to whom, *levels* of creativity in gymnastics may become apparent, which in turn could be commensurate with *levels* of gymnastic expertise to envisage, coach or perform within the sport. The outcome for the sport may be that true creativity in Men's Artistic Gymnastics may only be shown by exceptionally masterful elite gymnasts, who have the ability to present a gymnastic idea that is new to the world, within the confines of the F.I.G. rules. For example, when the Tsukahara vault was first performed by Mitsuo Tsukahara at the Mexico Olympics in 1968, he may have been truly creative. However, it may be reasonable to claim that teachers and coaches of gymnastics may experience degrees of success with either groups or individuals, to produce in the main, new to them products.

This is to point out that creativity in gymnastics:

- may have levels, distinguishing between educative and elite performance in gymnastics,
- could take years for a creative process to reveal true creativity, and that,
- only a small number of practitioners may be truly creative or innovative which may be indicated by their naming of a skill. I.e. when a unique action has been created and has been shown to the world

via a competition format, that particular action may now and in the future, be identified as a “xxxxxx” (name of gymnast - originator) in recognition of their creative achievement.

- The majority of Men’s Artistic Gymnastics appears to be at a new to them level as even elite gymnasts copy that which has gone before, although perhaps, striving to achieve increasingly difficult combinations of copied actions.

This is a theoretical explanation of how creativity in Men’s Artistic Gymnastics could be understood, at least in part. That is to say that this thesis is gleaned from literature on creativity and direct observation of a gymnastic process; observation of coaching, judging and competition, during this research. It seems that no one really knows where/when or how new ideas arise and aesthetician’s theories for their genesis may be the only explanation that is possible. However, rapid development within gymnastics indicates that new ideas do arise from somewhere, as they may be exhibited on the competition podium. Of particular interest here is that the product of that gymnastic creativity is immediately subject to aesthetic evaluation and differentiation in gymnastic terms. The performance of gymnastic actions, as opposed to any other kind of action, infers that an aesthetic evaluation is intrinsic to it. Therefore in gymnastics, whilst the physical execution of gymnastic feats may be a necessary condition for the sport’s existence, it may not be a sufficient one. That is, good technical execution may not necessarily equate to a high level of aesthetic appreciation which could be due to possibilities of interpretation of the gymnastic and perhaps creative product.

Figure 55. A Creative Process Related to Men's Artistic Gymnastics.

<p>Stimulus - A Gymnastic Idea</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ability to envisage possible kinds of gymnastic ideas, drawing upon a gymnastic heritage of aesthetic material. ▪ Lessons in gymnastics, educative function. ▪ Motivation: a need to compete. ▪ Motivation: a need to develop new gymnastics actions for competitions.
<p>Response</p>	<p>Improvisation: Practical playing with gymnastic ideas related to stimulus to find an appropriate response.</p>
<p>Selection / Rejection</p>	<p>Choice of found gymnastic ideas / reject others.</p>
<p>Initial Ordering</p>	<p>Patterning / sequencing of the gymnastic idea. A whole created that is repeatable. May be termed as new linkage, new move, or new combination of elements that may be identified by a name.</p>
<p>Composing / the creation of form / Aggregation</p>	<p>The using of the found ordered patterns of new gymnastic action, in combination with other gymnastic action to create a greater and more complex whole. Potential to integrate the gymnastic idea into routine.</p>
<p>Mastering / Skill learning</p>	<p>The skilful use of the body to master the action at its location within the gymnastic routine.</p>
<p>Polishing</p>	<p>Expert anticipation and execution of the action within the routine to create a seamless whole that presents an aesthetic in performance that may be pleasing to execute and to watch.</p>
<p>Perform</p>	<p>Presentation of the gymnastic idea to others at competition.</p>
<p>Criticise and Evaluate</p>	<p>Aesthetically educate i.e. indicate the worth of the gymnastic idea in comparison to historically accepted standards of gymnastic action.</p>
<p>Establish</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new move may be accepted into the F.I.G. Code of Points as a valid gymnastic element for a given cycle. • The linkage idea could maintain its aesthetic appeal as gymnasts repeat it. It may be retained as part of personal signature or become part of national signature. • The technique of the instigating gymnast is copied by others and technical improvements may occur.
<p>A notion of creativity</p>	<p>There may be levels of creativity depending upon whether the gymnastic product is new to them, being learned or presented as new to the world. True creativity in Men's Artistic Gymnastics may only become evident at the very top level of performance.</p>

6.3 The notion of a “sieve of taste” (Newton, 1950) as a mechanism for filtering new gymnastic material and the process by which some gymnastic material may become established or rejected over time.

A judgement of gymnastic taste such as declaring an action to be good, poor, beautiful or ugly, may only be made from a position within the cultural make-up of the gymnastic world. Newton (1950) highlights the implication of this relationship by claiming that the history of taste may never be written because:

To collect the necessary data would require not only superhuman devotion, but also an awareness of the influences that mould civilisation, which no single human being could possess. Moreover, the history of taste is the history of vanished loves and prejudices and whoever undertakes it will be at a disadvantage in that he himself will be at the mercy of his own active loves and prejudices.

Because we are all part of nature's plan (Newton, 1950), a view of perfect form in gymnastic action may be an anathema due to man's cultural disposition to make *his own* evaluation of that presented to him (Gaarder, 1997). Therefore, practitioners who make a value judgement about the aesthetic of a gymnastic action, whether in coaching or scoring at competitions, may do so from their unique cultural perspective. That is, they may be influenced to some degree by *their* own education of aesthetic taste in gymnastics. Two possible outcomes from an aesthetic education in gymnastics may be a) the acquisition of technical knowledge to apply the stipulated rules and b) the preparation of the faculties for intensely meaningful and enjoyable experiences by developing personal sensitivities and taste for certain styles in gymnastic presentation (Goldman, 1990). Goldman (1990) claims that the benefits of an education of this kind are:

The self-understanding of what causes one's enjoyment and appreciation of particular works. Another is that appreciation of the finer points of technique and style allows one better to enter the world of the artist himself, to perceive the subject matter and the set of artistic problems solved by the work as he perceived them.

As a result of his gymnastic education and developed sense of taste, a practitioner may have a unique cultural insight from which to comprehend and evaluate gymnastic actions. However, Goldman (1990) points out that “if evaluations are relative to taste, then correctness of interpretations will be also”. He then draws the conclusion that “an aesthetic education cannot enable students to make correct evaluations if no evaluation is correct or incorrect” (Goldman, 1990). Therefore, the idea of pure objective judgements in gymnastics may be challenged by the notion that the whole of aesthetic material in gymnastics, from creation to evaluation, may be culturally defined. This may render

aesthetic assessment at competitions as being a compromise upon cultural ideals in gymnastics which may question the value practitioners place upon of the score given to a performance by 'outsiders'. However, despite the differences in the learning and acquiring of cultural taste in gymnastic action, many nations are motivated to compete in Men's Artistic Gymnastics, as opposed to giving non-competitive displays of *their* gymnastics concept. The international agreement of stipulated rules and allowable skill content for "major manifestations" (competitions) serves to provide a basic framework of boundaries within which competitions might be staged. It also indicates that a mechanism of taste may act in two opposing directions, serving to counteract each other and stabilise to some degree the seemingly disparate evaluation possibilities. The top-down selection of rules and skill content may stipulate what counts as gymnastics from the F.I.G.'s institutional point of view, whilst the bottom-up interpretations of aesthetic material in gymnastics may define how gymnastics could be exhibited from a cultural point of view.

Successive F.I.G. Codes have repeatedly appealed for impartiality from the judge's when carrying out their evaluative duties at competition (Lylo, 1975; Gander 1979; Zschocke, 1989, 1993, 1997; Fink 2001). Newton (1950) clarifies how this F.I.G. requirement might be realised by stating:

When we are dealing with the complexity of human preferences and disgusts which added together produce what is known as taste, he must guard against his own taste. He cannot discard it but he must be aware of it. His picture will certainly be distorted, but if he knows that he is distorting, he will at least be under no illusion that his work can have the finality of an objective record.

Public acknowledgement by practitioners, that they may have a distorted picture of perfection in gymnastics may be one step towards impartiality in judging. However, an explanation of *how* a mechanism of taste could select and reject aesthetic objects may be given with reasonable impartiality, as it may not be concerned with producing a value judgement of taste in gymnastics. Rather, it may indicate to practitioners a method of comprehending the variety of aesthetic material presented which may serve a more useful purpose when analysing gymnastic material from their own and other nations. It is a mechanism that could be roughly compared to a sieve whose mesh has the power to sort and reject qualities and gymnastic skills instead of sizes. What passes through the sieve at a given moment in time is the raw material that the critic must work on (Newton, 1950). However, the characteristics of the mesh in the sieve may determine what material is allowed to pass through which may be dependent upon one's central experiences geographically, socially and in time. A simplified view may be that each culture develops its own sieve of taste in gymnastic action and the

aesthetic material that passes through, provides a unique reference to define a cultural gymnastic concept in time and style of performance, for example, perception of historical or religious symbolic gesture. From this information, a practitioner might be able to recognise classic or traditional features of gymnastics that identify a specific culture and/or a gymnast.

The competing interests of Romanticism and Classicism appear to give impetus to a selective mechanism which may determine the survival of aesthetic material that enters the sieve of taste (Newton, 1950). The movement of taste acceptance from the new, avant-garde and fashionable (Romantic) to the older established and surviving (Classic) may provide a useful theoretical model from which to explain how aesthetic selection could occur in gymnastics. Barzun (1994) states that:

Romanticism can be seen as a rejection of the precepts of order, calm, harmony, balance, idealisation, and rationality that typified Classicism. Romanticism emphasised the individual, the subjective, the irrational, the imaginative, the personal, the spontaneous, the emotional, the visionary, and the transcendental.

This theoretical proposition could reveal some of the forces within aesthetics, which with the catalyst of time, may account for the introduction of the new move; today's romanticism and its survival towards tomorrow's classicism.

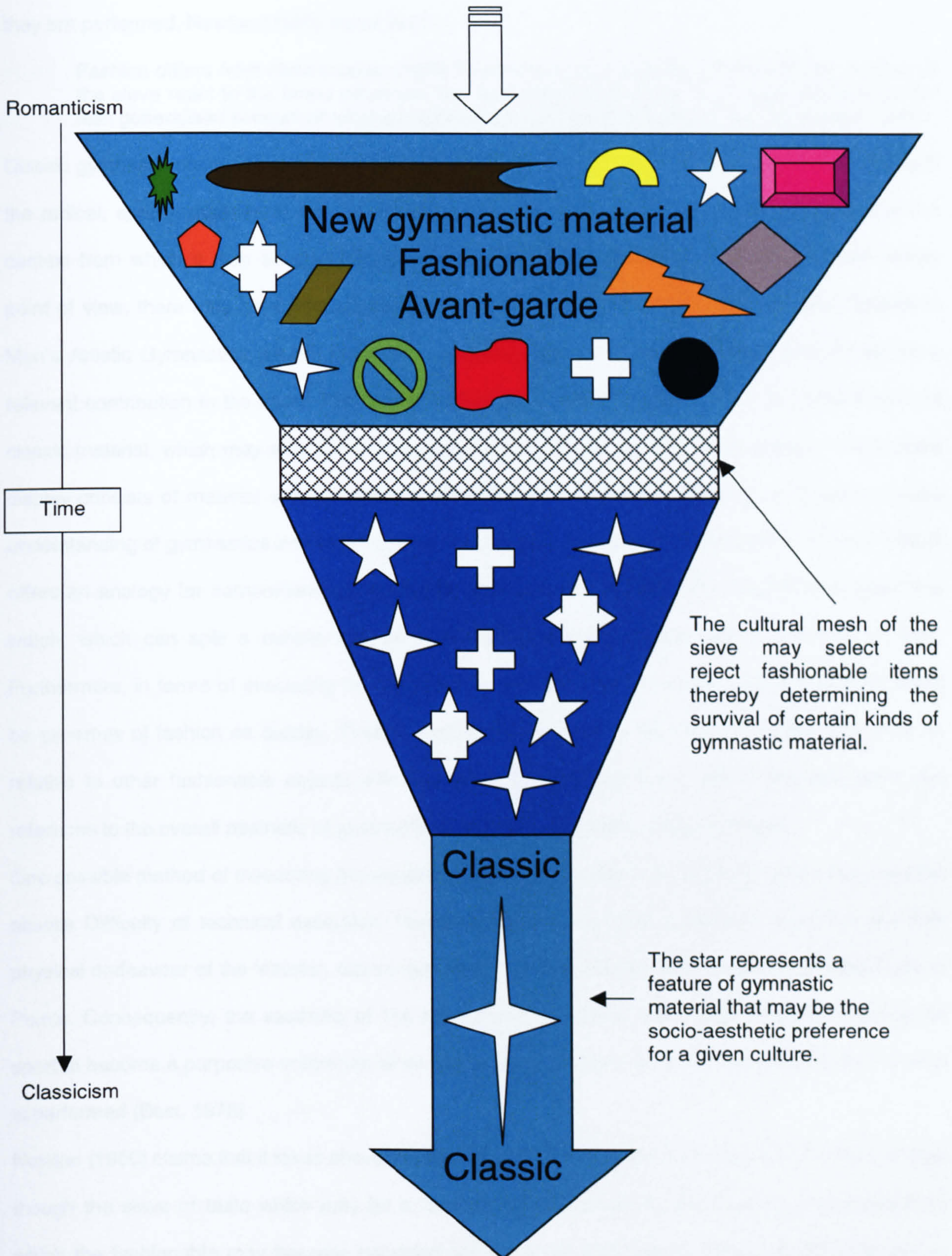
Figure 56 illustrates how the mechanism of a sieve of taste may filter and select a genre of aesthetic material, represented by a star shape, from a wide range of fashionable shapes which over time may become regarded as a classic example of kind. This could indicate how a socio-aesthetic identity may be established from which a socio-aesthetic preference may be expressed about other presentations in the future. Consequently, the terms fashionable and classic may acquire critical meanings as they may affect a comprehensive understanding of taste in gymnastic action, particularly when it is considered along the time line that a cultural sieve may be acting.

Fashionable status in gymnastic action

Gymnastic actions and/or aesthetic features of gymnastic performance, that enter a mechanism of taste may at first be awarded fashionable status, denoting their young, avant-garde relationship to older, established gymnastic actions that may have classic status. Newton (1950) states that the sieve of taste "always rejects more than it transmits" with the result that the life expectancy of the new object may be short because of its fashionable status. That is to say, by definition, that the fashionable object has not existed long enough for judgements of, and comparisons with classic taste to be made.

Figure 56. A sieve of taste. Defining a cultural gymnastic concept.

A creative process produces new gymnastic material, which enters the hopper of the sieve.



A selective process of taste may operate for each culture, which may define their aesthetic preference in gymnastics and therefore an identity for their gymnastic concept.

Newton (1950) points out that the pendulum of fashion swings more quickly and violently than that of classic taste which could cause evaluations of fashionable gymnastic actions to vary greatly each time they are performed. Newton (1950) states that:

Fashion differs from classic taste chiefly in its tempo, in the speed with which the meshes of the sieve react to the latest influence. For that reason it gives us a far more detailed but far less generalised account of what is happening to our sense of beauty than does classic taste.

Classic gymnastic actions may provide some kind of stability in a display and could serve to highlight the radical, special qualities of the fashionable content by providing it with a reference point and a context from which it may be appreciated and evaluated. Consequently, from an aesthetic beauty point of view, there may be a critical balance between fashionable and classic aesthetic material in Men's Artistic Gymnastics, which allows the gymnastic display to be understood and valued as a relevant contribution to the sport. That is, the fashionable content may be built upon a stable base of classic material, which may exhibit the new detail in the general context of the activity. If the entire display consists of material with fashionable status it may lack reference to the more stable classic understanding of gymnastics and could risk rejection as a poor example of gymnastics. Newton (1950) offers an analogy for comprehending fashion by stating that "it is rather like the seconds hand of a watch, which can split a minute into its component parts but cannot tell us the time of day". Furthermore, in terms of evaluating the fashionable, all that might be reliably said is that there could be extremes of fashion on display. That is, judgements of *good or bad taste* in fashion may only be relative to other fashionable objects with the result that the judgement has limited relevance and reference to the overall aesthetic of gymnastics which includes some classic material.

One possible method of measuring fashionable material in gymnastics may be by calculating a tariff to assess Difficulty of technical execution. However, if the pursuance of Difficulty becomes the sole physical endeavour of the 'athlete', classic gymnastic material may become rejected from the Code of Points. Consequently, the aesthetic of the sport could be altered completely, possibly causing the sport to become a purposive enterprise when the aesthetic created is an incidental by-product of what is performed (Best, 1978).

Newton (1950) claims that it takes about twenty-five years for an object with fashionable status to pass through the sieve of taste which may be a realistic estimation of the rate of cultural acceptance by which the fashionable may become regarded as classic or traditional in Men's Artistic Gymnastics. Examples of gymnastic material which may have fashionable status at performer level could include

the technique, or features of self-expression, that some gymnasts exhibit in their style of gymnastic performance such as Nemov performing his break-dance shoulder rolls on Floor. These kinds of technique may, or may not be copied by other gymnasts, which could determine the longevity and therefore status of the aesthetic material itself. Elite gymnasts such as Aleksie Nemov appear to be expert at combining fashionable with classic gymnastic material to produce an aesthetic object which exhibits *their* contemporary interpretation of gymnastic action. Also the analysis of successive Codes reveal how many elements (skills) may be regarded as fashionable at an institutional level. For example, elements on the Rings that involved crossing the cables were not in the 1979 Code (Lylo, 1979), however by 1993 the F.I.G. had recognised eight elements of this kind (Zschocke, 1993) with the number growing to thirteen in the 1997 Code (Zschocke, 1997). The status of these new Rings elements appeared to be developing as they progressed through the sieve of taste. Evidence for this may have been that many gymnasts were copying the actions and naming their own innovations of this kind of material, such as the Kitagawa and the Whitfield (Zschocke, 1997). However the 2001 Code (Fink, 2001) has removed all elements with crossed cables, confirming their final status as fashionable because, as it transpired, they could not stand the test of time that the sieve taste requires to define them as classic or traditional features of gymnastic material.

Classic status in gymnastic action

As the skill or element passes through the mesh of the sieve of taste, its aesthetic may attain classic status. The label of classic may indicate that the gymnastic material has some kind of cultural value accrued over time and reinforced by the likelihood of constant repetition by a majority of gymnasts which should help to preserve it. In gymnastics, classic status may be awarded for the aesthetic of the element itself, regardless of who performs it and when, for example, a young gymnast who executes a Cross on Rings may be said to be displaying a classic gymnastic element because that element has always appeared in the Code. Additionally, there may be classic status awarded to the personal performance style of the gymnast because they may have exhibited an aesthetic in gymnastics through their deportment, poise, balance etc. which over an international career that could last for up to twenty years, could become regarded as classic in gymnastics. Their career span may satisfy the time requirement for his gymnastic style to pass through the sieve of taste, becoming integrated and accepted as classic gymnastic style. For example, Neil Thomas represented Great Britain for

seventeen years (Palmer, 1999) and other gymnasts manage to compete at international levels into their early thirties such as Nik Stuart (Prestige, 1988) Andreas Wecker, Germany and Szilveszter Csollany, Hungary (Lotz, 2000).

In his awarding of classic status, Koppers (2000) appears to be correct when he describes Nemov's Floor routine and states that he strikes a "classic male gymnastics pose". The Splits position, which he is in at the time, does not appear to be the central classic feature that sets the gymnasts apart as all gymnasts are required to demonstrate extremes of leg and hip mobility on Floor. Whilst the classic Splits position may satisfy this technical requirement, it appears that the classic salute position that he gives simultaneously, may be significant for qualifying as a classic aesthetic. See Figures 47 and 13. Nemov's salute is an open palm deliberate gesture of respect and friendship directed towards the spectators and judges by using his hands, head and eyes to give this conspicuous signal. The arm and head positions by other gymnasts indicate that they strike a smart gymnastic pose in Splits position but they may not be called salutes in the way which Nemov uses this gesture at this point in his routine. His salute is often made to generate a good crowd-pleasing effect, as it is perceived that he signals directly to them (personal observation).

Figure 47 and Figure 13 (Reproduced to illustrate points above).

Left: Aleksei Nemov (Russia) in Splits position offering a gymnastic salute to the spectators and judges (Holmes, 1998). Right: Joo-Hyung (Korea) in Splits position striking a smart gymnastic pose but not saluting and looking towards the ceiling (Black, 1999).

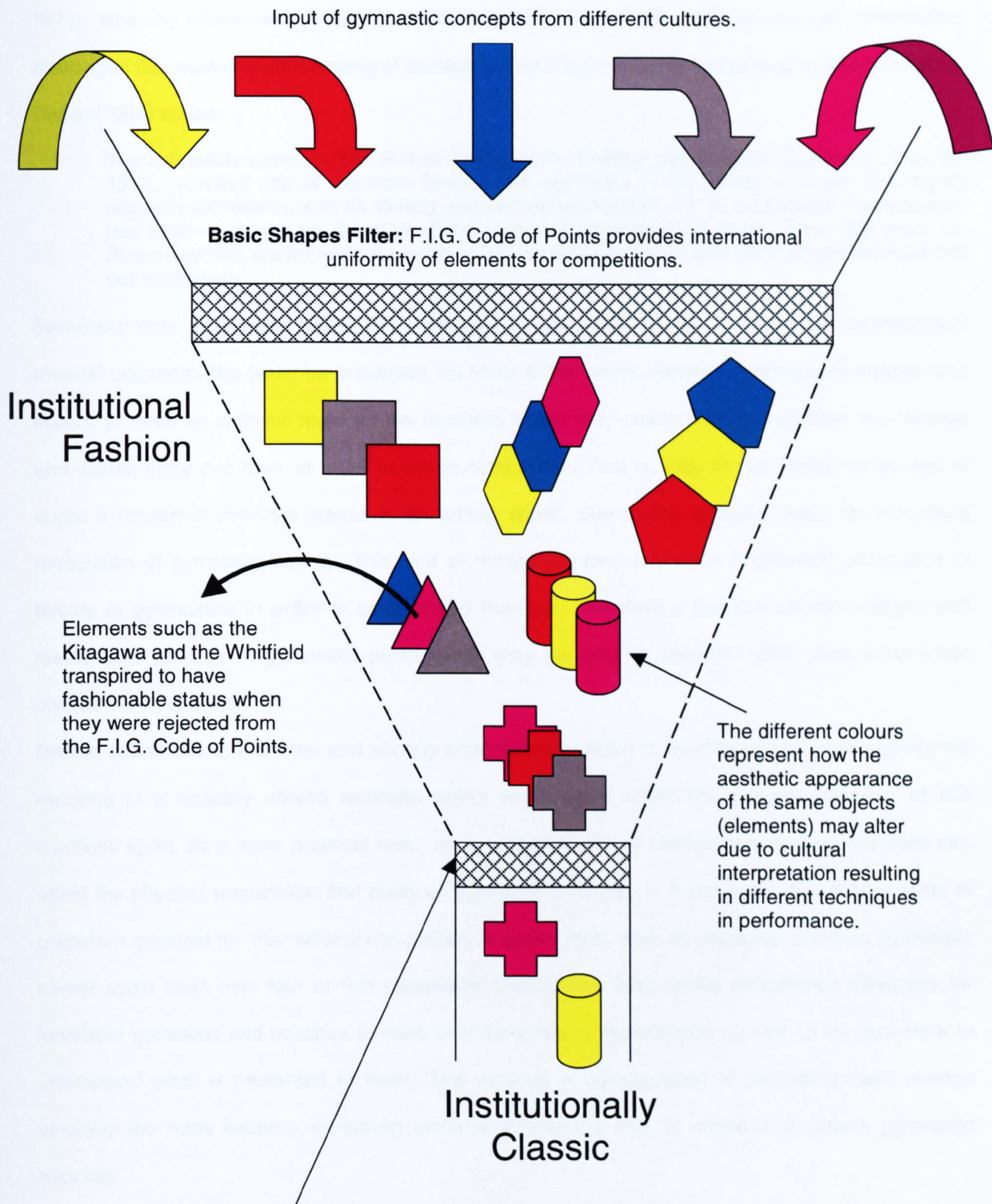
The fact that Nemov has utilised this aesthetic material, a salute in the middle of his routine, may indeed be a fashionable feature of his technique. However, the combination of the classic gymnastic salute in the classic Splits position appears to create a powerful aesthetic impact that may be an excellent example of classic status in elite performance of Men's Artistic Gymnastics.

The notion that classic status may apply exclusively to older aspects of aesthetic material and fashionable to new may oversimplify the issue, which could result in an inaccurate explanation of taste

in gymnastics. The fashionable new gymnastic material may require traces of classic aesthetic features if it is to be recognised as valid gymnastic action at all. For example, a new action may comprise of more complex arrangements of older material such as handstands, somersaults, leg circles, flicks or other basic shapes that make the biomechanic of the new action possible. That is, there may be a finite range of physical movement possibilities that allow elements and connections to be completed in Men's Artistic Gymnastics.

Figure 57 represents a further adaptation of the sieve of taste concept as it may relate to the selection of aesthetic material. The F.I.G.'s taste in gymnastic material may be reviewed and publicised every four years when the content of the Code is decided upon; in the majority of cases some new material may be selected and other material rejected. Represented at the top of the diagram, entering the funnel are the various culturally defined gymnastic concepts from which specific kinds of gymnastic material may be selected. The standardising function of the Code is indicated by the standard shapes that emerge from the first filter, however the standard shapes have different colours representing the differences in aesthetic that could be perceived beyond basic shape recognition as may be demonstrated by skilfulness and technique in a gymnast's performance. Material passing through the first mesh into the middle of the filter represents the fashionable in gymnastic actions, their status certified by being included within the F.I.G. Code of Points. It would appear that the bulk of aesthetic material that constitutes Men's Artistic Gymnastics (elements and connections) might be contained within this section, labelled as Institutional Fashion. That is to say that out of the 1020 elements in the 1997 Code, only a relatively small number of elements may have qualified for classic status in gymnastic action. The second filter on the diagram represents an important distinction in the quality of aesthetic material that may be selected. This gymnastic material with institutionally classic status, may have passed the test of time; twenty-five years approximately and could become immune to the whims of fashion in gymnastics being at a much reduced risk of rejection from the Code and therefore, the sport. The timeless quality in the aesthetic of classic gymnastic action may help to define and underpin, fundamentally, the aesthetic of Men's Artistic Gymnastics itself. Routines that exclude classic elements or classic features of gymnastic material; traces of the old within the new, could be said to exhibit a weak gymnastic identity.

Figure 57. Aesthetic filters within a sieve of taste in Men's Artistic Gymnastics.



Classic Shapes Sieve: There may be another mesh that provides a mechanism of taste at an institutional level which awards classic status to gymnastic elements and other aesthetic material that stand the test of time. For example, shapes; straight, pike and tuck shape, balances; handstands and Y-Scales, elements; Half Lever, Cross on Rings, Tkatchev on High Bar and Leg Circles on Pommels.

A parallel example of rejection of classicism in music may be the works of Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971), who, by concentrating upon a purely romantic, fashionable style of musical composition, challenged the musical understanding of audiences and critics and may have risked isolation/rejection.

Daniel (1994) states:

The first performance of *The Rite of Spring* at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées on May 29, 1913, provoked one of the more famous first-night riots in the history of music. This highly original composition, with its shifting and audacious rhythms and its unresolved dissonance's, has been said to mark the start of the modernist movement in music. From this point on, Stravinsky was known as "the composer of *The Rite of Spring*" and the destructive modernist par excellence.

Stravinsky may have been intrinsically motivated by his artistic liberty to challenge contemporary musical understanding when he presented his ideas to the world. However, gymnastics practitioners appear to have an extrinsic need for the aesthetic object they produce to be accepted, appreciated and valued there and then, in order to win at competition. That is, they do not appear to be free to adopt a modernist romantic stance in an artistic sense, due to the apparent need for immediate recognition of gymnastic beauty. This kind of recognition may rely upon a historical conception of beauty in gymnastics in order to comprehend the new. Therefore a balance between classic and fashionable features in gymnastic performance may be what is required rather than a complete divorce from the classic.

Drastic alterations to the rules and scoring protocols may serve to destabilise the sport significantly resulting in a radically altered aesthetic object which could affect the general popularity of this aesthetic sport. At a more practical level, an accelerated rate of change to a desired aesthetic can affect the physical preparation and ability of gymnasts to display it. It can take up to twelve years to prepare a gymnast for international competition at senior level, over 18 years old, and their gymnastic career could span over four or five successive Codes. This may create tremendous difficulties for individual gymnasts and coaches to meet new demands in performance as well as for observers to understand what is presented to them. This may be a consequence of promoting rapid change whereby the rules become increasingly unstable due to the rate of rejection of classic gymnastic material.

There appear to be a number of ways of limiting the utilisation of various classic elements and shapes in gymnastics such as agreeing, institutionally, not to include them in the F.I.G. Code of Points or devaluing the element so it is performed less frequently. For example, elements with crossed-cables on the Rings have been excluded from the Code whilst others such as *Guzchogy* and *Cross*, have

been de-valued (Fink, 2001). Also static balances on Floor with classic status; Y-Scale and Arabesque (Figures 61 and 62), are no longer compulsory requirements because they are only of A value. Some gymnasts, notably Jordan Jovtchev (Bulgaria) appear to trivialise a Y scale, using it for a rest before performing his dismount on Floor. Institutional stipulations for change such as re-valuing elements, may constitute methods of rejecting aesthetic material depending upon the character of the mesh, such as pursuance of difficulty, by which a selection has been made.

An important aesthetic distinction being made here is that between classic gymnastic element and classic body shape that give form to elements in gymnastics. Compared to the number of fashionable elements in the Code, 1000 approximately, there are relatively few classic elements, perhaps five percent of the total content, all of which are formed by only four basic classic body shapes listed below. Figures 58 to 67 depict some examples of basic elements and basic body shapes in Men's Artistic Gymnastics that may be regarded as classic aesthetic material. The four basic body shapes are; straight, pike, tuck and straddle which can be utilised in many ways on all apparatus in order to execute more complex actions and combinations. It may be interesting to note that currently, there seems to be less demand for the classic straddle shape than in past Codes as the act of straddling may be deemed to reduce physical difficulty, for example, two tenths deduction for "atypical straddle" (Kirby, 2000). Consequently there has been a notable reduction of elements performed at competition that utilise a straddle shape for example, flairs, straddle planches, straddle vault, straddled balances (personal observation). The classic Scissors on Pommels which uses a straddle shape may also be at risk of rejection, see Figure 64, because it may be felt by some practitioners that this element disrupts the flow of double leg circles which have become the expected norm on this apparatus today. The aesthetic claim for rejection on the basis of disrupted flow may mask the real reasons for rejection because the smooth transition from double leg circles to Scissors is extremely difficult to perform and that the difficulties of getting there may not be worth the numeric value which Scissors have currently in the Code. These examples could indicate the demise of a basic classic body shape; straddle shape, which could seriously affect the aesthetic identity of Men's Artistic Gymnastics.

For the F.I.G., a downgrade culture with draconian scoring limits for established actions may have been the simplest method of increasing difficulty in the sport whilst keeping the score below but close to the "perfect 10.00". Consequently many of the classic actions which are easier to perform than the fashionable new tricks may be de-valued by number, out of existence, that is, out of the Code. A risk may be that the aesthetic of Men's Artistic Gymnastics is not merely altered, it becomes something completely different, which could be identified as a collection of acrobatic tricks whose classic aesthetic heritage has been discarded. In terms of aesthetic value, which could be more than numbers can represent, the aesthetic created by classic actions may be worth more to the sport to maintain its aesthetic identity than the numeric value for difficulty that some practitioners would allocate. That is, it is not the actions themselves but the aesthetic they create that may be of central importance. An example of this may be the recent actions of the U.S.A. Gymnastic Team / American Federation, who at a cultural level may be actively pursuing their preferred aesthetic in gymnastics which presents athleticism and pursuance of difficulty as central features of their intentional object. Towards this American notion of gymnastics the American team also refers to their gymnasts correctly, for them, as "athletes" (Zunich, 2001 pers comm). This is to point out that the American gymnastic concept may be so radical or fashionable that it excludes classic aesthetic material in terms of presentation style that might commonly be expected in a traditionally performed routine. If the current American gymnastic concept is one of athleticism and pursuance of difficulty (Galimore *et al.* 1999; Fink 1999a) a consequence may be that risky gymnastic tricks that are executed in a staccato manner i.e. with perceivable breaks, could become the preferred and accepted style of gymnastic skill presentation. This is compared to the traditional style of performance during which a continuous, flowing, gymnastic display could maintain an illusion of ease of action with one clear start and finish to the routine. At the 2001 World Championships in Ghent, the majority of American gymnasts broke the illusion of continuous performance by having many athletic pauses; being in effect multiple starts and finishes as each big trick was attempted (personal observation). The term athlete implies a performer who has objective tests applied to his performance, to throw, to jump, to run etc. against a definitive standard of distance or time. The term gymnast implies a performer who has aesthetic connotations applied to his performance. Therefore the term athlete applied by the U.S.A. to the gymnast may indicate their lack of awareness of aesthetic connotations in gymnastics. That is, the qualitative evaluation of how well a gymnast performs may in some way be overlooked in preference to measuring what he executes, akin

to the track and field athlete who may only be concerned with what they can achieve measured against an objective standard.

Finally, there may be many different kinds of mesh, which may be active in a sieve of taste at any one time. Consequently the outcomes and products of a taste mechanism may affect the appearance of the sport in different ways. Each successive Code may imply that different meshes of taste have been active, for example,

- Any new skill may now have an F.I.G. mesh of acceptance to pass through prior to presentation to the world.
- New rules may present a new mesh, which may alter how the aesthetic appearance of the new object may be understood.
- Technology aids to innovation and may present a different kind of mesh for the selection of the new in gymnastic action. For example, coaching techniques, knowledge of biomechanics, and development of apparatus with greater rebound qualities than before have provided technical improvements (technological sense) to assist the gymnast to go higher for longer, enabling him to attempt greater Difficulty - bigger tricks - more axial rotations and twists.

Understanding how a mechanism of taste may be acting in gymnastics could help practitioners to realise methods of creating and improving their aesthetic product in a way that their ideas and creations may be understood by others and have value in the long term. This may help the aesthetic identity of the sport to not only be preserved but perpetuated so that fashionable innovations in the future may be regarded as good examples of Men's Artistic Gymnastics.

7. Interpretation and evaluation of aesthetic features of performance in Men's Artistic Gymnastics: Expert interviews about high level performances.

7.1 The research interview

Interviews were conducted in order to further investigate perceived problems of aesthetic evaluation in gymnastics, from a practitioner's point of view. The interviews were carried out face-to-face, lasting for approximately one to two hours. Commentaries were recorded on audio tape and field notes of observations were made during each interview.

A central aim of this strategy in data collection was to consider the kind of language being used by experts commenting upon experts, in order to reveal any aesthetic meanings within their comments and phrases, which demonstrated *their* aesthetic awareness and knowledge utilised to evaluate performances by elite gymnasts. Practitioners were asked to provide a running commentary to a video of fifty performances from the 2000 European Championships in Bremen, Germany. The use of this video footage proved to be a reliable and standardised prompt that directed the attention and therefore the responses which practitioners gave. That is, the video seemed to elicit their conceptions of aesthetic features and qualities, which they believed were comment-worthy in their explanation of the performances. The researcher's task was to record verbal responses of practitioners and some of their non-verbal reaction to visual images of gymnastics. A tactic within the interview process was that the word "aesthetic" was avoided when explaining and conducting the interviews with practitioners. The reason for this was that the researcher wished to gain access to gymnastically informed language within commentaries, which revealed how they understood at a 'grass roots' level what they saw, in their terms. From this, a grounded theory of aesthetic evaluation in gymnastics might emerge as the respondents were asked to explain genuinely what they saw instead of supplying what they thought the researcher wanted. The deliberate omission of the word aesthetic allowed the interviews to fulfil their data collection purposes, which can be summarised as follows:

- To identify what features and qualities experts see in elite performance.

- To find out how experts describe various performances: the kinds of descriptive language they employed.
- To investigate some of the concepts used by these experts which allow them to make sense of a visual display of gymnastics and to discriminate between performances.
- To observe and record how experts react to different performances with verbal but also non-verbal communication.

The challenge in this phase of the research became one of evaluating the data in order to expose the [extent of] *aesthetic language*, intuitive or tutored, used by these practitioners to make sense of their world of gymnastics. From their use of aesthetic language their particular level of *aesthetic knowledge* was gradually revealed. It was also from the subsequent analysis of all the responses that an indication of a collective level of aesthetic knowledge could be surmised.

Preceding knowledge: interview design

The extent of aesthetic knowledge developed by this research up to the point when interviews were conducted had a large affect upon interview design. Preceding knowledge indicated that a process of selection and rejection of aesthetic material: taste, within the gymnastics world, could be a driving force behind the changing aesthetic of this sport. The sieve-like mechanisms of taste (Newton, 1950) appeared to filter aesthetic material in and out of use, determining the appearance of the sport by identifying what could be termed as classic and fashionable features of Men's Artistic Gymnastics. Historically, the aesthetic of gymnastics seems to have experienced periods of relative stability followed by periods of rapid change. Therefore it seemed that the degree of selective activity in the sieve of taste might equate to the speed and quantity of aesthetic material which the gymnastic world discarded at a given time. This discriminative function of taste appeared to operate as a result of conscious, deliberate decisions concerning aesthetic preference made by individuals and committees at for example, national governing body or F.I.G. Technical Committee levels. It was envisaged that an interview strategy which asked for commentaries from practitioners at these high levels within the sport, may reveal examples of similarly deliberate and selective decisions of aesthetic preference made by experts in their evaluations of gymnastics performance. Research findings in the structured observation phase indicated that some individuals and committees may have identified their taste; i.e. their preferred aesthetic of gymnastic actions and were actively pursuing such ideals whilst

simultaneously ensuring that such an aesthetic ideal would be highly valued on the international podium.

A factor which directed the researcher to return to the field and develop an interview strategy, after taste was analysed, was that practitioners' understanding of aesthetic taste in relation to its impact upon their sport was seemingly overlooked in day to day operations. Reactions from practitioners to the researcher's enquiries about taste indicated that a concept of taste for them, was regarded as peripheral idealisation compared to the harsh daily realities of calculating and judging difficulty and coaching gymnasts to execute high scoring combinations without incurring major deductions. Also that an aesthetic term such as "taste" appeared to be "too subjective" for practitioners to discuss sensibly in the context of professional competition. Therefore "taste" seemed to be regarded as an unreliable term in their world and played an even lesser part in their day to day gymnastic vocabulary than that of "aesthetics", despite these concepts being fundamental to evaluation in gymnastics.

Consequently, an interview design, which investigated practitioner's *aesthetic* understanding, emanating from a theory of *aesthetic taste*, but not using these actual terms, was conceived of. It was decided that recording commentaries to video footage was an appropriate strategy to gather new data, the strategy being determined by the development of the study at that point. That is to say that a different interview design could have been used if the researcher had utilised interviews as the initial research action, as discussed in the Methods section. Also that a different interview design could be used in the future to research further the topic being investigated here. These considerations of the interview as a data collection method help to demonstrate that varying styles of interview may be appropriate at different times during research. That is, in terms of the different levels of interview structure, presentation, transcription, recording and the differing depths of analysis that may be required or deemed necessary. Within this study the design of the interview and the method of analysis were intrinsic to the stages of development of this research.

Interview design and implementation

There were some advantages and disadvantages emanating from the interview design and its implementation in this research.

Advantages

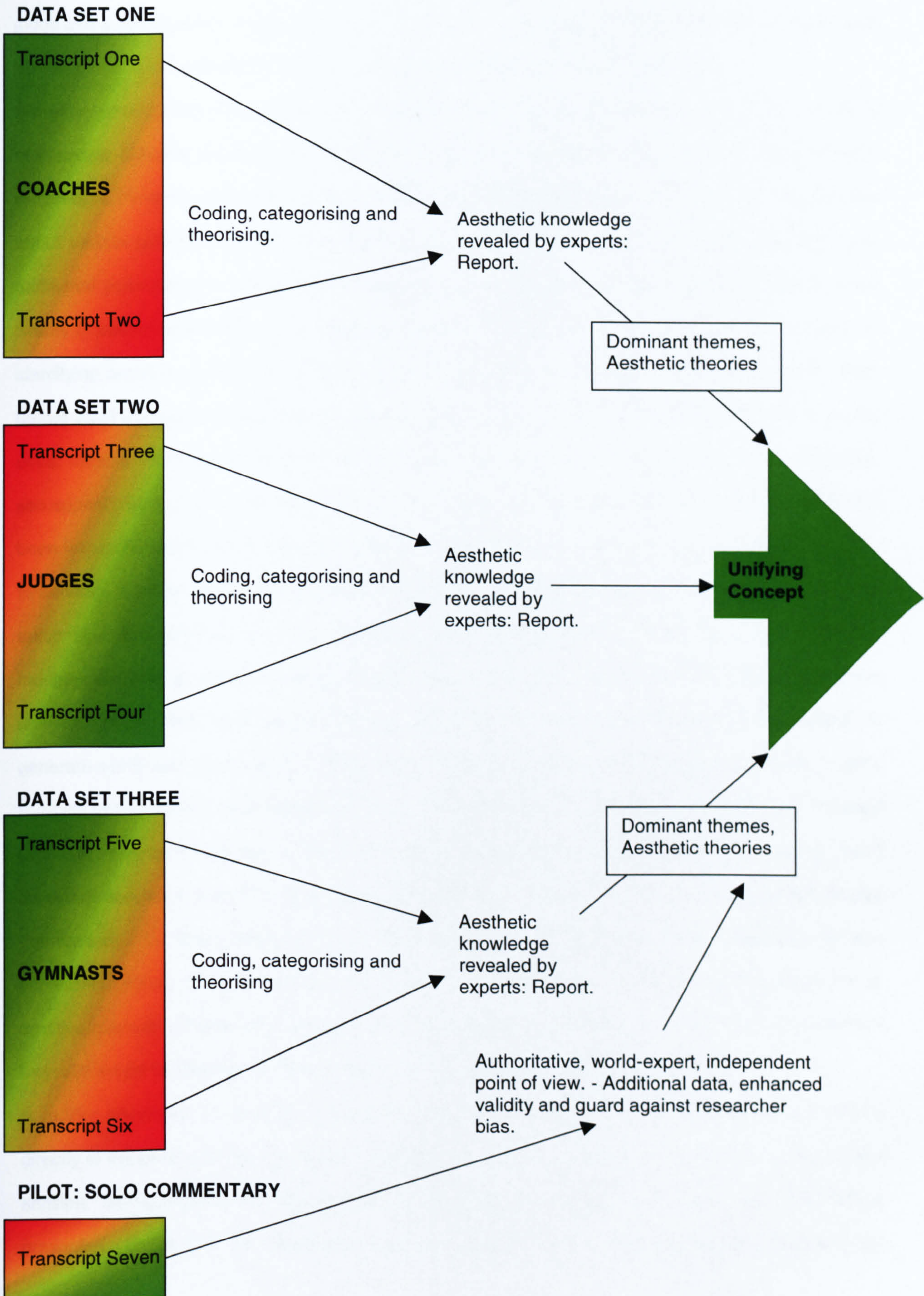
An overriding advantage of the interview design was that it provided a means of controlling the overall interview process. Control was established by structuring the interviews into data sets. This helped to manage the quantity of data collected (number of interviews) and helped to manage the time available to complete the interview phase of the research. It also provided a structure for the initial analysis of interviews with experts, followed up by more in-depth individual analysis of each transcript by coding and categorising, leading towards a grounded theory of aesthetic understanding and evaluation in gymnastics. Figure 68 details the structure of interview data sets devised for this stage of the study.

The construction of data sets and use of progressive interviewing allowed the researcher to identify aesthetically relevant information from transcripts, which was new to the research. This was because transcripts were complementary data to that already collected and analysed during the structured observation phase of this investigation. The researcher was conscious not to 'simply' rediscover aesthetic themes in order to reinforce earlier findings. More that he used these aesthetic themes such as rules, skill and technical in gymnastics to identify new areas of aesthetic knowledge evidenced by the practitioners interviewed.

Placing each interview in a structure of data sets allowed the researcher to delineate between periods of field research and interviewing and transcript analysis; enabling him to control what could seemingly have become an endless spiral of interviewing. The data sets concept was particularly useful for recognising when to stop interviewing for this phase of the research and recognising also, whether subsequent interviews were indicated by findings. In such a case, a data set structure could be repeated, with decisions made as to what kind of data set structure could be used, what style of interview could be used within it, and whether a visual cue such as a video or live performance could be used as a reference upon which comments could be made.

Another advantage of the data sets structure being that it provided a recognisable starting point for the interview process to begin in terms of the respondent's gymnastic roles and responsibilities.

Figure 68. Structure of data sets for analysing expert practitioner interviews.



At the start it was reasonable to group, within each data set, a coach with a coach, a judge with a judge and a gymnast with a gymnast, from which, further combinations of practitioners and roles could be compared and contrasted in the future if subsequent interviews were indicated.

A method of controlling the quantity of data collected within each interview was also 'built-in' in terms of interview duration because the same video footage (40 minutes) was commented upon by each respondent. However, the volume of commentary varied between interviewees if they had more to say about certain performances, or the video was paused to allow for more explanation, or there was additional post-interview dialogue. Consequently, transcripts were between approximately ten and twenty thousand words each. Tabulating the commentary within each transcript provided a means of identifying sections of dialogue by numbering the clips to which respondents' comments related. Also, before each interview the respondent signed a consent form assuring them of how the data would be used: informed consent (Silverman, 2002). These forms are included at the start of each transcript see appendices A to G. There were also follow up interviews with each respondent after their tape had been transcribed and opportunities made for corrections and additions to their commentaries.

In addition, a fellow researcher independently verified each transcript for accuracy by listening to the audio tape and watching the video footage synchronised together to replay the interview exactly. Independent coding was also carried out by a fellow researcher on un-coded transcripts later in the analysis phase, which both confirmed many of the aesthetic concepts identified but also helped to generate some new ideas and refreshing ways of looking at the transcribed data (Hammersley, 1990; Burnard and Morrison, 1994; Silverman 2001; Wengraff, 2001). Figures 69 to 75, which are included with the interview narratives, indicate how some of the coding analysis was carried out on each transcript, helping to identify some of the major aesthetic themes and features of aesthetic knowledge demonstrated by the practitioners interviewed. Basic colour coding was used to denote aesthetic comments (green) and gymnastic comments (red) within each transcript which is indicated in a pre-emptive manner in Figure 68. Transcript analysis revealed a predominant use of aesthetic comment by practitioners to comprehend the appearance of elite performers in their sport.

A further advantage in terms of validity of these interviews was that all respondents contributed directly to the performances featured on the video as a coach, judge or gymnast. Their ability to make sensible retrospective value-judgements was imperative for reliable comment upon the footage presented to them. This was because the performances at Bremen were characterised completely by

the levels of skilfulness and technique of the gymnasts at that time, and the style of performances permissible under the 1997 Code. For example, the respondents were able to identify what was good or poor *at that time*, as they were cognisant of the specific conditions under the 1997-2001 Code and what kind of interpretations were possible in relation to it. The matching of expert respondents with the recorded performances in time and at a specific competition was an important standardising feature for these interviews.

Additionally, it was important that the video footage, which was one year old at the time of use, was not regarded as too out of date by respondents to comment upon. This transpired to be a significant consideration, as all practitioners commented on how good the performances appeared under the previous Code and the large extent to which elements and combinations had altered under the current Code in 2001-2005. These comments highlighted points made earlier in the thesis that altering the rules of gymnastics may alter its aesthetic of appearance forever and perhaps, its evaluation. It was sobering to realise how rapidly this had become the case between an outgoing Code and its immediate successor.

One final advantage of the interview design with video footage was that it allowed the researcher to explore researcher impact: bias and reactivity during the interview scenario that could adversely contaminate the data collected (Hammersly and Atkinson, 1995). Reactivity is when a respondent attempts to provide deliberately what they think the researcher is looking for, or not provide it deliberately (Wengraff, 2001). When working with the transcripts in data set three it occurred to the researcher that a commentary could be recorded without the researcher actually being present. This had the potential to provide interesting additional data and be a check on "interviewer reactivity", being an example of bias within data that may be intrinsic to interviews as a form of data collection. Butch Zurich (USA Gymnastics judge), Bart Connor (USA gymnastic team, ex-Olympian) and Hardy Fink (Deputy President F.I.G MTC) were invited to comment on the same footage, with Mr. Hardy Fink kindly making a valuable contribution. It was decided not to follow up the first two American practitioners for this interview phase as sufficient data was collected from the pilot solo commentary.

Disadvantages

One disadvantage of the interview as a data collection method in this research was that only a relatively small number of practitioners in the gymnastics world would be able to contribute to the

study, thus raising the question of how representative the commentaries would be. It was therefore important, during the years of structured observation to establish contacts with potential respondents whose opinions were highly respected in the gymnastics world at international level. In this manner the transcripts in this research could be said to represent some of the highest expert opinion at the top level in competitive gymnastics.

Language differences were a potential barrier to the interview process although in the context that the interviews were conducted, this problem was overcome as all respondents could speak English. If further research interviews were indicated this might be a practical consideration and limitation upon data gathering in the future in an interview scenario, as accurate translation would become essential.

An inherent limitation of the interview as a data collection method was that it could have generated an unmanageable quantity of linguistic data if interviews had been carried out at all the major events attended. Also it would have been impractical and unrealistic for the researcher to interview and then follow-up with respondents who were only rarely available, due to their international commitments in the gymnastics world. Even when the researcher attended the events at competitions overseas the practical difficulties of access to high-ranking officials remained.

A possible limitation of interview design was that the respondent's attention was focused solely upon the video footage of the event at Bremen, which presented a highly structured aspect to the interview format. This format could have risked excluding aesthetic comment that may have been prompted by other scenarios or questions put to the practitioners. However, in many cases the respondents did explain their point of view and beliefs by comparing and reciting other situations in their experience, which were prompted by the footage. An unstructured aspect of the interview format was that the researcher had no preconceived questions whatsoever to put to the respondent during the interview, although he was aware of themes emerging from preceding interviews. The respondent had a free reign to comment exactly as they felt appropriate on each clip. For some respondents, certain clips provoked many other thoughts and memories to be recounted at which point the video player could be paused if necessary and the audio tape left recording whilst the respondent explained their points freely. From this point of view the interview process had the potential to generate enormous quantities of data to be transcribed, some of which was potentially of limited use only and became a huge demand on researcher time and energy.

7.2 Interview Analysis - Examples of aesthetic knowledge revealed by experts

As each interview was transcribed from the tapes, line by line analysis took place and theoretical notes were made about the aesthetic detail recognised within respondents' gymnastic language. These notes and theories were then grouped into sub-categories to reveal kinds of aesthetic knowledge used by practitioners to comprehend and explain the footage presented to them. By grouping their utterances into the major categories of **aesthetic comments** and **gymnastic comments**, it was revealed that the practitioners utilised a high degree of aesthetic knowledge and language that was related to their personal preference and conceptual understanding and evaluation of the performance. However, the range of qualitative language used by respondents to describe and explain what they meant was extremely varied. The variation of language used by the speakers resulted in aesthetic knowledge being manifested differently in each transcript. The process of making clear the meaning of a word by non-verbal means, such as pointing, is called *ostensive definition* (Hospers, 1967). Speakers relied heavily upon ostensive definition to physically point to their preferences in performances of gymnastics at the highest level. Ostensive definition may be regarded as a primal, but very accurate method of definition compared to linguistic definition when accurate interpretation relies solely upon shared knowledge of the meaning of words utilised.

An overview in the form of a narrative of what each transcript appeared to say to the researcher is presented here accompanied by an extract of the coding and analysis for that transcript (Figures 69 to 75). The narrative summarises what appeared to be the central messages of aesthetic significance for each respondent.

Interview narrative: Data Set 1, Transcript 1, Respondent FF - Coach - Appendix A.

There is a great depth of technical understanding presented within this transcript. FF seems to know the Code(s) almost "inside-out"; intricate details, implications and possibilities (standards) within the rules are stated confidently from memory. For example, FF could point out combinations of permissible elements, how they were valued and could be calculated under the 1997 Code compared to the 2001 Code, with consummate ease. Furthermore FF seems to 'know' the gymnasts on the video, seeing their strengths weaknesses and capabilities, having followed and studied them for a number of years at international level. A product of his professional study seems to have been his

identification of gaps and opportunities in 'the gymnastic game', which FF could exploit. These openings may be hinted at/revealed to FF by other gymnast's actions to play the Code or control the competition scenario, perhaps revealing to FF, his opposition coaches' stratagem.

Outside of technical ideas, there is a clear sense of what counts as good in relation to performers. In order to create and recognise aesthetic difference, the language in the transcript is about subtle features of performances, mainly related to form, such as extension of limbs and timing in execution of elements. There are repeated references to technique, beauty, perfection, personal like/dislike and impressiveness. The researcher senses from the transcript that these features should 'count' in relation to aesthetic evaluation, but from the script one gets the impression that the speaker feels they are overlooked by judges in order to get the "big trick" syndrome, pursuance of difficulty just to get 10.00 Start Value. For example, in clip 43, he comments about Townsend (USA) on Parallel bars:

FF - That's done poorly.
That's supposed to be a double pike.
But bent legs.
It's got all the stuff in but compared to the Russians it's a bit ugly.
He's not the extension, not the toes, ...
He's doing all the work to really score highly ...
But
He's a little bit loose in the back.
It's a small difference, ... but ...
Then again it's a big difference.
Ugly.

There is a concept of aesthetic appreciation running through the script without necessarily being couched in aesthetic language. There are clear references to "style" and "form". There is also a sense of perceived "awe" in the power and excitement in some elements and combinations such as release and catch or strength moves and often appreciation of perceived grace and poise in 'uniquely' performed sequences. The illusory perception of "lightness" in tumbles and "lightness" on hands (e.g. on Pommels) or the lack of it often stimulates comment where lightness and ease of action seems to add to the aesthetic appreciation of "good" gymnastics. The speaker also recognises cultural influences in the aesthetic of certain performances and seems to admire and appreciate the subtle difference this brings to a routine, even if it is not officially rewarded by the judges. For example in clip 6 about Vivo (Spain) on High Bar he comments:

FF - That's nice. Ahhh, very nice.
He's got a Cuban for a coach and he puts all his Cuban, Latin American influences in.
CP - Ahh right. That's interesting.
FF - And errr.
Very exciting High Bar, because the Cubans are very exciting on High Bar.
Beautiful routine.

The idea of "special" in gymnastic performance or gymnast's qualities in performance is raised and presents an interesting question i.e. what does it mean in a gymnastic context? The term special was used in association with other subjective terms which may be slightly more descriptive of the aesthetic character they identify for FF such as the apparent qualities of mastery, grace, power and effortless action. (The enquiry into the term special was developed further in subsequent interviews). In addition and significantly, the speaker could identify and point to specialness on the video (ostensive definition) without necessarily needing to articulate it in language. Clearly, there seems to be a sophisticated level of gymnastic knowledge which is shared in some way between FF's contemporaries, that is not available to the majority of people who watch gymnastics.

FF stresses that problems with the F.I.G. Code of Points may be the main cause for gymnastic elements leaving the gymnastic scene. The sieve of taste is clearly pointed to here although not understood formally as a consequence of taste-selection/rejection by FF. For example in clip 42 about Beresch (Ukraine) on Parallel Bars he comments:

FF - Beresch.

He normally uses this start but it's all gone now. [Reference to the old Code 1997/2001].

CP - Circles on the end?

FF - They are only worth a C, that move's a C and there's no connection and no bonus. So it's disappeared, so nobody does it.

Gone.

That's why the Code's crap.

CP - That's interesting.

Observing videotape ... pause in dialogue.

CP - Are there any changes in gymnastic taste do you think?

FF - Taste? Mmmm [pause - thinks]

Not really.

People still like seeing release and catches on High Bar and like seeing spectacular things, admiring the artistry there.

However, despite this, the researcher gets a sense from the script that FF will adapt his game to take advantage of whatever rules are in place, in order to win at competition. Even if, perhaps in the short term, he is not in complete approval of the aesthetic created by the gymnastic product he has coached. This may be an indicator of FF's high level of motivation to win in this difficult sport. If the winning product was not an aesthetically pleasing product to FF, the researcher gets a sense that FF would remain critical and in some way dissatisfied with his work, being a reflection of the speaker's high ideals and concepts of perfection striven for.

FF indicates in the script a need to re-structure the whole gymnastic evaluation system in order to free-up gymnasts to give of their best in a competition. An additive Code system is recommended. The

Code seems to bind the gymnast rather than set them free to show what they are capable of. This notion of freedom to present in gymnastics may be a significant point, which affects an approach to aesthetic evaluation in the future for the sport. For example, during the post interview dialogue the speaker comments:

FF - Yes. Yes.

I don't like the way the Code drives the routines and drives it wrongly.

You see some things, as soon as we got this Code you see Compulsory routines in another way and then they change it again and skills just come in and go out of vogue [just] like that, instead of seeing the best somebody can do.

You know what I mean?

CP - Yes.

Would you rather just see the ... errr ... gymnasts given the freedom to show their skills and difference?

FF - Yes.

Open ended Code.

I've always thought it.

The most difficult elements you get a mark for it.

CP - Additive?

FF - Yes.

Best way, best way, definitely.

During the interview this coach gave the impression of being a very tenacious character determined and motivated for success but with a passion for the sport and its potential to create beautiful gymnastics.

Figure 69. Transcript analysis. Extract from Appendix A: Data Set 1, Transcript 1, Respondent FF. Coach.

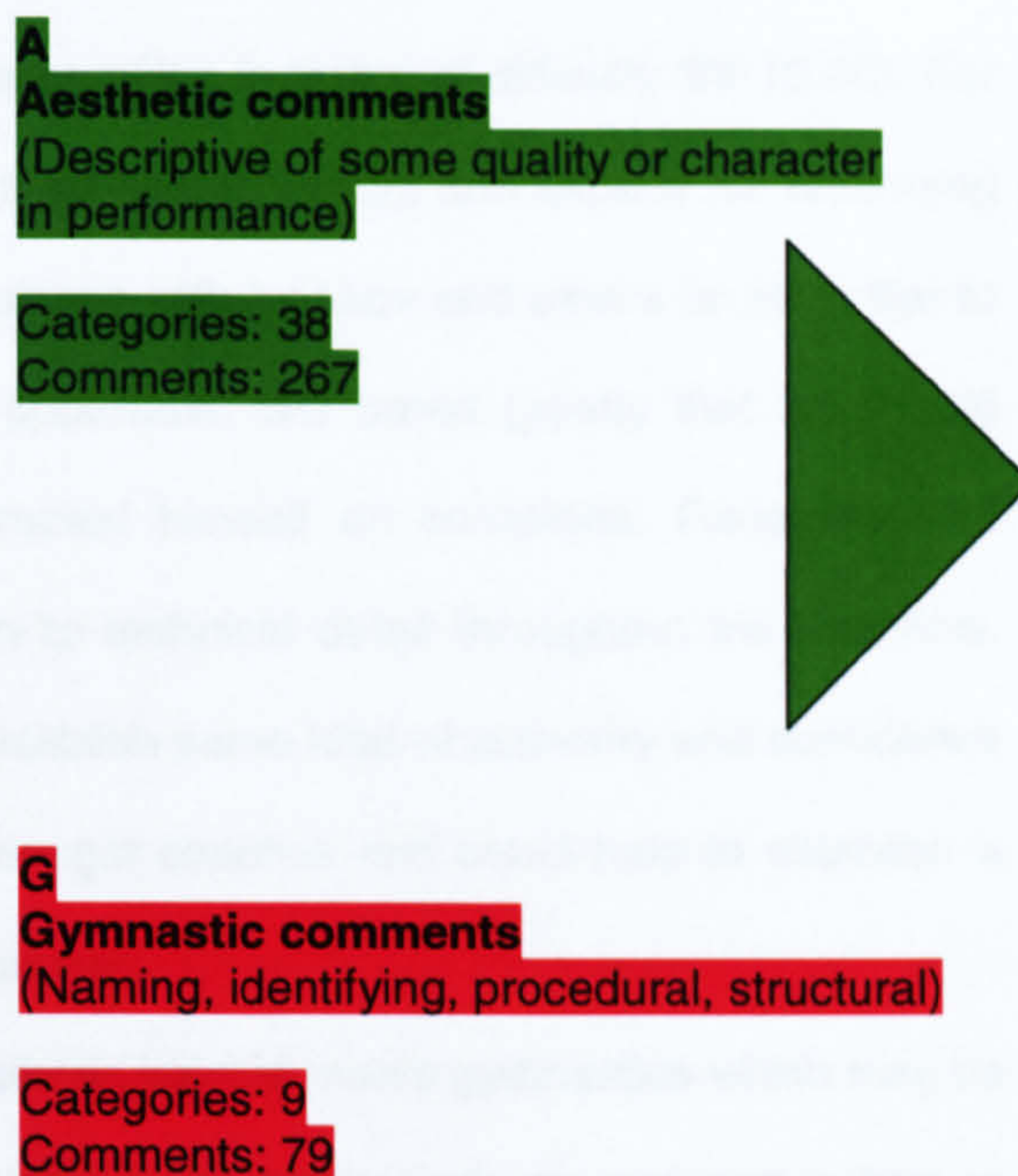
TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS

Total of 160 meaning units, coded and categorised: identified in initial coding and ongoing analysis.

Line by line analysis: number of related utterances on topics: Minor Categories to Major Categories.

The green triangle indicates a predominance of aesthetic comment to explain appearance.

Knowledge/reputation related	17	G
Fashion related	3	A
Technique related	39	A
Virtuosity related	2	A
Beauty related	17	A
Basic stock standard routine	7	A
Technical related	28	G
Rules related	5	G
Like/nice related	25	A
Form	17	A
Not impressive related	14	A
Different appearance related	11	A
Execution related	3	A
Perfection related	5	A
Judge related	3	G
Bonus related	6	G
Difficulty related	6	A
Code related	2	G
Excitement	3	A
Deductions related	8	G
Awe related	13	A
Coaching training related	7	G
Cultural influence/reference	4	A
Stylish related	7	A
Standards related	3	A
Originality	4	A
Special (gym quality)	4	A
Mastery related	1	A
Grace related	1	A
Power related	1	A
Artistry related	2	A
Effortless/ease related	3	A
Clarity of final positions	3	A
Spectacular	1	A
Purity related	7	A
Height related	2	A
Speed related	1	A
Swing related	2	A
Strength related	3	A
Textbook	3	G
Body shape/ideal	8	A
Ugly related	4	A
Amplitude	1	A
Extension related	1	A
Taste, selection/rejection	2	A
Six piece gymnast	3	A
Specialists on apparatus	4	A
Total	160	



Interview narrative: Data Set 1, Transcript 2, Respondent GG - Coach - Appendix B

Demonstrated within this script was an acute awareness of element recognition and constant calculation and comparison of what elements and combinations were worth under the 1997 and 2001 F.I.G. Code of Points. Particularly at the start of the interview, the speaker watched the routines very closely, seemingly regarding each clip as a problem solving challenge to recognise and calculate the contents of the routine. This coach could read the contents of a performance with ease and recount them as if reading aloud from a book. Almost sometimes, with detachment as if reading from a shopping list. At first, it was as if the speaker was not moved emotionally in any way at all by what he was watching. However as the video progressed, the speaker explained some of his preferences by comparison of gymnasts and was compelled to discriminate by using more descriptive language to indicate significant aesthetic differences in like performances (like in terms of difficulty SV 10.00). For example, he indulged in comparisons between gymnasts to help formulate and explain his reasoning for the appearance of certain performances e.g. comparisons with Ivankov and others on High Bar to highlight his preference for Ivankov on this piece of apparatus. GG cared greatly that he should recognise and name elements accurately as he corrected himself on occasions. Recognition of elements was a major feature of this coach's attention to technical detail throughout the interview. Naming every visual aspect of the display seemed to establish some kind of authority and confidence in his evaluation that may set up a social currency amongst coaches and could help to establish a hierarchy of knowledge and therefore status between coaches.

The script indicates that the speaker has an eye for aesthetic ideal in men's gymnastics which may be the ideal which he strives for as a coach. This far-sightedness being both an aim and a tool or motivator, which may define the act of coaching gymnastics at this level for GG, as opposed to judging or performing gymnastics. Resulting from his experience as a coach, there seems to be an expectation of ideal in element execution, ideal in routine construction and ideal in possibilities of action on a given piece of apparatus, which may be recognised by GG. On occasions in the script, performances are evaluated in terms of their *balance*, often accompanied by the term *varied*, which seems to comprise of the above factors but with particular regard to how the gymnast uses time and space to exercise the physical limits of the apparatus and the gymnast. However, equally important in this equation for GG, is that the routine is linked logically and harmoniously to create a *whole*, a unity, in presentation i.e. not a staccato or bitty routine with obvious add-ons.

There was a strong theme of aesthetic appreciation evidenced in the script, particularly after the initial High Bar section of the video. The speaker seemed to show an appreciation for the gymnast who could *connect* the big moves i.e. not just perform them with technical accuracy but link them in a sequence. Gymnasts who only 'manage' to execute some of the most difficult elements in the Code are almost not comment-worthy to GG, compared to those gymnasts who exhibit and perform the same element(s) linked with flare in a whole/unified presentation which, may be enhanced with choreography to create this visual affect.

The speaker raised the aesthetic notion of specialness in gymnastics during the Pommels section, which interestingly, indicated degrees of specialness depending on who was performing and on what apparatus. For example, commenting on clip 7: Nemo (Russia) on Pommels, GG explains, "That was nice... yes... that was good, it was good, it was fairly special... on Pommel". This coach seemed to be reasoning with his specialist knowledge in gymnastics, to equate "very good" with specialness in this case. This was an effort to ostensibly define and indicate to the researcher something that was slightly better than "very good" from GG's aesthetic evaluation of this clip. The use of the word "fairly" suggested degrees of specialness which might be recognised and expressed which was interesting and noted by the researcher who remained alert as to how this quality might be explained further. The notion of specialness was discussed by the speaker in relation to the performance of unique elements which were impressive to GG and in relation to the variety and unity (wholeness) of routine construction and performance. Of significant note with GG was his prediction of potential for gymnasts to become special and to estimate to what degree they could be special in the future. This demonstrated a particular aspect of gymnastic knowledge which seemed concrete for this coach and perhaps other coaches with whom he works closely. Also specialness was indicated in relation to a sense of illusion in performance where heavy gymnasts might appear light, or tall gymnasts appear to mask their 'disadvantage' on some apparatus and accentuate their line to their benefit on other apparatus. For example comments about Beresch (Ukraine) on Rings in clip 42 were:

GG observes video in silence for first 4 moves...

CP - Do you think his longer lines help with this apparatus?

GG - Mmm.... *Pause...*

CP - Or does he look ungainly?

GG - To me... *Pause...*

He controls his... his length quite well, he actually is not that tall, but in comparison to the others of course he is tall...

CP - Yes.

GG - Mmm... *Pause...* He's got a better line on High Bar.

The script indicates that top consistency and top difficulty do not necessarily equate to the best looking gymnastics for GG. Extension in swing to present a body line which creates an illusion of ease of action seems to be an aesthetically satisfying aspect of gymnastics for the speaker. In these terms GG did not appear culturally biased to any one style in gymnastics as high idealistic aesthetic standards seemed to have been established for himself intrinsically. Therefore, any gymnast who could satisfy or meet them would be worthy of praise by him which was demonstrated by for example, his critical comments about Urzica's (Romania) perfect 10.00 at Glasgow (2002). GG demonstrates here his high personal standards and knowledge that his ideal 'picture' can be realised after the Chinese gymnast, at the Worlds in Ghent 2001, had set new standards in Pommels swinging action which surpassed Urzica's example in the clip.

The physical appearance of the gymnast prompted GG to make comments, superficially, about attire and hair styles which appeared to be a distraction which a performer could be aware of and attend to. More notable perhaps were the reaction and comments about the appearance of gymnasts' physiognomy and their perceived suitability on certain apparatus and therefore, apparatus specialisms. These comments were occurring more frequently in the script, which echoed the comments of the previous coach interviewed. For example, references were made to Deferr (Spain) as "umpa-lumpa" and "chunky-legs" for his stocky heavy appearance, to Beresch (Ukraine) as "a lanky youth" and to Karbaneko (France) as "no legs" and "brick shit-house". These were off-the-cuff first impressions of physical appearance, which seem to affect the conception of aesthetic product they present for these coaches. This seemed to be a clear link to points made about gymnasts' *technique* and their *aesthetic persona* to appear good on some apparatus and poor on others. For example, Csollany (Hungary) on High bar (clip 1) who is a Rings specialist (clip 18) and Dragulescu (Romania) on Pommels (clip 11) who is a Vault and Floor specialist (clips 27, 49) seem to be good examples of gymnasts who demonstrated a better aesthetic product on their specialist pieces of apparatus than their exercises in the Team competition. This was qualified by the comments of most of the respondents in the interview phase of this research.

Significant aesthetic judgement seems to underpin GGs evaluative commentary, being demonstrated by his explanation of variety and unity in a performance in terms of what the gymnast is able to 'say' when performing. A wide variety in skills equated to a wide vocabulary for a gymnast to be able to express himself gymnastically. The ability of the gymnast in this regard may be a direct reflection of

the coach who has trained and developed his mode of expression. For example in clip 15 GG points to what the gymnast may be trying to 'say':

GG - Because again, it's a better variety isn't it?

CP - Yes, yes.

GG - Yes, its... look at me I am strong but, yes I can also swing... I have a wide vocabulary.

The speaker clarifies further what gymnastic vocabulary could mean in terms of routine construction and performance of smooth linkage and good timing in his comments about Ivankov (Belarus), on Parallel Bars in clip 37:

GG - Ivankov [recognised gymnast]

Observing videotape... pause in dialogue.

GG - God, I like all round P Bars...

This is good...

He's done under sommies...

He's done longswings...

He's just done a big difficulty above bar...

Lovely Healey...

You know... it's good... vocabulary.

CP - Right.

GG - Very good.

Urzica's before did very little underneath the rails... he did one move.

He's done under sommie, longswing... *pause*

That's a good routine.

CP - That's interesting, you like to see a good range of skills around the apparatus,

The same as well Rings really?

GG - Yes. Yes. Definitely.

GG was looking for the gymnast who 'said' gymnastically, "look at *how well* I can use the apparatus, demonstrate the main structure groups of elements at the highest level and link them into a seamless presentation which accentuates an illusion of ease". This seemed to be the vocabulary, which GG preferred to read. To explain and sum up his aesthetic preference as a coach, i.e. concisely what he was looking for, GG used the expression the "whole package". He explained that this was the overview of how the presentation appeared in terms of varied construction, balance (of difficulty and linkage and fluency) and unity of performance. When the notions of the "whole package" and "special" were explored further with GG his explanations were by comparison of gymnasts rather than by verbal clarification. This intuitive use of ostensive definition to point to what was meant and to identify examples of preferred appearance indicated a highly personal understanding for pin-pointing absolute quality, being an ideal process of aesthetic differentiation and evaluation for this coach.

Figure 70. Transcript analysis. Extract from Appendix B: Data Set 1, Transcript 2, Respondent GG. Coach.

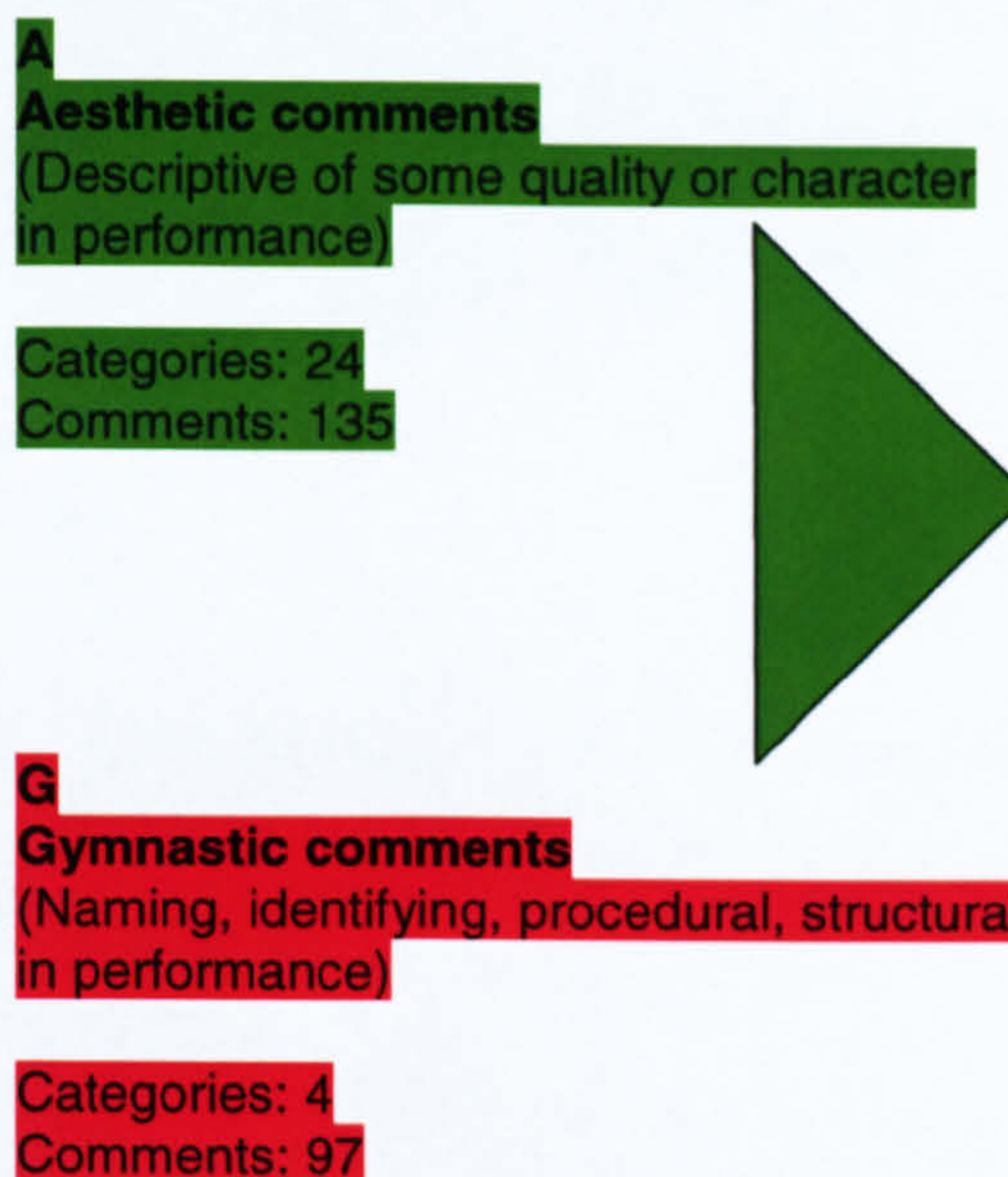
TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS

Total of 232 meaning units, coded and categorised: identified in initial coding and ongoing analysis.

Line by line analysis: number of related utterances on topics: Minor Categories to Major Categories.

The green triangle indicates a predominance of aesthetic comment to explain appearance.

Recognised elements (Diff category ABCDE)	65	G
Code related comments	23	G
Judge related comments	8	G
Reputation of gymnast	11	A
Good execution comments	6	A
Poor execution comments	8	A
Quality / standard	1	A
Gymnast consistency good	3	A
Gymnast consistency poor	2	A
Impressiveness / admiration	8	A
Character of gymnast	1	A
Essence of apparatus	1	A
Risk	3	A
Specialness	6	A
Balanced routine	4	A
Line (form / body)	7	A
Technical accuracy (perf)	10	A
Linkage	5	A
Standard fare	9	A
Dislike / not impressed	10	A
Anticipation	7	A
Viewing angle	1	G
Physiology of gymnast	7	A
Variation in routine construction	8	A
Vocabulary	4	A
Cultural comments	3	A
Specialisms (apparatus)	5	A
Whole package	6	A
Total	232	



Interview narrative: Data Set 2, Transcript 3, Respondent HH - Judge - Appendix C

This script demonstrates that the speaker considered predominantly, the form of gymnasts' actions such as shape, line and fluency during performances to develop his aesthetic evaluation of the presentation. The shape of the gymnast's body in motion and in hold positions were nearly always linked to comments on faults and deductions. On occasions similar reasons for deductions were mentioned such as leg splitting or bent knees or explanation offered for global deductions on an exercise due to poor overall impression of form. In contrast to the previous two transcripts from coaches, this speaker did not 'read' the executed elements out aloud as he saw them on the video, akin to reading a list. Whilst HH recognised all the elements in routines, he commented primarily on *how well* they were performed. He observed in critical detail for form faults and indicated when and where deductions would be made with a summarising comment at the end, for example in clip 6, Vivo (Spain) on High Bar, he comments:

HH - Again, tight legs...
Slightly bent...
Legs together...
That's a... [deduction]
You see the biggest... when you're judging mmm, and they're wearing white pants on a black background... you can see that gap...
CP - Right.
HH - And it often appears to be much larger than it actually is.
HH - Average routine...
Average in world standard...
CP - Right.
HH - Which will get an average mark.

The speaker frequently offered comparisons with other gymnasts on the video to highlight reasons for preferences in gymnastics performance. Once again, ostensive definition was being used to point to visual examples, which were *more like* the quality he was attempting to articulate. A great deal of this speaker's aesthetic knowledge seemed to be indicated by his use of key words, each of which, for him had a specific meaning and application. However, the most efficient way for him to explain these meanings was by pointing to visual examples. Words such as classic, elegant and graceful were used. For example on clip 49, Dragulescu (Romania) on Floor he comments:

CP - Is he a tidy Floor worker do you think?
HH - Yes.
I think he's powerful... powerful... mmm, he... mmm... you know... oh...
Tidy floor worker?...
He's like Defer really... he's not as big as Defer but...
CP - Mmm.
HH - He's not an elegant... err Floor worker.
Graceful is perhaps a better word.
As opposed to elegant...

The script indicates that the speaker takes an overview of the aesthetic form of the performance. As a consequence of considering the form faults and deductions in a display, he was able to comment upon the variety demonstrated in routine construction and whether the gymnast displayed every element structure and gave clear definition of shapes and positions. This clarity in performance was appreciated for making the judge's job easier, to recognise and give credit for elements where there can be no debate as to what the gymnast has attempted to show. Also whether the routine was a 'fluid' performance. These factors indicate that HH considers the 'whole' performance as a coherent unit of gymnastic action as part of his aesthetic evaluation of gymnastic quality.

The speaker alludes to what may be the judge-specific discipline for scoring during competition. That is, the judge, during competition, has to be very disciplined to operate and contribute to the reductive scoring process. HH comments on what may be a limitation to comprehensive aesthetic evaluation in gymnastics in clip 5, Ivankov (Belarus) on High Bar:

HH - You go back and compare it with... Beresch and...

CP - Yes, right... [interruption]

HH - And he's just scruffy... legs.

Line was ok... but the legs and...

A lot of splitting and knee bending...

CP - Yes... Would you give him much for the height?

HH - On the dismount?

CP - No, on the Kovacs.

HH - Err, yes but he'll... he'll lose it also for the...

because you can't give it him back - it's the Kovacs...

he'll lose... *pause*...

It's a problem with judging...

CP - Right.

HH - You can take things away but you can never give them back.

An important point for aesthetic evaluation here was that the speaker, whilst watching the video, was free to compare, to point to and explain using his gymnastic language, what he thought the best performance was in the whole display from gymnasts on a given piece of apparatus. A limitation seemed to be that during competition, a judge has to account numerically for what each gymnast did in turn and indicate the 'best' gymnastics by number value. This point was later corroborated informally by Mr. Hardy Fink when he reported that in a meeting with high ranking judges from all around the world, he set them the task of deciding and ranking who the best gymnasts were on a video of like-performances. However, they had to decide without using a defined scoring system. Mr. Fink commented that they could all achieve a consensus on what was the best every time, but when the highly structured scoring F.I.G. scoring system was applied, the consensus broke down.

The speaker's aesthetic preference or dislike for body form and line during a whole performance, may be indicative of points raised in the technique section regarding aesthetic persona, i.e. how a gymnast may be pre-disposed to create a certain kind of aesthetic whilst performing their gymnastic actions. HH demonstrated a clear aesthetic preference for overall body form in swing when discussing whether he would have awarded Urzica (Romania) a perfect 10.00 on the Pommels at Glasgow (clip 13). This gymnast's body line and shape during swing did not constitute perfection for HH and he would not have awarded 10.00, although he conceded this was very difficult to account for objectively and came down to purely, personal preference on his behalf.

CP - Would you give this 10.00?

HH - No....

The last routine that you showed me...

Was a better routine... in my opinion.

Observing videotape... pause in dialogue.

HH - By a tenth [0.1 deduction]

CP - About a tenth? [*Approximation?*]

HH - By a tenth [*CP corrected - i.e. exactly a tenth*].

CP - Oh right... whereabouts?

HH - **Just in general... just in general shape...**

Err, I think it's very difficult to deduct him for mmm... for any particular area...

He very rarely splits his legs...

CP - Right.

HH - Bends his legs, or has any problems **its just general shape...**

In fact you end up... when you, when your... judging this routine it's just err...

Very difficult not to give 10.00...

It'd be very easy to give 10.00 in fact.

The speaker's opinion was not swayed at all by the researcher's explanations of technical faults to account objectively for possible deductions, as provided by the previous interview with a coach. Nor was his point of view affected by the "new standards in swing on Pommel Horse" achieved by the Chinese gymnast Xiaojiao Sun (referred to in Hardy Finks' interview). Whilst the aesthetic preference defended by HH here had very personal grounds, it was clear that a definite and distinct difference existed between the aesthetic quality of the routines as conceived by HH and that a considerable degree of specialist gymnastic knowledge was used to inform his opinion. Ostensive definition and comparison between gymnasts was utilised once again to point to a preference in the display, for example in clip 13 HH continues:

HH - To me, the routine you showed before was better...

CP - Right.

HH - Was by far... mmm better.

HH - Its not that...

It's very difficult without being there (Glasgow)...

Especially when you see the quality of the... the routines but...

When he does swing its very difficult not to give 10.00.

CP - Yes.

HH - You fight to do... but I don't think they...

If you compare the two routines you've put together there...

The first one [Bremen performance] was far better than [Glasgow]...

I think he got something like 9.90...

CP - Mmm, yes.

HH - If you'd have reversed the scores I wouldn't have had a problem with that...

Its not worth a 9.80...

CP - Right. Right.

HH - But the Bremen one was probably worth more the 10.00 than...

CP - Yes.

The speaker then highlighted what seemed to be specifically judge-like strategies enabling him to recognise faults in the performance and justify deductions in its score. This was an insight to how this judge's critical eye operated. Indicators of poor execution of a 'big move' in a sequence were not so much the big move itself 'sandwiched' between linking moves, but how well the gymnast initiated the move and how well they connected it to the next element whilst maintaining a flowing routine. For example, in clip 30, of Bondarenko (Russia) on Vault HH explains:

HH - Mmm... From a judging perspective it tends to be...

as much where you land...

if you can land... legs first... land 'dead'...

and then you go back from there.

CP - Right.

HH - Its like watching a Rings routine or a High Bar routine or whatever...

If they land it dead...

If they don't land it you go back and have a look... at what else was wrong with it.

CP - Right.

HH - If they land perfectly, you tend not to go back.

You just accept what you've put down...

So if they... you fall on vault...

You tend to try and work out the reason why they fell

And then take a couple more off because...

It was almost assumed at this high level of competition that each gymnast would complete every big move, particularly in finals and perhaps score their bonus points on the basis of just completing the move. That is, all finalists may have a Start Value of 10.00 and routines are likely to comprise of similar high scoring elements. However, success or failure of the big move itself may not provide the judges with sufficient lee-way to make subtle differentiations of *how well* the move was completed. Shades of success may be justified in terms of for example, if all eight finalists on Parallel Bars completed a double-back between the bars to upper arm, but Urzica came from a more difficult move into the double back and then achieved the best extended and highest front-uprise from the double back, his could be seen as the best performance of the finalists. This explanation, as a way of considering aesthetic differentiation, was also offered by Hardy Fink and seemed to agree with HHs explanation.

The script indicates that it may be part of the gymnast's 'contract' to the judge to give clarity in execution to make the judge's job easier to give full credit for the elements shown. When there is no debate about intent of the gymnast fewer conflicts of opinion or protests may arise about the final score awarded. Two good examples of poor end positions and intent were Pfeiffer (Germany) and Bondarenko (Russia) on High Bar, clips 2 and 4:

Pfeiffer Clip 2

HH - Not...

CP - Not good?

HH - His shape started off quite nice, he's now... gone a bit err...

Scruffy.

He's not actually making all... finishing all the mmm...

Elements in a handstand shape...

CP - Right.

HH - So from a judging point of view... err he's going to get deducted for them.

CP - Right... his transition through the moves... too quickly.

Bondarenko Clip 4

HH - He had a lot of bent arm work.

CP - Yes.

HH - It's not classy...

It's not...

If you compare him with Beresch, Beresch went...

Everything went through to handstand...

It was clear and clean...

You knew when one move finished and another one started...

With this routine it's like...

It doesn't quite finish before he gets into the next element...

Shoulder angles and...

The speaker often raises the issue of vantage point from which to observe the performances. The previous coaches mentioned that footage was "filmed from an odd angle" for them to appreciate the display in what have been the same manner as when they saw it live. The concept that gymnastics might appear different from different viewing angles was clearly an important consideration in terms of aesthetic evaluation, particularly if judges were to have parity in their scores based upon what they see and comprehend. The notion that a judge could account for difference in his score on the basis of what he could or could not see at the time seemed totally legitimate to the researcher. Judges are often spaced evenly, sitting apart, around the podium for a given piece of apparatus. The speaker then highlighted that judges had experimented with tennis umpires chairs to evaluate routines on the Rings in the past indicating that the problem had in some way been acknowledged by the judging fraternity. A strong feature of this script was the descriptive aesthetic language used to explain subtle differences in performances as to why one might be better than another in HHs opinion. There was preference for variety in the contents of routines but also for proportion and unity in its performance, exemplified by

Deferr (Spain) on Floor (clip 44) about which HH commented that he was interesting to watch (not predictable) and interesting to judge as he uses linkage well to connect big tumbles and HH would become "hooked" to discover what he was going to do next. There was also an indication of the sense of illusion which might be created when HH used terms such as "crispness" to describe Ivankov's (Russia) twisting vaults, compared to Jackson (Great Britain) Vault clip 35, and "solidness" to describe Ivankov's (Russia) Parallel Bars performance (clip 37) compared to Urzica's (Romania) which "was just a routine with skills in it" (clip 36).

A final significant feature of this script was when HH sensed what the gymnast was trying to 'say' in a performance. This became evident in the speaker's explanation of Nemov's (Russia) performance on Floor (clip 47) in which the gymnast was able to exhibit a 'vocabulary' in gymnastic action which HH was able to read and express towards interpreted as total enjoyment in performance which for this speaker was pleasing to watch. For example:

HH - I like Nemov's floor... he's just...
 He jumps high...
 He's a big fella...
 And err... another thing is...
 He enjoys it...
 CP - Yes.
 Can you tell that [as a judge]...
 HH - Yes... yes.
 What he does... when he finishes... when he's...
 He's happy to be there you know...
 Give me a score...
 I'm happy here...
 I'm not worried about winning...
 Well he is but...
 CP - Yes...
 HH - Otherwise he wouldn't be doing it but he enjoys doing what he's doing.
 CP - That's interesting...
 Particularly if you can sense it when he's performing...
 HH - Mmm... mmm [nodding, yes].

Other notable examples of expression which HH interpreted, on Floor, were highlighted through comparison of gymnasts where Dragulescu (Romania) was likened to a circus performer, clown-like in deportment and manner, whilst the opposite was Nemov (Russia) being described as the artist who strives to maintain an illusion of fluency, unity, lightness and power in his performance.

The post interview dialogue was interesting in that it indicated many of the judging controversies in the gymnastics world which appeared to have some reference to aesthetic evaluation but was more to do with the politics of winning and maintaining dominance through peripheral means at international competitions.

Figure 71. Transcript analysis. Extract from Appendix C: Data Set 2, Transcript 3, Respondent HH. Judge.

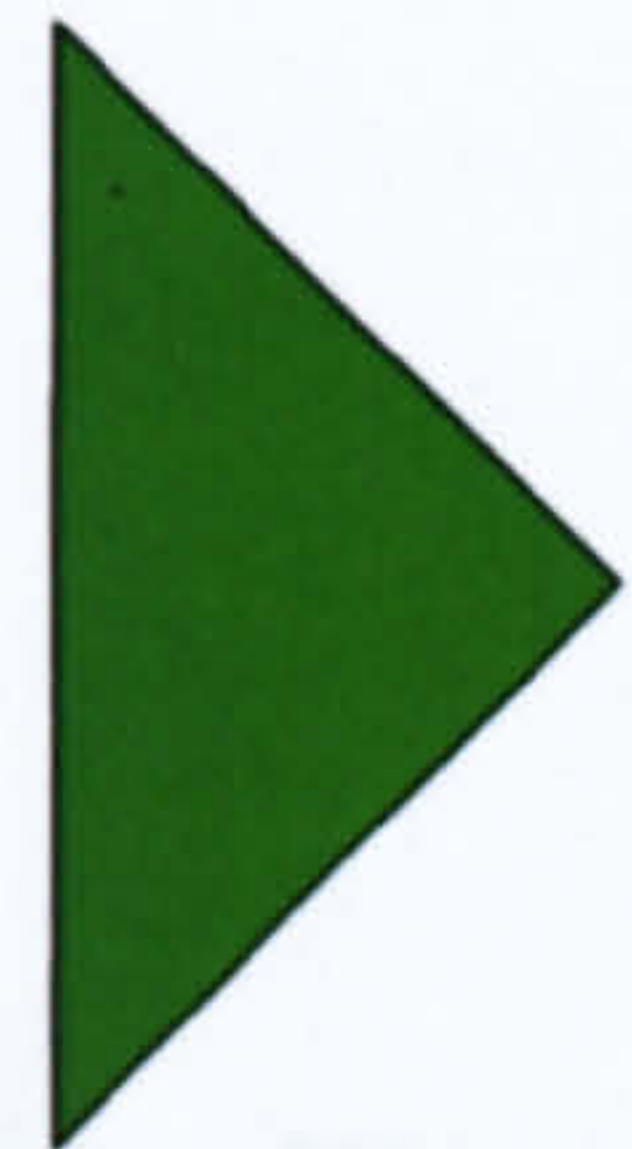
TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS

Total of 480 meaning units, coded and categorised: identified in initial coding and ongoing analysis. Line by line analysis: number of related utterances on topics: Minor Categories to Major Categories. The green triangle indicates a predominance of aesthetic comment to explain appearance.

Element recognition (ABCDE)	15	G
Recognition of gymnast / reputation	35	G
Shape comments	13	A
Form related comments	37	A
Line - bodyline comments	15	A
Scruffy	9	A
Strength comments	4	A
Good execution related comments	8	A
Poor execution related comments	33	A
Code related comments	7	G
Competition / strategy comments	3	G
Classic	3	A
Deduction / fault related comments	45	G
In-consistent gymnast comments	5	A
Dislike / not pleasing	13	A
Judging - start and finish of elements - Clarity / technical accuracy - no debate on final positions shown.	11	A
Comparisons with gymnasts	9	A
Not special	1	A
Cultural	3	A
Physical appearance / attire	2	A
Legs together	7	A
Legs splitting	10	A
Knee bending	4	A
Arm bending	3	A
Extension	12	A
Judge related comments	4	G
Average / standard fare performance	4	A
Personality of gymnast	5	A
Clean routine	2	A
Fluidity / flow in performance	4	A
Effortless	5	A
Heavy / light illusory appearance	3	A
Viewing Angle / vantage point	10	A
Bonus marks	12	G
Scoring related	24	G
Shaking	6	A
Cowboying	19	A
Landings	22	A
Cheating / dubious scoring	14	G
Technique	11	A
Solidness	4	A
Control	8	A
Powerful	2	A
Graceful	1	A
Elegant	1	A
Not elegant	1	A
Physique appearance	1	A
Originality	1	A
Interesting gymnastics	2	A
Linkage	4	A
Respect for discipline of the gymnast	3	A
Total	480	

A
Aesthetic comments
 (Descriptive of some quality or character in performance)

Categories: 42
 Comments: 321



G
Gymnastic comments
 (Naming, identifying, procedural, structural in performance)

Categories: 9
 Comments: 159

Interview narrative: Data Set 2, Transcript 4, Respondent JJ - Judge - Appendix D

This script demonstrated that the speaker utilised a great deal of cultural reference to formulate some of his opinions about the aesthetic of routines presented in the video. Of particular interest were his beliefs that an aesthetic of performance is trained from a very young age, being a kind of legacy of the coaches' approach to coaching. This may be how the 'gymnastic-character' of the gymnast becomes visually evident in performance such as appearing playful or stern in performance. From this the speaker was able to interpret and express to what the gymnast was able to 'say' in performance in terms of perceived levels of confidence and happiness to perform as a gymnast. In clip 49, Dragulescu (Romania), JJ explains the approach of his coach which may account for the playful aesthetic of the gymnast in performance which GG had described as "circus-like" in the previous interview:

As a Junior he was trained a little bit different that other...

He had a coach who was a... he died... as a, as a Junior...

He was very relaxed...

CP - Right.

JJ - He was very errm... **he did things playing...**

CP - Right.

JJ - The things... this is why as a Junior he was not a very good Junior.

CP - Right.

JJ - But because he is so powerful he could manage to catch up...

And err... be the best.

He took three Gold medals for the Romanians at the Europeans...

Yes.

CP - So his former coach liked *playing*?

JJ - So he, he yes... was err... was a old man who was not very focused on the... err...

Quick results.

He liked the children to play...

To play with big moves...

Play with them... "lets do that one, lets do that one"...

Sure he was in the system which is quite right...

Yes and the Romanian system was quite right [strict, laid down]...

The sets routines and everything was that...

He was in the Junior team, the Junior squad...

CP - Yes.

JJ - But was not like... the best one.

And the advantage of this was... he was never injured...

CP - Mmm.

JJ - Even now he will not complain about shoulders, about the knees, about...

Other...

The injuries are from the bad technique...

The cultural influence on the speaker's explanations for appearance was further evidenced by comparison with gymnasts from other countries, typically Russian gymnasts. JJ explained that scewing on the Pommels (off-set hand positions) could be a cultural feature of Russian coaching as the effect of scewing may be aesthetically acceptable to them. For example, the speaker commented in clip 7 about Nemov (Russia):

JJ - Pommel Horse, Nemov.

Observing videotape ... pause in dialogue.

JJ - So is quite a heavy boy for the Pommel Horse.

CP - Yes.

JJ - Does that scewing thing which is err...

CP - Scewing?

JJ - Yes, scewing is a... you see one hand is in front of other...

CP - Oh yes.

JJ - In the travels... so this is a technical mistake, but all the Russians do this thing.

CP - Oh right...

JJ - Yes. Not so much the Romanians...

That is why they... are the best in the world... champion [Reference to Urzica].

However, the [Russian] cultural affect of scewing on Pommels did not appear to be something which JJ strongly liked or disliked. Rather that he claimed that an outcome of the training regime, from which he emerged as a coach, was that gymnasts could decide whether to scew or not in their display almost at will. His point was that some gymnasts were so well practised in a wide variety of difficult gymnastic skills they could decide to show or disguise any aspects of their performance, which may count against them, depending on the audience. The notion of building a wide range of difficult skills became a strong feature of the script, leading the researcher to note this as the aesthetic of difference. That is, the gymnast is able to show such a range of different skills or combinations of skills compared to other gymnasts, in order to make their performance appear different on basis of content alone. Concepts such as grace, flow, elan harmony and illusion in performance did not feature in this script. Much greater emphasis was placed upon concepts such as powerfulness, strength, difficulty and having a wide repertoire of skills to appear different to others and adaptable to any situation or recovery. These were concepts, which the speaker seemed to prioritise as aesthetically admirable in a performance, which he intimates stem from the approach to coaching the young. For example in clip 7 he compares the skill repertoire of Nemov (Russia) on Pommels with Urzica (Romania):

JJ - Maybe you will have Urzica here? [*Featured on the video*]

CP - Yes, yes.

JJ - Yes, when he does all those things plus others... when all others have finished their routines Urzica starts to do other difficulties, and no deducted in the same time...

CP - Yes.

JJ - Yes, so...

He has to be the champion.

Ok lets see... [*Watches screen closely*]

The following extract from clip 12 of Urzica (Romania) on Pommels clearly illustrates the speaker's point of view with respect to coaching, adaptability and aesthetic of difference. However, JJ seems to be suggesting that some gymnasts, Urzica in this case, can be *so skilful* that they can be clever in

performance to consciously reveal or hide certain aspects of their display. Urzica's mode of *skillfulness* may be to demonstrate an impressively wide range of skills to appear different to his competitors rather than developing for example, aspects of an aesthetic persona. However, it may be worth noting that GG in the previous interview commented upon Urzica's performance as "just a routine with skills in it", indicating that the exercise was lacking some essence of style in presentation that he perceived in other gymnast's performances featured on the video.

JJ - Urzica. See he can stay forever on one... he impressing already by staying on one... one handle.

JJ - You see, others all have finished their routine by now but he still does the flair spindle facing the...

Observing videotape ... pause in dialogue.

CP - Right.

JJ - Yes.

So I... Ok I will comment Urzica... I know very well you see his routine...

JJ pauses video to formulate his explanation of the clip of Urzica's performance.

JJ - So he was... as a child he was never asked to stretch the maximum his circles... so was that, his training was... based on staying as long as possible on the horse.

CP - Right.

JJ - Doing as many as possible moves...

CP - Right.

JJ - Yes... but increasing so, so he was able to do erm... everything one arm on the [pommel horse] ... is so easy for him to do skills...

CP - Mmm... Mmm

JJ - That he can stretch, he can do what he wants there.

Now from the skills... see the Russians... so he doesn't go on the erm... *standard routines doing the trebles forwards, trebles backwards* and then do something on one handle and erm... maybe some flairs and then dismount.

CP - Yes.

JJ - Yes, he will avoid skills... because he can do so many skills...

CP - Yes.

JJ - A variety of skills yes... even if he scew in the trebles he will not show because you didn't see... you didn't see him doing erm... forward treble only... then Magyar or a Sivado...

CP - Yes, yes...

JJ - So he will cover things, he will go to the put a hand on and do spindle there... or he will do...

So you can't practically deduct him scewing, you, you don't have the time to deduct his scewing...

Even, even if it's done... because he will not show to you.

CP - Right.

JJ - Yes, he's hiding these things.

CP - Right, he's hiding it... he's too quick?

JJ - Yes, yes, he is too quick... you can... we will see again you said, his routine yes...

CP - Mmm.

JJ - And erm... I think that flairs in the middle... when erm... spindles impress or when all others have finished their routine, he will still do something else and do erm...

CP - Right.

Do you think the flairs in the middle, or being able to choose "I'll put something here to hide possible mistakes", do think that erm... is that deliberate thing from him do you think?

Do you think he might be aware of scewing his hands and will make a bigger visual impact by doing flairs immediately afterwards.

JJ - Yes... I think so because if... how is it... that thing which he is hiding what Bondarenko did or Nemov did they are only D moves so he did...

CP - Right...

JJ - A treble Magyar, err.. Say Nemov did a treble magyar, scewing, which is only a D.

He [Urzica] will do more difficulties, instead of doing that D he does another D...

In compensation... or another D or a combination E and a D...

So I think he is far above everybody...

CP - Right.

JJ - But if you will ask him to do a treble without scewing he will do those things because he was taught from start to not... to not do the scewing...

CP - Right.

JJ - Yes. So he can do everything...

So he is not [*so much*] hiding things he is...

Because he is so good on Pommel Horse that he can do everything...

CP - Yes, yes...

JJ - I think this is what the results told, because he is nearly to be the best gymnast having three Olympic Gold medals and err... so many things...

CP - Yes.

A major requirement to demonstrate an aesthetic of difference (wide skills repertoire) seems to be that of constant practice and training with the most difficult moves in gymnastics which JJ confirms. A high degree of [playful] practice with the most difficult moves in gymnastics may lead to a perceived sense of freedom on behalf of the gymnast to do what he wants. In a manner of speaking the performer may feel unconstrained by their physical repertoire and ability to change course if desired. Such a level of freedom does not seem to indicate the same freedom to be creative and expressive in gymnastic action, more that they increased scope to occupy time and space differently to other gymnasts. JJ comments on this in the post interview dialogue (clip 51):

All the Romanians play with...

Kovacs Kovacs

Kovacs err... Deff...

Kovacs... err...

The coaches were walking around and the gymnasts play big moves...

CP - Right.

JJ - Yes... or they did crazy things like ermm... on P Bars doing Diamidovs, in inverted...

CP - Right

JJ - Yes, outside the...

They didn't know what to do after, they they don't do... is quite impossible...

But they played with things...

So is a way to, to learn it but sure...

The gymnasts have to be able... they have to reach this level and they can play the moves to increase their... [*Confidence and repertoire*].

The speaker highlights that playing gymnastically as an approach to practice helps to develop an aesthetic of difference through greater skill repertoire. JJ confirms his aesthetic evaluation in this vein when it is lacking from performances where for him, insufficient practice is evident. He points out that some gymnasts slavishly pursue the training of big moves at the cost of practising linking/playing with big moves along with practising the whole routine each time they mount the apparatus. To illustrate this JJ comments in clip 47 about Nemov (Russia) on Floor:

JJ - The difference is there when you see the bad gymnast who try to do big moves...

CP - Yes.

JJ - Yes... and they will fall or they will do...

They are ones to not do aesthetically correct the other things so...

They are bad gymnasts in everything...

CP - Yes.

JJ - Yes, bad gymnasts... yes... no control...

So they spend a lot of time to improve their acrobatics, their tumbles... they don't have time to correct other things yes.

Toward the leaps... or toward the flares...

Or to improve the aesthetic of the... of the routine...

Because there is no time because they practice a lot of skills... and they are still bad.

Cultural reference and the building of an aesthetic of difference through skill repertoire were the main points arising from this script. The speaker came across as a passionate and dedicated coach who had firm aesthetic beliefs underpinning his practice to develop good quality gymnastics.

Figure 72. Transcript analysis. Extract from Appendix D: Data Set 2, Transcript 4, Respondent JJ. Judge.

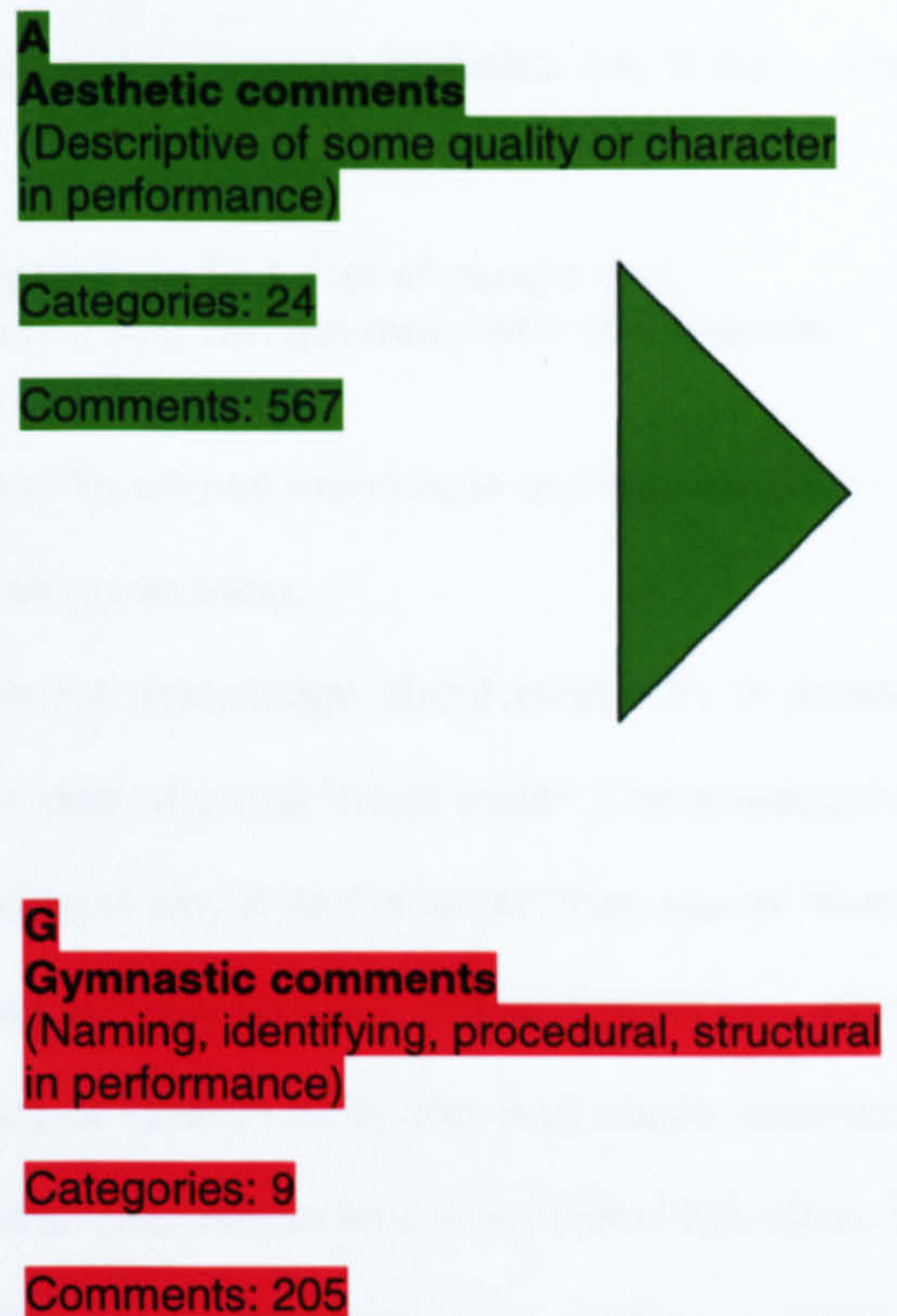
TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS

Total of 772 meaning units, coded and categorised: identified in initial coding and ongoing analysis.

Line by line analysis: number of related utterances on topics: Minor Categories to Major Categories.

The green triangle indicates a predominance of aesthetic comment to explain appearance.

Reputation of gymnast	42	G
Fashion old/new	7	A
Style comments	38	A
Technical comments	27	G
Technique comments	65	A
Element recognition	26	G
Good execution	25	A
Poor execution	20	A
Looks nice/better	12	A
Form related comments	54	A
Deductions / faults	41	G
Biomechanical / anatomical	8	A
Cultural Comments	52	A
Mistakes comments	39	A
Skill / Covering mistakes	29	A
Perfection	3	A
Play - gymnastic play	27	A
Physical Appearance	44	A
Illusion	9	A
Strong / strength	27	A
Crowd pleasing	4	A
Medal winning (extrinsic)	10	G
Training regime (cultural)	12	A
Variation in routines	5	A
Difficulty	11	G
Aesthetic of difference	22	A
Code related comments	8	G
Big moves	32	A
Judge related comments	17	G
Bonus / scoring	23	G
Playing / play gymnastically	16	A
Personality	9	A
Courage	8	A
Total	722	



Interview narrative: Data Set 3, Transcript 5, Respondent KK - Gymnast - Appendix E

There is a high level of performance knowledge demonstrated throughout this script. The level of technical know-how knowledge was impressively high and stands out as being the main focus of the dialogue. The researcher felt he was getting a 'nuts and bolts' explanation of how skills were executed and how subtle variations in performance technique altered between different gymnasts at the same competitive level. To this end, the speaker indicates great inside knowledge of the technical demands of the sport, for example, in clip 3 discussing Beresch (Ukraine) on High Bar, KK explains:

KK - That's a full twisting Kovacs...

Kovacs...

I think err... [*Pause*]...

I think he was one of the first people to do the full twisting Kovacs, probably one of the... one of the best in the world...

Because if you notice when he catches it...

CP - Yes.

KK - He comes out with both hands together whereas we find a lot of people do it...

Because of the way you're turning you see the bar... you can get away with catching one hand and then the other...

CP - Oh right...

KK - Whereas he does it pretty much perfectly and he comes round both at the same time pretty much.

And generally that whole High Bar routine just swings so easy.

The speaker was able to explain his considerable technical knowledge about execution of extreme difficulty on all six apparatus, which may only come from one who has "been there". The explanations offered were frequently qualified with aesthetic confirmation of why it "looks better" that way or "swings easier", as in the extract above. The speaker indicates a keen eye for ideal shape in execution, even if he cannot achieve it himself as a gymnast. His concept of ideal in body line and shape seemed to inform his aesthetic preference realised by pointing to other performers who exemplified this ideal. For example, Urzica (Romania), World Champion on Pommels, provided once again, a point of comparison and criticism in that the speaker did not find Urzica's body shape and line in double leg circles (on Pommels) as ideal as Casimir (France) upon whom KK would wish to model his own basic work. KK commented in clips 12 and 13 about Urzica's technique in basic double leg circles hinting also at the "aesthetic of difference" (different skill repertoire/content) to account for why Urzica may be 'better' than Casimir despite the less than ideal shape in KK eyes:

Urzica (Bremen) Clip 12

KK - And... again I don't think his circles...

I mean his circles compared to Casimir isn't... isn't that good...

CP - Right...

KK - I think it's the difficulty that he...

Contains in the routine that sets him apart from everybody else...

CP - Right...

KK - D'you know, I mean in terms of splitting that from the others...
 I mean you could say well...
 Well Casimir's better swinging... mmm... err... than his... but its difficult...
 CP - Mmm... to quantify yes.
 Interesting...

Urzica (Glasgow) Clip 13

KK - And then you work to how good your original basic circle is...
 I mean you're never going to be able to do... like you're single handled work more extended
 than what you do your double legs circles...
 CP - Right.
 KK - You know... so it all sort of stems from that so... well in that respect I don't think, I think
 personally I'd probably... the best I could probably get is say to Urzica's sort of style... rather
 than Casimir's...
 CP - Right, right...
 KK - My circles never going to be that extended now... [as extended as Casimir's]
 Not unless I have a... lot a time out and a lot of work [laughs]...
 CP - And six inches extra on your arms... [laughs]...
 KK - Yes...
 I mean that's the other thing as well... Casimir's taller so... everything looks a lot more
 flowing...
 Compared to the shorter person...

The speaker makes frequent reference to physique and physiognomy of the gymnast which may contribute to his concept of aesthetic persona which helps to construct his understanding of how he and others appear as gymnasts. This kind of perception of physical aesthetic in gymnasts suggested to the researcher that KK may construct an understanding of what it might mean or could be interpreted, if a gymnast has a certain physique and where their strengths and weaknesses might lay, from a gymnast's point view. For example, about Ivankov (Belarus) KK comments:

CP - Do you think the fact that he looks strong adds to the sort of aura about him?
 KK - Mmm...
 CP - The kind of gymnastics that he's going to do...
 KK - Yes and no, erm... I mean... to start of with I mean it just shows that he's quite well, well prepared... erm...
 I mean like he's not... although his arms do look massive when you see him in the gym and you say... he's got his top off...
 CP - Yes.
 KK - Erm... he's well proportioned you know, it shows that he's... his conditioning been done... done right you know he's not top heavy... it's not like his body's massive and his legs are... twig like...
 CP - Yes, yes.
 KK - It just shows he's a well prepared gymnast more than... that you see him as a strong gymnast so he's going to be good...
 I mean there's plenty of guys... from Italy in particular, who are really big...
 And they just look too heavy...

The aesthetic language KK uses seems to be intuitive and emerges when describing the physical appearance and qualities, which a performer brings to a routine. The illusory effect which some gymnasts are able to create in their performance is an aspect which KK is quick to highlight and give

credit for and admire in gymnasts that are distinctly different to him, for example about Deferr (Spain) on Floor clip 44, who he perceived as a 'heavy' gymnast, he comments:

KK - Mr. Powerhouse-Defer first on Floor...

I mean its easy to see straight away why he's good on Floor... just looking at the size of his like calves and... quads...

But he does quite well because someone with big legs normally... I say looks quite heavy... but he's very light across the floor and his technique's really good...

CP - Do you think that's personal to him then that he manages to do that?

KK - Yes I mean... as a general rule, unless you happen to be what you call the normal gymnastics build... skinny legs and you know... slightly bigger upper body...

CP - Sure... yes, yes.

KK - I think that's the key... the key to Floor is just to look light...

KK - Yes...

It is apparent that the speaker does not have formal aesthetic concepts or language to articulate aesthetic ideas, but again has the intuitive knowledge of what it should be, compared to what it is and can point to "scruffy work". This gymnast, as an expert performer, gives the impression that he would be able to point to many minor defects which for him detract from the presentation, even if he may be unable to correct such defects himself in his own performance. For example, there were numerous self-comparisons with the criticisms made about Csollany (Hungary) who 'cannot' point his toes and the speaker intimated his own 'inability' in this regard admitting that it is something which may disrupt the aesthetic of a presentation.

There were strong features of overall aesthetic, which KK perceived from the "whole" of presentation by some gymnasts. This realisation of a whole, or a unity concept in performance seemed to relate to making parts of a routine belong to a whole presentation. However, as an aesthetic performance feature he says "either you have it or you don't" which may be a reflection on KKs belief that these things cannot be learned. Therefore, the aesthetic created by Dragulescu on Floor (clip 49) may be regarded as innate by KK, which KK has interpreted as casual, being a reflection upon his own competition experience with Dragulescu:

KK - This is Dragulescu...

He's pretty awesome on Floor as well...

I mean I'd say... you know...

Going back to your point about the err... presentation...

I'd say his presentation isn't quite as good...

He looks... he always looks like he sort of... can't be bothered really in a way... he's always...

Very casual you know...

CP - Yes.

KK - But I mean err... if you speak to him its pretty much how he is, you know...

"Hoowweerrr errr eer erm"... "Never mind you know"... [*Slurred laid-back impression of speech*]...

Always like another comp sort of thing...

And yes... you see him...

Like on Floor in particular it seems to show that like... like everything's pretty casual... steps and stuff... so...
CP - Mmm...

The script indicates the limitations of the F.I.G. Code of Points and how it brings about more set-like routines rather than providing gymnasts with the freedom to "do their own thing". However, whilst significant, this kind of comment was not as predominant in this script as it was in all the others.

There was strong indication of cultural influence on the quality of gymnastics produced by certain gymnasts and the unique 'chemistry' they may have had to achieve the success they have experienced on the world stage. The extract from the post interview dialogue indicates that this kind of success may not be transferable by either coaches or gymnasts moving to different countries. KK's comments are in relation to Nemov (Russia):

CP - Your job's to go out there and do it.

Do you feel like... as a gymnast you go, "Here I am"

KK - Well yes... I mean I don't know... I suppose it's a bit like err... **the sculptor and the clay type thing** erm... as in... you know...

You could take Nemov away and he'd still be a very talented gymnast...

To take him out of Russia and bring him to Britain he still would have achieved a bit but some of the stuff he was going to do, he wouldn't have produced over here...

Just because it's a slightly different way to doing it or...

You know the coach that he might have ended up with over here would have handled him slightly differently...

And he might have had a different character...

There's so many different things like I say that go into, into a gymnast and how...

And how they respond.

CP - Mmm.

An interesting theme towards the end of this script was about confidence in performance being able to present and perform as opposed to 'merely' executing gymnastic actions. This indicates a belief that aesthetic presentation may be what separates the top-flight gymnasts who share 10.00 Start Values and that it is the judge's perception of "the little things" that may or may not secure medal positions.

Figure 73. Transcript analysis. Extract from Appendix E: Data Set 3, Transcript 5, Respondent KK. Gymnast.

TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS


Total of 446 meaning units, coded and categorised: identified in initial coding and ongoing analysis.

Line by line analysis: number of related utterances on topics: Minor Categories to Major Categories.

The green triangle indicates a predominance of aesthetic comment to explain appearance.

Reputation of gymnast	21	G
Element recognition	35	G
Gymnasts as specialists	9	A
Basic/average routine	5	A
Strength to swing (muscled)	2	A
Difficulty comments	6	A
Swings easily (not tight)	11	A
Technique comments	25	A
Know how knowledge	14	A
Insight to routine construction - (Linked to strengths as a gymnast)	20	G
Fault recognition	23	G
Form related comments	13	A
Extension in body/limbs	9	A
Likes the look of / looks better	36	A
Body shape (good)	19	A
Restrictive shape or swing	9	A
Bonus comments	11	G
Code related	3	G
Strength comments	11	A
Flowing comments	18	A
Tightening (not relaxed)	12	A
Line comments (body)	5	A
Physical anatomy comments (Muscle/body type/body appearance)	27	A
Handstand/control/shape	10	A
Timing	7	A
Vantage point/viewing angle	12	A
Impressiveness	16	A
Cowboying (Vault)	10	A
Lightness - illusion comment	20	A
Heavyness - illusion comment	12	A
Plodding appearance	4	A
Scruffy appearance	9	A
The little things (presentation)	2	A
Comparison between gymnasts	15	A
Total	446	

A
Aesthetic comments
 (Descriptive of some quality or character in performance)
 Categories: 28
 Comments: 348



G
Gymnastic comments
 (Naming, identifying, procedural, structural in performance)
 Categories: 6
 Comments: 113

Interview narrative: Data Set 3, Transcript 6, Respondent LL - Gymnast - Appendix F

The speaker in this script showed immense technical know-how or procedural knowledge in terms of explaining the precise biomechanics of element execution, deductions for faults and reasoning for the particular construction of routines performed by different gymnasts. A notable aspect of this know-how knowledge was LL's ability to read gymnasts' body movements and predict what elements they were going to perform next. Previous interviewees typically 'read' out the elements after they were executed providing a list of content, naming the constituent parts of a routine. This speaker cited element names so far in advance of the clip showing the element, that he was commenting the move and other aspects of that performance before they had landed. For example in clip 2, Pfeiffer (Germany) and clip 4 Bondarenko (Russia) LL predicts:

Pfeiffer Clip 2

LL - He's quite err... good on this piece of apparatus... quite nice... to watch...
And a double twist dismount... [Predicts]
Yes...
Double twisting double straight...
And there, the landing... not bad at all.
Did you see that in the way he is winding up?
LL - Yes.

Bondarenko Clip 4

LL - Err... No Beresch is a tidier routine I think...
So nice...
It'll be a nice full twist dismount now. [*Predicts dismount and continues to comment upon earlier aspects in the routine*].
I mean if you catch releases close...
That's the difference between a good routine and the one that's going to finish in second.
If you catch it at a nice arms length... [*Gymnast in clip lands from dismount*].
He was a bit close then...
He's going to struggle.

LL was aware of a concept of unity in performance in that the overall presentation style of a routine had a definable aesthetic, which he could interpret and express towards. His perception of a whole aesthetic was partly indicated by his very close attention to landings in almost every case. A good landing for LL would be clean, precise, sure and solid bringing the display to a controlled close. That is, the gymnast signified the end of the illusion/suspension of disbelief, which he had set up by controlling the fluency of linkage during performance. Throughout the script the speaker made frequent reference to what the researcher understands as illusion in performance, concepts which may be achieved through the (deliberate) deception of perception by the gymnast, possibly with the help of a choreographer. For example comments concerning how the difficult might be made to look easy, or the heavy to appear light or making tall look under control or looking tall and extended when

short, were made. These kinds of comments constituted an interpretation by the speaker, of the overall aesthetic evident in the style and technique of the gymnast. Extracts from clips 44 and 49, compared Deferr (Spain) with Dragulescu (Romania) to demonstrate how for LL, a distinct aesthetic technique in performance may be discernible:

Deferr Clip 44

LL - Err... Defer on Floor... this should be quite good. As you can see from his vault... he's a big powerful lad...

CP - Yes.

LL - He's got bloody massive legs...

CP - [laughs]

LL - Err... so Floor and Vault are his pieces... on the other pieces he, he just doesn't look as...

doesn't look as good...

He's built maybe for Floor...

He makes it look so easy... as you can see there...

CP - Yes.

LL - Out of that tumble... no deduction... just showing that he's in control really...

But his legs are about twice the size of mine...

CP - [laughs]

LL - And his work... so...

And he's got very good spacial awareness... so he knows where he is in the air...

Finished routine...

Like I say when you become a master at your piece...

CP - Yes.

LL - It's just a case of *polishing* things off...

And that's all he's doing now with this routine...

CP - What polishy things is he doing, that others don't, do you think?

LL - Err... Its just that... he's having time to think about moving his arms...

You know little things with his legs err...

CP - Yes. [Interruption]...

LL - At the end... of the second tumble...

When he landed and jumped to front support...

CP - Mmm, Mmm...

LL - Err... that's a little bit extra... you know...

The guys that have... you know...

Sort of mastered their routines can put that in whereas...

A few of the others will be struggling to land or be glad to land.

CP - Yes, yes.

Dragulescu Clip 49

LL - Err... this guy...

You just look at the legs on him and you know he'll be able to jump...

Very dynamic... double straight... punch front one-and-a-quarter...

Made it look so easy...

Err... maybe not as elegant as Nemov and Defer but...

He's got the originality and the power in the tumbles...

It's interesting to watch... you don't know what he's going to do...

See he nailed the second tumble there...

He didn't need to rebound out because he stuck it dead...

And the first tumble he rebounded so he's had no landing faults up till now...

CP - Do you like his style of performance?

LL - Err... I think... yes it's very err... snappy fast...

If you watch a lot of the Romanians on all the routines you see they seem to get on and get off very quick...

Err... he jumps really well... and he makes it look like that Floor's a trampoline...

Which is... you know... quite, quite good to see...

You don't know what he's doing [next]...

His links aren't too bad you know... he's obviously thought about them...

He's got big tumbles down the side and then he'll finish probably with one of the biggest tumbles err... double twisting double back...

Yes...

And a little step...

But he... he's two tenths bonus for the dismount and he'll lose a tenth so he's still a tenth up...

So he's still better off...

And it is nice to see... if I was a judge... somebody throwing in a big tumble at the end like that...

You're more likely to give them the benefit of the doubt...

CP - Right.

It is interesting to note that LL explained the aesthetic of what he saw in this performance rather than answering the question posed which elicited a straight yes or no earlier.

The speaker here was discussing "polishing", "practising" and "perfecting" the execution of elements in order that a gymnast might have temporal and physical space to concentrate on other aspects of their display which help them to generate a greater aesthetic impact with their performance, rather than appearing to just cope. This indicates that a kind of creative process may be at work which helps to exaggerate aspects of a display which are not deductible under the F.I.G. Code but appeal to a personal sense of aesthetic preference (or not). The practise aspect of training and the clear aesthetic style which may result is also mentioned in clip 13 concerning Urzica's (Romania) Pommel work which may be a conception resulting from a cultural approach to coaching and training. LL comments:

LL - So not a bad routine.

Not a bad routine... when you, when you're confident with your routines like he is with that routine... err... you don't think about falling off...

It's just a case of concentrating on the little things like pointing your toes...

And that in itself makes you relax with your routine...

And so, you know... the, the falling of is just sort of... not in question really...

He's probably just concentrating there on stretching his toes... getting legs as high as he can...

Whereas, you know... a lot of the other gymnasts will be thinking... "I'll just be glad to stay on and get through the routine"...

Whereas he's...

Obviously he's polished this routine...

CP - Yes.

LL - And wants to show it off as best as he can...

And you can see that in his performance...

And so manages to... swings round the horse with such ease...

The speaker does indicate some cultural influence on style and type of gymnastics, which typifies and identifies certain gymnasts and countries. For example, in clip 5 about Ivankov (Belarus) on High Bar he comments:

LL - So... a lot of the Russians do double twist, tend to do them in the second somersault.

But err... a very good routine there...

However, whilst direct cultural comment is not a major aspect of this script, the distinct aesthetic styles he points to indicate that the speaker may unwittingly be identifying cultural styles in gymnastics which may result from individual approaches to coaching and stylised development in a "system". The notion of a national coaching system is often referred to by coaches from overseas when they discuss and identify aesthetic products of specific national systems. Or more commonly, they tend to criticise the workings of a system e.g. the Russian [coaching] system compared to the American [coaching] system or British [coaching] system.

The speaker raised an interesting point in relation to "practise" and "fitness" indicating that these factors need to be matched with the level of difficulty that the gymnast was attempting. This resulted in a notion of "being fit for the routine". Such a comment may be a reflection upon the level of aspiration of the gymnast matched with their actual ability to perform the selected elements in their routine. That is to say, if fitness and practice appeared to be well-matched then a positive aesthetic of performance might be interpreted. Consequently there was an inference from the speaker's tone that some gymnasts might "bite off more than they could chew" which affected their ability to give the best of themselves which presented an aesthetic of being ill-prepared and unfit to meet the physical demands of the routine. The researcher sensed that it could be a great compliment between gymnasts in their physical realm to be judged as "being fit for the routine", as this might recognise their ability and competence to *perform* the routine in their distinct way. That may be to create an illusion of ease of action, shades of dynamic and timing between linkage that is intrinsic to that gymnast performing that particular sequence of elements. Its inherent aesthetic may be like a latent quality that might be revealed if, in a manner of speaking, the gymnast is fit enough to do the routine justice. For example in clip 8 about Casimir (France) on Pommels LL comments:

LL - So he's making full use of the handles...
 And he's getting to the end of it quite easily...
 So it's, it's good to watch...
 A nice routine.
 Its always good to check the shears out at the end to see how tired they are and if you get good shears err...
 It just proves that you're fit for the routine...
 And then up to a, a fluent dismount...
 a lot of people get tired at the end and they end up lifting or struggling so the idea is to...
 Do quite a nice swinging dismount.

A further example of this kind of comment is given in clip 22 about Merceta (Great Britain) who struggles to show any final positions throughout his routine leading to failure on his dismount. This provided an overall impression of Merceta being unfit for the level of difficulty attempted creating an

aesthetic of incompetence, which the viewer was pleased to see come to a close. This view was later corroborated by Hardy Fink in his independent commentary on the same footage.

The aesthetic of difference (skill repertoire / content) is detected once again in comments about Urzica's (Romania) Parallel Bars performance. Highlighted by the speaker here are the skill differences and the degree of practice rather than admiration for body shapes, poise, timing and grace etc. For example, he comments in clip 36:

LL - Right P Bars... here's our... our Pommel expert...
 CP - [laughs]
 LL - Does quite a nice P Bar routine... lots of interesting moves we'll probably get here...
 So Tipplelt there's quite nice...
 Healey...
 Front somersault, which is his move with full twist which is nice...
 Everybody seems to do the same sort of things...
 But then he'll do Stutz to one and Healey out...
 Which is very nice...
 Flying back half turn...
 Lots of little err... intricate moves in this routine...
 I think he'll do a double back with full twist dismount...
 Yes... which is a shame [took a step on landing]
 I think that's one of the first times I've ever seen that done.
 CP - Right.
 LL - But a nice routine, a nice routine there...

LL qualifies his point of view, indicating his perception of an aesthetic of difference, by comparing with Ivankov (Belarus) on Parallel Bars to ostensibly define the difference in aesthetic presented. The speaker is also beginning to point to and explain in his terms one of the more frustrating aspects of gymnastics for LL, the down-grading of elements which "don't look as nice" in the name of greater differentiation by pursuing difficulty. In clip 37 LL comments:

LL - Err... Ivankov...
 He always... we'll probably see a double back in this routine somewhere...
 If you watch Marius' routine it's quite exciting to watch...
 Lots of different things going on...
 CP - Yes.
 LL - So that's always nice to see...
 A very nice double back there from Ivankov...
 Very high...
 Nice Healey...
 Out on to one bar...
 You see the Code tends to favour hop three-quarters to one bar like that and you get quite a good amount of bonus for it... but it's not really as nice as some of the other stuff...
 CP - Right... there's not the variation is there in the routine?
 LL - No... like Marius' routine... was you know... there was lots of different moves, a couple of different moves what you haven't seen before...

The down-grading of elements was a strong point of contention for LL who could see the results both aesthetically and tactically in gymnastics at international level. LL has had to adapt his gymnastics to the increasing demands of successive Codes throughout his career, which at international level has

spanned at least the last three judging cycles (12 years). Tactically, some gymnasts who were eminently capable of performing greater difficulty could opt not to perform it because they knew they would be safe to score sufficient bonus under the current rules. LL indicated that a number of the top gymnasts featured on the video were capable of a greater than 10.00 Start Value and sometimes "threw in" extra difficulty to "make sure" just in case the judges were indecisive for any reason. In the post interview dialogue LL commented on one way in which gymnasts can "play the Code":

Down-grading

LL - That's right yes... I mean this time...

they [FIG] altered it after the Europeans...

CP - That's right.

LL - And made a few [changes]...

I mean they put Healey turn up... to a D on P Bars which is an absolute joke...

And then double back went down from an E to a, a D... so making it the same...

Err... Floor...

They had tuck then straight in different boxes and now it's the same move...

So before you could do something... you know...

So... if a double back on P Bars [*difficult*] is worth the same as a Healey turn... [*easier*]

CP - Yes.

LL - A double back you can batter your arms to fuck every time you get on the bars...

And a Healey... is a piece of piss...

It's worth the same so why batter yourself?

CP - Yes, yes.

Playing the Code

LL - I mean a typical example... Lee McDermott... who could get through his routines...

And you'd watch him... and other people'd say... you know... "it was a bit boring"...

Because he'd do Tippelt you know on P Bars and he could do the other moves and he'd say well "what's the point"?... because I can get through this routine everyday... and its worth more than... [more difficult moves]

Possible aesthetic outcomes of the kinds of things, which LL is pointing to here, have been highlighted as serious concerns in the gymnastics world to date i.e. that such changes in the Code may lead to monotony and boredom in the sport for the gymnasts and particularly the audience and eventually kill the sport. Some of these concerns were discussed in the Rules section of this thesis and were championed by Mr. Hardy Fink who provided the final commentary for this body of research.

Figure 74. Transcript analysis. Extract from Appendix F: Data Set 3, Transcript 6, Respondent LL. Gymnast.

TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS

Total of 753 meaning units, coded and categorised: identified in initial coding and ongoing analysis.

Line by line analysis: number of related utterances on topics: Minor Categories to Major Categories.

The green triangle indicates a predominance of aesthetic comment to explain appearance.

Reputation / recognition of gymnast	42	G
Element recognition	98	G
Gymnasts specialism on apparatus	12	A
Specialness	2	A
Physique / physiology of gymnast	35	A
Pleasing / displeasing comments	63	A
Comparison between gymnasts	34	A
Difficult / easy routine	18	A
Difficult elements (LL perception)	11	A
Start Values	15	G
Score related comments	54	G
Bonus related comments	27	G
Strength to swing (muscled)	1	A
Predicts / reads biomechanics	23	A
Routine construction comments	15	A
Scruffy	1	A
Faults / deductions comments	31	A
Code related comments	25	G
Judge related comments	17	G
Shape comments	15	A
Line - bodyline comments	23	A
Clean - execution comments	8	A
Landings 'nailed'	35	A
Nice - use of descriptor	90	A
Cultural comments	9	A
Tactics - team or individual	10	A
Linkage comments	8	A
Stylish	1	A
Innovation	3	A
Awe comments	7	A
Judge related comments	3	G
Vantage point - viewing angle	6	A
History / genesis of skill(s)	8	A
Total	753	

A
Aesthetic comments
 (Descriptive of some quality or character in performance)

Categories: 25

Comments: 472



G
Gymnastic comments
 (Naming, identifying, procedural, structural in performance)

Categories: 8

Comments: 281

Interview narrative: Pilot Solo Commentary - Transcript 7 - Respondent Mr. Hardy Fink (FIG)**Appendix G**

This solo commentary was a pilot in the research strategy from which it was envisaged, the existence of any interviewer bias might be revealed, that the researcher would be aware of when analysing transcribed data. No significant interviewer bias was detected with the benefit that Hardy Fink corroborated many of the points raised by previous interviewees and also offered new and very interesting information which complemented the topics about aesthetic evaluation being studied in this research.

The speaker is clearly an authoritative voice at international level in the gymnastics world and demonstrates a sophisticated knowledge of the sport. An overall impression from the script is that the speaker cares immensely for 'his' sport. He understands and explains gymnastic performance with a clarity not seen in other scripts and sees with a far-reaching vision as if looking out for potential pitfalls for 'his' sport in the future. Consequently the speaker comes across as a little sad, disappointed and perhaps frustrated, that judges do not pick up on "the little things" that should be deducted for, but are not, this being indicative of larger problems in the sport. A significant point here is that the speaker claims that basic body shapes such as a straight handstand, are not being shown by some elite gymnasts and they are not being deducted for this. Poor body shape in swinging on Pommels and lack of control on Rings were also criticisms where greater deductions could be made but were not taken for whatever reason (see clip 11 for extensive critical comment about Dragulescu (Romania) on Pommels). The speaker indicates that the reputation of the gymnast may be one way in which judges' decisions could be influenced, as he comments in clip 14 about Jovtchev (Bulgaria) on Rings:

Ah ha... Jovtchev...

Too bad he can't do a handstand...

After Menichelli did the first absolutely straight handstand in the 1960s...

An arch... a tenth was always deducted... but now we just look at the strength and forget the handstand... interesting...

And he's awesomely strong...

Bad angle... it looks like he might be high there but... I have seen his routine...

He set too high first and lowered...

You're supposed to go directly to the position...

Like that... [*Demonstrated on next element*]

Looks like a bit of an over-grip that's a deduction...

Which is normally not taken for Champions...

Only taken for beginners...

You can't see his handstand here... unfortunately... [*Vantage point/viewing angle*]

From the wrong angle but you can see it's Plunched and arched over...

Conversely there are some aesthetic features in performances which the speaker prefers and would like to see gymnasts given credit for, although he indicates that the authority at FIG tend to overlook these subtle attractive points in performance which in his view may be to the detriment of the beauty and popularity of the sport. In clip 3, Beresch (Ukraine) on High Bar he comments:

Beresch... Recently won the 2001 Worlds on High Bar...
 He was just close to perfect then...
 This man is just elegant throughout...
 Big Super E...
 Lots of difficulty...

Observing videotape ... pause in dialogue.

That full turn to El grip...

I personally prefer to see them caught in near handstand to like the women do...

But err...

The Men's Technical Committee doesn't seem to care...

Or doesn't seem to want to do that...

Very nice routine...

The speaker demonstrates a very keen eye for well executed basic shapes and smooth linking elements in combination with completing great difficulty. This indicates that he may perceive faults in a similar manner as the judge HH, who explained how he looked for tell-tale signs (mistakes) at the end of a move identified by working backwards from the last element or landing, as indicators of poor technique and then to deduct accordingly. For example in clip 39 about Nemov (Russia) on Parallel Bars he comments:

Front up-rise is... out of those tricks is low and... [*Double back between the bars*]

I am really thinking we should expect at... [*International/World level*]

Perfect amplitude on a regular front up-rise... to...

If he can do that double salto well then the front up-rise should also be possible out of it that has amplitude...

[*A higher swing to the front than demonstrated*].

These extracts indicate that the speaker has a clear vision of what should be, could be and ought to be in relation to ideal execution and presentation in the sport. However there is a sense of "if only" indicating there may be a restrictive element in gymnastic culture which in some way prevents ideals in aesthetic presentation to be aimed for by gymnasts. The script indicates that the bonus system of scoring may constitute such a restriction as it could provide an alternative pathway to short term success. This "short-sighted" method of evaluation may circumvent the energy and effort required to attend to the subtle features of presentation, i.e. the "little things", with the result that gymnasts are in some way lured towards 'easy' options to win at competition. This was intimated by the gymnast KK who pointed out that "if what you can do is sufficient (to win) then why bother to do more?" This could constitute a 'disease' of apathy leading to monotony in performance, which Hardy Fink has pointed to

in the past as being a symptom inherent in the Bonus System of scoring. In clip 46 on Vihrovs (Latvia) on Floor, who is Olympic Champion and eminently capable of "nice work", seems to let passages of his performance lapse completely for no apparent reason:

Olympic Champion... [2000]

Observing videotape ... pause in dialogue.

That's nicely done... nicely done...

He's the only one who does that pass...

And that one-and-three-quarter was beautiful...

Lots of control...

Question about rolling off the back of his hands rather than a proper roll... but no-one seems to care...

Nicely finished...

Observing videotape ... pause in dialogue.

Dive roll... mmm... [Gymnast passes from corner to corner with a run and a dive roll only].

A problem with the bonus system... get your bonus and then you don't have to do anything else...

The speaker seems to regard the construction of the Code as a major determinant of the aesthetic produced in the sport, which he in some way was responsible for, being a member of the MTC at FIG. His comments about the MTC's intentions for the aesthetic on Pommels are illustrated by his explanation when discussing Urzica on Pommels at Bremen (clip 12):

He does so much on one Pommel its just beautiful...

That's what we were trying to encourage in the Code and it just didn't happen...

A factor which appears to help formulate the speaker's conception of aesthetic perfection is that of reference to historical standards in presentation e.g. reference to the Menichelli handstand in 1960s cited above. Consequently, the speaker may wish for harsher judgements to be made in order to get back to an aesthetic of perfection, rather than letting the gymnasts get away with lazy actions. A sense of disappointment seems to come through in the script that simple actions are not performed well or that difficulty is pursued at the expense of good form, just to get bonus marks. To combat this, identification of an ideal aesthetic in performance is ostensibly defined by comparison between gymnasts. The speaker points to purer examples of perfection as he sees it, which from the speaker's point of view should guide the judgements of the top judges in the world. When this education is incomplete, an error in judgement may be deemed to have occurred, see clip 13. This is clearly illustrated in the speaker's commentary on Urzica (Romania) on Pommels in clip 12:

His extension isn't the same as some of the others...

And it certainly isn't the same as Xiaojiao who competed at the 2001 Worlds...

[Xiaojiao Sun, China]

But, somebody who still got a 10.00 at Glasgow last year...

Which should not have been the case...

[Reference to Xiaojiao Sun (China) Pommels performance Ghent 2001. *Aesthetic of style, excellent swing and body line*].

It is interesting that when the speaker made this comment, he was unaware that the next clip was footage of the performance at Glasgow, which he just referred to. In clip 13 he comments about the same gymnast at the Glasgow Grand Prix:

Now... I assume this is the routine he got 10.00 for...
 And err... it's a pretty good argument to me that it's only a 9.90 Start Value...
 Which is a problem in itself...
 And it certainly should not have been a 10.00 following the World Championships when we saw that new...
 Excellent standard of... of amplitude and extension on Pommel Horse...

The formulation of these conceptual aesthetic *standards* seem to help define the best aesthetic by comparing other aesthetics with that which was most pleasing. Standards were discussed in the Rules and Standards section of this thesis, indicating that standards can be altered, updated and superseded as gymnasts appear to exhibit a purer aesthetic which exemplifies the closest to perfection as yet displayed in the world. To this end and perhaps ideally, the judges at world level could be educated through visual experience, being exposed to the *best* aesthetic in the world that exists, from which they could make their comparisons of other gymnasts' attempts to achieve the same. Such a method of standardising in evaluation-judgement would be a completely subjective enterprise for expert practitioners who may consider themselves the arbiters of objective assessment of aesthetic quality. This may in fact be a contradiction in their terms.

The aesthetic language used by the speaker demonstrated he was tuned-in to subjective interpretation of the products and aesthetic qualities of the visual display. He seemed to read the performances predominantly from a form, body-shape and execution point of view when he constantly pointed out the faults and deductions for actions as they were performed. He did not quote a sequence of element names like the coaches in previous scripts. The speaker makes use of the most varied range of aesthetic language to identify qualities in performance and describes the aesthetic presented accurately in his terms. The aesthetic language seems intuitive and he often refers to degrees or amount of aesthetic quality identified (greater or lesser) for example, "very nice", "very elegant", or "not perfect" or "very sloppy" etc.

Vantage point and viewing angle are also raised in these extracts and throughout the script indicating that the final positions and general appearance of the performance might look different from different viewing angles. As the act of judging relies solely upon the judges' physical perception of the gymnast

through sight, which may easily be deceived, their conceptual point-of-view of aesthetic quality in performance may be influenced from their physical point-of-viewing when observing the gymnast.

There is some cultural comment made by the speaker, however, whilst it was not a dominant feature of the script, the comment made may indicate the speaker's awareness of a strong cultural affect on appearance of gymnastics on the world stage. In clip 43 about Townsend (USA) on Parallel Bars he comments:

Didn't hold the handstand...
 Was that tucked or piked?
 Low front up-rise...
 Bent arms...
 Low front up-rise again...
 Ohh... didn't quite finish... or show that position...
 Mmm... a little bit muscled there...
 Bent arms...
 Swaying... [in handstand]
Quite a typical, I would say... American routine.
Has everything in it but nothing's really nice...

Overall this speaker seems to be saying that the sport could be much better in terms of performance if the judges judged "better" i.e. "did their jobs properly" in terms of deducting for poor aesthetic form as well as not being influenced by political pressures (see also clip 13). The implication of this may be that coaches would have to coach to a higher aesthetic standard and choreography and linkage of routines might improve. Also that the gymnast would have to "come up to scratch" in terms of presentation and difficulty executed, or lose out on the medals. The speaker's comments about Ivankov on Floor (clip 5) seem to optimise his sentiments as to how gymnasts may be just doing enough, as opposed to showing what they are capable of. The subsequent inference being that the attention of the judge whilst watching average or "standard fare" performances may be less than acceptable. Mr. Fink comments:

Seems he never learned a triple Russian to also put in there, to get some more bonus here...
 And another bonus element from that Code [*front Planche lift to handstand*]
 Ohh... [Laughs] didn't quite get to handstand...
Major tumbling pass - a dive roll - it just isn't contemporary...
Judge doesn't even seem to be watching...
 So minimal tumbling, 5 tenths at the beginning... and the rest is....
 Strength and Pommel Horse.

The speaker makes frequent disparaging reference to the bonus scoring system and the culture of pursuing difficulty for bonus marks, seemingly because of the dislike for the aesthetic product it produces. Mr. Fink seems to be hinting that a completely different kind of evaluation system may be required in the future to comprehensively give credit for, not only what the gymnast is capable of

executing but also, that which takes much closer notice of *how well* the overall performance is presented.

In his commentary for this research Mr. Fink has provided the researcher with a valuable insight to an expert practitioner's "way of seeing" some of the aesthetic qualities in a performance. What seems to make this contribution outstanding is the clarity and confidence with which critical comments are made and justified. Faults in performance are pointed out with such ease and confidence that it makes his evaluative judgements appear accessible and 'simple' for all practitioners to make.

Figure 75. Transcript analysis. Extract from Appendix G: Solo Commentary. Transcript 7, Respondent MM. Judge.

TRANSCRIPT ANALYSIS

Total of 421 meaning units, coded and categorised: identified in initial coding and ongoing analysis.

Line by line analysis: number of related utterances on topics: Minor Categories to Major Categories.

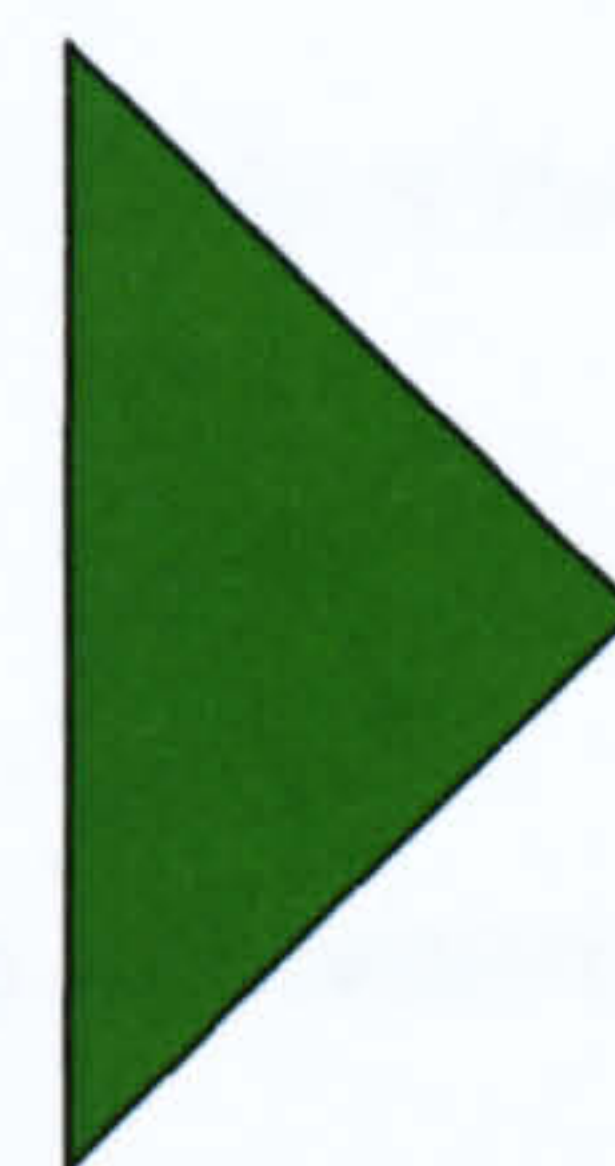
The green triangle indicates a predominance of aesthetic comment to explain appearance.

Reputation / recognition of gymnast	25	G
Element recognition / naming	45	G
Faults and deductions	92	G
Form	14	A
Non-completion of trick	3	G
Technical	4	G
Impressive routine or elements	10	A
Average or standard routine	3	A
Not a bad routine	4	A
Pretty good routine	2	A
Nice comments	27	A
Elegant comments	3	A
Original comments	2	A
Swing with strength - muscled	4	A
Perfection comments	2	A
Special - comments about	1	A
Not perfect	1	A
Difficulty comments	4	G
Personal preference in aesthetic (Looks nice or does not look nice)	9	A
Code related	11	G
Frenetic	1	A
Rushed	1	A
Sloppy	5	A
Comparison with other gymnast(s)	5	A
Judge related (inadequacy)	15	G
Not pretty	1	A
Not elegant	2	A
Confident in performance	3	A
Vantage point / viewing angle	5	A
Effort in presentation	5	A
Unusualness in presentation	3	A
Extension of limbs / body comments	3	A
Bonus related comments	15	G
Unique element to gymnast comments	4	A
Gymnast specialism stated/recognised	3	A
Weak performance	9	A
Tight (lack of extension)	3	A
Beautiful - comments about	2	A
Variety in performance	4	A
Routine construction	5	A
Routine construction (balance)	5	A
Rhythm - comments about	1	A
Political pressure (judging)	1	G
Strong / strength comments	6	A
Swing comments	3	A
Steadiness and wobbles	6	A
Head-up signals during performance	7	A
Historical comparison	5	A
Cowboying (vault)	5	A
Awesome - comments about	4	A
Prediction / anticipation	7	G
Clean - execution comments	1	A
Little things - comments	1	A
Aesthetic persona of gymnast	9	A
Total	421	

A
Aesthetic comments
(Descriptive of some quality or character
in performance)

Categories: 43

Comments: 199



G
Gymnastic comments
(Naming, identifying, procedural, structural
in performance)

Categories: 11

Comments: 222

7.3 Discussion of common themes in aesthetic knowledge revealed by expert practitioners

There were a number of common themes that emerged from the transcripts, which seemed particularly significant to these practitioners understanding of aesthetic evaluation in the sport. These themes are:

- Unity and variety in gymnastic performance
- A sense of illusion in gymnastic action and performance
- Descriptive aesthetic language to describe gymnasts and gymnastic performance
- Form related comments about gymnastic performance
- Cultural influence upon aesthetic evaluation of gymnastics performance
- Vantage points for observing and evaluating gymnastics performance
- The rules for evaluating gymnastic performance and frustration with the F.I.G. Code of Points

Unity and variety in gymnastic performance

The concept of "unity in variety" (Sparshott, 1963) appeared to have a strong correlation with practitioners' explanations of beauty and perfection of performance in gymnastics. The concept that an exceptionally good performance might present a unified appearance but contain varied gymnastic skills was an ideal that seemed to give meaning and direction to practitioners' endeavours. A concept of variation in the aesthetic of performance seemed to be indicated by responses that related to for example, a gymnast's varied use of space "above, along and below the bars", or varied entry into and exits from elements and combinations, or "interesting ways of doing things" not "bog-standard". Also demonstrating varied dynamics of Floor skills and utilisation of all the Floor space available. These may be some aesthetic features of unity in variety in gymnastics. Practitioners indicated also that a wholeness or unity in performance was an admirable quality which for them, demonstrated fluidity of linkage, to exhibit a seamless whole, in a sequence of gymnastic actions. Therefore, a unified performance may be a performance, which creates the impression of being *one gymnastic action* rather than a 'queue' of *gymnastic actions* executed as if being from a list of isolated tasks. This impression was highlighted by HH in his comments about Urzica (Romania) on Parallel Bars (clip 36,

Appendix C):

HH - He's actually not a bad P Bar worker...
That's his "Urzica"...

CP - Right... his own move...
 HH - Yes...
Again he's not... he's not a great P Bar worker...
 CP - Right... why's that?
 HH - Err... again its just...
 There's nothing that solid...
 You know it's just there...
It's a routine with skills in...
 CP - Yes.

The more varied range of skills that could be linked fluently into a seamless whole of gymnastic action appeared to stimulate the most appreciative responses from practitioners. Practitioners complemented gymnasts upon their ability to demonstrate a variety of gymnastic content within their unified performance. A good example of this were comments by GG about Ivankov (Belarus) on Parallel Bars (clip 37, Appendix B):

GG - Ivankov.
Observing videotape... pause in dialogue.
 GG - God, I like all round P Bars...
 This is good...
 He's done under sommies...
 He's done longswings...
 He's just done a big difficulty above bar...
 Lovely Healey...
You know... it's good... vocabulary.
 CP - Right.
 GG - Very good.
 Urzica's before did very little underneath the rails he did one move.
 He's done under sommie, longswing... *pause*
 That's a good routine.
 CP - That's interesting, you like to see a good range of skills around the apparatus?
 GG - Yes. Yes. definitely.

It may be that one of the greatest complements that could be paid to a gymnast is to say that their performance exhibited unity and variety at the highest level of competition. The speakers in the transcripts seemed to indicate that this may be one of the defining qualities which for them, differentiates the absolute best in a field of elite gymnasts in a Final, all of whom may have a Start Value of 10.00. The current segmented processes of scoring routines may diminish or fail to acknowledge formally the positive impression created by unity and variety in performance. In effect this may penalise the gymnast by not rewarding his performance highly enough. This situation may be exacerbated by the current trend for pursuing difficulty for bonus marks and scoring what may simply become big tricks and demonstration of skills in isolation. Croce (1922) warns of the consequences of overlooking unity and variety and its importance in aesthetic evaluation. This may have some

correlation with the limiting methods of scoring and the general direction of Men's Artistic Gymnastics at present which seems to be towards sensationalism and difficulty. He states that:

Expression [of unity and variety] is a synthesis of the various, or multiple, in the one. The fact that we divide a work of art into parts, a poem into scenes, similes, sentences, or a picture into single figures and objects, background, foreground etc., may seem opposed to this affirmation. But such division annihilates the work, as dividing the organism into heart, brain, nerves, muscles and so on, turns the living being into a corpse" (Croce, 1922).

A sense of illusion in gymnastic action and performance

The presentation of a unified performance may be linked with a sensation of illusion, which some gymnasts were able to create during their performance. That is, an impression of illusion may be created in the observer as a result of observing the gymnast's performance closely. A sense of illusion has traditionally been a feature of gymnastic performance whereby the impressiveness conceived may relate to the apparent "ease of action" demonstrated by the gymnast and his ability to "make the difficult look easy". In so doing, the gymnast may be able to deceive the viewer's perception by utilising his personal technique to display actions in his own special way, which could be trained by clever use of choreography. Therefore, the deception of perception could be intentional. For some performers, such as magicians, the act of deception may be the key to their success if their endeavours are to be appreciated as good or even expert (Maskelyne, 2002). Similar physical 'tricks' may exist for gymnasts to develop their performance technique with regard to illusion. The varying speeds of limb and body action in relation to the speed of other actions may develop possibilities for deceptive timing akin to the magician's slight of hand. This could contribute to a sense of illusion in performance. Establishing a base tempo or cadence of subtle limb and body actions in performance may also create a sense of rhythm and timing through repetition, which may instil in the observer a sense of expectation. When an expectation is set up, deception of perception may occur and the observer could experience what they interpret as illusion. Examples of subtle limb and body actions in gymnastics may be an extension of the arm(s) or leg(s) which could draw the eye away or towards a certain point which may accentuate a conception of body line, timing, height, length, poise and control. Also, the speed of actions and the noise generated by impacts on landings and rebounds could be controlled differently by gymnasts to give an opposite impression of what may be the observer's first impression of the gymnast's physical appearance. According to Collingwood (1938) this is much to do with interpretation of sense data and he states that:

"That which is true or false is thought; and our sense data are called real or illusory in so far as we think truly or falsely about them. To think about them is to interpret them, which means stating the relations in which they stand to other sensa, actual or possible. A real sensum means a sensum correctly interpreted; and illusory sensum, [i.e.] one falsely interpreted".

Interpretations of gymnasts by speakers in the transcripts seemed to identify illusory qualities, which contributed to the aesthetic evaluation of that gymnast (aesthetic persona) and their performance as a unified whole. Common examples in practitioner's language were that:

- Heavy gymnasts might appear light when running, vaulting or in tumbling series on the Floor.
- Gymnasts appeared light on their hands on the Pommel Horse.
- Gymnasts appeared more solid in their performance than their competitors.
- Gymnasts who are short might appear tall or extended whilst some tall gymnasts were able to hide or "cope well" with their height well in performance.

These appeared to be comparative evaluations between, in some cases, the first impression created by a gymnast's physiognomy and how well they appeared to contradict that first impression. This may induce in some, a sense of illusion as a result of thinking about and trying to make sense of the performance in order to ascribe value to it in some way. Additionally a sense of illusion conceived in gymnasts' performances may contribute towards an evaluation of "performance style". An excellent example of this may be Nemov (Russia) on Floor and High Bar who presents a continuous flow of gymnastic actions with linkage that draws the eye which may create an illusion of a seamless whole in performance. Once a sense of illusion is established it seems to be possible for speakers to identify a gymnastic style for a given performer which for example, has been described as "playful" in the case of Dragulescu on Floor, or "serious" in the case of Bondarenko on Vault or "enjoyable" in the case of Nemov on Floor. For some gymnasts the maintenance of illusion may help the observer to express and label a style in the performance observed. However, the researcher recognises that the deliberate disruption of illusion may be a further interpretation of a different style in performance, this being for example, what some of the American gymnasts appear to demonstrate. However, the sport may be too rigidly defined by its history, both recent and past, to permit such an interpretation of style to be beautiful or perfect examples of gymnastic performance.

Descriptive aesthetic language to describe gymnasts and gymnastic performance

One of the most significant outcomes of the transcripts was the predominant use of descriptive aesthetic language to explain subtle features in gymnastic performance and differentiate between elite

gymnasts. (Refer to green triangles on Figures 69 to 75). The dialogue in the transcripts seemed to be indicative and typical of the gymnastic language used by all the speakers in their daily operations. The period of structured observation was very instructive from this point of view. Therefore the data could be said to be uncontaminated, being a reliable reflection of their normal daily discourse on such matters. Common examples of qualitative descriptors in gymnastic parlance in the transcripts were: being special, perfect, beautiful, classic, elegant, graceful, awesome, powerful, impressive, strong, nice, clean, original, varied, coming down to the little things and the sculptor and the clay. Examples of some negative descriptors in the transcripts were: sloppy, plodding, brick shit-house, ugly, barely competent, umpa-lumpa, frenetic, rushed, cowboying, scruffy, tight, standard fare or bog standard. Of particular note was that practitioners used an increasing amount of positive descriptive language to explain subtle differences in performance between the top gymnasts. Their explanation would differentiate between the elite gymnasts who have a start Value of 10.00 'only' and those who are likely to appear in an Olympic final. Arguably, a principal guide to evaluating, differentiating and selecting a winner, when the top two or three gymnasts in a final may be capable of scoring 10.00, could be the use of descriptive aesthetic language and 'gut' aesthetic preference to point to (identify ostensibly) the best performance on the day.

Form related comments about gymnastic performance

Each transcript evidenced a strong critical awareness of gymnastic form. The gymnasts had the most critical 'eyes' and could explain in great detail how actions might fail or succeed depending upon body form, even to the extent of predicting what action would come next and *how well* it might be executed. This demonstrated a high level of procedural knowledge that was not so evident in the transcripts from judges and coaches. Judges' and coaches' form related comments were predominantly linked to explanations of deductions such as bending legs, splitting and cowboying. Their comments about form were also related to rule violations pertaining to routine construction, repetition, and biomechanical execution errors and scoring implications. Typically they would see these as technical explanations. All the speakers recognised body-form features and form in exercise construction in many of the routines featured on the video. However, there seemed to be some common instances recognised by the respondents which indicated that the reputation of the gymnast making the form faults may in some way over-ride a deduction for poor form in their case. This being a 'courtesy' which may not be

afforded to their competitors. Common examples in the transcripts of this were that: Jovtchev (Bulgaria) does not straighten his back to strike a good handstand on Rings; Csollany (Hungary) does not point his toes but seems to "get away with it"; Tambakos (Greece) shakes the wires of the Rings apparatus when striking what should be static elements and Dragulescu (Romania) appears lazy on Floor with lackadaisical linkage and simple dive rolls after he has "done enough" difficulty to collect his bonus marks. Also, there were mentioned instances of gymnasts being skilful to hide form faults in particular Urzica (Romania) and Nemov (Russia). Urzica could select actions from an extensive repertoire of personal skills to impress by doing something different rather than allow form faults to be revealed (referred to by the researcher as the aesthetic of difference) and the latter gymnast, on Floor, would step into corners or go straight into the next action after a tumbling pass, in order to hide possible deductions for landing faults.

A notion of form in its varied meanings was emerging from the transcripts, which seemed to evidence some of the aesthetic knowledge of these practitioners in relation to their sport. For example, "form" relating to a concept of body-form and "form" relating to technical requirements of elements and routine construction. Also "form" relating to compositional structure and "form" relating to bodily facility such as being in good form which could be a comment relating to physical appearance or apparent psychological ability to cope with stress during competition.

Cultural influence upon aesthetic evaluation of gymnastics performance

There were a great number of references to cultural influence to account for differences in the aesthetic style of presentation in performances. Of particular note in the transcripts were references to Cuban [Latino], Russian, Romanian, Chinese and American influences. The speakers' interpretation of the American aesthetic style may be one of "skills in isolation" where the illusion in performance may be deliberately broken, perhaps being a symptom of pursuing difficulty for bonus marks. The speakers' interpretation of Russian aesthetic style may be one of maintaining an illusion of gymnastic wholeness in presentation; the suspension of disbelief fuelled by apparent ease of action. Additionally, some technical characteristics of a Russian performance were reported by the speakers as being scewing on the Pommels and twisting in the second somersault of multiple-somersault dismounts.

The revelations by respondent JJ to explain the aesthetic of the Romanian style of gymnastics indicated a strong cultural aesthetic, which was corroborated independently by other respondents. In

concise terms, the Romanian approach to coaching gymnasts was that gymnasts should "play with big moves" to become confident with high risk and to experiment at the very limit of difficulty in gymnastics. Also that gymnasts should have a wide repertoire of skills to appear different from their competitors. This approach to coaching may be exhibited and conceived by the actions and disposition of Urzica and in particular, Dragulescu (Romania). However, the transcripts indicated that a cultural influence upon aesthetic appearance may also generate cultural bias to account for what the majority of speakers had recognised as poor form. An example of this was when respondent JJ explained and justified Dragulescu's [unattractive] technique on Pommels (clip 11) as "defensive" to prevent him falling and incurring big deductions. All the other respondents criticised this clip heavily for Dragulescu's poor body shape in swing, their views being confirmed by Mr. Hardy Fink who, in his solo commentary (clip 11) commented that that:

This looks like Dragulescu yes...
 He's a tumbler and vaulter but...
 He... look how tight he looks...
 He doesn't stretch in the shoulders at all...
 His... kind of... lats are pressed against his elbow almost...
 And these are the sort of things that just aren't deducted sufficiently by judges...
 There should be a... a amplitude and... and extension deduction on every single trick... a technical deduction on every circle...
 And err... it just won't be...

Observing videotape ... pause in dialogue.

Muscled a little bit.
 A routine of bare competence...
 And nothing nice about it.

The transcripts confirmed that, in a majority of cases, most practitioners could agree on what was good or poor form in a gymnastics performance and that exceptions to such a consensus could be motivated by other aesthetic interests or points of view.

Vantage points for observing and evaluating gymnastics performance

It was very interesting to note that all respondents commented at some point during their commentary, upon how different performances looked from the angle recorded by the camera. Common responses were, "It's difficult to see from this angle but", or "You can't quite see from here but", or it's a funny angle you have here". Conversely, there were comments of "It's interesting to see from this angle". Of particular note were KK's comments about the viewing angle for judges on Vault. Some of the footage of vaulting was filmed from the side and some end on, or above or from an oblique angle. The judges'

view at the competition in Bremen was from the side only, which may have meant they could not see major form faults clearly, such as knee splitting or cowboying. KK commented in clip 27:

KK - Erm... you know, saying it looks neater with your legs apart.

But I mean... to watch some of these from the side you can't actually tell that they are splitting their legs which is a... which is a big problem.

CP - Yes.

KK - So with Vault... a lot of the times with the Vault it all depends on where you... where you look at it... as to...

CP - Where the judges are sat?

KK - Yes... as to how bad something looks...

I mean if you...

CP - [laughs] (Dragulescu vaults)

KK - To sit on the side where the judges are and to sit on the side of the arena slightly higher I would say you get two completely different views of what the vault looks like.

CP - Right.

KK - Yes... Dragulescu with his own vault which is err...

Pretty awesome...

I think it's more impressive again because of the thing with having your err... your legs together [cowboying... it was all pretty neat and he turns out so easy...

He's just has it spot on...

It may be reasonable to add a provisional rider to KK's closing comments about Dragulescu on Vault that it looked awesome *from that angle*. It comes as no great surprise to the researcher that the same things might appear different from different vantage points and that an aesthetic evaluation may be affected by this. What was surprising was that all the practitioners raised it as an important point for the researcher to consider in his study, without apparently, pausing to consider the impact of different vantage points upon aesthetic evaluation and competition outcome in their world. Judge HH did explain how the F.I.G. considered using tennis umpire chairs to judge the Rings following the video footage filmed from a high angle which offered a much clearer view of the gymnast during his performance. However, no such innovation has been taken up by the F.I.G.

The rules for evaluating gymnastic performance and frustration with the F.I.G. Code of Points

Within the transcripts there was a sense from all the speakers that the sport had "moved on" significantly from the event at Bremen, although for some it felt as if the progress was not always for the better in terms of the attractiveness of the gymnastics produced. This seemed to be partly resulting from drastic rule changes within the incoming 2001/2005 Code. However, all respondents commented upon the video footage in the correct rule-context i.e. the 1997-2001 Code, which was important for this research. However, it also provided an opportunity for speakers to compare the difference between the appearance of gymnastics under the new 2001-2005 Code. This was highlighted by Mr. Hardy Fink when he commented in clip 8 about Eric Casimir (France) on Pommels:

Nice stretch...

Course this is 2000...

In 2001 we saw a new level of stretch so... [*Reference to the Chinese gymnast at the 2001 World Championships in Ghent*]

Erm... this is beautiful for 2000 but not for 2002... interestingly...

There seemed to be a sense of frustration concerning the implementation of the Code of Points at competition and concern about the aesthetic of performances, which result from it. These may be further symptoms of the down-grade culture and pursuit of bonus for difficulty which could lead to the rejection of what the speakers considered to be exciting actions in gymnastics.

Frustration over the implementation of the Code was evident with every speaker, particularly when they commented upon Urzica being awarded his 10.00 at the Glasgow Grand-Prix (clip 13). Also that basic form faults and "sloppy linkage" were seemingly being overlooked after high scoring bonus elements and connections had been completed by the gymnast. Gymnast LL commented upon how some of the best gymnasts in the world could deliberately perform routines with Start Values higher than 10.00, which should not really be feasible, but would do so just to "make sure", should there be any doubts by the judges when scoring. Likewise, a further symptom of the Code that was reported appeared to be 'laziness' or mediocrity in performance, in that the Code rewarded gymnasts for doing less than they were capable of and gave some gymnasts little reason to do more (see comments in post-interview dialogue by gymnast LL).

A significant point alluded to by the speakers was that some elite performances now appear to lack the excitement and obvious risk displayed by for example, big release and catches on High Bar, as they have been either down graded, or alternative actions more highly rewarded. For the speakers, this posed a quandary as to how [non-expert] spectators might be able to appreciate and value what they came to see. All the speakers were very keen that complex rules and scoring systems should not alienate the followers of this already highly sophisticated sport. The speakers also showed concern that if the elite gymnasts, who were performing the newly graded elements did not themselves think "the new" elements were as impressive as "the old" elements now in the process of being filtered out, how should they value these actions? Also, how should observers appreciate the complex difficulty they performed? An example of this would be the intricate in-bar work on High Bar which was explained as demanding a much higher level of technical knowledge in the observer for them to appreciate its difficulty and good execution compared to the obvious risks and difficulty involved with big release and catch elements. The predominant 'consensus' amongst the speakers about the rules,

scoring systems, rewards and deductions seemed to be that there was general disagreement about their application in a majority of the circumstances discussed. In the course of this research it was observed that when a point of contention existed between practitioners, it was the practitioner who put forward the most ostensibly reasonable and forceful argument, backed by persuasive examples and all reinforced by their reputation as an expert in the field, which won the day.

7.4 Discussion of the interview data in the context of this investigation.

The interview data contributes to this investigation in a number of key ways that data from the period of structured observation may not have been able to do. The different perspectives offered by these approaches to data gathering seemed to complement the deficiencies of utilising one method alone. That is, structured observation seemed to offer a macro view of aesthetic products and their formal evaluation processes in the gymnastics world, which allowed the researcher to 'stand back' to achieve an overview. Starting from this perspective, some areas of interest emerged which warranted further investigation when a more highly informed view was sought directly from practitioners in the form of interviews. However, as discussed in the Methods Section, the interviews were a result of the structured observation period with interviews being the natural development of the study as directed by the data at that point to further the investigation.

Interviews - an insight to the aesthetic comprehension of experts, about experts.

The use of interviews as a data collection method marked a development in the research towards looking into a linguistic understanding of appearance in gymnastic performance. This move in the research seemed to have the effect of opening another door on aesthetic understanding, not fully explored up to that point, which could contribute to this study. That is, the researcher moved from a relatively detached consideration of aesthetic products resulting from practitioners' gymnastic behaviour, to a relatively involved enquiry of how expert practitioners made sense of gymnastic behaviour itself. This tack in data collection was necessarily retrospective for practitioners in that it focused upon what experts had to say about experts at a past event. Given that the appearance of gymnastics may be realised by gymnasts' behaviour, a data collection method that revealed the kind

of language that some practitioners used to make sense of gymnastic behaviour and therefore its appearance was of interest to this investigation.

Interviews - the depth of aesthetic language

The researcher found that the transcripts were 'saturated' with aesthetic considerations demonstrating that practitioners, to a large degree, used descriptive aesthetic language to discriminate between performances. The depth and detail of this kind of language seemed to indicate how they conveyed to others their concepts of aesthetic qualities and quality in performance. Of particular interest to the researcher here, was what the data was revealing about where, when and how these practitioners learned to assess aesthetic qualities in this manner.

The transcripts indicated that all the practitioners interviewed had an extensive experience of 'living with' gymnastics throughout their lives. For example, it is not unreasonable that a twenty-five year old gymnast could have been in full-time training since he was seven or eight years old, or that coaches and judges may have at least twenty to thirty years of experience in those roles which may come after a career as a gymnast. Such close proximity to a very specialised sport at high levels of competition for such a long period of time may have the result that one learns the vocabulary and language of gymnastics to convey meaning clearly to like-educated practitioners. The notion of a gymnastic vocabulary within a gymnastic language hinted at here refers to for example, the naming of moves related to reasonable ways in which good examples could be said to be performed. This is to point out that there seems to be a sensible way, and therefore an illogical way, to convey aesthetic meaning and therefore to reveal the level of ones aesthetic understanding when using gymnastic vocabulary within gymnastic language. For example, a triple back from the Rings might be better described as a "powerful" dismount rather than a "graceful" one when a multiple twisting somersault in a straight or "stretched" shape might attain the descriptor "graceful".

The gymnastic world is a very intense, competitive and 'closed' world where practitioners are judged upon their results in order to maintain their reputations and survive within the competitive scene. Consequently, being a member of this social group under these kinds of pressures, a practitioner has to be clear with the kind of language he uses, with whom and in what context. Therefore the consequences of being unclear in his explanation may be that he achieves only mediocre results. For instance, if a coach lodges a protest with the Head Judge that something was judged wrongly, his only

recourse is to the rules and using “rule language” to point out what may have been an oversight on “technical” grounds. That is, the performed action only may be discussed in the manner and context in which it is stated in the Code. It would seemingly be of little use for that coach, under current protocols, to protest that a triple back from the Rings was more (or less) attractive in some way than a double twisting double back somersault in stretched position, as they are both worth the same amount in the Code i.e. they are both Super E dismounts. As far as the Code is concerned there is no reason, on “technical” or “aesthetic” grounds (if there is a difference), why either dismount should be valued differently if they are both executed correctly. However, these same practitioners would probably agree that the “double-double” in a stretched shape may be a more graceful dismount than the triple back which utilises a forceful use of power to generate maximal accelerated rotations in a tight tucked position. In contrast, the “double-double”, performed well, may give illusion of flight and balance in the air when the straight body-line and line of flight is pleasing for the eye to follow, a sensation which the triple back seemingly cannot provide. Figure 76 are the diagrams of these dismounts (from Rings in this instance) as they appear in the F.I.G. Code of Points.

Figure 76. Extracts from the F.I.G. Code of Points (Fink, 2001) to illustrate the triple back somersault (left) and “double-double” dismount (right) from Rings: Super E Elements p.81.

Interviews - objective meaning in gymnastic language

The transcripts indicate repeatedly that practitioners can offer detailed aesthetic reasoning (as outlined above) to support their differentiation between certain elements on certain pieces of apparatus, as may be performed by particular gymnasts. For example, to describe Dragulescu (Romania) as a graceful Pommel worker may be, to be clearly mistaken. Similarly to describe Csollany (Hungary) as

elegant, strong and controlled on High Bar may be misplaced being a more accurate account of his aesthetic on Rings (Clips 11 and 18 respectively). This high degree of aesthetic understanding within practitioners' vocabulary has the ability to convey specific meanings, which for them can be patently right or wrong, or at least sensible or illogical such as describing the "double-double" as graceful and the triple back as powerful and not the other way around. During his field work, the researcher was privy to many informal conversations between practitioners who were refuting or defending vehemently their aesthetic beliefs about performers and performance qualities. This level of aesthetic differentiation may be seen to apply throughout the range of elements up to these Super E dismounts indicating that reasoned aesthetic differentiation between performance qualities may be eminently possible at all levels of difficulty in gymnastics. For example, the speakers indicated that the 'easy' performed well can be more pleasing than great difficulty performed poorly or "just scraped through". The practitioners, particularly the coaches, were hinting that for them, an ideal aim in performance may be to combine the two, the 'easy' and the difficult, rather than just pursuing difficulty for the sake of scoring highly as this seemed to disrupt the aesthetic balance of what a gymnastics routine "should be". One coach reported during field research, that he had seen routines that "crammed in" so much difficulty as was humanly possible on High Bar, that it seemed to have a negative effect upon the aesthetic of a *gymnastics* routine as he understood quality in the sport. That is, the routine was so imbalanced in terms of skill content that it had a comical clown-like effect due to the excessive number of tricks in such a short space of time. The routine may have presented too much for the eye to follow as well as ridiculing of the essence or nature of gymnastics, as this practitioner understood it.

If practitioners are able to offer such an accurate level of reasoning to account for their aesthetic assessment at all levels of difficulty and they can clearly be right, wrong or mistaken in doing so, then there seems to be a good deal of sense to say that these judgements are objective ones. It follows therefore that these objective judgements could be embraced in some way that allowed the judges to genuinely judge and assess the quality of the performance as they see it, as evidenced in the transcripts, as opposed to 'merely' calculating numerical tallies. Moreover, that the misconception of what counts as objective and subjective in the gymnastic world may be further exposed because the assessments being made in the transcripts, which are rich in aesthetic reasoning, appear to be overlooked in any final evaluation. That is, they become labelled as subjective and are rejected as unreliable because of the seemingly narrow context of criteria and language in the rules as outlined in

the example of the coach's protest. This may be a pity as the vocabulary and language in the transcripts indicate that this may be how the aesthetic of a performance is actually comprehended in the first place.

This criticism is made not to demean the current processes of judging which place extremely complex demands on the judges to observe critically, record elements and 'measure' execution whilst under great pressure at competitions. Rather it is to point out that their aesthetic reasoning may contribute greatly to their making a final judgement but the final judgement (score) may be in such narrow terms that their original reasoning is in some way ignored. This point, although it may be revealing, is raised only tentatively being an inference of what the data appeared to be saying to the researcher. That is, the practitioners were asked to provide their commentaries to explain the appearance of selected performances. They were not asked explicitly how they would account for their score for each performance on the video. To have requested this from respondents might have yielded data of limited use to this study.

Interview transcripts Figures 69-75 - the balance of aesthetic and gymnastic comments

In support of the points being made above for an evaluation based upon sound aesthetic reasoning to be considered as objective, the transcripts indicated a strong predominance of aesthetic comments compared to gymnastic comments. Aesthetic Comments was the major category identified which included qualitative descriptive comments of how well a gymnast appeared to perform or how the appearance of the routine as a whole could be described. Gymnastic Comments was the contrasting major category which included references to the F.I.G. Code in terms of scoring, repetition, judging decisions and element recognition and naming. The predominance of aesthetic comments is of particular note here, although the researcher found that the process of categorising utterances into subcategories and then into major categories, lost the context in which the original utterances were made within the transcript. Therefore, one revealing aspect about the Figures 69-75 was how important the context of practitioners' comments was. It was therefore the researcher's aim, in his reporting and inferring, to preserve the context of comments to their situations as much as possible, as this seemed to be of paramount importance amongst expert practitioners when they were discussing issues in their world.

The balance of Gymnastic to Aesthetic comments often fluctuated between the respondents which may be indicative of how they recognised qualities differently and explained the appearance of performances differently using a particular kind of language. The kinds of language seemed to point to what their involvement in gymnastics was and how they may have learned to see and convey qualities. This appeared to have a cultural dimension as well as a discipline specific dimension. An example of a discipline specific dimension was when Mr. Hardy Fink, in his Solo Commentary (Figure 75), offered by far the greatest clarity of reasoning for his aesthetic judgements in terms of judging. Consequently Figure 75 was the only analysis table to show an approximately equal number of aesthetic comments to gymnastic comments. This may have been because the speaker named nearly all of the elements he observed but also, nearly every deduction which could have been applied in each performance. However there were four times as many aesthetic subcategories than gymnastic subcategories identified from this table which indicated the high level of qualitative aesthetic reasoning offered to support his rule related criticisms. This might denote what could be an ideal balance in aesthetic judgement in gymnastics towards a more comprehensive and objective evaluation from a judge's perspective.

In the remaining transcript analysis tables (Figures 69-74) the balance between the Aesthetic and Gymnastic utterances were approximately 2:1 in favour of Aesthetic Comments. This indicated a predominance of qualitative explanation of appearance across all disciplines; judges, coaches and gymnasts. However there were trends in kinds of explanation that emerged, which could be identified by kinds of gymnastic vocabulary and language used. For example gymnasts gave a very 'nuts and bolts' account of how they understood each other's performances (Figures 73-74). The judges recognised typically, names of elements and deductions but could usually account for their aesthetic preferences in a reasoned manner with reference to the rules often claiming that this was a "technical matter" of evaluation (Figures 71-72). The coaches' comments typically related to risk, consistency, aesthetic of difference (different elements), unusual appearance and smooth linkage (illusion). The coaches seemed to have a concept of ideal aesthetic quality fixed in their 'mind's eye' which stemmed from their interpretations of efficient of biomechanical execution and unity and variety in routine construction (Figures 69-70). A feature of the coaches' transcripts was that they could not accurately explain in verbal means what their ideals in performance were but they could point to gymnasts and aspects of gymnasts' performances which represented either what they did like and mean or did not

like and not mean. A message for the researcher from these coaches' transcripts, seemed to be that by a process of elimination and direction, he might piece together a jigsaw of performance qualities of different gymnasts combined with selected elements as performed by a further range of "special" gymnasts to represent what may have been the ideal performance for a given coach.

A key point emerging from what the data analysis tables appeared to be saying is that there is a great deal of aesthetic understanding which is utilised to comprehend and communicate qualities of aesthetic performance. The different disciplines of coach, judge and gymnast appear to utilise distinctive shades of gymnastic language, which could contribute sensibly to a final evaluation. The contribution of a discipline specific evaluation of aesthetic qualities would be seemingly, sufficiently distinctive to recognise its contribution as separate to others. Therefore evaluations from three areas; coaches, judges and gymnasts might have the advantage of not being repetitious but being more comprehensive than relying upon judges evaluations alone. To this end there seems to be a wealth of aesthetic knowledge held by coaches and gymnasts which is currently not being tapped in the evaluation process. It therefore seems reasonable to suggest that coaches and gymnasts might act in some judgmental capacity to contribute to the evaluation of an exercise on the basis that their reasoning is as "qualitatively objective" (Kaufman, 2002) as evaluations by judges.

Finally, a cultural dimension of aesthetic interpretation was emerging from the transcript analysis which had the potential to impact upon a formulation of aesthetic knowledge from which evaluations might be made. Respondent JJ in transcript 4, (Figure 72) was particularly notable in this regard showing how he may have learned to interpret 'his' cultural style of performing gymnastics. JJ supported passionately all the Romanian gymnasts featured on the video which in effect served as a key for the researcher to access a cultural insight not afforded to him up to that point. JJ explained with great feeling and in great detail how a playful approach to training helped Romanian gymnasts to become confident to experiment with extreme difficulty in gymnastics. JJ was keen to point out that it was a "mind-set" of coaches and gymnasts in Romania to approach gymnastics in this way. The notion of adaptability to change was also important to JJ who stated that, if a gymnast was correctly trained, they would have "no problem" adjusting the demands of new Codes. JJ was suggesting that the Romanian 'System' did not just equip gymnasts with "big moves" but more importantly it equipped them with an attitude to adapt positively to higher demands of difficulty in the sport as may be required by successive Codes. This cultural attitude of "playing with big moves" might help the Romanian

gymnasts to embrace the challenge of change in order to prolong their competitive careers at the highest levels. Moreover that it was the “Romanian way” to be setting the standards for other gymnasts around the world who would have to adapt to Romanian innovations in gymnastic skill development.

JJ also reported that an important feature of gymnastic education in Romania was that Men's Artistic Gymnastics was a significant element of teacher training through which a detailed level of gymnastic knowledge and high expectation in performance was transmitted. Therefore certain psychological approaches to training and competing in this society may have permeated through their symbiotic institutions of education and sport. This may have given rise to many specialised aspects of gymnastic language in their country which helps to define their gymnastic endeavour. A comparable example of “in language” discovered during field research overseas was that the Ukrainian coaches described a small number of their gymnasts as having “Red Bull”, this being a connotation of courage, bravery and ‘heart’ in a performance.

JJ explained that there was a desire in Romania to be dedicated to gymnastics to create different moves in order to appear different to competitors in order to win. This was evident in the transcripts and became what the researcher termed as the “aesthetic of difference” relating to a wide repertoire of moves in order to appear different as opposed to distinguishing oneself by having a special way of performing certain moves which other gymnasts will be executing also. The overall appearance resulting from this cultural approach to gymnastics in Romania appeared to be corroborated by all the respondents and one in particular who stated about Urzica on Parallel Bars, “it’s just a routine with skills in it”. All respondents indicated how impressive the repertoire of skills were for the top Romanian gymnasts. However, these gymnasts were not usually described as graceful, elegant or beautiful performers in the way that for example Alexei Nemov on Floor, Xiaojiao Sun on Pommels or Alexander Beresch on High Bar were. Therefore, it could be said that their cultural aesthetic may be quite distinctive and can be accurately identified, which contributes to an objective assessment of aesthetic qualities in Men's Artistic Gymnastics.

8. Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

It is recognised that the conclusions drawn from this research will have implications to the world of gymnastics. Consequently some recommendations are made which may go some way towards meeting the implications envisaged. Each conclusion is identified by a letter and where appropriate is linked with an implication and therefore a recommendation with corresponding letters.

8.1 Conclusions

In conclusion it appears to be the case that:

- a. The concept of gymnastics has been evolutionary and has been determined over time by its history. The stock of gymnastic history appears to consist an eclectic mix of ways in which gymnastics has been used throughout its history varying between the preparation of armies and the young for war, maintenance or improvement of health for medicinal purposes, or entertainment which in its current format manifests itself as an 'artistic' sport. Therefore, looking back over its history, the term "gymnastics" may not have been descriptive of the type and character of a specific sporting discipline in the way in which Acrobatics or Rebound Tumbling may be understood. Retrospectively, the term "gymnastics" appears to have been used to label successive systems of fitness training and exercise formats which were very specific for the user, instructor and institution at particular times during gymnastic history in terms of conduct, correct execution and perceived benefits from participation. Gleyse (1999) discusses a critical juncture in the history of physical exercise to reveal conceptually how "the body became free" [from God] which may point to a useful illustration of how a manner of "doing" gymnastics developed. This may in turn account for part of the aesthetic character and the aesthetic element of the modern day sport.

A philosophical dilemma in Europe in the Eighteenth century concerning fitness and sport within a culture stemmed from the kind of discourse used by physicians since Greek Antiquity. That is, that bodily strength is good for health, but a culture of excess strength leads to a decline in culture (Gleyse, 1999). In order to free the body from God, but in an acceptably controlled manner, the gymnastics theses from the Montpellier University School of Medicine (1792-1803) are notable

and may have been “revolutionary” for their prescription of exercise to be carried out in a particular manner. They provided a theoretical breakthrough to divert the conceptual burden of the negative effects of exercising the body; chiefly that celebrating the body’s powers was sinful. They identified a notion of the “principe vital” (Vital Principle: vitalism) which makes it possible to transform the concepts of the life of the body where bodily movement was considered to be the manifestation of this principle. Consequently, as their theories allowed them to conceive of a scientific world without God the notion of movement as curative entered the medical field in which they could administer and prescribe exercise for medicinal purposes. However, it was extremely important that the “dose” of that exercise should be controlled and measured to realise its curative benefits. In contrast, games represented a “dangerous excess” of exercise leading to crude uncontrolled movements which would have been conceived as a poor bodily education (Gleyse, 1999). Gleyse states that it is this kind of thinking which led to the birth of mechanical gymnastics and especially Swedish Gymnastics where precision, control, standardisation and regulation in bodily movement was the “Order of the Day” (Enebuske, 1890). Detailed research in the correct prescription of Swedish Gymnastics specified exactly how gymnasts should carry out actions to achieve the best possible results from a medicinal and health point of view. In their works they were also pointing to an essential aesthetic element of body form emanating from this kind of gymnastics exercise, but only when it was performed in a controlled, rhythmic and precise manner (Enebuske, 1890; Skarstrom, 1914; Bjorksten, 1926,1932; Arvedson, 1936; Tregurtha, 1937; Thulin, 1938, 1947; Holmstrom, 1939, 1949; Lindhard, 1949).

There are many other important aesthetic milestones which have been noted in the thesis and by Goodbody (1982), Prestidge (1988) and Fink (2002) which may guide practitioners’ judgements concerning aesthetic quality. However, aspects of gymnastic history similar to that referred to above may point to other reliable sources from which a sensible aesthetic in Men’s Artistic Gymnastics may be conceived, particularly with regard to developing and understanding of how new innovations in the sport may be distinctly gymnastic.

- b. The rules indicate that there is an intrinsic aesthetic element to the evaluation of gymnastic actions i.e. the notion of *how well* one does *what* one does and that this emphasis upon aesthetic assessment became more definite when “purposive” athletic events (Best, 1978) such as Pole Vaulting were removed from gymnastics competition. The rules for gymnastics were internationally

agreed soon after this standardisation of events at the World Championships, for men's six-piece competition to take place (1964). This date marked the first judging cycle of F.I.G. Code of Points. Within the workings of the present-day sport there appears to be a strong "ethos" (D'Agostino, 1995) of interpreting the rules in order for a nation to develop and present gymnastic routines which are in accordance with *their view* of the rules. From this perspective the rules for constructing gymnastic routines are relatively clear although disagreements do occur such as the Americans constant demand for re-clarification of what repetition might mean. The rules will also be interpreted to evaluate the aesthetic of performance in the "best possible way". It is upon this issue that a range of beliefs, opinions and interests stated by different participating nations and cultures appear to conflict. That is, achieving a consensus about the quantification of aesthetic quality may be difficult under the current protocols, as they may be proving to be too narrow in scope. Consequently, the rules appear to lead to a great deal of "instrumental activity" as outlined by Diggs (1972) who stated that "a good player does more than just follow the rules". This is not a new phenomena in gymnastics as one practitioner reported that each new Code simply "moves the goalposts" on where and how the instrumental activity occurs, it does not seem to reduce it.

It may be that any degrees of latitude within the rules which allow a practitioner to arrive at a different judgement compared to another, may in fact add to the objective assessments of a performance. That is to say, that if two assessments were slightly different one of the assessments does not suffer the immediate consequence that the other is correct. The notion that both assessments could be correct but both are slightly different appears to be conflated with impartiality in the judging process or lack of it as the case may be. This may bring about perceived degrees of "rightness" which may in turn contribute to a concept of social hierarchy in judging when bowing to the superior judgements of a more experienced practitioner may be indicated, possibly on non-aesthetic grounds.

It may be that where aesthetic assessment is concerned, the F.I.G.'s pursuit of an absolute consensus may be an illusive ideal as there will seemingly always be an attempt to interpret the rules in ones favour and there will always be a hierarchy of judge expertise and experience to make 'different' judgements. Additionally, restricting the rules to acknowledge only *what* the gymnast executed and then award bonus points for difficulty may be a counterproductive tactic to police abuse of the rules if that was an envisaged benefit of this strategy for scoring. A bonus

system may only serve to reduce the scope for formal aesthetic evaluation which, if it were developed further, might be said to push gymnastics towards being a “purposive” enterprise as opposed to an “aesthetic” one. Significantly it might also overlook the central aesthetic character of the sport as defined by an aspect of its history being the *how well* in performance i.e. bodily precision and control, balance, accuracy and variation in actions.

The large number of aesthetic considerations made by practitioners in this research indicates that a system of evaluation which not only increases the capacity of numerical scores to be made beyond 10.00 but also synthesises verbal or other forms of assessment may be a move towards a more comprehensive and objective evaluation of the performances. For this reason the rules of the sport might have to be significantly re-appraised whereby the processes of policing abuse of the rules are also re-considered.

- c. Even within the rules there was only a 'gut response' attitude towards the wider aesthetic concepts interpreted by elite performance in gymnastics. Early evaluation of aesthetic appearance related to features of form in performance for example, features of physical form such as legs straight, toes pointed, constructional form and or compositional form. Even today, features of form have not been fully articulated, although this research indicates that coaches, judges and gymnasts intuitively indicate a need to evaluate concepts, such as balance in composition, harmony, originality, illusion, and unity in variety as may be conceived by gymnasts' technique.
- d. There is a need to articulate criteria for performance form, such as legs straight, toes pointed, as well as structural form, for example difficulty and element recognition and compositional form, such as balance, proportion, harmony and unity. The coach GG points towards this broader notion of assessment in his comments about "gymnastic vocabulary". There does seem to be a vocabulary displayed by some gymnasts which is evident in performance and utilised to perform their routine and, when disposed to, create the illusion of a "unified whole". It is a concept of unity in variety in their performance which might be assessed by a Composition Jury.

Criteria for a Composition Jury might be structured upon a notion of unity in variety through their assessment of the gymnast to give them an impression of a harmonious whole in his performance.

Substantive features they might be observing for may be further subdivided into the areas of “form” and “expression” which would be articulated in a gymnastics context rather than an musical context as was the case in earlier Codes. For a degree of definition it may be sufficient to point out

here that harmony may reflect the relationship between rhythm and melody where harmony would reveal the interdependency of each element of the performance to create the whole. In gymnastics terms, harmony may relate to the harmonious relationship of the constituent elements; logical building of elements and combinations which are seamlessly linked to create a unified but varied “whole” performance.

From a perspective of [compositional] form there may be a hierarchy of qualitative features which could be structured around the concepts of “phrases”, and “balance and proportion”. Phrases when the quality of linkage might be a factor for consideration such as being smooth, flowing or logical. Balance and proportion when the actual elements used are considered from a perspective of fit and appropriateness, for example, the range of difficulty included in an exercise and the speed of execution. Also, importantly, how well the gymnast demonstrates his ideas for the use of space about the apparatus.

From a perspective of [compositional] “expression” there may be a range of non-verbal body language and gymnastic gestures which can be ‘read’ by an educated observer that may add to the quality of performance which the gymnast could be given credit for. The aspects may emanate from the notion of aesthetic persona and the gymnast’s predisposition to show his gymnastic expertise with elements, which are appropriate to him as a performer. Such expressive qualities may be evidenced by his surety of performance; his sureness and accuracy and precision with which he places his body to anticipate and link actions which may create an impression of being self assured and confident in his performance. There may also be credit given for a sense of what the gymnast appears to be saying in his performance, which a jury could decipher (as reported by many respondents during this research) and interpret such as being for example, proud to perform, being positive and not tentative in execution, being self assured and being “happy to be there” (HH’s comments about Nemov), being in “good form” and being fit for the routine and being in command and control of ones body, using ones performance to communicate “how good your are”. These may be some concepts which contribute to a good and positive self-expression of a gymnast’s aesthetic qualities when performing his routines.

In contrast, there would be examples of descriptive language to recognise negative expressive features, which could contribute to the Composition Jury’s assessments. For example, they might note evidence of physical struggle and or psychological stress by ‘reading’ what may be given

away by gymnasts faces and bodies in terms of levels of effort; ability or inability of the gymnast to create the impression of ease of action when performing great difficulty.

- e. There is a need to increase vantage points for judges at competitions with the aim of improving the visual aspects of the gymnast's performance that the judges may be afforded. The notion of getting a better view of a gymnastics performance may not be to simply to move closer to it. This may be a fault of the vantage points currently adopted by judges for assessing performances which may be dictated to them by having a raised competition podium. Clearly the positions of the vantage points which judges have should be standardised as they are currently at major manifestations, but with the advantage of additional views as may be achieved with the use of technology and perhaps close-up focussing of for example the positioning of hands on the Pommel Horse to assessment element completion as well as video play back if required. Feedback from practitioners in this research allow the researcher to conclude that a range of views might aid a more comprehensive evaluation of appearance in addition to those which are already gained. These views of the gymnast's performance can be achieved with the use of technology already being utilised by the television companies who record the events.

It was very interesting to note during field research overseas how keenly practitioners watched the local television coverage of the event at which they had just officiated a few hours beforehand. The camera operators afforded them new and different aspects of the routines which seemed to allow these experts to re-evaluate their own decisions and importantly, allowed them to evaluate the scoring of theirs or other gymnasts by their competitors. The video footage used for the interviews also provoked a lot of comments from respondents concerning how different the performances appeared to them from the different camera angles.

As in nearly all cases at an event the practitioners around the competition podium will be looking up at a gymnast who is even further elevated by their position mounted on the apparatus. Therefore, in addition to the views from judging stations, some advantageous viewing angles may be for example: a good view of Rings and the High bar may be at the height of the rings/bar and therefore the gymnast. Good views of the vault may be at the height of the flight off and overhead as well as being slightly further away from the landing area. A good view of the Pommels may be from directly above so the gymnast cannot perform with their back to the observer, similarly with Floor an overhead view may be instructive for observers. In each of these cases it would seem

that a straightforward use of basic technology might afford some useful new perspectives of a performance for evaluation purposes.

- f. There is a cultural or socio-aesthetic influence intrinsic to particular countries at work within the gymnastics world. This can be demonstrated by considering the existence of regional accents i.e. that in the U.K. English is the common language and similarly that gymnastic actions and the F.I.G. Code of Points provide the common gymnastic language. Regional accents such as those found in Birmingham, Liverpool, Newcastle and Glasgow provide the regional variation. Similarly Romanian, Cuban, Chinese, Russian and American styles in performance are aesthetic variations within a common gymnastic language.
- g. Some of the compositional variation features have been filtered out of gymnastics. At one time some compositional features were compulsory, now they are not, for example on Floor showing a static balance, mobile lift, strength and mobility as well as tumbles. Historically the F.I.G. showed some concept of aesthetic variety and aesthetic composition but from the wrong end of the telescope, so to speak. Their inclusion was by fluke in that gymnasts had to evidence for example, strength, mobility, tumble and agility. In this manner the rules built in compositional elements, mainly on Floor. These have now largely been eliminated due to changes towards a bonus related Code of Points. So there was historically and intuitively some degree of both performance aesthetic and compositional and structural aesthetic. The recommendation from this research is that both should be articulated formally.
- h. The downgrading of elements is not an efficient way to revise the content of this aesthetic sport. The need, or race, for gymnasts to get to 10.00 Start Value is seemingly at the expense of elegant actions in performance. Therefore rule changes, upgrade and downgrades which allow the gymnast to "play the Code" perhaps permitting them to choose the cosy option to get to the magic 10.00 may be promoting mediocrity in gymnastic performance. This implies that boring, monotonous compulsory type routines could result as has been reported by some prominent practitioners. This indicates that the bonus system of scoring may not be working and could be self defeating i.e. ensuring a gymnast's bonus gets him up to 10.00 and then do easy elements for the rest of the routine. The evidence from the respondents indicates a need to change the Code to free-up the gymnasts to allow them not only demonstrate their full range of skills but be given credit from a more comprehensive evaluation of their aesthetic in performance.

As the current scoring system does not allow them to show the true level of their skill, a change to an additive system may be beneficial for the sport. To this end there is a need to articulate an Additive Code, alongside both Aesthetic and Compositional Codes. A combination of assessment from these three perspectives would result in a fairer and more comprehensive system of all round aesthetic evaluation i.e. rethink the present dual system and add a compositional code.

8.2 Implications

Some implications of the conclusions appear to be that:

- a. The concept of gymnastics will continue to evolve, particularly with the development of technology and the F.I.G. needing to upgrade rules and scoring protocols every four years. However, an implication is that the use of technology in apparatus design will create greater rebound qualities and therefore height and flight for gymnasts to execute increased amounts of twists and rotations. This may push developments in the sport towards a more circus-like or acrobatic aesthetic. It is therefore important not to ignore the aesthetic heritage which gymnastics possesses which can provide valuable clues for a genuine gymnastic aesthetic if one chooses to look closely enough. Haphazard development of the rules, the development of the gymnastic environment and innovations in element creation may result in a lot of 'blind alleys' for practitioners and spectators alike to follow in their pursuit of gymnastics. This may become detrimental to the popularity of the sport as whole when the eagerness for rapid development may bring about the demise of gymnastics as one of the world's premiere sports. The sieving actions of taste may become so active that the original aesthetic qualities, classic gymnastic features, which defined the sport are rejected completely. The desire for gymnasts to perform different actions for the sake of difference which are new and fashionable in order to stand out at competition, may be to ignore classic gymnastic elements which embody classic gymnastic performance qualities. This risks the possible outcome that followers may become flummoxed as to how they are to understand and enjoy the sport themselves with a requisite loss of interest.
- b. That the aesthetic appearance of Men's Artistic Gymnastics will continue to alter as the rules change and technology improves. Technology may allow gymnasts to go higher for longer and judges to see in greater detail which actions were executed. However, the notion of *how well* the

gymnast “does” and not only *what* they “do”, will remain central to the aesthetic evaluation of their sport. The concept of judging “how well” aesthetic qualities were displayed seems to indicate that more, and not less judges are required to achieve a fairer assessment of performance (fairer in an ethical sense and a comprehensive-aesthetic sense). The rules stipulate the number of judges who will be assessing the performances at each piece of apparatus and that this number has doubled over the years. For example, the 1979 Code required four judges at the apparatus, the 1993 Code required six and the 2001 Code requires eight judges split into two juries (notwithstanding extra judges such as Head Judge, Line Judge etc.) This increase in the judging department appears to stem from the fact that the range and number of elements within gymnastics routines has grown (from three categories in 1979 to seven categories in 2001) and the complexity with which they can be combined and therefore scored has increased exponentially. Consequently, the number of people required to fulfil the tasks of evaluation at competitions has doubled from twenty-four judges in 1979 to forty-eight judges in 2001.

It was suggested to the researcher that increasing the number of judges may increase the potential for “instrumental activity” within judging when ‘playing’ the “gymnastic game” of returning favours of more favourable scoring for certain gymnasts, as opposed to less favourable scoring within the scoring tolerances at competitions. This, to say the least, may be undermining the essence of the judges’ oath which is a separate matter for the F.I.G. of policing abuse. It seems that for objective aesthetic evaluation the natural development may be to increase the amount of assessments that can be made about a routine. That is, to recognise that coaches’ and gymnasts’ assessments of others’ performances, although they may vary slightly, may make a useful contribution to evaluation at competitions. A major implication being that to ignore their views may automatically reduce the scope of expert evaluation which may be invaluable to the F.I.G. as the trend for increasing the number of judges and therefore a need for their judgements has been clearly demonstrated.

In contrast to this trend, a reduction of the number of judges may help to reduce the potential for rule abuse but with a possible consequence of a reduction in the scope of aesthetic assessment. This may move the process of evaluation towards a notion of Ideal aesthetic observer in gymnastics, a notion of *absolutism*. However, Bronzon (1999) explains the dilemma as to how this conception may fail. That is, on account of shifting the responsibility of judgement away from the

merits of the object itself towards specifying the qualities that an ideal observer would ideally have and then to define good work as being that which would be judged favourably by an ideal observer. However, an implication of employing the views of multiple judges and juries is that the F.I.G. may have to reconcile their position towards the judging process in terms of *relativism* and how they utilise two views which may be equally 'correct', reasoned and objective but different, without falling foul of relativism and descending towards the perils of subjectivism as explained earlier in the thesis.

- c. The evaluation system is still not right. Skills are tabulated and graded according to difficulty. Physical form features are valued in relation to execution only and scored numerically between tolerances based upon human perception. Construction features and compositional form are pointed to, but not counted in any official evaluative sense during a competition performance.
- d. There is a level of aesthetic ignorance in this key area of aesthetic evaluation and appreciation. This situation will continue to be the case unless a level of aesthetic education and a rules change embraces another complete area of form evaluation. The formulation of a Composition Jury would require considerable re-appraisal of the aesthetic education of all practitioners in order to embrace what a new jury would have to offer the evaluation process. A key point here is that the data showed that these kinds of evaluations are already being made by all practitioners at some point, it would be a matter of formalising them so they can contribute to the evaluation process. The nature of such an educational task would be a paradigm-shift for practitioners away from artistic connotations of subjectivity towards aesthetic reasoning to account for their judgements which may then become valuable in their own right. This approach to recognising formally, aesthetic features in performances may generate a new range of terminology and language with new gymnastic meanings to provide a framework for comprehensive aesthetic assessment. This level of innovation in the sport may be led by a name change for the sport which could be more indicative of the type and character of gymnastics. This is discussed in the Recommendations section.
- e. The potential for error and conflict in evaluations will remain unless standardised vantage points are established and or, evaluations embrace technological innovation to aid evaluation. The technological route may solve the problem of additional vantage points, immediate replay and complete recording of performances for subsequent scrutiny. However, there are number of

implications for the gymnastics world, should they adopt technology in an effective manner, which stem from a financial ability to implement the changes in order that the technology works and is accepted.

There will be financial implications resulting from the high cost of buying in a complex level of technology. Practitioners' patience to work with new technology may also be tried in the early days of usage when technical hick-ups and glitches will prevent the tool they have become reliant upon, working effectively. This may be frustrating for some at first who may reject it. However, the more detailed images that are presented may provide indisputable evidence of a point, helping judges to clarify their decisions. This may circumvent an avenue of instrumental behaviour which may be the real motivation for some practitioners' rejection of using technology. There would be practical implications for the staging of major manifestations in terms of extra time required to set up extra equipment, transporting it all and the training of practitioners and other operators to use it efficiently.

There may be simpler solutions for the F.I.G. to gain additional vantage points of performance by using staging, being at different positions in the arena or even umpires chairs as was suggested by respondent HH. However, this strategy may not help towards recording of performances or enhance the ability to share information quickly to discuss decisions. It may in the end, in the absence of technology, simply perpetuate the norm and "goalposts" would have moved onced again, but only slightly.

- f. There is a danger that the intrinsic cultural autonomy will be rendered as non-viable or even filtered out altogether by the rigid standardisation of the F.I.G. Code and the constant fight for higher skill levels. It would be better to recognise and celebrate cultural differences rather than stamp out regional variation.
- g. Historically, compositional features were prescribed as being good for the sport and evidence of pleasing features of the sport. A mobile balance or a static balance which demonstrated mobility were a fixed requirement. As compositional elements they became pleasing features of a Floor exercise. The Code now downgrades such 'simple' skills which therefore eliminates these compositional elements from gymnastics routines as gymnasts pursue the 'magic' 10.00 Start Value. If such a course of events persists then composition will be reduced in variation, tempo and dynamic interest to become monotonous events.

- h. Demonstrating a range of physiological features within a performance was a positive feature of gymnastics, for example, to show strength, mobility or freedom in swinging linked with static strength elements. The Code discourages such features as they are now downgraded and therefore less worthy of inclusion into an exercise limited by time or an exercise limited by the number of constituent elements. Consequently, once the 'easy option' route to 10.00 becomes a mindset for gymnasts, the need for innovation will become negated, resulting in similar set-type routines. It will become a disincentive for finding "the new", resulting in all routines looking similar with dull, repetitive, set-like, boring routines. One aspect of this implication may be that the ceiling of the 10.00 score will have to be reviewed seriously because "playing the Code" mentality results in extremes of skill being displayed. The "big trick" syndrome to get maximum bonus and then an 'easy' route to complete the rest of the routine may serve to kill aesthetic interest in the sport.
- A change of Code evaluation system, towards an additive system, would enhance the gymnastic product on all fronts: what was displayed and how it was appreciated and would lead to a more transparent, 'fairer' evaluation procedure. The current direction of development of the rules may serve only to ossify the sport bringing it to a gradual standstill, with dire consequences for its aesthetic and overall popularity on the world stage. Whatever creativity and imagination is in gymnastics, the rules are becoming increasingly rigid and prescriptive which could squeeze out or filter out practitioners motivation, interest and desire to search for new possibilities in gymnastic action. This will in turn restrict variety in gymnastics because the scope for creativity and imagination has been eliminated. The rule changes to combat the instrumental activity of unscrupulous practitioners do appear to be required although they should not be conflated with aesthetic assessment as this may by default, reduce the ability of all judges to acknowledge fully and fairly the quality of aesthetic displayed in performances.

8.3 Recommendations

Some recommendations that may be ventured are that:

- a. The continued rapid evolution of gymnastics indicates that the F.I.G. should welcome technology and innovation in apparatus design which allows gymnasts to go higher for longer, with the proviso that their thinking about the quality of aesthetic appearance in gymnastics allows them to

appreciate and evaluate critically "the new". That is to say that being genuinely innovative with gymnastics actions may be to evidence some traces of classic gymnastic material that identifies the action as being distinctly gymnastic.

From questioning what it means to be "gymnastic", drawing upon a historical perspective, a recommendation that can be made is that Men's Artistic Gymnastics change its name to one that is more descriptive of the type and character of the enterprise. Only in this manner may the F.I.G. be able to remain the true guardians of the gymnastic concept. Alternative names for the sport should aim to remove the artistic connotations from the sport and emphasise its aesthetic grounding and heritage. This is because Men's 'Artistic' Gymnastics is neither presented as art or invites its observers to consider it as art. Nor does it not utilise artistic criteria to understand its appearance or educate others about its appearance in order for them to evaluate how good or poor their artistic products might be. Therefore, ideas for alternative names should be sought. *Men's Aesthetic Gymnastics* may be a comparable example for the sport within the gymnastic family in the way that Rhythmic Gymnastics seems to be. In this instance, the use of the word aesthetic would denote more accurately the kind of evaluation taking place in this branch of gymnastics i.e. it is not an artistic evaluation. However, all forms of gymnastics will have their own aesthetic so that name may not differentiate sufficiently between other forms of gymnastics. Alternatively, *Men's Apparatus Gymnastics* or *Men's Gymnastics (Apparatus)* may be a reasonable recommendation. Whilst all forms of gymnastics appear to be aesthetic as opposed to artistic, the distinction would be that not all forms of gymnastics use this range of six apparatus. *Men's Olympic Gymnastics* may also be a viable option although only tentatively suggested as the word Olympic is not descriptive of the type and character of the activity and the Olympics is only one of many major manifestations for the sport of gymnastics. This research has revealed that the name "Men's Artistic Gymnastics" may be misleading for spectators and practitioners alike and therefore a new name which points towards the nature of the activity and how it might be understood may be more instructive and helpful for expansion of evaluation criteria.

- b. The quality of aesthetic appearance should be kept as the key feature of gymnastic endeavour; celebrating the notion of "how well a gymnast does what he does". As a sport that prides itself in an all round bodily ability and facility to show its strength, take risks and perform elegantly, room should be made within the rules and the routines to ensure that such an important aspect of the

gymnastic concept is maintained. If mobility for example, does not have a numerical value as a technical feature within a routine, it still has aesthetic performance value and compositional value.

- c. The whole evaluation system should be rethought to include the range of possible evaluation areas: Technical, Aesthetic and Compositional; all three areas considering various levels of aesthetic form in gymnastics performance. A technical jury would be analysing, with the applied use of technology, aspects of execution which can be measured in minute detail such as degrees of angles, finishing positions and seconds of hold in each element and combination. An aesthetic jury would be assessing aspects of skilfulness and technique in a performance when the gymnast may be able to demonstrate his "special" ability to individualise a routine, this being a synthesis of his aesthetic persona and a balance in routine construction to demonstrate a wide gymnastic vocabulary. The aesthetic jury's assessment of form would be considered in a linear fashion when the aggregation of actions makes up the routine. That is to say they would consider what elements were performed in relation to the abilities of that gymnast to utilise the space and time on the apparatus available to him. A composition jury would be assessing the aesthetic of performance from a deeper sense of form as may result from notions of standards, skilfulness and technique in gymnastics. They would be observing qualities of composition, structure and design and theme and variation in performance as may become evident from a choreographic process and "polishing" a performance. They would be eager to consider the gymnast's clever use of dynamic rhythm, phrase and use of gesture as these might contribute towards the overall aesthetic effect of performance. Composition Jury members, being educated and in tune with these areas would be observing how well a gymnast is able to self-express his gymnastic character to meet the demands of demonstrating unity in variety in gymnastics which may become a aesthetic ideal for this jury to assess its view of performance qualities.
- d. To achieve the latter, judges, coaches and gymnasts need to be educated in aesthetic appreciation. Aesthetic awareness should be tutored, not just left to be intuitive. The tutored view will result in a reasoned view and it is the status of aesthetic reasons which should be considered valuable for making an evaluation system objective. The reduction of logical reasoning into numbers (under 10.00) may filter out important facets of reasoning, which could contribute to the aesthetic assessment of performances. Also, the sensible contribution towards aesthetic reasoning and final judgements which gymnasts and coaches could make should be integrated as

it appears that at present, two thirds of expert opinion, who attend at competitions may be overlooked.

- e. Technology in evaluation procedures should be embraced. The use of video playback and multi-view digital analysis should be explored to enhance judges' vantage points and assist with the evaluation process. This recommendation is made became this investigation has demonstrated a clear need for assistance in some technological way which has also been voiced by some practitioners.

The level of technology being suggested is already available from television companies and recording specialists who currently attend events with the sole intention of broadcasting for their networks. Whilst camera operators, camera booms and other equipment can be regarded as intrusive, particularly when they are experimented with during preliminary rounds to set up for the broadcast of Finals, they seemingly will not disappear from the international gymnastic scene. Therefore it may be sensible for the F.I.G. to utilise what is already there to their advantage, instead of feeling that they have to do their work in spite of this intrusive technology. It does not seem unreasonable to recommend that the F.I.G. could make it a condition of access to the event that the "Technological Sponsor" should provide, set up and dismantle all the necessary equipment for monitoring, measuring and recording. This would be similar to sponsors of other major sports when they provide specialist timing and monitoring equipment, such as in motor racing, tennis and skiing.

- f. The F.I.G. should encourage cultural diversity in performance. Competing nations may want to speak the same gymnastic language but in different ways. Further research into the aesthetic of gymnastics needs to be carried out and should include investigation of cultural perception, aesthetic value in the sport and motivational drives to compete and perform at the highest level. This kind of research will inform the educational process and could indicate alternative value systems for ascribing aesthetic value within the sport.
- g. The F.I.G. should not 'throw out the baby with the bath water'. Some of the old rules were good and worthy of being maintained for the compositional features in performance they appeared to bring about. The F.I.G. should be asked "what kind of aesthetic do you want?" From this question an educational initiative can be envisaged to address certain misconceptions and point to, in order to 'rediscover' formally, important aesthetic qualities.

The reasons why practitioners seem to reject artistic criteria and artistic notions of qualities in their sport as subjective (pejorative, “anything goes” sense) may be because they don’t see how they relate to their context. This is by no means a travesty or shortcoming of gymnastic knowledge as similarly, artists who paint, sculptor or dance may not understand gymnastic criteria because there is no apparent need for them to do so to improve the quality of their work in order to present it, or importantly for others to assess the quality their work. For example, in evaluating a bronze sculpture at a Gallery of a gymnast on Pommels there would be little sense in deducting 0.2 for poor hand positioning in ones assessment of it. Here artistic criteria should be brought to assess the object. However, in assessing the quality of performance many practitioners utilise informally, what they conceive to be artistic notions of understanding to account for and appreciate pleasing qualities of gymnastics. Therefore, there may be a problem of translating aesthetic emotions and personal aesthetic assessment in to a format which can contribute towards formal assessment. It seems wholly understandable why practitioners should reject artistic criteria as they [correctly] fail to see how “artistic” fits with gymnastics. Consequently it might be fortunate that they reject artistic notions but in so doing they seem to reject all useful aesthetic ones as well which they have clearly demonstrated, makes qualities of their sport understandable for them. It is a recommendation of this research that the F.I.G. consider further investigation in to the aesthetic understanding of their sport in order to expand their current means of assessment.

- h. The evaluation systems should be reworked to include an additive system of scoring, a technical-aesthetic performance jury and a compositional-aesthetic jury.

8.4 Limitations of this Investigation.

There are a number of limitations to this research that are acknowledged by the author, some of which could be followed up by further research as indicated in the next section. By highlighting these limitations the researcher is necessarily taking a retrospective view of his work. During this investigation there has been a very steep learning curve about aesthetic understanding in gymnastics which has brought the researcher to this point. That is, knowing what is known now and from this point onwards, it may be feasible to point out ways in which this research problem could be tackled differently. However, the researcher was not in this privileged position at the start of the study and

would suggest that the approaches adopted here were as suitable, as could be envisaged by him to carry out this research, being within the limits of practicality.

Whilst every effort has been made to get as close to the gymnastics world as possible, the researcher has been, by definition, on the periphery of it. Within the sport, the pressures, realities and outcomes of competitions or rulings did not ultimately affect the researcher in the way that they affected the gymnasts, coaches and judges. It is more accurate to say that for the researcher, any changes, pressures or contentious decisions counted as significant data for this investigation. The researcher's allegiance was towards discovering more detail about decisions or trends in the sport which might affect its aesthetic in some way, however bleak the forecast for them was by certain practitioners. Information, which generated conflict in the gymnastics world was welcomed from a research point of view because it exposed potential evidence of a motivation to pursue and promote different aspects of gymnastics performance, and its evaluation.

Clearly a different position is adopted by practitioners who wish to oppose or promote certain views, or other nations' strategies for developing and valuing their gymnastic products. The practitioners often predicted that there is a great deal of "real consequence" for them resulting from major decisions or trends such as a bonus system of scoring, which are largely related to competition outcome and therefore, funding opportunities to train and compete. These are the kind of considerations which may prevent practitioners (or allow them) to achieve success in this highly competitive sport. In terms of this investigation a consequence for the researcher may have been to fail to reflect the reality of their situation in this regard. That is, there appeared to be social consequences for practitioners which the ethnographic field work element of the research could acknowledge. A further consequence for the researcher was that by virtue of his position (as a researcher), he may have been deemed as being too far removed from the lived experience of practitioners to make certain aesthetic claims and draw certain conclusions. Therefore, what this thesis has to say about the gymnastics world and the evaluation of its products may have risked rejection by the very people it relates to unless certain approaches to research were adopted.

A limitation, which is linked to the points above, is that of the independence of the researcher to conduct this investigation. The researcher is not a coach, judge or gymnast operating with any 'weight' to influence the opinions of others in the gymnastics world. However, if he were a judge, say, he would necessarily be attached to a National Governing Body and would cease to be independent from his

competitors' points of view. Further limitations of being an independent researcher have been the lack of financial support to carry out this investigation, which has limited the researcher's travel opportunities to attend at a greater number of international events or make more frequent overseas visits to gather data. Also, not being active as a practitioner within the gymnastics world has limited the researcher's ability to stay in touch with developments at international level and maintain regular contact with key people although this situation improved greatly towards the end of the research. Admittedly, the researcher's independence has been an advantage as well, allowing him to have a genuine exchange of information with a range of people from different countries. This, the researcher believes has been because he is not perceived as a threat by others, that is, not sponsored by a competing nation or the F.I.G.. The principle interest of the researcher has been to understand the appearance of gymnastics in greater detail for the sake of researching the aesthetic of the sport. This does not prevent representatives from the F.I.G. or any other gymnastic nation making use of these ideas should they express an interest in doing so.

A further limitation may stem from one's perspective of what a "good piece of research" is at this level. Interestingly, the notion of unity in variety may be used to highlight a limitation of the study by questioning the approaches within this investigation and therefore perhaps, its aesthetic as a piece of research. This study has attempted to combine a philosophical approach to questioning about aesthetic evaluation in gymnastics, with a sociologically based methodology in order to get closer to the gymnastic world itself. There may be an argument to say that one approach dilutes the detail and "purity" of the other which is reflected in the final work presented here. That is, that a purely aesthetic piece of research might address the aesthetic issues more thoroughly by not going to the 'shop floor' of the gymnastic world for comment. Moreover that eliciting practitioners views as part of a purely philosophical study might be considered as a side issue for a researcher who is interested only in discussing the appearance of gymnastics from a detached position.

In contrast, a purely sociological based ethnographic study would have the purpose of getting close to the lived experience of practitioners. This approach would have the consequence of not developing a philosophically based of aesthetic discussion which has the potential to inform practitioners views beyond the bounds of their daily lives. Such a view might be useful in indicating to practitioners how to proceed from their current position in a meaningful way which is distinctly gymnastic from an aesthetic point of view. However, an ethnographic study might reveal some interesting perspectives of the day-to-

day life of being a practitioner, who is dealing with the pressures of coaching, judging or being a gymnast. The result of such a study might be that it only tells practitioners what they already know, albeit in a slightly different language. Also, to carry out such a study, the researcher could have to engineer a starting position as part of his strategy within participant observation. For example, he might first have to become qualified as a coach or judge in order to engage fully with other practitioners to experience first hand, the same kinds of pressure, loss, success and stresses at competitions. However, this kind of tactic, by virtue of its low level of entry might not provide the researcher with access to facets of gymnastic life at international levels of the sport. Nevertheless, at its level, the investigation might be regarded as a “pure” study, which starts and finishes with the practitioners’ lived experience.

The researcher believes that the challenge which a notion of unity and variety provides for this research has been a worthy academic one for him to strive towards. The problems of drawing philosophical aesthetic inferences from empirical data have been thought provoking and testing for the researcher throughout the fieldwork phases and writing up phase. However, the end product is one which seems to be thought provoking for practitioners in the gymnastic world, indicating that the ideas presented here have a degree of acceptance in that they are read by the people it relates to and may stimulate further interest. This is to acknowledge that there are limitations to the combination of approaches used in this research where there is a trade-off between the advantages and disadvantages of both. In view of these limitations, the trade-off may be worthwhile in that the investigation might be deemed as being “balanced” as its variety in approaches helps to present a unified piece of philosophically based research, which is acceptable for Ph.D. and accessible to practitioners. This compromise may be a limitation on academic purity, as much as it is an advantage for relevance to the gymnastics world.

8.5 Research opportunities: A way forward

In closing there are a number of research options which, in an ideal world could be followed to develop aesthetic investigation within Men's Artistic Gymnastics:

1. Researching a cultural aesthetic perspective of a specific nation towards gymnastics whilst being resident in that nation. This may reveal other perspectives about the sport ranging from historical

considerations to how current operations are managed, which would add to an understanding of its overall aesthetic.

2. Research in greater detail how practitioners construct meaning from subjective language and use ostensive definition to identify their ideal appearance of performance. Many practitioners seem to regard language which conveys qualitative meaning as being unreliable but this may only be because of their relatively untutored understanding of the terms, producing strong differences in opinion concerning aesthetic ideals.
3. Shadowing FIG officials at international levels for a judging cycle (four years) to consider their decision making processes when creating rules and then, evaluating the products from them at competition.
4. Shadow a national coach(s) for a cycle (four years) to observe their coaching of a gymnast(s), their interaction with other coaches and their tactical decisions at competition, in order to consider the aesthetic of the gymnastics they produce and their perception and conception of others' gymnastic products. This might include researching whether the success of a coach with a good reputation in one country, is automatically transferable to his work in another country. This might evidence socio-aesthetic cultural preferences, and possibly motivational and aspirational insights for them to create winners in gymnastics.
5. Shadow an international gymnast(s) who represent a country other than Great Britain for an FIG cycle, in order to investigate their aesthetic conceptions of other gymnasts and nations.
6. Conduct further research into how some practitioners may seek to influence the sport by constructing new rules, exploiting opportunities within the rules and broadening interpretations of the rules in order to develop their instrumental activity and short term success in the sport.
7. Using two sets of judges, compare competition results from differing vantage points around the apparatus and competition podium with actual results given from current viewing positions.
8. Follow up research by Pulh (1980) and Plessner (1999) to compare results derived from the use of technology, for example using digital play back and multi-view technology, with actual results, using two sets of judges as experiments.
9. Set up a third jury with aesthetic compositional form criteria and judge at competitions to see if results would alter the order of merit or significantly, recognise more comprehensively the most impressive and pleasing aesthetic in gymnastics performance.

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