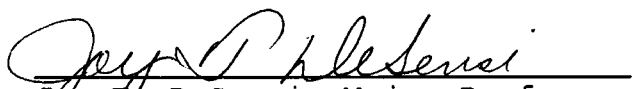


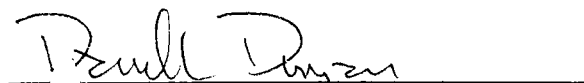
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Charles Ray Hopson entitled "Exploration of Flow in Sport and the Exalted Experiences of the Holy Spirit." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Physical Education.


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and recommend its acceptance:


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EXPLORATION OF FLOW IN SPORT AND
THE EXALTED EXPERIENCES OF
THE HOLY SPIRIT

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Education
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Charles Ray Hopson

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ABSTRACT

Although many conflicting claims can be found in the literature, a rigorous analysis of the theological aspects as well as dynamics of enhanced performance has never been investigated. This ethnographic study was conducted in an effort to comprehend whether there were qualitative similarities and differences between the rare states of exalted consciousness and performance reported in sporting contexts and the analogous states of exaltation occasionally reported in the contexts of Christianity.

Six professional athletes were interviewed regarding their perceptions of their ecstatic experiences in sport and their perceptions of their exalted experiences of the Holy Spirit.

Triggers which promoted flow in sport included a positive mental attitude, positive pre-competitive and competitive affect, maintaining appropriate focus, and physical readiness (Jackson, 1992). A fifth general dimension of triggers was that of unitive state. All five sets of triggers were applicable to the rare state of exalted consciousness. Situational blocks or hindrances which were perceived to disrupt flow included physical problems, inability to maintain focus, and negative mental attitude (Jackson, 1992). Similarities were reported as situational blocks for disrupting the rare states of exalted

consciousness of the Holy Spirit. Crowd distraction was reported to disrupt flow, but not the exalted consciousness of the Holy Spirit. All of the professional athletes reported flow experiences and their descriptions were congruent with Csizkszentmihalyi's (1975, 1990) eight components of flow. The professional athletes reported qualitative similarities which included ecstatic qualities as described by Laski (1962), James (1985) and Otto (1932), community building as described by Augustine and in 1 Corinthians Chapters 12-14, and perfection as described by John Wesley (1964) and the fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23. Qualitative differences were noted in the spiritual realm which included a new love. Previous to this research Csikszentmihalyi (1990) offered two sets of factors for getting into flow: psychological and situational factors. A third underlying mechanism for producing flow was determined in this research. Through the complex interplay of the Holy Spirit and its trigger of the rare exalted states of consciousness during a sport performance, a new trigger was identified. This researcher termed this combined exalted experience a quasi-religious sport flow.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Sport and religion in North America have been described by some as having a symbiotic relationship (Coakley, 1990). Since the mid-nineteenth century this symbiotic relationship has existed between the institutions so that they could achieve personal and organizational goals (Coakley, 1990). Historically, this relationship was not the first time that sport and religion had been linked. The ancient Greeks entwined their athletic demonstrations with religious observance in such a way that these two institutions had the same warp and woof (Eitzen, 1989). The Greeks held strong anthropomorphic conceptions of gods believing that they took pleasure in mortal activities such as music, plays, and displays of physical excellence (Eitzen, 1989). Every city-state erected sports training facilities for its male adults with an altar and a chapel in the center to promote religious worship. The Olympic Games were considered sacred with the superior athletes offering their prizes to such gods as Zeus, Apollo and Poseidon (Eitzen, 1989). Viewing the Olympic Games as pagan, Theodosius I, the Roman emperor of A. D. 392-395, decreed their end in favor of Christianity (Kyrkos, 1979).

Throughout history there has been an on-again off-again debate regarding the relationship between sport and religion. The Renaissance began during the fourteenth century and ended early in the seventeenth century. During the first half of this epoch, the scholar-athlete known as the "Renaissance man" became the ideal among the aristocrats and the affluent. This individual possessed social skills, appreciated aesthetic values, was highly skilled in the use of weapons, maintained a strong physique, and was learned in letters (Coakley, 1990). The peasant class also participated in their own type of folk games and sport activities without interference from the authorities.

During the Protestant Reformation, negative attitudes regarding games and sport activities began to spread, especially in areas where either Calvinism or Puritanism was popular. For example, between the early 1500s and the late 1600s, the English Puritans appeared to be on a mission to erase all sport and play from life. The main targets of the Puritans were the sport and games of the peasants. Puritans, particularly, believed that these worldly indulgences on the Sabbath sinful and tempted individuals from a godly life. All this was based on moralism, the adherence to a strict code that condemned many natural desires of man (Struna, 1977).

The current debate of interest began during the 1850s with a group of influential Christian men in New England,

described as "muscular Christians" who had been influenced by such men as Thomas Hughes and Charles Kingsley from England who promoted the idea that there might be a connection between physical activities and the spirituality of human beings (Vance, 1985, Guttman, 1978 and Coakley, 1990). Other Christians, however, thought it utterly blasphemous to equate the sacred to the secular or the spiritual to the physical (Higgs, 1983). Curiously, this confusion still continues as exemplified by the remarks made by two renowned coaches. Ken Hatfield, University of Arkansas Football Coach in 1984 sought to inspire the performance of his team in the following manner:

All of our abilities come from God. . . .Never forget that. . . .Be part of God's team. Jesus Christ can make a better player, can make you the best you can become. . . .Plug into Him (Coakley, 1990, p. 353).

Bobby Knight, Indiana University Basketball Coach in 1985 took an opposing stance as he sought to motivate his players:

. . .God is not going to provide any leadership on this basketball team. . . .He is not going to parachute through the roof. . .and score when we need points. . . .God does not give a damn what goes on in athletics. Nor should He (Coakley, 1990, p. 353).

The first quote is indicative of how some coaches have encouraged their players to look to a higher power for sustenance in the game. Moreover, some athletes have made claims that their success and prowess in competition is directly attributed to divine intervention (Hoffman, 1992). They relate ecstatic experiences not unlike the claims made

by those involved with religion (James, 1985). This ecstasy by definition is "an abnormal state of consciousness, in which the reaction of the mind to external stimuli is either inhibited or altered in character (Hastings, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, 5, s.v. "ecstasy"). Ecstasy, for the most part, has been linked with religion because it is assumed that "the soul has been brought into communication with higher powers" (Hastings, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, 5).

The second quote by Bobby Knight is a direct rejection of the sanctification of sport and the secularization of religion. Notwithstanding, athletes who agree with this line of reasoning often clearly describe similar ecstatic or altered states of consciousness and posit dramatic breakthroughs in terms of breaking records or great plays in a championship series (Snyder and Spreitzer, 1983). These athletes did not place any special religious overtones or labels to the subjective experience. Among those who have provided similar discussions was Csikszentmihalyi whose observations were published in Beyond Boredom and Anxiety (1975). In this text, he coined the phrase "flow theory" which he derived from earlier writings on creativity, (Montmasson, 1932; Ghiselin, 1952; Dillion, 1972; Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) oceanic feeling, self-actualization and peak experiences (Maslow, 1962, 1968), intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1975) play theory (Huizinga,

1950) collective ritual (Deren, 1953; Worsley, 1968; Turner, 1969), the practice of Zen, Yoga, and other forms of meditation (Herrigel, 1953; Eliade, 1969; Naranjo and Ornstein, 1971); and other forms of religious experience (Laski, 1962; Rahner, 1967; Moltmann, 1972).

Csikszentmihalyi defined "flow" as the dynamic feeling state subjectively interpreted and characterized by a holistic sensation of total enjoyment (1975, p. 36). He offered this theory in order to explain "the experience of acting outside the parameters of worry and boredom" (1975, p. 38). He described the flow experience as a process that is intrinsically rewarding and includes six linked and interrelated qualities which contribute to the subjective feeling of pleasure. According to Csikszentmihalyi, these six flow qualities or elements include: (a) merging of action and awareness, (b) centering of attention, (c) loss of ego, (d) control of action and the environment, (e) noncontradictory demands for action with clear, unambiguous feedback, and (f) autotelic nature.

The symbiotic relationship between sport and religion was examined by Higgs (1983). Concentrating on these differences between sport and religion, he distinguished between three forms which have occurred throughout history. First, he described the muscular Christians as Protestant with emphasis placed upon the body as a means of drawing individuals to Christ. The "success in worldly competition"

qualified the Muscular Christian to serve as a witness (Higgs, p. 90). The second form is "holy play" which he defines as basically "pagan, gnostic and oriental" (Higgs, p. 90). This form tends to view the Divine "as immanent rather than transcendent as, for example, when the divine order manifested itself in dance" (Higgs, 1983, p. 90). The "blessed state" is attained "through a playful attitude and the aligning of individual rhythms with the absolute rhythms of the universe so that the performer and form are one" (Higgs, p. 90). In holy play, the essence of mysticism is experience while in spiritual exercises, the mystical state is both experience and vision" (Higgs, p. 90).

The third type identified by Higgs is spiritual exercises which was both Hindu and Christian and viewed the body as "an instrument in the attainment of divine knowledge" (p. 90). Through the process of private asceticism, the spiritual exercitant fortifies himself for work in the world (Higgs, p. 90).

Clearly, the term "religion" means many things to many people. For the purposes of this study, "religion" will be used in accordance with the definition offered by William James (1985) in his classic study, The Varieties of Religious Experience:

Religion. . . shall mean the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men [sic] in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine (p. 34).

Religious leaders, in an effort to explain the place of humans in the universe, have developed elaborate theories or theologies. Moreover, the world religions such as Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism, and Muhammadanism are cores of elaborate cultural systems that have dominated world societies for centuries. Moreover, since James' study encompasses many different cultural systems, for the purposes of this study only athletes who identify their religion to be Christianity will be included. Again, out of the many possible meanings of the term "Christianity, the following is the definition to be adopted for the purposes of this study:

Christianity. . . [may be defined as] a loving fellowship with God as life's highest good, [belief in the] promises an immortality of glory and blessedness with God, [acceptance of the] offer of the forgiveness of sin and the renewal of the soul of man by the grace of God received by human faith, [belief in the efficacy of] Divine grace in the sacrificial death of Christ and [finally, reliance upon] continued living in His Spirit (Hastings, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, 3, s.v. "Christianity").

Since this is a very broad definition, this study will focus attention in particular upon "continued experience of the Holy Spirit." For the purposes of this study, this behavior will be defined as follows:

. . .the Spirit denotes the divine, the supernatural, for it comes from God, indicates Jesus' claim to be Messiah, authenticates His exaltation, fulfills OT prophecy, and is the medium whereby He is present and operative within His Church (Hastings, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, 7, s. v. "Spirit. Holy").

One of the most prominent public manifestations of the Spirit was represented at Pentecost:

. . . it was manifested, abnormally and explosively, by extraordinary elevation of human faculties, so that miracles, prophecy, glossolaly, and visions were abundant; more normally in great enthusiasm, new courage, liberty of speech, skill in debate, keen insight into and wise use of Scripture, sound judgment of human character, business aptitude, and comfort in suffering (Hastings, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, 7, s.v. "Spirit, Holy").

In summary this implies more specifically, one receives the gifts of the Spirit for the sake of the body of Christ and a gift of the Spirit is not the same as a natural talent such as possessing athletic proficiency or a business aptitude, however, such a talent may be sanctified and inspired through the Spirit. The gift may be viewed as the supernatural manifestation of God through an individual for the glory of God and the edification of church.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Athletes have offered diverging explanations regarding the presence or absence of the Holy Spirit in their greatest experiences in sport (Coakley, 1990). This is an ethnographic study on sport. As such, it belongs to several other studies of the same type (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; DeSensi, 1980; Borg & Gall, 1983; Bowles & Klein, 1983; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Mishler, 1986; and Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). As a branch of cultural anthropology, undertaking a

qualitative study allowed the respondents to recreate specific experiences within the institutions of sport and religion. The researcher interviewed the respondents regarding these recreated experiences, analyzed them according to some of their religious belief systems, and looked at broader cultural analysis of their belief systems and the "flow" experience to determine if they were similar. Ethnographic studies in the past have had missionary endeavors and this study did not take that direction. This study was an objective study which avoided confusing the categories of religious discourse and scientific discourse. The researcher kept the religious behaviors separated from the scientific behaviors and made no attempt to explain away religious behaviors using scientific language. By the same token, no effort was undertaken to explain away or understand the scientific behaviors from the point of view of the religious. The researcher was cognizant of the principle of reductionism and made every effort to avoid its constraints. The researcher tried not to reduce the psychological phenomena to the scientific. (Corsini, 1984).

This study proposed to examine and compare the concept of flow within sport and the nature of possession by Holy Spirit within the Christian religion. After these were clarified, the possible interaction of these concepts in the sports context was examined. Although many conflicting claims can be found in the literature, a rigorous analysis

of the theological aspects as well as dynamics of enhanced performance has never been investigated. The investigator sought to determine whether the two concepts were mutually exclusive, or whether they were somewhat congruent, given the social and religious assumptions of modern American culture.

More specifically, this study explored the transcendent quality of sport found in Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory and the subjective ecstatic experience of the Holy Spirit within Christianity. Furthermore, this study was undertaken in an effort to comprehend whether there were qualitative similarities and differences between the rare states of exalted consciousness and performance reported in sporting contexts and the analogous states of exaltation occasionally reported in the contexts of Christianity.

In order to address the issue of flow/Holy Spirit in sport and Christianity respectively, questions were posed to selected professional athletes concerning their ecstatic experiences during the performance of sport.

The following questions guided the investigation:

1. How is the experiential state of flow during the height of competition and the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit described by the professional athletes?

2. In order to understand the similarities and differences involved in the ecstatic moment while participating in sport, were any or all of the following

components of flow described by professional athletes during the altered experiential state associated with sporting activities and Christian practices: (a) they were involved in a challenging activity that requires skills, (b) there was a merging of action and awareness, (c) clear goals and feedback was provided, (d) they were able to concentrate on the task at hand, (e) they acted with a sense of control or were not worried about the loss of control, (f) they felt a loss of self-consciousness, egolessness, (g) transformation of time, and (h) and the combination of these components caused a sense of deep enjoyment that is so rewarding that people feel that expending a great deal of energy is worthwhile simply to be able to feel it. It is an autotelic experience, an end in itself.

3. What events or triggers lead to the flow state in sport and the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit in Christianity?

4. What situational blocks or hindrances disrupt flow of sport or the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit in Christianity?

5. What were the results of the personal experience while in flow, in the Holy Spirit, or a combination thereof?

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms are defined for interpretive purposes in the study:

Autotelic nature. The term "autotelic" derives from two Greek words, auto meaning self, and telos meaning goal. It refers to a self-contained activity, one that is done not with the expectation of some future benefit, but simply because the doing itself is the reward (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 67).

Community. A body of individuals organized into a unit or manifesting with awareness of some unifying trait or the ability to find agreement or shared likeness.

Ecstasy. A term derived from ekstasis, meaning standing outside of, and descriptive of a range of experiences characterized by being joyful, transitory, unexpected, rare, valued, and extraordinary to the point of often seeming as if coming from a praeternatural source (Laski, 1962, p. 5).

Epistemology. A term derived from episteme, meaning knowledge, thus, a theory of how you know what you know.

Flow. A dynamic feeling state denoting the holistic sensation a person experiences with total enjoyment. Flow is achieved through an individual's perception of congruity between his or her skills and the challenges of an activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975).

Holy Spirit. In Christianity, the Holy Spirit is the third part of the Trinity which has being in one and the same eternal, undivided, indivisible essence of the divine majesty. First, is the person called the Father; and of Him exists the second person called the Son, born from eternity; and proceeding from both of these is the third, namely, the Holy Spirit (Sirks, 1957).

Interview. A research technique designed to obtain and explore an individual's personal reflections about his or her world. It is used to identify variables and relations, to suggest hypotheses, and to guide other phases of the research. The interview is a face-to-face interpersonal role situation and may be open-ended as well as semi-structured to allow the interviewer and the respondent to guide the investigation in terms of what information they experience as significant. It was also semi-structured to allow the interviewer to gather in-depth information which would enhance the study. The interview in this investigation consisted of one session 1-2 hours in length (Kerlinger, 1964)

Macroflow. Activities which are available on an everyday basis for a continuum in terms of their capacity to induce flow. At the lowest ebb are "microflow" activities such as doodling, pacing, or smoking, which provide fleeting moments of structured existence. At the other extreme are "macroflow" activities that provide relatively enduring and

totally absorbing experiences, as in creative pursuits, complex symbolic or religious thought, or the heights of physical performance (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, pp. 192-196).

Peak experience. In his book, Toward a Psychology of Being, Maslow (1962) differentiated between two types of love (D-love and B-love). The B-love state involved concern for the Being of the other person and was labelled B-cognition. In contrast stood D-love which was organized around the deficiency needs of the individual and was labelled D-cognition. Maslow generalized the cognitive happenings of the B-love experience into a single description which included "the parental experience, the mystic or oceanic, or nature experience, the aesthetic perception, the creative moment, the therapeutic or intellectual insight, the orgasmic experience, certain forms of athletic fulfillment, etc. These and other moments of highest happiness and fulfillment I shall call the peak experiences" (p. 69).

Pneumatology. The study of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit regarding the subjective reality of the revelation of God to man (Sirks, 1957, p. 78).

Professional Athlete. Individual involved in structured athletic experiences within a chartered organization, who has or is playing a highly organized schedule of competition for monetary rewards.

Quasi-religious sport flow. A term coined to define the altered state of consciousness which occurs during a sporting event and results in a life-transforming, totally absorbing experience where an individual feels immense elation and freedom, experiences a self-surrender, and connection with a friendly continuity of one's own life with a transcendent power.

Religion. According to James' (1985), religion is "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men [sic] in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine" (p. 34).

Transcendent. Surpassing or excelling others of its kind; going beyond the ordinary limits; pre-eminent; superior or supreme; extraordinary. Also, loosely, eminently great or good (Oxford English Dictionary, 1933).

Unitive state. An act or instance of uniting or joining two or more things into one as in feelings of fulfillment on a personal level, or the conscious identification of one's will with that of divinity in which the soul is held to have experiential knowledge of God.

ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions were acknowledged to underlie the investigation:

1. The concepts inherent in Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory had sufficient semantic integrity to be evaluated by professional athletes with regard to their sport experiences.

2. Responses of the subjects were honest and valid within the limits of their perceptions.

3. Facts pertaining to an individual's flow experiences in sport could be measured by the ordering of self-referent statements.

4. Facts pertaining to an individual's transcendent ecstasy experiences through the Holy Spirit could be identified by the ordering of self-referent statements.

5. The interview technique was a valid tool to elicit information about an individual's own understanding of the flow experience and the ecstasy of the Holy Spirit.

LIMITATIONS

This investigation faced several restrictions. First, the study was limited to responses to specific interview questions addressed to professional athletes. Consequently, the results of the study were only representative of that population. Second, only males were involved in the study; therefore, the sample was (a) biased by sex and (b) biased by the specificity of professional athletics. Third, the athletes involved in the study were post-collegiate; thus,

no generalizations can be made to collegiate or younger populations. Fourth, the investigation focused the issue of flow/Holy Spirit; therefore, generalizations made must be limited to that particular issue and cannot be drawn about other philosophical or religious issues.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of the study was developed from a three-pronged approach. First, the possibility of applying theoretical propositions of flow to sport and Christianity were examined. Second, the articulation and examination of professional athletes' experiences in sport and Christianity were relevant and important. Finally, this investigation potentially provided information regarding the experiences of professional athletes in the flow state and the ecstasy of the Holy Spirit which has implications for the reevaluation of sport.

The constructs of the flow theory provided a conceptual framework for studying sporting activities while the features of the Holy Spirit provided the parameters for Christianity. Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) theory was utilized to explore professional athletes' perceptions of flow in the sporting activities in order to gain insights which contribute to understanding the phenomenon of transcendent ecstasy.

The second prong for significance of the study involved the need for further articulation and examination of professional athletes' experiences in sport and Christianity. Traditionally, research on sports has focused on motor performance and the subjective experience of the athlete has been minimized (Ravizza, 1977). The small amount of research examining the subjective experience of sport revealed that involvement provided the athlete with a wide domain of subjective experiences (Slusher, 1967). Other studies dealt with specific aspects of an athlete's subjective experience (Beisser, 1967; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Ravizza, 1977). Edwards (1973) dealt with a comparison of forms between religion and sport and identified some interesting similarities:

Sport has a body of formally stated beliefs, accepted on faith by great masses of people. . . sport also has its "saints"--those departed souls who in their lives exemplified and made manifest the prescriptions of the dogma of sport. . . . Sport also has its ruling patriarchs, a prestigious group of coaches, managers, and sportsmen who exercise controlling influence over national sports organizations. . . . Sport has its "gods"--star and superstar athletes who, though powerless to alter their own situations, wield great influences and charisma over the masses of fans. . . . Sport has its shrines--the national halls of fame and thousands of trophy rooms and cases. . . . Sport also has its "houses of worship" spread across the land where millions congregate to bear witness to the manifestations of their faith. (Hoffman, p. 7).

The third and final prong of significance is that this investigation provided information regarding the experiences of professional athletes in the flow state and the ecstasy of the Holy Spirit that have implication for reevaluation.

The significance of the study is further exemplified in both the works of Csikszentmihalyi and Maslow. Csikszentmihalyi (1975) addressed the transcendent aspects of deep-flow experiences and noted that not all participants in mountain climbing reported the elements of flow as an integral part of the experience. As a member of the Jewish faith, Abraham Maslow (1962), in his classic, Toward a Psychology of Being, described the person at the peak which clearly resembles what I am defining as an experience of the Holy Spirit:

. . . is godlike not only in senses that I have touched upon already but in certain other ways as well, particularly in the complete, loving, uncondemning, compassionate and perhaps amused acceptance of the world and of the person, however bad he may look at more normal moments. The theologians have long struggled with the impossible task of reconciling sin and evil and pain in the world with the concept of an all-powerful, all-loving, all-knowing God. (p. 87).

Maslow (1964) was led to divide the human population in his work on "peak experiences" into "peakers" and "nonpeakers" which indicated that hindrances are a major determining factor in the level of performance. James (1985) discussed the progression of the human consciousness into saintliness and cited universal features of saintliness which were remarkably comparable to the flow elements.

For Christians, the touch of the Holy Spirit allows a conversion which leads to a change which James (1985) contended occurred in "the habitual centre of personal energy" (p. 219). He goes on to suggest that the universal features of saintliness included in all religions and

definitive of a saint when all are present are: "a feeling of being in a wider life than that of this world's selfish little interests" while simultaneously feeling "a conviction, not merely intellectual, but as it were sensible, of the existence of an Ideal Power" known in the Christian sense as God; "a sense of the friendly continuity of the ideal power with our own life, and a willing self-surrender to its control"; "an immense elation and freedom, as the outlines of the confining selfhood melt down"; and finally, "a shifting of the emotional centre towards loving and harmonious affectations," towards an assured "yes, yes, and away from 'no' where the claims of the non-ego are concerned" (p. 220).

Pneumatologists view the subjective revelation of God to man as a centerpiece in transcendental theology. According to Karl Barth, Jesus Christ is the objective reality of the revelation and the descent of the Holy Spirit may take place as the subjective reality of the revelation; thus, it is:

Through the descent of the Holy Spirit man receives his existence, that is to say, man is so gripped and changed by it, that he receives his existence only from the revelation. The important thing is that this subjective reality of the revelation is quite dependent upon the objective reality (Jesus Christ); so dependent that the subjective reality (Holy Spirit) is altogether enclosed with the objective (Sirks, 1957, p. 78).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

During the 1850s a group of influential Christian men in New England, described as "muscular Christians, promoted the idea that the physical condition of one's body had religious significance" (Coakley, 1990, p. 357). They believed the body was the instrument of good works, and that meeting the physical demands of godly behaviors required a combination of health and physical conditioning.

Religionists such as Paul Tillich (1948), Richard A. McCormick, who denounced boxing's immorality on religious grounds, and Herbert W. Armstrong, leader of The Worldwide Church of God which publishes the widely distributed magazine, Plain Truth, devoutly disagree with this premise and think it too superficial to suggest that sport could be equated with the institution of religion merely because some similarities exist. Albeit, sport, like religion, seems to have the potential for the "development of character, habits of hard work, perseverance, competitive spirit, and teamwork" (Hoffman, 1992, pp. 6-7), there were still grave concerns within the religious community. These religionists accepted the fact that sport events "may reinforce the community's commitment to society's core values. . .[or] provide a controlled environment in which to express

emotion, a social function normally attributed to religion" (Hoffman, 1992, p. 7). Armstrong, however, questioned the concept of competition on theological grounds.

Historically, from the Protestant Reformation until the mid-19th century, clerics rebuked sport citing problems of "violence, destruction of friendships, fanaticism, exposing one's body unnecessarily to physical injury, and using sport to escape the more pressing responsibilities of Christian citizenship. . . ." (Hoffman, 1992, p. 220).

Sociologists such as Thorstein Veblen (1918) Joan Chandler (cited in Hoffman, 1992) and Robert Higgs (1983) do agree that there are some similarities, but contend that the differences far outweigh the similarities. Individuals from this perspective noted that sport focuses on things secular and material while religion is centered in the sacred and the supernatural. Sport is inherently a competitive activity and open to self-promotion while religion is non-competitive and altruistic. Sport is rule-oriented and crude, while religion is intended to be mystical and pure (Coakley, 1986). Edwards (1973) with these open contradictions in mind viewed the sports creed in terms of its ultimate values and arrived at the opinion to not "consider it an alternative to formal sacred religious involvement" (p. 90).

What is there about sport which has encouraged an interfacing with religion? Eitzen and Sage (1986) contended

there was a parallel between the emergence of sport in North American society and the dominance of Protestant Christianity. "If we place the values inherent in the Protestant ethic and the ideology of sports side by side, it immediately becomes apparent that the two are congruent" (p. 149). Prebish (1984) stated that "it is not just a parallel that is emerging between sport and religion, but rather a complete identity. Sport is religion for growing numbers of Americans, and this is no product of simply facile reasoning or wishful thinking" (Hoffman, 1992, p. 48). Albanese viewed sport as a "cultural religion" in that it offered symbolic vehicles which acted as windows into a transcendent world and gave people an opportunity to order their lives and find meaning in the everyday world (1981, p. 312).

As interest in the relationship of the two institutions increased, leaders in their respective areas began to study and report their findings and opinions. From the religious community leading periodicals such as Christianity Today, (1986) and New Catholic World, (1986) published special issues which explored religious beliefs and their effect on the conduct of sport. Sport sociologist, Shirl Hoffman (1992), observed that this expansion of interest has not led to a major work on the relationship, but noted that certain points of congruency have been addressed in books by Novak, (1976) and Guttman (1978) and the issue has been allocated separate chapters in recent textbooks in sport sociology

(Coakley, 1986; Eitzen & Sage, 1986; Snyder & Spreitzer, 1983).

As always in bringing together diverse institutions or groups such as sport and religion, differing positions will arise regarding this new affinity and their roles in society. Historically, the Muscular Christians had supported sport as a model for reinforcing Christian ethics. But in the 20th century church leaders observed the mass appeal to sport when marketed, and as a result there arose a community of believers that advocated such movements as Billy Graham's evangelical marketing of "Christ like soap" (Hoffman, 1992, p.89). On the other hand, the old guard took what Higgs labeled a "censorious attitude" (Higgs, 1983, p. 61). In examining the "prize" which Higgs noted was the most crucial aspect of both sport and religion, he extolled the words of Burke (1958):

The most beautiful thing which man can say of God is that, knowing his inner reaches [the prize] he becomes silent. Therefore, 'prate not of God,' say Echart and Sankara" (Otto, 1962, p.49). Put another, "woudst thou be perfect, do not yelp about God," says Echart. Compare this attitude, by the way, with the vocal witnessing of Muscular Christians (Hoffman, p. 96).

As some participants in their religious experiences seem to have become mystified beyond speech, the sportianists have become more open and willing to discuss their experience. And why not become verbose about an experience that is both quiet and exciting. Slusher (1967) observed that sport can produce "a type of mysticism that is quiet, peak and flowing

with care" for the members of the team (p. 64). He noted that the experience of a spiritual community can develop from the mutual involvement of teammates through joint effort and cooperation resulting in the knowledge that "being" is being with others. Spiritual awareness from one individual to another is described in the ideal terms vis 'a vis a crew team:

It is intimately felt in the common rhythm of the rowers. Each one of them feels within himself the same movement of transcendence toward a common goal, on the horizon of a common world, and feels it with the other rowers. In this conception, however, being for others has been replaced by being with others. It reveals the coexistence of consciousness without explaining it (Salvan, 1962, p.66).

INFLUENCES LEADING TO THE FLOW THEORY

The sport psychologist, Csikszentmihalyi, (1975) studied these glimpses of mystical exaltation in the sport experience and coined the phrase "flow theory" which he derived from writings on self-actualization and peak experiences by Maslow (1968, 1970) and Laski's (1962) study of ecstatic experiences; research on intrinsic motivation by White (1959), Berlyne (1960), De Charms (1968), and Deci (1975); and research on the play theory offered by such leaders as Huizinga (1955), Callois (1979), and Ellis (1973). Csikszentmihalyi (1975; 1990) offered this theory in order to explain the special dimension of enjoyment not commonly experienced. Flow is defined as a dynamic feeling

state denoting the holistic sensation a person experiences with total enjoyment. To achieve this optimal experience the individual must feel his or her skills match the challenge at hand.

According to Csikszentmihalyi, when one feels the spirit of flow, concern for self is forgotten, but a stronger sense of self emerges after the flow experience. Csikszentmihalyi (1978), however, acknowledged the possibility of enjoyment and intrinsic rewards derived from negative activities such as burglary and waging war. The flow experience and intrinsic rewards were equated to physical energy.

Both are powerful, both are neutral. They are valuable because they work for us, because they reduce the effort needed to accomplish a job. But it is possible to attach rewards to destructive activities, just as energy can be channeled for destructive ends. (pp. 213-215).

The behaviorist, Abraham Maslow, whose work was studied extensively by Csikszentmihalyi, contended that each person progresses through a hierarchy of needs and once the more basic (such as for food, safety, and acceptance) are met, the individual pursues the need for self-actualization, or the fulfillment of one's total potential (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p. 20). Maslow noted that the self-actualized individual attains the ideal in brief glimpses and he labelled these moments as "peak experiences" (Maslow, 1962, p. 72). Research has suggested that people are likely to

attain the ideal in areas that are consistent with other aspects of their aspirations and personalities.

Csikszentmihalyi (1985) stated that one plays generally because the experience is enjoyable. There might be other motives, but basically it is for the sheer fun of it. He went on to say that art, creative works of any kind, and religious practices also offer this self-justifying optimal experience.

Individuals who reflected on how they felt when they enjoyed themselves or were in the flow mention one if not all of the following components: they were involved in a challenging task that they could complete; were concentrating; had clear goals; received immediate feedback; were removed from awareness; had a sense of control over their actions; concern for self disappeared, but a stronger self emerged; and the sense of time was altered (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 49).

Csikszentmihalyi's (1975, 1978, 1990) flow model is an objective and analytic attempt to describe the human experience of enjoyment. Decades of research on the positive aspects of the subjective experience have suggested a comprehensive framework of the structural contexts which enable the flow feeling state. Although flow theory is relatively precise, Csikszentmihalyi cautioned that the structures make up a model and not the real phenomenon (1990). For personal understanding, the optimal experience

of flow is offered to facilitate people in learning to control inner experience, thus, being able to determine the quality of their lives. This, the researcher noted, is as close as any of us can come to being happy (1990). A description of the flow constructs and their relationships is presented and discussed for better understanding the nature of enjoyment in sport.

The flow experience is the essence of Csikszentmihalyi's model. It is the interface between a flow activity and a flow personality. Flow is achieved, Csikszentmihalyi (1975) theorizes, under optimal conditions in which a person perceives his or her skills to be challenged by the demands of the activity. Therefore, congruity between skills and challenges particular to a person and the situation define the flow experiential state.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) noted that all flow activities, whether they involve competition, chance, or other dimensions of experience, "provided a sense of discovery, a creative feeling of transporting the person into a new reality" (p. 74). Those who have entered flow stated that they were launched to higher levels of performance, lifted to heretofore undreamed-of-states of consciousness. "In short, it transformed the self by making it more complex. In this growth of the self lies the key to flow activities" (p.74).

Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) theoretical model is illustrated in Figure 1 (p. 30). According to Csikszentmihalyi, the game of tennis as the diagram is studied with the letter A representing Alex, a boy who is learning to play the game. Four different points in time are represented for Alex. As a beginner, (A1), Alex lacks skills and his only challenge is to hit the ball over the net. This is not a very difficult performance, but Alex is likely to enjoy it because the level of difficulty is just right for his fundamental skills. Thus, at this point, he will probably be in flow, but for a short time. With improved skills through practice, he will become quickly bored by just returning the ball over the net and move to point (A2). Perhaps he will meet a more practiced opponent, in which case, he will perceive that there are much demanding challenges for him than just lobbing the ball, and here he will feel some anxiety (A3) concerning his poor performance. Choices are afforded at all points. He may choose to give up tennis altogether or set or himself a new and more difficult goal that matches his skills--for example, to play an opponent just a little more advanced than he is--Alex would be back in flow (A4). Knowing that (A4) does not represent stability either, Alex keeps playing and the cycle is repeated (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, pp. 74-75).

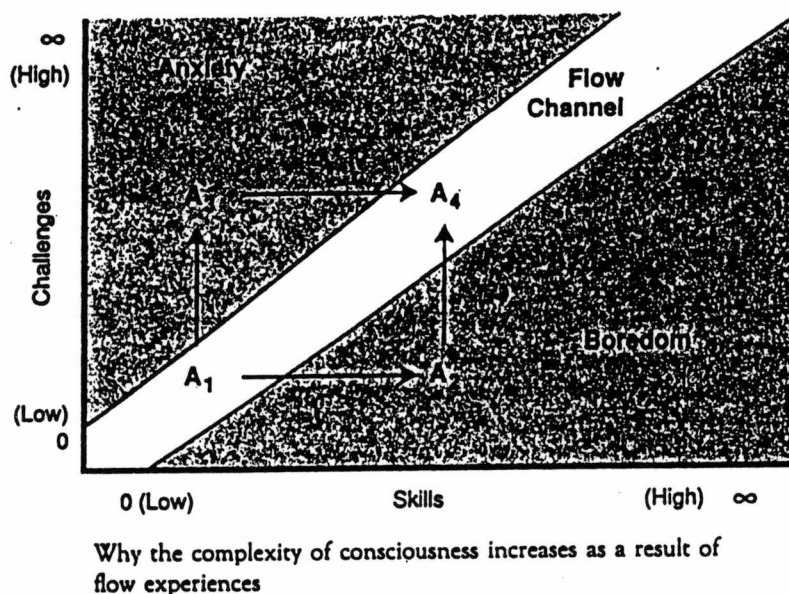


Figure 1. Taken from Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience by M. Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 74.

One must keep in mind that it is not simply the "real" challenges offered by the situation that matter, but those that the person perceives (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 75). The way we feel at any given time of a flow activity is primarily influenced by the objective conditions; but consciousness is still free to make its own assessment (p. 76). There is potential for individuals to adjust their perceived discrepancies in skill/challenge circumstances by symbolically restructuring the activity, seeking different external challenges, or by acquiring increased competencies to adequately cope with the demands of a difficult situation (Eliade, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 5, s.v. "Flow

Experience"). Learning how to structure experiences to derive more enjoyment for life is a valuable goal. Complex, structured activities that test the limits of a person's physical and intellectual potentials are associated with deep, full-fledged macroflow (Eliade, Encyclopedia of Religion, 5, s.v. "Flow Experience"). Simple, unstructured activities that yield simple positive enjoyment such as doodling and daydreaming, characterize microflow (Eliade, Encyclopedia of Religion, 5, s.v. "Flow Experience").

Flow is highly individualistic and depends solely on a person's interpretations of skills and challenges specific to the moment and the task. Furthermore, the constantly changing nature of feeling states as described in Csikszentmihalyi's on-going process of enjoyment account for intrapersonal as well as interpersonal differences in experiencing flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) claims that it is the challenges of the activity that force us to concentrate and in turn have the potential to create the inner feeling of flow. The essential steps in the process of transforming any activity into a flow experience to produce intrinsic rewards are:

- (a) to set an overall goal, and as many subgoals as are realistically feasible;
- (b) to find ways of measuring progress in terms of the goals chosen;
- (c) to keep concentrating on what one is doing, and to keep making finer and finer distinctions in the challenges involved in the activity;

- (d) to develop the skills necessary to interact with the opportunities available; and
- (e) to keep raising the stakes if the activity becomes boring (p. 97).

Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1978, 1987) described the flow experience in terms of six flow elements or interrelated qualities that contribute to the subjective feeling of enjoyment. These flow elements that distinguish the inner feeling state of flow include: (a) merging of action and awareness, (b) centering of attention, (c) loss of ego, (d) control of action and the environment, (e) noncontradictory demands for action with clear, unambiguous feedback, and (f) autotelic nature.

The clearest sign of flow is the merging of action and awareness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Csikszentmihalyi (1975) considers the nondualistic, elusive, momentary sense of harmonious unity as most indicative of the subjective sensation of flow. Flow cannot be intended or maintained while one reflects upon or analyzes the experience. The words of a sailor describes the natural unfolding of enjoyment that only occurs in the here and now process of interacting with the environment.

...a person alone might sail for weeks in a small boat without seeing land. Jim Macbeth, who did a study of flow in ocean cruising, comments on the excitement a sailor feels when after days of anxiously scanning the empty reaches of water, he discerns the outline of the island he had been aiming for as it starts to rise over the horizon. One of the legendary cruisers describes this sensation as follows: " I... experienced a sense of satisfaction coupled with some astonishment that my observations of the very distant sun from an unsteady platform and the use of some simple tables...enable[d]

a small island to be found with certainty after an ocean crossing." (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 55)

Centering of attention on a limited perceptual field of relevant stimuli characterizes flow. The fact that one is able to forget all the unpleasant aspects of life is an important feature. Order is imposed by the clearly structured demands of an activity, thereby, the interference of disorder in the conscious is excluded.

Loss of ego implies "the loss of the sense of a self separate from the world around it sometimes accompanied by a feeling of union with the environment. . . ."

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 63). Self-scrutiny is not a consideration in flow. The ego is never threatened during flow because enjoyable activities have clear goals, stable rules, and challenges suited to skills. If we are not preoccupied with ourselves, we have the opportunity to expand the concept of who we are. "Loss of self-consciousness can lead to a self-transcendence, to a feeling that the boundaries of our being have been pushed forward" (1990, p. 64). Ostensibly, it seems the surrender of self-consciousness is necessary for the growth of a strong self-concept (p. 65).

In a chess tournament, players whose attention has been riveted, for hours, to the logical battle on the board claim that they feel as if they have been merged into a powerful "field of force" clashing with other forces in some nonmaterial dimension of existence. Surgeons say that during a difficult operation they have the sensation that the entire operating team is a single organism, moved by the same purpose; they describe it as a "ballet" in which the individual is subordinated

to the group performance, and all involved share in a feeling of harmony and power. (p. 65).

A sense of control in one's actions and the environment characterizes individuals in the flow state. Lacking the sense of worry about losing control is more appropriate when describing the flow state. Active awareness of control may not be realized during a flow experience, just as the harmonious unity of merging of action and awareness is different and only acknowledged in reflection. In fact, what individuals "enjoy is not the sense of being in control, but the sense of exercising control in difficult situations" (1990, p. 61).

Complete involvement in a flow experience is possible because clear goals and immediate feedback are integral features (1990, p. 54). Csikszentmihalyi observed that the kind of feedback received is often unimportant as long as it contains the symbolic message that the individuals have succeeded in their goal. This knowledge promotes order in consciousness and fortifies the structure of the self (1990, p. 57).

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) observed that the key element to facilitate flow is that the optimal experience must be an end in itself which he labeled the autotelic experience. Derived from two Greek words, auto meaning self, and telos meaning goal, it refers to a "self-contained activity, one that is done not with the expectation of some future

benefit, but simply because the doing itself is the reward" (1990, p. 67).

Autotelic persons are characterized as individuals who tend to enjoy activities for their own sake, regardless of the external rewards associated with their endeavors. They enter the flow state knowing that it lifts the course of life to a different level.

Alienation gives way to involvement, enjoyment replaces boredom, helplessness turns into a feeling of control, and psychic energy works to reinforce the sense of self, instead of being lost in the service of external goals (1990, p. 69).

It is Csikszentmihalyi's view that the flow experience is largely dependent upon, though not limited by, the form of autotelic activities. This is evidenced by remarks made by a surgeon who says that he or she would do the work even if he or she didn't have to or a sailor who says that spending the time and money on his boat is worth it because nothing else provides the feeling he gets when out sailing (1990, p.67).

Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990) selected the term flow because it frequently and spontaneously appears in respondents' description of the subjective feelings of enjoyment associated with their activities. In fact, the following description from a poet and rock climber is indicative of the autotelic quality and the process-oriented essence of flow:

The mystique of rock climbing is climbing; you get to the top of a rock glad it's over but really wish it

would go on forever. The justification of climbing is climbing, like the justification of poetry is writing; you don't conquer anything except things in yourself. . . . The act of writing justifies poetry. Climbing is the same: recognizing that you are a flow. The purpose of the flow is to keep flowing, not looking for a peak or utopia but staying in the flow. It is not a moving up but a continuous flowing; you move up to keep the flow going. There is no possible reason for climbing except the climbing itself; it is a self-communication. (1975, pp.47-48; 1990, p. 54)

To the above six constructs of flow, Csikszentmihalyi added two additional components and labeled them the eight major components of the phenomenology of enjoyment. The first additional component was that the experience involved a challenging activity that requires skills and one that we have a chance of completing (1990, p. 49). The second additional component was that during the flow experience time is altered. Some report time passing by quickly, while others note being in a state of slow motion (1990). Together these components of flow produce a sense of intense enjoyment that is so rewarding individuals expend great amounts of energy simply to have the feeling. The gratification which becomes the incentive leads to both self-knowledge and self-growth (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 49).

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) made the assumption that athletes' optimal experience "is caused by a complex interplay between psychological and situational factors." This was analyzed further by Jackson (1992) as she investigated the flow experience of elite figure skaters in

order to better understand the flow experience in sport. Her research explored the factors perceived as most important for entering into flow and factors perceived to prevent or disrupt flow. The descriptions of what happened to the skaters during optimal skating experiences were congruent with many of the characteristics of flow mentioned by Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990).

ECSTASY--BOTH SACRED AND SECULAR

Experiences which lead to enjoyment may be sacred or secular and produce a limited range of feelings. Laski (1962) examined transcendent ecstasy which may be secular or religious experiences and categorized both the circumstances in which the experiences took place and what those who were interviewed said about their experiences. Ecstasy was defined as "a range of experiences characterized by being joyful, transitory, unexpected, rare, valued, and extraordinary to the point of often seeming as if derived from a praeternatural source" (Laski, 1962, p. 5). In order to impress upon those questioned that the state being studied was a state of mind that surpassed or excelled others of its kind, the adjective "transcendent" was added (Laski, p. 7).

Laski (1962) divided ecstatic experiences into two basic kinds with subcategories depending on the way they

were approached. The first was the withdrawal experiences which involves a more or less gradual loss of normal perceptions, could be deliberately induced and involuntarily achieved, were of less importance unless they turn into the other kind of experience. They were described in phrases such as "slow and gentle merging, melting, liquefying, dissolving, usually into something else" (Laski, p. 47). Evelyn Underhill's work entitled Mysticism (cited in Laski, 1962) described the way to achieve a withdrawal ecstasy through contemplation as follows:

All that is asked is that we shall look for a little time, in a special and undivided manner, at some simple, concrete, and external thing. This object of our contemplation may be almost anything we please: a picture, a statue, a tree, a distant hillside, a growing plant, running water, little living things. . . . Wilfully [sic] yet tranquilly refuse the messages which countless other aspects of the world are sending. . . . Do not think, but as it were pour out your personality towards it: let your soul be in your eyes. Almost at once, this new method of perception will reveal unsuspected qualities in the external world. First, you will perceive about you a strange and deepening quietness; a slowing down of our feverish mental time. Next, you will become aware of a heightened significance, an intensified existence in the thing at which you look It seems as though the barrier between its life and your own, between subject and object, had melted away. You are merged with it, in an act of true communion: and you know the secret of its being . . . in a way which you can never hope to express (p. 49).

Second, were the intensity experiences which were tumescent experiences, might be of momentary duration, however, they may sometimes be followed by a more or less extended period--up to an hour or so--which leave behind an ecstatic afterglow, during which the experience was

appreciated and interpreted, and normal facilities and perceptions gradually restored (Laski, 1962, p. 369). Contact with one or some of a limited range of objects, events, and ideas as described by Underhill above was always a precursor of intensity experiences (p. 16). In order to categorize intensity experiences, she examined the closeness of the contact which the subjects mentioned and the nature of the contact. A working model was developed offering intensity experiences divided into three kinds and labelled as responses experiences. Each stage progressed to be a better ecstatic experience and were described as follows:

At the least stage at which ecstasies identify experiences as being of a kind, we find feelings that life is joyful, purified, renewed. Ecstasies principally characterized by feelings of this kind I shall call adamic ecstasies. It is to this stage, I believe, that there belong those feelings of kindness and love spoken of by Wordsworth, Fox's desire to benefit mankind.

At a stage regarded as better we find feelings of creativity or of knowledge gained. These I shall call knowledge ecstasies. Often the knowledge is felt to be gained through a contact felt to be made, and these I shall call knowledge-contact ecstasies.

That knowledge may come at a stage less than that in which contact is felt to be made is suggested by the feelings often reported where knowledge is gained, self is not felt to be lost; but where contact is made, self is often felt to be lost, and it is generally agreed that ecstasies in which self is lost are better than those in which feelings of self are not lost.

The more complete the knowledge is felt to be and the more incommunicable, the better the ecstasy.

At the stage regarded as the best, ecstasies may involve complete or almost complete loss of sensibility, coupled with a feeling (necessarily afterwards) that any contact made has been complete.

Ecstasies with these characteristics I shall call union ecstasies (Laski, 1962, p. 122).

Three noteworthy characteristics were attached to intensity experiences to represent differences in degree rather than in kind. The first was the element of revelation (Laski, 1962, p. 154). Here the ecstatic's discovery for the first time of a continuing and often expanding focus of value in the trigger to the experience. These, which seem most likely in children and young people were labelled revelation ecstasies.

They, and almost certainly similar but less intense experiences, may have considerable influence on an individual's tastes, interests, beliefs, and aims. Many of the feelings of momentary ecstatic experiences may be known for more or less prolonged periods ranging from, say, an hour, a day, a week to (ideally) a lifetime. Such states may come unsought after, for instances, childbirth or going away on holiday; they are usually postulated as necessary states for inhabitants of utopias; and they may and even should be sought by the religious as almost continuous conditions. In the last case they are known as unitive states or periods, and I have used this name for all more or less long-continuing feelings of ecstasy (Laski, 1962, p. 371).

A second noteworthy characteristic of intensity experiences was the concept of conversion used by Laski "to refer only to substantial and lasting improvements in outlook and personality" (P. 289). Underhill (1930) narrowed the definition of conversion in the context of the mystical life:

All conversion entails the abrupt or gradual emergence of intuitions from below the threshold, the consequent remaking of the field of consciousness, an alteration in the self's attitude to the world (p. 177).

Laski (1962) contended that conversion necessitated mental reorganization, may also be the moment of an ecstatic experience, was usually permanent, and involved "those beliefs that the person concerned holds to be the most important part of his mental life, which entails, in effect, that most though not necessarily all conversions will be concerned with religious belief" (p. 290).

The last noteworthy characteristic attached by Laski to intensity experiences was that of inspiration which does not necessarily change the personality, but on some scale, does "effect a change from a self 'hitherto divided' to a self unified" (p. 292). De Sanctis (1927) in his work, Religious Conversion, defined inspiration as "an illumination which clarifies a truth already perceived, or reveals a new truth; work done under its impact is done without effort, and this is not true of conversion" (p. 66).

Laski (1962) observed that ecstasies related both religious experiences and mystical experiences. Thus, the requirement to discern the differences is important. Two renown researchers in the field of religion, Glock and Stark (1965) used the term "value orientation" to classify those "over-arching and sacred systems of symbols, beliefs, values, and practices concerning ultimate meaning which men shape to interpret their world" (p. 9). Two discrete perspective realms were established by the researchers:

In one realm, all value orientations include some statement affirming the existence of a supernatural

being, world, or force, and predicate their ultimate solutions on this assumption. We shall call these religious perspectives. Value orientations in the second realm do not posit a supernatural, but limit their statements about ultimate meaning to the material world, although often to past or future versions of it. We may refer to this second type as humanist perspectives . . . But it must be kept clear that they represent alternative forms of the same basic phenomenon (Glock and Stark, 1965, pp. 10-11).

By defining religious experience as an encounter between an individual and "some supernatural consciousness" (p. 10), they deliberately excluded parapsychological phenomena and mystical experiences that lack a supernatural referent. Using this dichotomy, they classified religious experiences according to the frequency with which they are reported in the general population.

With the understanding that the religions of the world have various expectations of their adherents, Glock and Stark (1965) identified five "core dimensions" in which religiosity ought to be manifested. These dimensions proved "a frame of reference for studying religion and assessing religiosity" (p. 21). The five dimensions of religiosity were: the experiential, the ritualistic, the ideological, the intellectual, and the consequential (p. 20). In order to have a clear picture of what was included in each dimension, a description of each was necessary. First, the experiential dimension included "the more extreme forms of religious expression--the conversion experience, talking in tongues, being visited by the Holy Spirit. . . ." (p. 30). Glock and Stark identified a "fourfold ordering" of the ways

in which religious feelings may be expressed. This involved the notions of concern, cognition, trust or faith, and fear (p. 31). Out of concern, came the need to seek a higher purpose in life. Out of cognition, came the effort to reach God, to be saved, to experience God in the beauties of nature. Out of trust or faith, came the feeling of being "in the hands of a divine power" where there is no need for worry (p. 31). Out of fear came the recognition of the need to operate within the bounds of what one deems to be acceptable religious practices. In many religions there is an admixture of fear and trust with either one taking the predominating role (p. 31).

The second core dimension is the ritualistic which encompassed such facets as church membership, attendance, recitation of prayers, participation in sacraments, and other religious practices. Third was the ideological dimension which constituted the content and scope of beliefs held by the adherents. Fourth was the intellectual dimension which indicated the religious literacy or "expectation that the religious person would be informed and knowledgeable about the basic tenets of his faith and its sacred scriptures" (Glock and Stark, 1965, p. 20). The researchers noted the congruity between the ideological and intellectual dimensions "since knowledge of a belief is a necessary condition for its acceptance. However, belief need not follow from knowledge nor for that matter, does all

religious knowledge bear on belief" (pp. 20-21). Lastly, the consequential dimension encompassed the practical conduct to be expected by one who harbors religious belief and knowledge. "The notion of 'works,' in the theological meaning of the term, is connoted here" (Glock and Stark, 1965, p. 21).

As Glock and Stark (1965) examined the experiential dimension of religious commitment, they noted that it was inextricably bound up with all the other core dimensions and could only be studied and analyzed within this context. The researchers offered the following definition of religious experience and separated it from all other human experiences while making clear that certain feelings were religious experiences if the person stated them as such:

. . . all of those feelings, perceptions, and sensations which are experienced by an actor or defined by a religious group or a society as involving some communication, however slight, with a divine essence, i.e., with God, with ultimate reality, with transcendental authority (Glock and Stark, 1965, p. 42).

Glock and Stark (1965) classified the varied phenomenon of religious experience as they were reported in the general population into four types. The most frequently occurring experience was referred to by them as the confirming experience which is a sudden awareness, knowing or intuition that one is confronted with another mysterious, often holy entity. William James (1961) called it "the something there" experience. The confirming experience provides

validation of one's held beliefs through a sudden intensification of feeling the presence of sacred influence.

The next most commonly occurring religious experience is what Glock and Stark (1965) called the responsive experience in which individuals not only sense the presence of a transcendent power but feels the awareness is mutual (p. 46). Generally, such recognition of the individual's presence takes the form of some salvational, miraculous, or sanctioning action.

The third type of religious experience as identified by Glock and Stark (1965) was labelled the ecstatic experience. This comes from ekstasis, "standing outside of" and is described as "an effervescent and intoxicating experience in which individuals sense that they are standing outside the ordinary world" (Hoffman, 1990, p. 68). The ecstatic not only knows the presence of God and knows that he is acknowledged by the divine, but has the intimacy of friendship with the transcendent power (Glock and Stark, 1965, p. 52).

The least common type of religious experience is the revelational experience in which individuals claim to receive messages from the divine power through voices or visions (Glock and Stark, 1965, p. 55). The type of message delivered may place the religious experience in a congruity with one of the other types. For example, the vision may be a part of any or all of the types of religious experiences

whereas voices cannot be a part of the confirming experience. To speak to an individual is to acknowledge his existence (p. 55). It is when the "voice imparts confidential information about the future, divine nature or plans, then we must consider it revelational" (Glock and Stark, 1965, p. 55). These types of religious experiences have the potential of creating change within the existing religious movement or the establishment of a new religious movement (Hoffman, 1990, p. 68).

RESEARCH ON SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES

BOTH EASTERN AND WESTERN

Introduction

William James and Rudolph Otto were selected to be two basic contributors toward a definition of peak religious experience because they examined the study of spiritual experiences from the history of religion's point of view. In order to prevent the impression that this is a purely Christian study or research project, we will show that the categories analyzed in their cross-cultural research in religious experience are very applicable to the theme of this study on Christian subjects. We will begin with James and then go on to Otto.

William James

In his classic, The Varieties of Religious Experience, William James (1985) described religious experiences as being moved by external power: "the sense of union with the power beyond us is a sense of something, not merely apparently, but literally true" (p. 403). James arrived at this basic statement through a lengthy analysis of a wide variety of religious experience. There were no boundaries drawn nor limitations placed around the feeling state in James' contention in that it was all-inclusive as shown succinctly by the following:

. . .ask how far our transmarginal consciousness carries us if we follow it on its remoter side. Here the over-beliefs begin: here mysticism and the conversion-rapture and Vedantism and transcendental idealism bring in their monistic interpretations and tell us that the finite self rejoins the absolute self, for it was always one with God and identical with the soul of the world. Here the prophets of all the different religions come with their visions, raptures, and other openings, supposed by each to authenticate his own peculiar faith (p. 404).

James (1985) sought to work out his view of religious experience in human subjects. Although James discussed a variety of different concerns in his book, for purposes of this research, the effects of the affective experiences regarding religious involvement was important.

James narrowed his focus to the experiential basis of religious experience by showing that they are more than mere physiological states and more than philosophical or theological doctrines. In an effort to understand the

affective state of religious involvement, James set out to analyze the statements made by those who have had religious experiences. For James, the repeated "first-hand" experience of individuals such as Saint Teresa, Walt Whitman, and Emanuel Kant offered support that religion could not be reduced to organic origins.

James (1985) examined four "critical points" that manifested themselves within the scope of religion and its importance in life. The four points were: (a) the experiential approach and the generic meaning of religion; (b) the sick soul, the divided self, and the process of regeneration; (c) saintliness, or the concrete fruits of religion and their value; and (d) the bearing of mysticism on the truth of religion.

In James (1985) first "critical point" he attempts to provide a neutral definition of religion which allowed space for all to enter on an individual basis separate from the institutional and theological concerns. He contended that all our thoughts spring from the same divine well. The same test can be applied to scientific thoughts as are applied to religious thoughts. He finally offered a working definition of "religion" which is all-encompassing and purely generic in meaning: "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine" (p. 34). James' all-

encompassing definition does not restrict the relationship between the individual and the divine and may be "moral, physical or ritual" in denoting where the personal experience may originate and flourish. Many athletes have attributed their successful athletic performances to spiritual inspiration and labelled the event as a worship experience (Prebish, 1984).

In the second part of James' (1985) discussion of the first critical point, he goes on to examine the inner experiences which underlie expressions of faith. From the experiential point of view, he presented that which others had determined as divine through their experiences with his/her deity, that which "is godlike, whether it is a concrete deity or not" (p. 36). He was clearly pointing out that his central concern was to examine religion as it appeared in the life and experience of the individual as opposed to the institutional and theological setting. Since many religious experiences during sporting feats have been described as changing lives and leading people to be more in tune with their connections to the rest of the world, may we assume that James' definition of divine is broad enough to take in athletes' personal experiences as well?

A second "critical point" for discussion was James' (1985) view of "the sick soul, the divided self, and the process of regeneration. Pertinent to this study was the understanding of the divided self which was in need of the

unifying conversion experience (p. 157). Here James sought to understand the dichotomy between the "once-born", the "religion of healthy-mindedness" and the "sick soul as they parallel the "twice born" or conversion experience (p. 73)." James observed the light-hearted disposition to life of the once-born and the healthy-mindedness approach and identified ways which lead to overcoming the divided self and the sick soul through conversion. Much like the baseball player who lacks assurance that he can rise above a slump, the divided self is in need of an experience either gradual or sudden which will bring about a superior consequence such as a successful plate appearance.

For conversion to occur, James (1985) stated that, "man's consciousness or the group of ideas to which he devotes himself, and from which he works, call it 'the habitual centre of his personal energy'" must move from the peripheral in his consciousness to a central place with religious aims now forming the habitual centre of his energy (p. 162). Hence, the affective experience traditionally called the "state of assurance" indicated that the divided self and the sick soul have undergone a renewal of life or regeneration leading to the "twice-born." The assurance state is characterized by peace; the perception of truth not known before; and the objective change which the world often appears to have undergone (p. 201).

James' (1985) third "critical point" was a consideration of saintliness. He examined the progression of the human consciousness and the value of the fruits of religion as one moved toward saintliness. It is striking to observe the universal features of saintlessness as delineated by James corresponded to Laski's (1962) characteristics of ecstasy and Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) components of flow.

The efficacy of conversion may lead to change in the "habitual centre of personal energy" where spiritual emotions are operative leading to the saintly character. There is a jettisoning of self-seeking behaviors and sensuality in all its forms, thus, allowing for pragmatism or practical consequences to result from the improved inner condition or human consciousness. He then examined the character traits within the "personal centre of energy": (a) asceticism; (b) a strength of soul visited by equanimity and peace; (c) an increase in purity as one endeavors to "keep unspotted from the world"; and, (d) an increase in charity in that a saint "prays for his enemies" (p. 221).

James gives the universal features of saintliness included in all religions as follows:

1. A feeling of being in a wider life than that of this world's selfish little interests" [while simultaneously feeling] a conviction, not merely intellectual, but as it were sensible, of the existence of an Ideal Power [known in the Christian sense as God]...

2. A sense of the friendly continuity of the ideal power with our own life, and a willing self-surrender to its control.

3. An immense elation and freedom, as the outlines of the confining selfhood melt down.

4. A shifting of the emotional center towards loving and harmonious affectations, towards an assured 'yes, yes,' and away from 'no' where the claims of the non-ego are concerned. (James, 1985, pp. 219-220).

Eric Liddell captured James' (1985) fruits of saintliness for some viewers in the 1981 film, Chariots of Fire, when he portrayed the Christian athlete "running one's way to glory." The choreographed "transcendent pounding of composer Vangelis's synthesized score" seemed to highlight the created effect as one sensed God's friendly continuity in his own life (Flake, 1990, p. 166).

James' (1985) last "critical point" was mysticism, philosophy, and the problem of truth in religion. He proposed four marks or characteristics for identifying a mystical experience: ineffability--the feeling that the experience is inexpressible and cannot be described or imparted to others; noesis--a feeling that the event imparts a state of knowledge, illuminates revelations, or restructures an individual's outlook; transiency--the feelings are not sustained for long except in rare instances; and passivity--a feeling of "being grasped and held by a superior power" indicating that one is being acted on by an outside force (pp. 302-303).

In describing the rapture of the sporting experience, Beisser (1977) appeared to include James' marks of mysticism as he called it a type of "madness" in the sense of ecstasy: "one is caught up into something greater than oneself, with the self becoming fused with the environment, when supposed limits are exceeded and the full potential of existence seems within reach, and where the action is all-encompassing" (p. 205).

Rudolph Otto

Two of most famous discussions of intense religious experience in different cultures are by the German historian, Rudolph Otto. His study of the experience of sacred presence was entitled Idea of the Holy (1923; 1957 ed). He followed this a few years later with Mysticism: East and West (1932). Since Otto is so widely respected as having pioneered the comparative study of mystical experience, this study will now turn to a consideration of these two books. Instead of covering the entire books, the researcher will pick out the features of most importance to this study.

In the Idea of the Holy, he coined the term "the numinous" or "numinous consciousness" (p. 11). The Latin word "numen" is that overplus of meaning above holy and beyond the meaning of goodness. For example, "numinous" may be the feeling evoked after the experience of a perfect

moment which is "irreducible to any other; and therefore, like every absolutely primary and elementary datum, while it admits of being discussed, it cannot be strictly defined. Understanding of "the numinous" comes only through the experience itself. Although the thrill of victory is to be savored, the experience of "the numinous" goes far beyond in that it is like the sweet taste of victory but also different to the degree it is totally absorbing.

Otto (1923; 1957 ed) names the mysterium tremendum or the "wholly other" as the object to which "the numinous" consciousness is directed (p. 12). This is a feeling state of mystery inexpressible and above all creatures where the individual may experience anything from a "tranquil mood of deepest worship" to a thrilling terror and vibrant resonance until "it dies away and the soul resumes its profane non-religious mood of everyday experience" (p. 12).

Otto (1923; 1957 ed.) asserted that the nature of the numinous can only be suggested by the feelings it evokes in the mind not described directly as it is in itself. Thus, he separated the two words mysterium tremendum and examined them independently in order for the reader to gain insight into this undefinable feeling state. Otto suggested the following elements of the adjective "tremendum": (a) a sense of awefulness or awesomeness that included the emotion of fear, but not in the connotation of fright or the potential for danger. The awesome nature of the tremendum was

described as so "overwhelmingly great that it seems to penetrate the very marrow, making the man's hair bristle and his limbs quake" (p. 16). Conversely, Otto says the tremendum may affect one in an almost unobserved gentleness (p. 16); (b) a sense of overpoweringness (*majestas*) where there is a feeling of one's own submergence into something far greater than oneself. One experiences the annihilation of the self as is seen in the classic mystic phrase: "I am naught, Thou art all" (p. 21). This leads to an identification with the Something which is Absolute and supreme in power and reality which is wholly and non-rational (p. 21); and (c) a sense of energy or urgency of "the numinous" object which is perceptible in the "wrath" and offered through symbolic expressions such as vitality, passion, emotional temper, force, will, etc (p. 27). For the archer, the awesome, overpowering and energetic qualities of the tremendum provided the impetus for being totally absorbed and submerged in something greater than himself until he and the bow become one instrument.

Otto (1923; 1957 ed) then suggested the elements of the noun mysterium as follows: (a) a sense of the "wholly other" outside the limits of the familiar, the intelligible, and the canny whereby the mind is filled with blank wonder and astonishment (p. 26). The "wholly other" may be connected or indirectly aroused by extraordinary phenomena or astonishing occurrences where "the numinous" and the natural

come together (p. 27); and (b) a sense of fascination whereby one is transported with a strange ravishment, feeling dizzy with intoxication, and filled with wonder at something that totally entrances one (p. 31). The pitcher of a no-hitter is unable to express the positive feelings experienced during the performance, nor can he describe what precipitated this fascinating feeling state.

Rudolph Otto next wrote a second book, Mysticism: East and West (1932), in which he went farther and showed that the experience of the holy is similar in different cultures. Underhill (1911) and Laski (1961) verified or have since verified the similitudinous experience. This is also very helpful to our project to show that there is a window into human nature as such. This will be helpful in understanding why different athletes from a variety of backgrounds and religious perspectives may have described their experiences in comparable terms.

Otto (1932) carefully analyzes the mystical thought of an Indian philosopher named Sankara who lived around 800 C.E. and he compares it to a German mystic named Meister Eckhart who lived from 1250 to 1327. Of the categories that Otto identified as occurring in both thinkers, the following are pertinent to our study.

1. In the experience of God, according to Otto, the masters believed that one passes into an area where there are no words to describe what one feels.

2. The words fall away and one is simply in it, one is it, undivided, non-multiple as opposed to becoming (p. 25).

3. For them, becoming was the intermediate state between Not-Being and Being (p. 35).

4. Becoming is unstable, painful, and has all kinds of appearances that come and go.

This is no different than trying to learn a golf swing which is painful and unstable. It is difficult to know what to rely on as one adjustment is made and another requires further work. The researcher interpreted the athletes' achievement of Being as entering the flow experience.

Otto (1932) determined that perhaps the most remarkable similarity between the two metaphysical systems is that they are not metaphysical or scientific, but something wholly other (p. 32). Their view of Being is not a cause and effect relationship, but something "numinous" to be perceived using the doctrine of salvation (p. 34). For the athlete, achievement of Being elicits the same affect level with the attached qualities of bliss, exaltation, exhilaration, happiness, and relief. It goes way beyond all the prescribed guides, rules and regulations, the correct diets, the appropriate training, or the metaphysical and scientific, to a level where this new knowledge or creativity is impossible to explain technically. The athlete recognizes that he/she must be willing to surrender or lose the self or self-consciousness in exchange for Being or the flow experience in sport.

BIBLICAL EVIDENCE

Introduction

Any study of Christian ecstatic experience defined as possession by the Holy Spirit or exaltation in the Spirit will have to consider the biblical evidence. With the exception of 2 John and 3 John, every writing in the New Testament refers to the Holy Spirit (Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, 2, s.v. "Spirit, Spirit of God"). Important to this study, however, are three classical passages within the New Testament that deal with the experience of the Holy Spirit or describing people who are being lifted up in the Holy Spirit.

The most famous description of the experience of the Holy Spirit is in the second chapter of the book of Acts where it reveals that the Holy Spirit came down on the Apostles and gave them the gift of tongues. This researcher began with that passage, then examined the famous description of the "gifts of the Spirit" by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians, Chapters 12-14. Next another of Paul's letters to the Church at Galatia where he described the "fruit of the Spirit" was examined (Gal 5:22-23).

The Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost

According to early Christian tradition, a physician and companion of the Apostle Paul named Luke wrote both the

Gospel of Luke and Acts. Without making a judgment ourselves on this controversial issue, the researcher can say that Luke and Acts were written by someone in the first generation of the Christian Church (New Jerome Biblical Commentary). In Acts, the author describes the carrying out of the great commission that Christ assigned to his followers (Conzelmann, 1987, p.xliii). Thus, Christ continued to do the things on earth by the Holy Spirit and working through his disciples. (Conzelmann, 1987, p. xliii). According to Acts, Christ promised the Holy Spirit to his disciples during the time of his absence to empower them (Rahner, 1975, p 643). This promise of Christ was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when He poured forth the Holy Spirit upon his disciples and they were then to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judaea, in Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Rahner, p. 643). The passage in question reads as follows:

1. When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.
2. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.
3. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them.
4. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.
5. Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.

6. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.

7. And they were amazed and wondered, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"

8. And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?

9. Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

10. Phrygia and Pamphlia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

11. Cretans and Arabians, we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."

12. And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

13. But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine." (Acts 2: 1-13)

The rare state of consciousness and ecstasy described in Acts 2:2-4 is in keeping with the characteristics of ecstasy as noted by Laski (1962). Also, athletes experiencing sport flow have given various accounts of this type of rapture or being in similar exalted states (Beisser, 1977; Hoffman, 1992). Acts 2:6-8, however, is a unique passage in all early Christian literature in that Holy Spirit led the Christians to speak in foreign languages or glossolalia. The phenomenon of glossolalia is not something of relevance to this study, but the ecstatic state which they found themselves in is most relevant. In Acts 2:13 where there is the accusation by the "others" that the Christians who were under the Spirit's influence were intoxicated (Haenchen, 1971) is similar to

descriptions provided by Laski's (1962) ecstatic moments and Csikzentmihalyi's (1990) flow states. Both authors have provided excerpts from individuals' statements describing similar "loss of self-consciousness" with related symptoms of dizziness and "getting high". In Acts 2:1, the disciples were "all together in one place" as a show of unity and inspiration from the Holy Spirit which promoted community building. Csikszentmihalyi's flow state offers the opportunity for a team to operate as a single unit, working toward clear common goals, and with immediate feedback. Beyond these comparisons, however, there seems to be no further parallels.

Gifts of the Spirit

According to Conzelman (1975), chapters 12-14 of 1 Corinthian "provide a richer insight into [early Christian] community life than any other passage in the New Testament, and especially into the busy life of divine worship in Corinth" (p.204). For the sake of brevity, 1 Corinthians 12-14 were not listed in their entirety. Verses were extracted and presented as they provided insight to this study.

The following is a list of the "gifts of the Spirit" as found in 1 Corinthians Chapter 12:7-10 which were extracted from Conzelman' (1975) commentary:

7. But each is given the manifestation of the Spirit in order to make use of it.

8. For to one it is given through the Spirit to speak with wisdom, to another to speak with knowledge, according to the same Spirit,

9. another is given faith, in the same Spirit, another gifts of healing, in the one Spirit,

10. another the working of miracles, another prophecy, another the distinguishing of the spirits, another (various) kinds of (speaking with) tongues, another the interpreting of tongues.

In 1 Corinthians, Chapter 12 provided a description of the "gifts of the Spirit" with Paul's admonition not to use the gifts as ends unto themselves or for self-aggrandizement, but for the exaltation of Christ and community building (Fee, 1987, p. 573). What Paul saw in the Church at Corinth were members who found themselves "in possession of exceptional spiritual endowments or natural gifts raised to an extraordinarily high power" known as charismata (Robertson and Plummer, 1963, p.257). The understanding and expression of extraordinary feelings was important to this study since many accounts have been documented where athletes have described entering "flow" and performing at extraordinary levels beyond their natural and trained capabilities (Csizkszentmihalyi, 1975; 1990; Hoffman, 1992).

In 1 Corinthians Chapter 13:4-7 provide Paul's offered a guide toward a better decision and community building through love:

4. Love is long-suffering, love is kind, love is not jealous, not boastful,

5. not arrogant; it is not rude, it does not seek its own advantage, it is not irritable, it keeps no score of wrongs,

6. it does not rejoice over wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.

7. It covers everything, believes everything, hopes everything, endures everything.

In 1 Corinthians Chapter 13, Paul sought to assist the believers in forming a valid estimate as to the gifts importance, and, thus, offer the chapter of love (Robertson and Plummer, 1963, p. 282). Verses 4-7, Paul presented "the way that is beyond comparison" in a context which is love for others over and against self-interest (Fee, 1987, p. 629). Where love abounds, individuals come together for one goal or purpose which leads to community building. Similarly, one component of the flow experience is the loss of ego or the consciousness of self with it emerging stronger afterward (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1990). During self-transcendence, the individual feels boundaries widen and involvement with "something great and powerful" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 65).

Fruit of the Spirit

The "fruit of the Spirit" is included in this study because it demonstrates the level of perfection to be sought through the Holy Spirit. This has relevance for this study because the person experiencing "flow" has described a perfected state whereby the "concern for self disappears and

the sense of self emerges stronger after the flow experience is over" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 49).

The "fruit of the Spirit" is the natural product of a vital relationship between the Christian and the Spirit" (Burton, 1964, p. 313). It was used in the singular context to offer "all the experiences and elements of character in the ensuing list as a unity, together constituting the result of the living by the Spirit" (Ibid). Taken from Galatians 5:22-23, the phrase "the fruit of the spirit" is as follows:

22. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23. gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Burton, 1964, p. 312).

This transcendent power has potent effects some of which are listed in Galatians 5:22-23. The ninefold characteristics listed are not something the adherent does or produces, but are outgrowths from his relationship with the Spirit (Wakefield, 1983, p. 167). "The spiritual person is always conscious of his dependency on the Spirit" (Wakefield, 1983, p. 357). Thus, his need for affirmation is perfected only by the Spirit. Correspondingly, the phenomenology of the flow experience enhances the athlete's opportunities for growth. The experience of perfection within the finitude of a game has been described by many athletes as a "moment of glory...from a feeling of awesome power and delicate control with courage conquering fear such

that one loses consciousness of self but ends up with a sense of self-affirmation" (Snyder, 1983, p. 269). Even though the fruit by definition are overlapping in meaning, each has a valuable and singular role to play in the unifying and perfecting of the Spirit-imbued character.

The first characteristic of this transcendent power is love which "in the New Testament usually means divine love, as manifested in Christ, as experienced by believers and as overflowing in their love to others" (Wakefield, 1983, p. 167). 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 described love as a deep emotional surrender and commitment sustained by devotion to God and communal concern for neighbor (Wakefield, p. 167). It deals with the operations for the upbuilding of Christian conduct in the church with the central theme that is all is for nought if done "apart from love" (Fee, 1987, p. 627). Curiously, the flow experience has the community building effect as well as athletes in unison concentrate on the game, lose the sense of self, and transcend the everyday world (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

The second characteristic of this transcendent power is joy which is the "great delight and pleasure that Paul shared in the company of his fellow believers...something which affliction and persecution could not quench" (Wakefield, 1983, p. 167). This coincides with Laski's (1962) ecstatic moments which are characterized by the feeling "that life is joyful, purified, and renewed" (p.

122). "Flow" by definition is the very essence of joy in that Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defines it as "the dynamic feeling state subjectively interpreted and characterized by a holistic sensation of total enjoyment" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p. 36). In this people mention being so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that they do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it.

The third characteristic of this transcendent power is peace which was used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 16:11 to bid farewell or "go in peace" meaning to have good health and welfare (Arndt and Gingrich, 1957, p. 226). It is not only the mere "absence of strife, but a positive beneficial relationship or to "have peace within one's group" as stated in 1 Corinthians 3:4 (Ibid). The salutary effect of peace is tranquil assurance and "spiritual well-being" (Burton, 1964, p. 315). Athletes have described a tranquil feeling state during performance where they have felt unusually free from outside influence and disturbance. During "flow" an individual is able to act in harmony with other teammates as his performance is "a deep but effortless involvement that removes from awareness the worries and frustrations of everyday life" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 49).

The fourth characteristic of this transcendent power is long-suffering whereby individuals possess "steadfastness of the soul under provocation to change" (Burton, 1964, p.

315). The one who is long-suffering possesses patience and persistence "in the face of adverse circumstances" (Wakefield, 1983, p. 167). Athletes present themselves for painful training, pressing schedules, and strenuous physical and mental sacrifice on a consistent basis in order to achieve victory for the team, for the organization, for the fans, and for themselves. One interesting aspect of "flow" is that during the performance the "concern for self" disappears, yet paradoxically the sense of self emerges stronger after the flow experience is over" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 49).

The fifth and sixth characteristics of this transcendent power are kindness and goodness which have the same general breadth of reference and are equated with being merciful and benevolent (Arndt and Gingrich, 1957, p. 894). Also, they mean to possess excellence, honesty, and prosperity of character (Wakefield, 1983, p. 167). There is a great spiritual return to the individuals who apply goodness and kindness practices to their everyday lives. It is striking that for some athletes, the practice of good sportsmanship enhances positive feelings about themselves and allows for total concentration, and may lead to "flow", which is a by-product of complete focused athletes. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) observed that individuals who seek enjoyable experiences gain a sense of control over their

actions, they are goal-directed and work within the rules (p. 49).

The seventh characteristic of this transcendent power is faithfulness which means "reliability, trustworthiness, loyalty, or to have confidence in that which one has committed oneself to" (Arndt and Gingrich, 1957, p. 668). It refers to "matters of distinctly ethical and religious character" (Burton, 1964, p.316). Csizkszentmihalyi (1990) described the successful athletes as those who are dedicated to self-established or team-established goals and have the confidence to meet the demands of the task. The reliability among teammates and coaches has the potent force of a community building effect in that all are able to depend on one another to do his or her share. The enjoyment of "flow" "appears at the point whenever opportunities for action perceived by the individuals are equal to their capabilities" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

The eighth characteristic of this transcendent power is gentleness which "denotes recognition and concern for others" (Wakefield, 1983, p. 167). In order to successfully interact with others, one must consider the effects of his or her behavior on others. As one gives consideration to others, his or her own ego ceases to feel threatened. Athletes who have allayed aggrandizing behavior have reported entering "flow" where there was a complete loss of concern of self. During "flow" they reported feeling

"subordinated to the group performance" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 65). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) gave a climber's account of the loss of self-consciousness:

It's a Zen feeling, like meditation or concentration. One thing you're after is the one-pointedness of mind. You can get your ego mixed up with climbing in all sorts of ways and it isn't necessarily enlightening. But when things become automatic, it's like an egoless thing, in a way. Somehow the right thing is done without you ever thinking about it or doing anything at all. . . .It just happens. And yet you're more concentrated (pp. 62-63).

The ninth characteristic of this transcendent power is self-control and denotes "mastery over one's desires and appetites" (Wakefield, 1983, p. 167). Here Paul is speaking to the athlete regarding "control of bodily appetites" (Burton, 1964, p. 318). The need for mastery over the appetite of drink and the resulting "tendency to unrestrained and immodest hilarity" were admonitions of special reference (Burton, 1964, p.318). Behaviors that interfere with focus and concentration interrupt the potential for entering "flow."

Works of the Flesh

Paul introduced the "works of the flesh" as the antithesis to the "fruit of the Spirit" (Burton, 1964, p. 313). He believed that the "works of the flesh" precluded one's effort "to follow the leading of the Spirit" and reaching a perfected spiritual state (Burton, 1964, p. 312). In the Letter to the Galatians found in Chapter 5, verses

19-21 of the New Testament, Paul listed the vices which manifest when one fails to resist the "works of the flesh" (Burton, 1964).

19. Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are fornication, uncleanness, wantonness;

20. idolatry, witchcraft, enmities, strife, jealousy, angers, self-seekings, parties, divisions,

21. envyings, drunkenness, carousing, and the things like these, of which I tell you beforehand, as I have (already) told you in advance, that they who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (pp. 304-311).

This study is concerned with "flow", not only how to attain it, but what works against it. When Paul speaks of the "works of the flesh" in Galatians 5:19-21, he is describing certain characteristic behaviors that make it difficult for anyone to attain "perfection" regardless of the context in which one's life is involved (Burton, 1964). Could this application be made to a team that is plagued by players who are sexually promiscuous, who are not clean as far as using drugs, or who are filled with hatred or filled with envy? Will the team fall apart and nobody perform well? In order to achieve the heightened awareness necessary in the spiritual life that Paul describes or in the sports activity, should the player or believer abandon what Paul calls "works of the flesh?"

Conclusion

A careful study of all other uses of the terms "Spirit" or "Holy Spirit" indicates that there are no passages of greater significance than the ones discussed (Hastings, 1951, p. 784).

MAJOR CHRISTIAN THINKERS

In examining the "Holy Spirit," the "wholly other" or what this researcher has referred to as the transcendental power, two key figures were selected outside of Christian tradition. To add balance to this study regarding an understanding of the "Holy Spirit," it is important to examine the views of two key figures selected from the history of Christian thought. The researcher examined the views of a North African by the name of Augustine, who lived from 354-426, and an Englishman by the name of John Wesley, who lived during the 18th century.

Augustine

Augustine was selected because he wrote a classic on the Trinity which included a discussion of the "Holy Spirit." John Wesley was chosen because of all the major Christian theologians, he put a major emphasis on experience of the "Holy Spirit" and perfection, two themes that fit well into the study.

Augustine sought to enlighten the reader as to the identification of the "Holy Spirit" as one part of the Trinity. For Augustine, the Trinity includes the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Bourke, 1974, p. 141) which together form a community for the adherent. The "Holy Spirit" is "the gift of the Father and the Son, since He 'proceeds from the Father,'" (McKenna, 1970, p. 190). Augustine wrote that the Spirit is the gift of God to his creation from all eternity:

...the Holy Spirit is the love which proceeds from the Father and the Son and, for this very reason, God's gift to man, since the first gift of love is always love itself (Rahner, 1975, p. 648).

The essential beliefs of Christianity were presented by Augustine that the "Holy Spirit" is "the Teacher of Thy servant" (Bourke, 1974, p. 108). Thus, the "Holy Spirit" is the adherents' powerful access to the Father through the Son. Augustine wrote of the supreme and true God, "by whose gift all are happy who are happy through verity and not through vanity. . ." (Bourke, 1974, p. 222).

Augustine discussed the mind with three concerns becoming evident: memory, understanding, and will (Bourke, 1974, p. 76). The three together help toward the discernment of one's character and may be considered as a community of the mind. The three concerns were further analyzed by three heads: ability, knowledge, and use. For example, that which one has studied and stored in memory may be accessed in direct proportion to one's abilities and use.

From memory and understanding comes application or use which:

lies in the will. . . handles those things that are contained in the memory and understanding, whether it refer them to anything further, or rest satisfied with them as an end. For to use is to take up something into the power of the will (Bourke, 1974, p. 76).

For the athlete, the amount of time in preparation, training, and practice refers to the amount of use with regard to that which has been understood.

Curiously, athletes experiencing "flow" describe a feeling state in which they are purely absorbed in the experience, feel a new power or energy, and joyfully lose touch with the rest of the world (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

John Wesley

John Wesley was included in this study because he was famous for his work which examined the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit (Outler, 1964). He defined the testimony of God's Spirit as follows:

. . . inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given Himself for me; and that all my sins are blotted out, and I , even I, am reconciled to God (p. 115).

This phenomenological inward impression is His pardoning love to our spirit, thus, when the Spirit of God witnesses to our spirit, we are conscious that God loves us. "We love God, because He first loved us"; and, for His sake, we love

our brother also which, of course, leads to community building (Wesley, 1964, p.115).

Wesley contended that the divine testimony was manifested to the heart in that the Holy Spirit comes through Christ into man just as "the wind bloweth, and I hear the sound thereof; but I cannot tell how it cometh, or whither it goeth" (Wesley, 1964, p.117). Sirks (1957) noted that the "Holy Spirit flows through Christ into man whose entire, or religious, personality being involved, is awakened by it" (p. 80). These descriptions sound very similar to the Pentecostal accounts found in Acts 2:1-13 where the first Christian community came together. Outler (1964) viewed Wesley's chief interest and significance as a theologian laid in the integrity and vitality of his doctrine as a whole. Within that whole, the most distinctive single element was the notion of "Christian perfection" (p. 30). He contended that the goal of the Christian life was perfect love which he defined as:

. . . the conscious certainty, in a present moment, of the fullness of one's love for God and neighbor, as this love has been initiated and fulfilled by God's gifts of faith, hope, and love. This is not a state but a dynamic process: saving faith is its beginning; sanctification is its proper climax. As faith is in order to love, so love is in order to goodness--and so also goodness is in order to blessedness (Outler, 1964, p. 31).

Outler (1964) described Wesley as believing that everyone living the Christian life could fully expect to live in "love, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit" (p. 28).

To this end, he preached perfection which was attainable in this life if one advanced in knowledge and love through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Wesley, 1964, p. 462). He emphasized the "holiness of heart and life" as he saw many people come forward "to profess the gift of perfection", something he "had explicitly taught them to expect" (Outler, 1964, p. 22). He believed, however, that the gift of perfect love was deferred until the "moment of death" (p.32).

The schism with the Church of England developed as a result of Wesley's preaching on the stages in Christian life which lead to the perfection by the Holy Spirit and, thus, sanctification.

. . .that the new birth is not the same with sanctification. This is indeed taken for granted by many;. . .it all along speaks of regeneration as a progressive work, carried on in the soul by slow degrees, from the time of our first turning to God. . . . When we are born again, then our sanctification, our inward and outward holiness begins; and henceforward we are gradually to 'grow up in Him who is our Head.' (Wesley, 1964, pp. 523-524)

The argument may be made that the process leading to perfection has many parallels to the psychology of the optimal experience or entering "flow" as described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) in Figure 1 shown previously on Page 30 of this study. Most athletes state that the optimal experience happens after years of practice and is "thus something that we make happen "through accepting challenges to expand themselves" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 3). The

optimal experience is those rare occasions when "we feel a sense of exhilaration, a deep sense of enjoyment that is long cherished and that becomes a landmark in memory for what life should be like (Ibid). The description of the memorable longevity compared greatly to the revelation ecstasies described by Laski (1962) in that they may last a lifetime. The optimal experience "usually occurs when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile" (Ibid). Similarly, Wesley (1964) presented the stages for the Christian to reach perfection.

Conclusion

Augustine and Wesley, renown for the writings on Christian thought, arrived at points of interest concerning the internal affect of the Holy Spirit on the believer which have relevance for this study. Augustine discussed the "Holy Spirit" as a gift from the Father as proof of His love for servants before they loved Him which is in keeping with the teachings of 1 Corinthians Chapters 12-14. Augustine stressed the building of community through the gift of the "Holy Spirit" which was love. In fact, Augustine went as far as to say that the Trinity was a community.

Wesley's most important feature which coincided with the Biblical evidence as cited in this study was that of perfection. As a believer sought perfection through the

"Holy Spirit," its outgrowths were made evident by the "fruit" that the believer exhibited from the ninefold list found in Galatians 5:22-23.

Both Augustine and Wesley wrote about the ecstatic qualities of the "Holy Spirit." Augustine described the receiving of the "Holy Spirit" as something which "springs up in [one's] mind adelight" (Augustine, 1872, p. 160). Wesley mentioned "the conscious certainty in a present moment" (Outler, 1964, p. 31). Their writings were analogous to the ecstatic believers at Pentecost described in Acts 2:1-13.

SUMMARY

Since the early nineteenth century in America there has been considerable interaction between the institutions of sport and religion. During this symbiotic process, various interpretations have been offered as to their relationship along the continuum from the belief that the two institutions are mutually exclusive to the viewpoint that sport is a form of religion. This study will show that there is some support for both views, that they are, in fact, very different from each other and that they overlap. James' (1985) definition of religion which has been selected as a guide for this research provides the framework to satisfy both views. He defined religion as "the feelings,

acts, and experiences of individual men [sic] in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine" (p. 34). Hence, those who support the latter view contend that sport has features which resemble religious experience. Thus, three central themes have emerged from the research. Sport may provide: (1) opportunities for the expression of a range of ecstatic emotions, (2) reinforce community building through socialization and team comraderie, and (3) develop character, and enhance personal growth.

First Central Theme

There have been many accounts where athletes have described a mystical experience which is "quiet, peak and flowing" (Slusher, 1967, p. 64). The first central theme of this research centered on the ecstatic experience. Csikszentmihalyi (1975) studied glimpses of mystical exaltation in the sport experience and coined the phrase "flow theory." Csikszentmihalyi (1990) listed eight major components of the phenomenology of "flow":

1. Being involved in a challenging activity that required skills;
2. Merging of action and awareness;
3. Clear goals and unambiguous feedback;
4. Concentration on the task at hand;
5. A sense of control or felt no worry about the loss of control;

6. The loss of self-consciousness or egoless;
7. The transformation of time;
8. An autotelic experience or an end in itself.

These individuals stated that the "flow" experience was so intensely exhilarating that they would expend great amounts of energy in order to have the feeling again. They described the optimal experience as leading to deeper self-knowledge and personal or emotional growth. The optimal experience during sport participation may be compared to the ecstatic experience as described by Laski (1962): "a range of experiences characterized by being joyful, transitory, unexpected, rare, valued, and extraordinary to the point of often seeming as if derived from a praeternatural source" (p. 5). Laski divided ecstatic experiences into two basic kinds with subcategories depending on the way they were approached:

1. withdrawal experiences--gradual loss of normal perceptions, deliberately induced or involuntary,--microflow;
2. intensity experiences--tumescent experiences which may be from short to long in duration, with an ecstatic afterglow and possess three characteristics which may vary in gradation: revelation; conversion; and inspiration--macroflow;
 - (a) adamic ecstasies--Feelings of purification and renewal;
 - (b) knowledge contact--creativity or knowledge gained thought transcendent power;
 - (c) union ecstasies--complete loss of sensibility as complete contact is made with transcendent power;

Although ecstatic states are traditionally associated with religious experiences, some athletes insists that they have felt the presence of the Holy Spirit in their greatest experiences in sport. In order to gain a better understanding of the glimpses of traditional mystical and ecstatic experience in general and the Christian experience of being "lifted up by the Spirit" in particular, this study included a review of the writings of William James and Rudolph Otto, three famous passages in the Bible, and two historic Christian theologians who focused on the Holy Spirit--Augustine and John Wesley.

James (1985) and Otto (1923; 1932) pioneered the analysis of the experience of divine power in religions outside the Christian tradition. The categories they created to understand religious experience were very applicable to the theme of this study.

James (1985) focused on the experiential basis of religion in order to understand the individuals's affective state during the experience. For purposes of this study, James' four critical points were examined as they manifested themselves within the scope of religion and its importance in life. In many ways, they parallel Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990) components of flow experience in sport and Laski's (1962) ecstatic religious experience (Table 1).

Table 1. Parallels of James, Csikszentmihalyi and Laski

James' Four Critical Points of Religion	Csikszentmihalyi's Components of Flow	Laski's Ecstatic Religious Experience
the experiential approach	challenging activity that requires skills; autotelic;	intensity experience
the sick soul, the divided self, and the process of regeneration	clear goals and unambiguous feedback	intensity experience knowledge-contact
saintliness	flow experience	intensity; union;
knowledge of an ideal power	focus; merging of action and awareness;	revelation; knowledge-contact; union;
self-surrender of control	loss of control; loss of self- consciousness	union; conversion;
elation and freedom	focus and concentration	inspiration
non-ego	egolessness	adamic; intensity;
marks of mysticism and truth in religion	autotelic experience	ecstatic qualities
ineffability	flow performance with inexpressible feelings	union
noesis	unambiguous feedback; new confidence;	knowledge-contact; revelation;
transiency	microflow	withdrawal experience; awesome moments;
passivity	loss of self- consciousness; willing loss of control	union

To further elucidate the ecstatic moment which James (1985) described in his universal features of marks of mysticism, this research examined Otto's (1923;1957) Idea of the Holy. Otto coined the term "numinous" for the overplus of meaning above holy and beyond the meaning of goodness. Otto identified the object to which the numinous consciousness was directed as the mysterium tremendum. The following elements were features of the Otto's undefinable feeling state or mysterium tremendum and were related to Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) components of phenomenology of flow (Table 2).

Table 2. Corresponding Features of
Mysterium Tremendum and Flow

Otto's Elements of <u>Mysterium Tremendum</u>	Csikszentmihalyi's Components of Flow
a sense of "wholly other"	loss of self-consciousness
a sense of fascination	focus and concentration with a loss of self- consciousness;
a sense of awesomeness	merging of action and awareness;
a sense of overpoweringness	a sense of control or felt no worry about the loss of control;
a sense of energy	onset of flow through focus and concentration;

Otto defined the transcendent power as the "wholly other" whereas James labelled it the "something there" experience.

Both described the ecstatic features of the experience comparable to the revelation ecstasies mentioned by Laski (1962).

Otto's (1932) Mysticism: East and West presented the contention that the experience of the holy or the ecstatic moment is cross-cultural. He identified similar categories of mystical thought from the Indian philosopher, Sankara, and the German Meister Eckhart. These categories parallel James' (1985) marks of mysticism or the ecstatic qualities and Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) components of the phenomenology (Table 3).

Table 3. Cross-cultural Comparisons of Three Theories

Otto's Elements of Mysticism	James' Marks of Mysticism	Csikszentmihalyi's Components of Flow
inexpressible feelings	ineffability	flow performance with inexpressible feelings
undivided, non-multiple state	noesis	unambiguous feedback; concentration on task at hand; egolessness;
in a state of becoming, between Not-Being and Being	transiency; passivity;	loss of self-consciousness; willing surrender of control;
state is preceded by pain, struggle, uncertainty and doubt	inability to reach a state of passivity	training; overcoming self-doubt, illness, injury; lack of focus;

Next, this study presented three classical passages within the New Testament which deal with the experience of the Holy Spirit. These passages were important because they describe the affective state and resulting behaviors of people as they were lifted up in the Holy Spirit. This interaction with transcendent power provided illumination into the ecstatic moment, insight into community building and clarity to the stages of perfection.

The first central theme was further explored in the Christian ecstatic experience in terms of the exaltation of the "Spirit" as seen in Acts 2:1-13 using the King James Version if not otherwise referenced. The following passage was related to the writings of Otto and James who described spiritual experiences from the history of religion's point of view (Table 4).

The Second Central Theme

The following list of the "gifts of the Spirit" comes from 1 Corinthians Chapters 12-14. Verses were extracted and presented to provide insight to the study regarding spiritual exaltation and community building. Augustine was selected from the history of Christian thought because he along with the great theologian, John Wesley, in particular placed great emphasis upon the understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit within Christian faith. Augustine focused

Table 4. Ecstatic Qualities

Acts 2:1-4, 13	James and Otto	Csikszentmihalyi
1. When the day of Pentecost had come, they were <u>all together</u> in one place.	James' experiential approach of community building or Otto's "wholly other"	challenging activities that require skills autotelic; loss of self-consciousness;
2. And suddenly a <u>sound came from heaven</u> like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.	James' passivity and Otto's <u>mysterium tremendum</u>	loss of self-consciousness; willing loss of control;
3. And there <u>appeared to them tongues as of fire</u> , distributed and resting on each one of them.	James' marks of mysticism and Otto's elements of <u>mysterium tremendum</u>	athletes' reports of dreams, hallucinations, visions, preceding, accompanying, or following flow
4. <u>All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.</u> (*RSV)	James' stages of saintliness or Otto's <u>mysterium tremendum</u>	the act of unattainable perfection with parallel loss of self-consciousness
13. But others mocking said, <u>"They are filled with new wine."</u>	James' stages of saintliness and Otto's elements of <u>mysterium tremendum</u>	Reaction of onlookers who have various perspectives: incredulity, mockery, jealousy, the suggestion of drugs;

*RSV Revised Standard Version of The New Oxford Annotated Bible edited by Metzger and Murphy, 1991.

on the Trinity which is a unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Together the Trinity is a community bonded through love as Paul described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. A community, whether the reference is to Csikszentmihalyi's team bonding, the individual athlete's meshing of the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual realms to achieve flow, or Paul's instructions on using the "gifts of the Spirit" toward the development of the First Church at Corinth, emerged as a bonding process leading to perfection among the sporting community and the religious community.

The Third Central Theme

John Wesley focused on the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit. The inner testimony is the silent message which the Holy Spirit imparts to the individual leading him or her toward perfect. 1 Corinthians Chapter 13 also dealt with the inward self as it strives for the perfect state of love which was necessary for successful community building whether in the sporting community or the religious community. Paul in Galatians 5:22-23 enumerated the "fruit of the Spirit" which are a natural product of working toward being Christlike or having the personality of Christ through the Holy Spirit. Csikszentmihalyi's optimal experience or flow and James' stages of saintliness are other ways that this study offered for achieving a loss of self and allowing a stronger self to emerge. Paul in Galatians 5:22-23

Table 5. Community Building

1 Corinthians Chapters 12:7-10	Augustine	Csikszentmihalyi
7. <u>To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.</u> (RSV)	gift from God; union with the Trinity	new energy; autotelic experience; teamwork;
8. One man, through the Spirit, has the <u>gift of wise speech</u> , while another, by the power of the same Spirit, can put <u>the deepest knowledge into words.</u> (*NEB)	new understanding	stronger self emerging after flow experience
9. <u>another is given faith in the same Spirit, another gifts of healing, in the one Spirit,</u>	uses by the power of the will	more focus and more sense direction: "I can do it." "I will do it."
10. <u>another the working of miracles, another prophecy, another the distinguishing of the spirits, another (various) kinds of (speaking with) tongues, another the interpreting of tongues.</u>	knowledge, ability, and use;	many gifts: scoring, team leadership; support player: good passer, rebounder, etc.

*NEB The New English Bible edited by Sandmel, Suggs, and Tracik, 1976.

enumerated the "fruit of the Spirit" which are a natural product of working toward being Christlike or having the personality of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Csikszentmihalyi's optimal experience or flow and James' stages of saintliness are other ways that this study offered for achieving a loss of self and for a stronger self to emerge.

Table 6. Perfection

Galatians 5:22-23	Wesley and James	Csikszentmihalyi
22. But the <u>fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,</u>	Christian perfection	meeting challenges with appropriate skills: physical development, psychological readiness, and socially adept;
23. <u>gentleness, self-control;</u> against such things there is now law.	James' stages of saintliness; Wesley's stages of perfection	flow experience accompanied by the act of unattainable perfection

METHODOLOGY

In the latter part of the 1960s and early 1970s, researchers began to develop an interest in studies that were termed qualitative, field-oriented, observational, case study, cross-cultural, anthropological or ethnographic (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984, p. 27). Ethnographers contend

that qualitative methodology, like quantitative methodology, is simply another way to approach the empirical world (Bodgan and Taylor, 1975; Borgand Gall, 1983; Bowles and Klein, 1983; Goetz and Le Compte, 1984; Martens, 1987; Mishler, 1986; Taylor and Bodgan, 1984).

Ethnographies are defined as "analytic descriptions or reconstructions of intact cultural scenes and groups" (Spradleyand McCurdy, 1972). They may recreate for the reader "the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge, and behaviors of some group of people" (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984, p. 2). The design of ethnographies demands adherence to investigatory strategies with the following results: first, the techniques used extract phenomenological data which are in line with the view of those under study; second, the techniques are empirical and naturalistic without purposeful manipulation of variables in the study; third, the research is holistic in that ethnographers make every effort to construct descriptions of the full phenomena within their various contexts; and finally, ethnography research is eclectic as many techniques are utilized to obtain the data (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984, pp. 3-4).

In the qualitative research process, validity is emphasized. Ethnographic techniques enhance reliability and the replicability of a treatment by providing both a process and a context for the experimental manipulation (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984, p. 12). Researchers such as Mishler (1986)

suggested that reliability has been overemphasized in social research and mentioned the overconcern for consistency without much regard for correctness. Valid studies of the empirical world make it most difficult to achieve perfect reliability (Mishler, 1986). In order to establish validity, the researcher must demonstrate that the propositions generated, refined, or tested were compatible with the causal conditions that are present in human life (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984, p. 220). Two questions must be answered concerning the issues involved in matching scientific explanations of the world with its actual conditions.

First is the question of internal validity. Do scientific researchers actually observe or measure what they think they are observing or measuring? (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984, p. 221). The second question concerns external validity. To what extent are the abstract constructs and postulates generated, refined, or tested by scientific researchers applicable across groups? (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984, p. 221).

Qualitative research begins with flexible research designs (Taylor and Bodgan, 1984). Instead of concrete hypotheses, qualitative research is purely inductive. It begins with collection of data which may be empirical observations or measurements of some kind and then builds theoretical propositions from patterns in the data (Becker,

1958; Kaplan, 1964). Thus, an ongoing process of hypotheses building creates the basic tool for data analysis. In this way, the researcher generates and tests ensuing explanations, both uneventful and theoretical, for the behavior exhibited and attitudes presented by the people under study (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984 p. 173). In this respect, the researcher utilizing qualitative methods becomes a part of the people and settings being studied (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975; Bowels and Klein, 1983; Goetz and Le Compte, 1986; Mies, 1983; Mishler, 1986; Taylor and Bodgan, 1984).

Qualitative researchers play a substantive role within the study. The researchers are data collectors, or "sensitive observers, storytellers, and writers"; like human videotape recorders, they record as faithfully as possible the phenomenon they see" (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984 p. 102). They develop an intuitive approach to recording and raising finely tuned questions, test out feelings, and dig deeper into analysis of phenomena (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984 p. 102). It is "time-consuming and intellectually fatiguing" to study human behavior (Mishler, 1986, p. 21), and usually the success of a qualitative study depends on the "essential research instrument" which is the ethnographer himself or herself (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984, p.101).

Ethnomethodology was one theoretical perspective which was used as a research process. Ethnomethodology is based

on how people construct meaning in their everyday lives and how they maintain a sense of external reality.

Ethnomethodology projects the belief that each person experiences an external reality. External reality may or may not be experienced in the same way by everyone, but everyone uses beliefs and concepts: (a) to construct their perception of reality and (b) to give reality meaning (Goetz & Le Compte, 1986; Mies, 1983; Mishler, 1986). The interview became a valuable tool within ethnomethodology. Research interviewing is a method for understanding individual experiences through the voices of those people being studied (Chu, 1982; Mishler, 1986). Through listening and talking with respondents, both the interviewer and the interviewee construct the meaning of the interview process together. During the interview, the interviewer-respondent interaction is in a constant state of modification and development. Both individuals influence the other with their questions and responses, thereby establishing a relation which is reciprocal.

When successfully employed, the interview can become a powerful act of communication for obtaining access to material and information otherwise unavailable. Kahn and Cannel (1957) discussed this point as follows:

The term interview refers to a specialized pattern of verbal interaction--initiated for a specific purpose, and focused on some specific content area Moreover, the interview is a pattern of interaction in which the role relationship of the interviewer and respondent is highly specialized, its specific

characteristics depending somewhat on the purpose and character of the interview. (p. 16)

Interviewing has the intent of focusing conversation with the purpose of seeking unique information. The interview process allowed for in-depth reflective look at the flow experience by encouraging respondents to describe specific details about how they felt, thought, reacted, and believed about the flow experience and the analogous rare states of exalted consciousness of the Holy Spirit. This was in terms of a time frame including before, during and after the flow experience or the exaltation of the Holy Spirit experience. Thus, communication of this nature is not limited to obtaining information, but extends to offer the potential for developing a mutual and trusting relationship. The effectiveness of the interview is proportional to the care with which it has been planned and to the openness, spontaneity and understanding with which it is actually carried through.

To summarize, ethnographers view human behavior (i. e. what respondents say and do) as a product of how individuals define their lives. The task of a ethnomethodological endeavor is to capture and understand the process of how individuals interpret their world. Ethnographers attempt to do this by watching and listening to individuals in order to understand how they define their world from their own perspective.

This study was phenomenological in nature because it is an attempt to explicate and to gain an understanding of male professional athlete's experiences of their reality. From anethnomethodological perspective, it is a study of male athlete's experiences in their professional sport performances. Phenomenology and ethnomethodology are both adaptive because they address the personal framework which is essential in understanding the feelings, thoughts, and reactions of athletes during rare feeling states.

In addition, the interview was chosen as the tool for collecting data because of the intent of the interviewer to listen and develop an understanding of male athletes' interpretations of their world from their own perspectives. Furthermore, sociologists of sport are interested in the symbiosis which some have described concerning the two institutions of sport and religion.

Qualitative researchers must be both aware and sensitive to the potential problem areas inherent in interview methodology. Various distortions on the part of the interviewee and interviewer may occur prior to the interview, during the interview, and within the analytical or interpretative stages of this type of research.

Although a review of literature reveals that the interview technique may be time consuming, expensive, and accommodate a limited number of subjects, this researcher determined that the interview was the most efficient way of

collecting personal data from the athletes who have had flow experiences and analogous rare states of exaltation of the Holy Spirit. Information of a personal nature requires that a base of rapport was essential for full discussion and disclosure. Interviewers should be cognizant of the fact that possible antagonism between the interviewer and interviewee might develop due to the amount of probing required.

Best (1977) indicated that the interview is a superior data-collection device if the interviewer is skillful. An individual with expertise in interviewing is capable of adapting and controlling the situation as well as motivating the respondent to elicit more accurate and complete information.

The interview guide used open-ended semi-structured questions based on items derived from those used by Csikszentmihalyi's (1975, Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988) to assess flow. This was further adapted by Jackson (1992) and very useful to this research.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

The major purpose of this study was to examine and compare the concept of flow within sport and the nature of possession by the Holy Spirit within Christian religion. Once these have been clarified, the possible interaction of these concepts in the sports context will be explored. Although many conflicting claims concerning these interactions can be found in the literature, a rigorous analysis of the theological aspects as well as the dynamics of enhanced performance has not been thoroughly investigated. Given the social and religious assumptions of modern American culture, this study will seek to determine whether the two concepts are mutually exclusive, or whether they are somewhat congruent.

More specifically, this study will explore the transcendent quality of sport found in Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory and the subjective ecstatic experience of the Holy Spirit within Christianity. Csikszentmihalyi (communication of October 17, 1991 during Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP) Conference) agreed that there was need for further research regarding the phenomenology of flow and the exaltation of the Holy Spirit and suggested specific reading materials. Furthermore, this study was undertaken in an effort to

comprehend whether there are qualitative similarities and differences between the rare states of exalted consciousness and performance reported in sporting contexts and the analogous states of exaltation occasionally reported in the contexts of Christianity. Since the intent of this investigation was to acquire firsthand, personal accounts of phenomena as they occur in the real world, this study was considered to be phenomenological in nature. The open-ended semi-structured interview was utilized. The same questions and probes were used for all subjects, however, the order of presentation was changed in order to adapt to the individuals' responses. This allowed for the quick enumeration of results, but also provided for needed flexibility in the order in which the questions were asked. This protocol maintained consistency for the investigation. The interviewer attempted to maintain a natural and responsive demeanor which enhanced the development of rapport with the respondents during the face-to-face interview.

SELECTION OF DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE

In order to solicit information, to establish rapport with the respondent, and to aid in the understanding of each respondent's experiences, the personal interview technique was used. The interview is probably the oldest and most

often used technique for acquiring information (Kerlinger, 1964, p. 467). This instrument has important qualities that are not possessed by objective tests and scales and behavioral observations. If used with a well-envisaged schedule, an interview can obtain a great deal of information; it is flexible and adaptable to specific situations, and it can often be used when no other method is possible or adequate (Kerlinger, p. 467). The interviewer is in the position to quickly assess as to whether the respondent understands a question and can, within limits, repeat the question. Questions about personal feelings requiring self-reflection and in-depth introspection can be asked in such a way as to elicit accurate information. "Most important, perhaps, the interview permits probing into the context of, and reasons for, answers to questions" (Kerlinger, p. 468).

The interview guide consisted of open-ended and semi-structured questions in order to delve deeper into the motivations of respondents and their reasons for responding. Within this procedure, the respondents' reflections were illuminated and their own frame of reference emerged (Belenky et al., 1986; Benjamin, 1981; Bodgan and Taylor, 1974; Goetz and Le Compte, 1986; Mishler, 1986; Taylor and Bodgan, 1984).

The qualitative assessment involved eleven questions which described characteristics of flow as outlined by

Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1988). Eleven questions were adapted to address the characteristics of the Holy Spirit. Two questions combined the two phenomena in order to find similarities and differences.

CONSTRUCTION AND EVALUATION OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A modified version of the questions developed by Belenky et al. (1986) and Jackson (1992) from her dissertation on the flow theory were adopted for this project (See Appendix A). Items of the interview guide were derived from those used by Csikszentmihalyi (1975; Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988) to assess flow. The interview questions were modified to directly approach the issue of flow/Holy Spirit within sport participation.

After reviewing the work of Csikszentmihalyi (1975; Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988), Belenky et al. (1986), and Jackson (1992), 24 questions were developed to extract responses from the professional athletes regarding their internalized view of the transcendent quality of sport found in the flow theory and the subjective experience of the Holy Spirit within Christianity. Question one from Part I and Part II of the questionnaire for this study was developed from the work of Belenky et al. (1986) which began with the question, "What stands out for you in your life over the past few years?" Jackson (1992) modified slightly

the question for her dissertation to ask: "What performance in sport stands out as your most satisfying personally, the one you will want to remember for the rest of your life?" This question was utilized by the investigator of this study while the first question of Part II asked: "What experience with the Holy Spirit stands out for you as your most satisfying personally, the one you will want to remember the rest of your life?" The interview questions were then evaluated by experts in the related areas to determine their appropriateness to the study.

SUBJECTS

This ethnographic investigation included current United States professional athletes of varied racial backgrounds who play under the chartered rules of an association or league. The sample consisted of six male subjects which represented the sports of football, baseball, soccer, and swimming. The subjects were between the ages of 24 to 40. The six subjects sampled were selected because they had played professional sports and were assumed to have operated at the optimal experience level identified as flow. A second criterion for subject selection was that each had professed an abiding faith in Jesus Christ and a strong Christian faith and agreed to answer questions describing the Holy Spirit experience.

Prior to conducting the interviews, University of Tennessee policies had been followed regarding Human Subjects Research (See Appendix B). Appropriate measures were taken to protect the rights of the participants of this study.

Upon being informed of his rights as a respondent in this investigation, each interviewee was requested to sign a consent form (Appendix C). The professional athletes were informed that the interview sessions would be audiotaped, subsequently transcribed, and that all responses were confidential. If the participants wished to receive a copy of the results of the study, a summary was made available upon completion of the project.

The investigator explained the research project to the athlete and inquired as to his willingness to participate. The investigator then set up a preferred time and place with the athlete for the interview. The location of the interview was scheduled in a place where both the interviewer and the respondent felt comfortable and relaxed so that the interview questions could be explored in depth. Using the networking and snowballing sampling technique utilized by Allison and Meyer (1988) all athletes interviewed became a source of identification for other subjects. Each respondent was interviewed for one session with no interview exceeding the two-hour time-frame. If the respondent had any further thoughts, feelings, or questions,

he was encouraged to contact the investigator and either discuss the concern by telephone or schedule another meeting. No respondent followed up with further concerns after the interview concluded.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

All the face-to-face interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Subjects were identified on the audio tape by a coded synonym which was known by the project directors and the investigator. Tape recordings were utilized for accuracy purposes only. The first step in analyzing the data was for the researcher to read through the transcription completely in order to develop an understanding of the respondents' knowledge about flow and the Holy Spirit. This initial reading was an overview to provide insight to the researcher regarding the experiences of the athletes in the areas of flow and the Holy Spirit. Professional athletes' quotations were taken directly from the transcripts of each interview. These direct quotations became the unit of analysis as the research questions were addressed. The researcher then attempted to determine if the athlete described the flow experience similar to other athletes, if the athlete described the Holy Spirit in similar terms to the flow experience phenomenon as well as in similar terms to those used by his peers. More

specifically, the researcher attempted to determine if any or all of Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) components of flow were present and to determine if similar dialogue was used in describing the Holy Spirit experience.

In order to ascertain the athlete's experiences, an Inductive Analysis Form (See Appendix D) developed by Jackson (1992) was utilized. The inductive analysis involved a two-step procedure recommended by Patton (1990) and applied to sport by Scanlan et al. (1989) and Jackson (1992). Because two phenomena were examined, the analysis involved categorization of "flow" quotations and "Holy Spirit" quotations within each step. First, raw data themes were identified from the athletes' quotes or paraphrased quotes on "flow" and then on the "Holy Spirit". Second, these raw data themes were organized into higher order themes and clustered into a general dimension within "flow" or the "Holy Spirit" phenomenon. While collecting the raw data themes and characterizing each athlete's responses to each question, a summary profile of each professional athlete was developed. Cross-referencing was made between "flow" and the "Holy Spirit" general dimensions in order to determine if there was a congruency of dialogue and feeling state.

A final reading of both the interview and the quotes served two purposes: (a) statements that seemed more peripheral during the initial reading could upon further

study take on a more pronounced meaning, and (b) initial placement of quotes could be re-examined leading to their being moved from one raw data theme to another, to a different higher order theme, or different general dimension, because of a better understanding of the respondent's story. After all the quotes were placed in the proper category, the investigator read the quotes a final time in order to reflect on inductive assumptions and theory development regarding the data.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined and compared the concept of flow within sport and the nature of possession of Holy Spirit in Christianity. More specifically, this study explored the rare states of exalted consciousness found in Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory of sport and the subjective ecstatic experience of the Holy Spirit within Christianity. The major purpose of this study was to comprehend whether there were qualitative similarities and differences between the rare states of exalted consciousness and performance reported in sporting contexts and analogous states of exaltation occasionally reported in the contexts of Christianity.

This study was undertaken by qualitative inquiry which allowed the researcher to acquire firsthand, personal accounts of these phenomena as they occurred in the real world. This phenomenological study used an interview guide with open-ended, semi-structured questions to obtain the reflective statements of six professional athletes. Part one of the interview guide (See Appendix A) consisted of eleven questions dealing with flow in sport; part two included eleven questions dealing with the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit; and part three consisted of

two questions dealing with the combination of flow and the Holy Spirit. The data were analyzed by integrating and reporting responses to the questions in the interview guide. The reflective statements the professional athletes articulated followed the guidelines of the five research questions proposed in Chapter I to guide the investigation. Thus, this chapter was divided into sections each of which dealt with one of the proposed research questions found in Chapter I. The sections were further divided into the two categories of sport flow and the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit. An introduction to describe a brief framework relevant to each question was included following each research question. Results followed the introduction describing (1) the professional athletes' responses about sport flow and describing (2) the professional athletes' responses about the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit. At the end of the reported results pertaining to each research question is a discussion of the responses for the pertinent question.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

How is the experiential state of flow during the height of competition and the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit described by the professional athletes?

The experiential state is an important subject of qualitative inquiry and knowledge of it should extend to a better understanding of observed or measured behaviors. Flow experiences have been studied by sociologists to understand the heightened awareness that sometimes happens in sport and to "illuminate religious experience" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 5).

1. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) described the optimal experience or flow as a rare occasion, when one feels a sense of exhilaration, a deep and lasting sense of enjoyment, which may be the landmark in our memory as to what life should be like (p. 3). The task or activity is totally absorbing. The information received by the performer is congruent with his or her goals and "the psychic energy flows effortlessly" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 39). The psychic energy removes any worry or reason to question one's ability. Positive feedback comes through self-produced cognitive evidence as one senses his or her body as a flowing unit. For example, one professional athlete described the congruency of the flow experiences:

I was not that emotional. Preceding the race my fingertips were tingling. I felt really light, like I was mechanical. I was pumped-up. I exploded up on the blocks from the deck and when they said, "take your mark and go", I felt like it was a flow. It feels like a rhythm. It was effortless, efficient, and easy. I did not feel any pain until the last few strokes and I was passing the world record holder and I was on my way to winning. And for such pain I was grinning. (S6)

Some athletes offered descriptions of how it felt to be in top form and labelled it a flow experience. A professional athlete described the sensation of flow denoting the ecstatic qualities of flow such as merging of action and awareness and the balance of challenges and skills:

. . .a soccer game I played back in 1977 [in which] I had my only hat trick [three goals in one game].
. . .from that standpoint [I felt] a tremendous amount of peace and lack of pressure. In the soccer game everything just went right. It was one of those days where everything I did seemed to work. (S5)

2. The professional athletes interviewed also reported personal accounts of their exalted experiences of possession by the Holy Spirit. Features of the mystical experience such as the inability to express the experience, the new knowledge imparted, transiency, and the feeling of being acted on by a superior power were reported by a baseball player:

I know that I was real emotional and it was real. I go [sic] seriously numb and like all of a sudden I prayed to receive Christ because I knew it was what I needed to do. It was like a ton of bricks was lifted off of [sic] me and I just jumped up and I was a new man. It was serious, it was conversionary. . . It doesn't happen often, but it does happen. (S4)

The feelings evoked in the mind of the individual experiencing the transcendent power are sometimes awesome and overpowering as if one were submerged in something far greater than oneself, as reported by a professional swimmer:

I felt the best I had ever felt in my entire life. I was manipulating the water the best I had done in my life. I felt a surging forward. I felt as though I

was overpowering it. . .Everything was great. I felt at home in the water more than anywhere else. (S6)

Discussion

The professional athletes offered descriptions of flow which supported Csikszentmihalyi's definition of flow. The terminology was often similar as descriptions of flow and the Holy Spirit experiences were discussed. The enjoyment and the overall good feelings were characteristics in both experiences most prominently found in the research. There were also some reports of their inability to express their feelings, the sense of overpoweringness as if one was submerged in something greater than oneself, and the feeling of being acted on by a superior power.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

In order to understand the similarities and differences involved in the ecstatic moment while participating in sport, were any or all of the following components of flow described by professional athletes during the altered experiential state associated with sporting activities and the exalted state associated with Christian practices: (a) they were involved in a challenging activity that requires skills, (b) there was a merging of action and awareness, (c) they had clear goals and feedback, (d) they felt a sense of

control or were not worried about losing control, (e) they sensed a loss of self-consciousness, egolessness, (f) there was a transformation of time, and (g) the combination of all these elements caused a sense of deep enjoyment that is so rewarding that they would expend a great deal of energy simply to be able to feel it. It was an autotelic experience, an end in itself.

Professional athletes' personal accounts of ecstatic moments during sport flow and the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit were examined to determine the existence or nonexistence of Csikszentmihalyi's eight components. Placing statements from the two experiential states side by side allowed the researcher to clarify the similarities and differences of the reported ecstatic moments.

(a) Challenging activity that requires skills

(1) Professional athletes reported that the flow experience was entered when they were involved in a challenging activity that requires skills:

As far as individual performance, I have to say going up against someone who is considered a big-time player [takes me into flow]. [When I compete against] a future Hall of Famer and doing well against a player like that. . . . I reach a different point [flow] when the competitiveness reaches a different level. If the team is doing great, then, I think it [flow] just automatically rises. (S2)

Successfully meeting the challenges of the superstars competition, which matches the best players of each sport, was a flow experience for this winning professional athlete:

The initial superstars competition that was on ABC television and was viewed by 40 or 50 million people. It featured. . . .a Hall of Fame list of stars. I was competing against [stars] such as O. J. Simpson, Lynn Swann, Pete Rose, Carl Yastrimski, Jim Palmer, Franco Harris, and so on. (S5)

A professional football player described the situation where the challenges and the required skills come together this way:

Over the last 11 years in the pros I have made some observations. . .I don't think it matters who your opponent is, although it has seemed to come to me when I've needed it the most. It has seemed to come to me in a moment of need, when the competition is the stiffest, when there is the most on the line. It doesn't seem that you get those kind of performances when you don't have to have them. (S1)

(2) Another professional athlete reported his exalted experience of possession by the Holy Spirit, noting that the challenges were met not by him but through him.

[It was] before the world championship, and I'm saying a prayer, saying "thank You." I was empowered. He was there. I did not know if I was going to win, but I knew that Gross [East German world record holder] was going to respect me after the race. I felt the feeling and it was an amazing afternoon for me. . . It is a few seconds, but it is there. It is someone else, it is not you. (S6)

Another case where a professional athlete reported rising to the occasion when the challenges were exceptionally great is presented below. This professional soccer player gave attribution to a transcendent power during his rare state of exalted consciousness in sport:

The Spirit blows where It will and [is] not subject to being captured and certainly not used for man's glory. (S5)

There are challenges that one must overcome as one seeks the transcendent power which James (1985) eluded to in his universal features of saintliness. Developing skills by reading the Bible, listening to spiritual leaders, and singing praises are but a few of the methods of spiritual formation mentioned which are useful in overcoming the challenges of leading a Christian life.

(b) Merging of action and awareness

(1) According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), during the flow experience all of a person's energy and attention is completely absorbed by the activity. Individuals act with spontaneity and instinct such as described by this professional football player:

In 1987 we played the Washington Redskins at Washington for the N.F.C. championship game. My assignment that day was to block Charles Mann. . .when it came time to play the game. . .no matter what else was going on in the game, it was Charles Mann and me locked into a set apart world. Nothing else mattered. . .I was at least emotionally isolated from the rest of the game. I wasn't affected by the crowd and I wasn't affected by the noise. It was like we were watching it [the game] from the outside. . . (S1)

An individual experiencing flow is voluntarily putting forth the best he or she has to offer in a fully disciplined, totally fluid, and seemingly effortless movement. This professional baseball player described the whole experience this way:

. . .there is nothing outside of my mind [except] the mitt of the catcher. I know a hitter is up there but I am not really concentrating on him. I have to have complete confidence in who I am, what I am doing,

because if I have any other distractions with that, I can't be totally focused inside myself. (S4)

(2) Individuals who have had an exalted experience in the Holy Spirit reported a new personal energy which equipped them to fully concentrate on an activity. This professional football player described being in prayer about a personal tragedy and the subsequent merging of his total being when he received an answer from the Holy Spirit.

Completely, unequivocally, at peace with myself. There's no turmoil left. There's no pressure. There's no right. There's no wrong. There's just you. You are running faster than you've ever run. Your knees are hitting you in your chest, but you don't remember putting any extra effort into it. (S1)

The merging of the awareness and the activity allows one to develop a sense of purpose and direction as was described by this professional baseball player:

I felt like everything was erratic and in disarray. [Then], I came to know the Lord and everything fit together. And I had a purpose and I had a new peace. I explain the peace like a calmness and an understanding of where I am going. (S4)

This is similar to the awareness or ecstatic state experienced by the disciples at Pentecost in Acts 2:1-13 found in Chapter II on page 55 of this research. They were assembled to await further instructions as directed by Christ when a spiritual phenomenon issued forth joyful ecstasy and miracle-working power. The presence of the Holy Spirit brought new purpose to their lives.

(c) Clear goals and feedback

(1) Individuals who establish goals to be achieved and learn how to assess the value of the information they receive as feedback are more apt to enter flow:

If I've gone through the first inning and the second inning pretty smoothly, I am starting to get in that groove. I am starting to get within myself and say all right, I am in it. (S4)

Feedback information may be in the form of personal statistics or the expression of human emotion such as reassurance and positive reinforcement as described by this professional football player:

The confidence came when I made a few good plays. They started coming to me and saying you just keep playing like that. When you respect yourself and then you get the respect of others it makes you feel good. You can always enjoy a pat on the back. (S3)

(2) Feedback is an integral part of the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit and comes through the inspiration felt by the adherent. There is new self-knowledge and personal growth. This feedback is congruent with what has previously been defined as community building. The importance of feedback was reported by a professional swimmer as he described the support group which helped him to meet his goals:

I think the most important thing that you can have in your life is someone who is inspiring. And I have three: an academic coach, an athletic coach, and an inspirational coach. You will have people who daily break you down and always want to see you fail. . . That is the reason we ought to surround ourselves with people who will inspire and stimulate us. (S6)

This seems similar to the central thrust of 1 Corinthians Chapter 13:4-7 reviewed in Chapter II on page 58 of this research where Paul said that two of the main effects of possession by the Holy Spirit were better decisions and community building through love. These verses can be seen as a description of an ideal support group, composed of individuals who do "not seek [their] own advantage, [are] not irritable, [and keep] no score of wrongs." (Fee, 1987, p. 629). These individuals take the positive approach, as they work together to develop a communal spirit. For a community to prosper, a critical mass of people must set community goals, exact methods for achieving those goals, and work together for their completion.

(d) Concentration on the task at hand

(1) Individuals who enter the flow experience have a more ordered consciousness and an increase of psychic energy. The mundane worries and anxieties of the everyday world are precluded by an intense focus on the activity at hand as noted by two professional football players:

I think from the time the game started until it was over I was totally consumed by the task at hand. Nothing else entered my mind. No other distractions. I don't ever recall hearing the fans. I just recall being totally into the game. (S1)

I think once you get into [flow], the intense feeling overcomes the nervousness and you get at ease. Your mind gets at ease, [concentrated] but your body is still intense [and energized]. (S2)

(2) The exalted experience of possession by the Holy Spirit invokes an ecstatic moment filled with mental clarity

and focus on life's true meaning, coupled with a sense of complete safety. These features can be observed in this professional football player's statement:

It was like a four hundred pound bench press was moved off me. It would be almost supernatural. It gives you a whole lot of inner strength and confidence. [One is] more clear, mentally, and focused. And nothing can touch you. (S3)

(e) The paradox of control

(1) Individuals have reported a sense of being in control while in the flow experiences. Also, they have reported a lack of worry about losing control, which is a common aspect of life (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 59). In some flow experiences, the sense of control is dominant in the mind of the individual as he or she knows that they will have perfect execution. This is illustrated by the remarks of a professional baseball player:

I know what I need to do. Boom. I throw that first pitch, first strike. . .I start talking to myself. I know exactly what I need to do. It's like my body just does it, and my fast ball, I can throw it hard, I can throw it easy. . .it's just like I can do ten different things, and I am putting it. . .in those locations. (S4)

Correspondingly, the willingness to relinquish all control becomes paramount as the individual feels something greater than himself in control. In the popular parlance of those who have experienced such a flow experience, they "stay in the moment." Paradoxically, when one tries to resume control after willingly giving it up, the loss of flow occurs. For example, this professional soccer player

reported being in flow, but lost it as he began having self-aggrandizing thoughts:

It only lasted the first half. . . . I had such a remarkable half athletically. . . . because I scored three goals in the first half. [But then something happened to break the flow.] In retrospect, I probably knocked myself out of whatever zone I was in. I wanted to score a fourth goal. . . . My goal was [no longer] to be a servant teammate and to win the game. . . . [That] broke [the] focus for me. (S5)

(2) In the exalted experience of possession of the Holy Spirit, James (1985) described a "friendly continuity of the ideal power with our own life, and a willing self-surrender to its control (pp. 219-220). Otto (1923; 1957) described a "feeling of one's own submergence into something far greater than oneself" (p. 21). The loss of a sense of control occurs when one willingly commits oneself to the transcendent power. This sense of being part of something greater that is in control was described by a professional football player:

I know that through genetics or through the master plan, we've all been given different temperaments, talents, communication, and abilities. I do think sometimes that there is a force somehow in the universe that makes you excel [in] those abilities at certain times that you can't at others. (S1)

In Acts 2:13, as reviewed in Chapter II, page 56 of this research the disciples came into the dynamics of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Some were empowered for special service, but all received the power to witness. The exalted state of consciousness is similar in scope as

that described by the professional baseball player as follows:

. . .it's kind of like the sprinter's lane [going in one direction]. It's like that with the Holy Spirit as it builds you or as Christ takes control of your life. All of the sudden you [lose control as to where you are going], but you know that its in that one lane. You know that you are being obedient by reading God's Word, [practicing] forgiveness and confessing of your sins. That's obedience to God. While you're in that one lane and no matter where you are going, you know you are going one way. (S4)

(f) The loss of self-consciousness

(1) In today's success-oriented society, much attention is placed on self-promotion. When psychic energy is absorbed to maintain the status quo, there is little opportunity for further growth. Oftentimes individuals are unwilling to try something new or difficult because they feel inadequate to the task, or they fear appearing ridiculous to others. This self-consciousness foils the flow experience because it is difficult to get beyond our own threshold of self-preoccupation. But when we become comfortable with the environment to the extent that we unite with it and the concentration on the task replaces our concern for approval, acceptance, or whatever, then, there is opportunity for flow. As a result of this loss of consciousness of self, another paradox emerges, namely, a stronger self emerges following the flow experience. A professional football player reported his realization of a

stronger self after having two excellent performances in which he achieved flow:

I think there were [life-changing effects] from both performances. . . . Knowing that I could go out and excel with the best. . . . It's like a soldier going to war for the first time. He's a whole better soldier after he's had a couple of battles behind him. [Entering flow] gave me a certain toughness that I would not have had had I not been able to compete at this level [of competition]. (S1)

(2) James (1985) described a "melt down" of the self during the conversion experience leading to saintly character. Self-seeking behaviors are abandoned with a resultant altruistic point of view (Ch. 2, p. 47). Otto (1923; 1957) also discussed this phenomenon, defining it as "the rejecting the delusions of self-hood" leading to the annihilation of self (p. 21). John Wesley (1964) explored the loss of self-importance in his exegesis on the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit. This phenomenon can be found in this report by a professional soccer player:

I go into a game and I want to win and score goals. But I don't have a fear of losing because my identity is not wrapped up in athletics. I'm . . . the child of God who happens to have played soccer for part of his life. . . . [With] a core identity in Christ I don't have to win to be significant. I'm significant because of what God has done. If I win, I don't think more of myself than I should. And if I lose, I'm reminded of Col. 3:23 [which says] "whatever you do, do it with all your heart as unto God, rather than unto man." Did I play for God? (S5)

Some individuals who have experienced flow describe a perfected state whereby the "concern for the self disappears and the sense of self emerges stronger after the flow experience is over" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 49). James

(1985) labelled this feature as "noesis" or a feeling that the event imparts a state of knowledge. The "gifts of the Spirit" found in 1 Corinthians Chapter 12:7-10 included wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, discernment of spirits (Ch. 2, p. 57) and are all forms of noesis through the exalted power of the Holy Spirit.

(g) The transformation of time

(1) During the flow experience, many individuals have reported that time moves at a much faster pace, but, some have reported feelings of being in "slow motion." In the majority of flow experiences, freedom from a sense of time constraints were reported, enhancing the positive aspects of the experience. A professional swimmer described time-altering episodes at both extremes as the flow experience extended into hours. Noting a speeding up of time during the activity, the swimmer reported entering a slow motion feeling-state as he learned of his world-record-breaking performance.

After the first lap, it seemed just a few moments. It happened in a few moments. . . .Then as I blew by him, I felt this incredible power. Before the race. . . .I felt a tingling but afterwards, I felt light-headed. Like a high. If you asked me what I said, I could not tell you. I saw bright lights. It felt almost like slow motion. Like a dream. (S6)

(2) In the exalted experience, one becomes unified with a transcendent power which may be fleeting or ephemeral. James (1985), in his four marks of mysticism (Ch. 2, p. 48), discussed feelings of transiency. The moment may not be

sustained long except in rare instances, but may be looked back upon as a landmark of memory. A professional soccer player described this sense of being one with the Holy Spirit in which consciousness of the passage of time disappeared:

In Austin, Texas I got carried away and lost in God's Spirit and I did not want that moment to stop. I wanted it to go on for days and days. I thought this must be what heaven is like. It was a church service and we were singing some neat little praise songs and I really felt comforted. He touched me and I could not tell you how long the service went on. It was a lot longer than I thought. (S5)

(h) The autotelic experience

(1) Enjoyable activities are gratifying and individuals seek them in order to achieve the feeling states described above. The flow experience is intrinsically rewarding which causes those who have achieved it to center on doing it again and again. It is an end in itself (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 67). Flow or the autotelic experience adds a special dimension of enjoyment to the routine of life, lifting it to a higher level. James (1985) defined this plateau as the "personal center of energy" or the group of ideas to which one devotes oneself. Extrinsic rewards, oddly enough, will not produce flow experiences and may distract the moment if thoughts of external rewards break into the threshold of awareness. This point was clearly made by a professional swimmer:

You can't swim for money [\$100,000 for the world record]. Isn't that funny. Money doesn't motivate you. Money is not the high. I am a living example. I had

the world record and all I had to do was do it again. And it did not happen. The best times you ever have is when you use emotion. Emotion is everything. It enables us to swim beyond our limits completely on what we feel ourselves doing. (S6)

(2) Trying to approach the character of Christ in one's own life is at least part of the reason Christians seek an exalted experience of possession by the transcendent power. The phenomenology of the autotelic experience has been reported as reinforcing the self, giving one a sense of control, increasing the psychic energy, and giving meaning and a sense of joy to one's life (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 69). The flow experience itself was reason enough for many athletes to concentrate and focus in an effort to recreate the feeling state. Believers also go through spiritual rituals in order to achieve the exalted state of consciousness. A professional soccer player described his effort to create the autotelic experience through a pattern of spiritual rituals:

Winning is achieving that state where you are satisfied with what happened. . . . So it starts six months ahead of time with the rituals, writing them down, saying them aloud. It starts each day in workouts. Working on one specific thing as you get closer to competition, spending not five minutes a day, but ten minutes up until the moment. It is building. (S6)

Discussion

Professional athletes reported that there were similarities between the flow experience and the exalted experience of possession by the Holy Spirit. The

similarities included feelings of ecstasy and euphoria, a merging of action and awareness, setting clear goals and receiving feedback, being focused in a wider feeling state, losing self-consciousness, and feeling that time was altered. This professional athlete reported "a very strange phenomenon the night before the game" that he documented with his coach before the game began:

I had a dream that I scored a touchdown. . . I could see the ball turning end over end in the air and falling into my hands and running with it to the goal line. It was extremely unusual because I was a middle guard on defense at the time. . . . [The next day] I ran sixty-five yards for a touchdown exactly as it appeared in my dream. It is documented on record. I told [my coach] about it, the day before, about the dream. . . . It was certainly a euphoric feeling running down the field. . . . It was almost like everything else stood still. You could hear the roar of the crowd but there was really nothing happening outside of myself. I was running down the field but it was almost like I was unconscious. (S1)

Differences were also reported by those who have been involved in the ecstatic moment while participating in sport and the exalted experience with the transcendent power or the Holy Spirit. Those who reported feeling the Holy Spirit involved during challenging events stated that success did not come by their skills but was performed through them by the transcendent power. Finally, the autotelic experience was something that all mentioned during flow as the components combine to create an experience of extreme joy. The joy was so great that the autotelic experience was sought after time again. It was referred to as "an end in itself" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 67). However, none felt

that the exalted experience with the transcendent power was pursued as an end in itself.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

What events or triggers lead to flow in sport or the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit in Christianity?

Part 1: Events or triggers leading to flow in sport.

Professional athletes reported being in flow and noted that specific events or triggers promote entry into the experience. Jackson (1992) identified five general dimensions which were perceived by elite skaters as the most important factors for getting into flow as follows: (1) Positive Mental Attitude; (2) Positive Pre-Competitive and Competitive Affect; (3) Maintaining Appropriate Focus; (4) Physical Readiness; and (5) Unity with Partner (p. 170). Since this study included individuals who played team sports, the fifth general dimension was labelled as Unitive State. The unitive state featured a unifying nature of the heightened performance within the individual and also with the teammates.

The professional athletes interviewed in this study provided much information regarding triggers leading to their entry into flow in sport and the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit in Christianity. The questions were posed

in order to recreate the situation for the professional athletes and to encourage reflections.

First, through inductive procedure, the professional athletes' quotes were analyzed and grouped into specific raw data themes according to their response to the research question regarding triggers enhancing flow in sport. This inductive procedure was used by Jackson (1992) and used by this researcher in the same manner. The specific raw data themes were grouped into the more common higher order themes which were then placed in the five general dimensions as identified by Jackson (1992).

Second, through inductive procedure, the professional athletes' quotes were analyzed and grouped into specific raw data themes. They were categorized according to their response to the research question regarding triggers which led to an exalted experience in the Holy Spirit. The two-step procedure was again followed in that the specific raw data themes were grouped into the more usual higher order themes and then placed in the five general dimensions as follows: (1) Positive Mental Attitude; (2) Maintaining Appropriate Focus; (3) Positive Pre-Competitive and Competitive Affect (4) Physical Readiness; and (5) Unitive State.

Appendix D displays the higher order themes and five general dimensions regarding triggers perceived by professional athletes to be most important for entering flow

as found by this researcher. The five general dimensions are in close alignment with Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) eight components of flow. The raw data themes which emerged from this research were somewhat different, but were amenable to the higher order themes and general dimensions identified by Jackson (1992).

Positive Mental Attitude

This research identified three higher-order themes under the general dimension of positive mental attitude: (1) confidence, (2) positive thinking, and (3) high motivation to do well. All six of the professional athletes interviewed by the investigator mentioned these higher order themes. Nine raw data themes which combined to form the Positive Mental Attitude dimension. Three of the raw data themes were grouped into the higher order themes about being confident were as follows: (a) confidence, (b) total belief, (c) self-belief. The second higher order theme of positive thinking involved three raw data themes: (a) being positive with self, (b) positive self-talk, and (c) focusing on strengths. The last higher order theme was about high motivation to do well and included three raw data themes: (a) high motivation, (b) pure genuine desire to do well, and (c) feeling that nothing is going to stop you from getting what you want.

The following quote from a professional swimmer recognizes that motivation comes from within through

positive thinking, but goes further to observe that external forces may affect internal well-being:

I think the most important thing that you can have in your life is someone who is inspiring. And I have three: an academic coach, an athletic coach, and an inspirational coach. . . . Because ideally we all want to progress and we all want to be much better. But what are we? We are our thoughts. (S6)

A professional swimmer went on to speak about cognitive restructuring as he described programming his mind through positive self-talk:

What I do is I wake up in the morning and I have a little board on my refrigerator and I write down what I want to do specifically. My goal times. . . . For this race I was eleven one-hundredths off. That close. I read a lot of motivation books. (S6)

A professional football player also observed the importance of external motivation or inspiration from fellow teammates:

The confidence came when I made a few good plays. They started coming to me and saying 'you just keep playing like that.' When you respect yourself, and then you get the respect of others, it makes you feel good. You can always enjoy a pat on the back. (S3)

Positive Pre-Competitive and Competitive Affect

Jackson (1992) identified eight raw data themes and three higher order themes for the general dimension of positive pre-competitive and competitive affect. In the higher order theme of relaxation, Jackson listed three raw data themes: (a) being relaxed, (b) feeling calm, and (c) being relaxed, but being on edge at the same time. The second higher order theme Jackson identified was controlling anxiety and three raw data themes were listed: (a)

controlling nerves, (b) controlling nervousness and turning it into energy, and (c) having good stress coping skills. The third higher order theme identified was enjoying what you are doing and two raw data themes were presented: (a) believing in/liking your program and (b) enjoying what you are doing.

This research followed the same procedure and identified three higher order themes and twelve raw data themes under the general dimension of Positive Pre-Competitive and Competitive Affect.

In the higher order theme of relaxation, five raw data themes were identified by professional athletes: (a) being at peace, (b) feeling calm, (c) being relaxed, (d) nervous, but at ease, (e) relaxed but pumped up.

Three professional athletes reported feeling at peace as was exemplified by the remarks of this professional soccer player:

. . .a tremendous amount of peace and lack of pressure. In the soccer game everything just went right. It was one of those days where everything I did seemed to work. (S5)

The second higher order theme under the general dimension of Positive Pre-Competitive and Competitive Affect was that of being able to control anxiety. Four raw data themes emerged in this research: (a) controlling nerves, (b) not allowing the crowd to make one nervous, (c) absorbing energy from the crowd, and (d) coping with stress.

Where Jackson's (1992) research observed apathy from the crowd, this research dealt with team sports and the respondents often made mention of the negative affect from the crowd on the event. Three noted that the crowd had the potential to make one nervous. Two reported absorbing energy and excitement from the spectators who then were forgotten during the flow experience.

It was almost like everything else stood still. You could hear the roar of the crowd but there was really nothing happening outside of myself. I was running down the field, but it was almost like I was unconscious. (S1)

The third higher order theme was enjoying what your are doing and this research identified three raw data themes: (a) overall good feeling about what you are doing, (b) experiencing ecstatic feelings and satisfaction in the performance, and (c) feeling elation and new energy.

Four of the professional athletes reported experiencing a new energy during flow. A professional swimmer described the enjoyment he experienced while in flow bringing him good feelings and new energy:

And when you are in rhythm, you are in a groove, and you feel fantastic. Well, I felt the best I had ever felt in my entire life. I was manipulating the water the best I had done in my life. I felt a surging forward. I felt as though I was overpowering it. (S6)

Maintaining Appropriate Focus

In the general dimension of Maintaining Appropriate Focus, Jackson (1992) did not identify any higher order themes. She did identify eight raw data themes concerning

maintaining a narrow focus: (a) focus, (b) balance between total focus and total release, (c) very narrow focus, (d) staying in the present, (e) focusing on key points in program, (f) being able to focus before performance, (g) not getting ahead of self, and (h) taking time on each thing you do.

This research identified two higher order themes: (1) pre-event focus and concentration and (2) competitive focus and concentration. In the higher order theme of pre-event focus and concentration, two raw data themes emerged: (a) focus and (b) concentration. The remarks of a professional football player highlight the value placed on pre-event focus and concentration when a big game is forthcoming:

. . .the whole week before the game I focused all of my emotions and mind on my job at hand. . . . when it came time to play the game on Sunday. . . . it was [opponent] and me locked into a set apart world. Nothing else mattered. (S1)

The second higher order theme emerging from this research competitive focus and concentration which was also dealt with in the previous quote by the professional football player. The raw data themes which emerged from this research were: (a) balance between total focus and total release, (b) maximizing abilities in a focused manner, (c) merging of focus and awareness, and (d) staying in the present. A second football player observed the importance of competitive focus and concentration as follows:

A lot of people say, 'watch just one thing,' but when I'm focused I see everything around me. I don't try to

block out everything because I'm still aware of the things around, but I'm focused. (S2)

Physical Readiness

Jackson (1992) did not identify any higher order themes for the general dimension of physical readiness but did list five raw data themes as follows: (a) being well trained, (b) hard work, (c) being physically ready, (4) being well prepared, and (d) having good practice sessions before competition.

This researcher identified three higher order themes under the general dimension of physical readiness: (1) trained and prepared, (2) free of injury, and (3) physical rituals. In the higher order theme of trained and well prepared, three raw data themes emerged: (a) being well trained, (b) being well prepared, (c) having good practice sessions before competition. A professional soccer player observed the importance of being trained and prepared:

. . . one of the goals I scored was . . . the result of about four years of practicing one move. And in a game, I finally had a chance to try the move and it worked. (S5)

The second higher order theme which emerged was being free of injury. Three professional athletes reported the ability to enter flow was enhanced if they were free of injury. Thus, the raw data theme that emerged was not having any pain. A professional baseball player described the theme this way:

And it's almost like the body doesn't feel, . . . I don't worry if there is not a twinge in my arm, [or] in

my leg. It's just O.K. They call a fastball, so I am going to throw it. I am going to just relax and then boom. I am real aggressive. (S4)

The third higher order theme found in this research was physical rituals. Three professional athletes reported following a specific pattern prior to the event in terms of what they did, they ate, or they wore. The professional swimmer was most precise for as much as six months before the event:

So it starts six months ahead of time with the rituals. Writing them [statistics to be accomplished] down, saying them aloud. It starts each day in workouts. Working on one specific thing. And as you get closer to the competition, spending not five minutes a day, but ten minutes, up until the moment. It is building. (S6)

Unitive State

Jackson (1992) did not identify any higher order themes under the general dimension of Partner Unity. She did identify two rare data themes as follows: (a) partner unity and (b) being as one with partner. This research identified two higher order themes which were as follows: (1) community building and (2) perfection.

In the higher order theme of community building, three raw data themes emerged: (a) unity of the self, (b) bonding with teammates and (c) bonding with coaches.

Augustine (Bourke, 1974) discussed community of the mind in terms of three concerns: memory, understanding and will. In other words, taking the information one has

committed to memory, through understanding, may put it to use through the will to do so.

A professional baseball player described the unity of self and the bond with a teammate in the following quote:

. . .but it just kind of [reaches] a point where there is nothing outside of my mind, the mitt, or the catcher. I know a hitter is up there, but I am not really concentrating on him. (S4)

The second higher order theme under the general dimension unitive state is perfection. Four raw data themes emerged from the research: (a) feeling loss of consciousness, (b) feeling in the groove, (c) being in rhythm, and (d) feeling in flow. John Wesley (Outler, 1964) described the stages of perfection which are direct result of application. A professional swimmer described the act of unattainable perfection as he related a conversation between him and his roommate who had broken the world record the day before his own record-breaking performance:

After the race we sat up all night long and talked. We would go ten to fifteen minutes without saying a word and then I would say 'did you feel this way?' I would say I dozed that night but I would get up and go look in the mirror and say, 'the best in history.' (S6)

Part 2: Events or triggers leading to the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit in Christianity.

Professional athletes reported having been involved in exalted experiences of the Holy Spirit. The general dimensions identified by Jackson (1992) as the most important factors for getting into flow were useful in analyzing the professional athletes' reflections regarding

their exalted experiences of the Holy Spirit. The five general dimensions are as follows: (1) Positive Mental Attitude; (2) Maintaining appropriate focus; (3) Positive Pre-Competitive and Competitive Affect (4) Physical Readiness; and (5) Unitive State.

Through inductive procedure, the professional athletes' quotes were analyzed and grouped into specific raw data themes according to their response to the research question regarding triggers enhancing the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit in Christianity. The specific raw data themes were grouped into the more common higher order themes which were then placed in the five general dimensions as identified by Jackson (1992).

Appendix D displays the triggers perceived by professional athletes to be most important for an exalted experience in the Holy Spirit.

Positive Mental Attitude

Jackson's (1992) research listed three higher order themes under the general dimension of positive mental attitude which were perceived to be most important for elite skaters to enter flow. The three higher order themes were: (1) confidence, (2) positive thinking, and (3) high motivation to do well. These three higher order themes again emerged as professional athletes interviewed by this researcher inquired regarding triggers or events perceived to be most important for an exalted experience of the Holy

Spirit within Christianity. From the professional athletes' reports, ten raw data themes resulted and were grouped under the three higher order themes through inductive procedure. Four raw data themes were grouped into the higher order theme about confidence. These were: (a) faith, (b) obedience, (c) identity in Christ, and (d) self-belief. This professional football player's remarks highlight the importance of feeling confident in oneself while holding an abiding faith in Christ:

It was like a four hundred pound bench press was moved off me. It would be almost super-natural. It gives you a whole lot of inner strength and confidence. . . . And nothing can touch you. (S3)

The following quote from a baseball player captures both the confidence and obedience aspects that come from the Holy Spirit:

But when you add the third component and the final one which is spiritual--the obedience to God. Then, you can be the best you can be. We can be the best athletes of anybody because we have peace and confidence. No matter what we do on the field, we still have those. (S4)

The second higher order theme under the general dimension of positive mental attitude is positive thinking. Two raw data themes emerged as follows: (a) positive self-talk and (b) spiritual formation. The following quote accents the importance of spiritual formation which comes through not only positive self-talk, but spiritual rituals:

One of the ministers that I listen to is Robert Schuler. He had a sermon based on this verse, Matthew 17:20: 'If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, be removed, and it

shall move and nothing will be impossible to you.' I actually watch the show with my mentor, seventy-six years old. He is not a swimmer, but the principles are still there. So later he wrote me a letter and he included this verse and it stuck with me. So I wrote it down and stuck it on my wall. But this was not enough. So I tore it down and started writing it every day. That nothing is impossible. I believe this. (S6)

The third higher order theme emerging from this general dimension was high motivation to do well. Four raw data themes loomed as follows: (a) internal motivation, (b) motivation through reading, such as the Bible, commentaries, and other books, (c) music, and (d) prayer. The following quote from a professional soccer player emphasizes the importance of a positive frame of reference in every aspect of life which is enhanced by reading the Bible and doing one's best.

Well, the Bible I read promises trials and tribulations. It does not promise championships. What it says is, 'trophies will rust and moth, and thieves will break in and steal them.' You set up for you trophies of faith, they will last forever. But, trophies of the flesh are perishable. . . . We sometimes give the wrong impression in that we glorify God in our successes. Yet we are to glorify God as much in our failures as our successes. (S5)

The trigger of music was also discussed by the same professional soccer player as a way of entering an exalted experience of the Holy Spirit:

. . . in this case. . . I felt like music [and] for me, I'm not a big musical guy. . . the singing praises, much like probably what Orel Hershisser's gone through. You know on the bench singing praises a lot. . . (S5)

A professional baseball player described the importance of prayer as a factor in being motivated.

. . . I pray for calmness and I pray for accuracy and I pray for confidence that will allow me to do my best and glorify Him. So in those instances, I'd say that the Holy Spirit was working to help me to throw strikes because I know I can't control the outcome of what the batter does, but I can control what I do or how I throw the ball. (S4)

Positive Pre-Competitive and Competitive Affect

In the second general dimension, three higher order themes emerged as follows: (1) peace, (2) controlling anxiety, and (3) ecstasy. A total of eight raw data themes appeared and were presented under the higher order themes. Three raw data themes under the higher order theme of peace were as follows: (a) being at peace, (b) feeling calm, and (c) feeling secure.

The comments of this professional football player describe the feature of peace which comes about through an exalted experience of the Holy Spirit:

Completely, unequivocally, at peace with myself. There's no turmoil left. There's no pressure. There's no right. There's no wrong. There's just you. You are running faster than you've ever run. Your knees are hitting you up in your chest, but you don't remember putting any extra effort into it. (S1)

The second higher order theme that appeared under this general dimension was controlling anxiety. Two raw data themes were included as follows: (a) allowing the Holy Spirit to blockout distractions and (b) dedication of the performance to God.

The remarks of this professional football player embody what James (1985) referred to as the "something there" experience and Otto (1923, 1957) described as the "wholly

other". In his words, the Holy Spirit helped him center on the task at hand and avoid distractions:

I think from the time the game started until it was over, I was totally consumed by the task at hand. Nothing else entered my mind. No other distractions. I don't ever recall hearing the fans. I just recall being totally into the game. On that last play, the game was decided not on my play and not on his play. It was decided by something completely away from us. We both turned and looked and it was like, 'yea, there's something going on out here, too, besides us.' (S1)

Dedication of the performance to God was the way this professional soccer player entered an exalted experience of the Holy Spirit:

See my goal was not to win or lose, but to do the best I could and to honor God whether I finished first or last. . . . So my goal was to go in there and do all I could with the God-given talent that I had. . . . My goal was not the money or the championship. . . . The goal is to honor God in whatever I am doing, in my relations and everything else. (S5)

The third higher order theme which developed in the general dimension of positive pre-competitive and competitive affect was ecstasy. Three raw data themes emerged as follows: (a) overall good feeling about what you are doing, (b) intensity experience and (c) new energy.

Ecstatic feelings were reported by all of the professional athletes and their descriptions paralleled that provided by Laski (1962) as intensity experiences. Laski observed that three noteworthy characteristics were attached: (1) revelation, which involves a continuing and often expanding focus of value in the trigger; (2) conversion, which Laski used "to refer only to substantial

and lasting improvements in outlook and personality" (p. 289); and (3) inspiration, which does not necessarily change the personality, but on some scale, does "effect a change from a self 'hitherto divided' to a self unified" (p. 292).

The following quote from a professional soccer player gives insight regarding the nature of the intensity experience:

For me, it is a kind of warming. And I also get an almost kind of shivering when I'm really all right before God. . . . In Austin, Texas, I got carried away and lost in God's Spirit and I did not want that moment to stop. I wanted it to go on for days and days. I thought this must be what heaven is like. (S5)

The conversionary feature of the intensity experience was described by this professional baseball player:

I know that I was real emotional and it was real. I got seriously numb and like all of a sudden, I prayed to receive Christ because I knew it was what I needed to do. It was like a ton of bricks were lifted off of me and I just like jumped up and it was, I. . . . was a new man. . . . it was a conversionary [experience]. (S4)

These intensity experiences mentioned by the professional athletes coincided with the ecstatic experiences of the Christians on the day of Pentecost found in Acts 2:1-13.

Maintaining Appropriate Focus

Two higher order themes arose in this research regarding the general dimension of maintaining appropriate focus as follows: (1) pre-event focus and concentration and (2) competitive focus and concentration. In the higher order theme of pre-event focus and concentration, two raw

data themes emerged: (a) focus and (b) concentration. The remarks of a professional swimmer indicate the building of focus and concentration prior to the event:

I was sitting in the waiting room for ten minutes before the race. Then, they line you up and I thought to myself, 'what do I have to fear?' . . . I'm the second best in the world so what do I have to fear. . . And I said, 'I should be thankful because it is an honor to be here'. I had made the choice at that point, as much as it was an honor, I was thankful to be here. (S6)

In the higher order theme of competitive focus and concentration two raw data themes surfaced: (a) balance between total focus and total release, and (b) maximizing abilities. The following quote from a professional soccer player highlights the emphasis he placed on being focused in faith, not in the world:

But in the world of the Spirit, God does not call us to be people of fame, but people of faith. Therefore, it is tough to maintain that focus. . . . Few people would have tried to label me as one of the greatest athletes that our nation has ever produced. I would attribute it to being able to get close to, not perfectly, but close to maximizing whatever abilities I have in a focused manner. (S5)

Physical Readiness

The interviews of the professional athletes resulted in the emerging of four raw data themes which were grouped into three higher order themes: (1) preparation, (2) paradox of being injured, and (3) physical rituals. Two raw data themes emerged as follows: (a) being well prepared and (b) purpose-oriented.

The following quote captures the problems that may result from the lack of preparation and the lack of purpose:

. . . just a sense that I am not connected. Second, would be the lack of preparation. . . . if, I'm not physically right, if I have not trained and paid the dues [it is not a meaningful experience]. (S5)

The remarks of this professional baseball player indicates the value placed on spiritual purpose and direction:

And I had a purpose and I had a new peace. I explained the peace like a calmness and an understanding of where I am going. . . . it is kind of like the sprinter's lane that I explained in pitching. Well, it's kind of like that with the Holy Spirit as it builds you or as Christ takes control of your life. All of the sudden you know not always in what direction, but you know that it's in that one lane. (S4)

The second higher order theme which emerged was the paradox of being injured. Two raw data themes emerged from the research in a paradoxical way as follows: (a) no pain and (b) having pain. The quote from the same professional baseball player indicates both his need for physical readiness and the positive frame of mind he derives from the Holy Spirit as he seeks relief:

So I said, 'God if you really want me to finish out this year, you're going to have to take this pain out of my knees. . . . I couldn't even walk and it seemed from that point on, this thing [pain] was behind me, and I started pitching real well. My pain all went away and my season ended up pretty good. . . . And I think that God healed me. (S4)

The third higher order theme to be addressed was that of physical rituals. One raw data theme emerged: following rituals in preparing for the game or event. The idea of

preparing for competition through specific rituals which led to a positive state of "yes" which is described by a professional swimmer's comments is comparable to one of James's (1985) universal features of saintliness. James described "a shifting of the emotional center towards loving and harmonious affectations, towards an assured 'yes, yes,' and away from 'no' where the claims of the non-ego are concerned" (pp. 219-220). The professional swimmer's remarks were as follows:

We have the power to control everything in our lives. We control our future by what we do daily. By our rituals, by taking new steps, and programming our mind. . . . So it is "yes" you can do it and it is simple.
(S6)

Unitive State

In this general dimension, the research identified two higher order themes regarding triggers which lead to an exalted experience of the Holy Spirit in Christianity. The two higher order themes were: (1) community building and (2) perfection. Two raw data themes arose under the higher order theme of community building: (a) bonding with inspirational leaders and (b) spiritual bonding with teammates.

Augustine (Bourke, 1974) discussed the building of community as he described the unity within the Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. When one endeavors to commune with the Holy Spirit, one is seeking a bond or community with the transcendent power. In 1 Corinthians

Chapters 12-14, the Apostle Paul directed his followers to utilize their gifts of the Spirit for the good of all in an effort to build community or the first church. The statement illustrates how this professional swimmer realizes the importance of being a part of a strong community:

I think the most important thing that you can have in your life is someone who is inspiring. And I have three: an academic coach, an athletic coach, and an inspirational coach. You will have people who daily break you down and always want to see you fail. . . . That is the reason we ought to surround ourselves with people who will inspire and stimulate us. (S6)

The second higher order theme that emerged under the general dimension of unitive state was perfection. Two raw data themes emerged in the research: (a) unity with the transcendent power and (b) feelings of new love. Curiously, all six of the professional athletes interviewed indicated that they felt their contact with the transcendent power was something over which they had no control. Their role was to seek and wait on the Holy Spirit to act or not to act. Three of the six described feelings of new love and the desire to make the lives of other better once they had undergone the conversionary experience. John Wesley examined the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit (Outler, 1974). He defined the testimony of God's Spirit as that which creates an "inward impression. . . whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me. . . ." (Outler, 1974, p. 115).

Galatians 5:22-23 provided the list of the "fruit of the Spirit" as offered by the Apostle Paul which is a vital outgrowth of one trying to achieve the personality of Christ.

The following quote by a professional soccer player captures both the unity to be felt when in contact with the transcendent power and the feelings of love which generate:

But I don't have a fear of losing because my identity is not wrapped up in athletics. I'm [name of athlete], the child of God who happens to have played soccer for part of his life. But my part of things in the eternal scheme might be less significant in having played in front of 50 million on national t.v. . . . And so [I have] a core identity in Christ. I don't have to win to be significant. I'm significant because of what God has done. I'm significant because of the blood of Christ. If I win, I don't think more of myself than I should. And if I lose, I'm reminded of Col. 3:23 [which says] 'whatever you do, do it with all your heart as unto God, rather than unto man.' Did I play for God?

Discussion

Triggers or events which were perceived to enhance one's entry into flow and the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit centered on five general dimensions. All the professional athletes reported the importance of a positive mental attitude, mentioning the value of having confidence in oneself. This attitude is the product of positive thinking and all six mentioned the need for positive thinking. Four of the respondents noted that they restructure their thinking by self-talk. Unlike the confidence in oneself which triggers a flow experience,

triggers for a Holy Spirit experience involved confidence and faith in a transcendent power as being one of the most important. Four professional athletes noted that self-talk was an important factor for triggering flow. Three described self-talk as an important factor for entering an exalted experience. When athletes stated that they wrote biblical verses over and over or said them aloud several times a day as much as six months prior to a performance was labelled as spiritual formation. The third higher order theme was having a genuine desire or motivation to succeed. All six reported using some form of external motivation such as reading motivational books, having a motivational coach or mentor, and drawing off the support of teammates as triggers for entering flow. External motivation triggers for the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit included reading the Bible, commentaries, and music. Prayer was the most often mentioned trigger for creating a positive mental attitude and entering an exalted experience of the Holy Spirit.

In both experiences, the professional athletes described the need for a positive affective state before the event as well as during the event. The terminology from the flow experience to an exalted experience of the Holy Spirit was slightly different. For the flow experience, triggers included being relaxed, controlling anxiety, and enjoying what you are doing. Peace, controlling anxiety and enjoying

what you are doing were the triggers mentioned for entering an exalted experience of the Holy Spirit. In both experiences, ecstatic feelings were reported. Four professional athletes described feelings of elation and new energy.

In both experiences, the professional athletes noted the value of maintaining the appropriate focus both before and during the event. All of the professional athletes mentioned the need to be either focused or concentrated in both the flow and exalted experience of the Holy Spirit. Triggers for flow and the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit were basically the same under this general dimension. For the flow experience, two athletes reported the need to stay in the present which was not included for the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit.

In both experiences, professional athletes recognized the necessity to be physically ready. All reported the importance of being trained and prepared physically in order to enter flow. When the professional athletes were asked about triggers of the Holy Spirit, preparation was mentioned by all six as well. Three of the respondents mentioned that being free of pain was an important trigger of flow. Being freed of injury through prayer which removed or reduced pain, were also important triggers for an exalted experience of the Holy Spirit. Three noted the value of following specific physical rituals in preparation for the event such

as eating the same foods, arriving at the park at the same time, suiting up in the same manner, and going through the same warm-up routine. Three also reported performing rituals of a spiritual nature such as singing praises on the bench, listening to motivational speakers or mentor, writing a specific biblical verse many times a day for a length of time, or saying biblical verses to oneself over and over before and during a performance.

In both experiences, the unitive state appreciated. An undivided self and team affiliation were combined and perceived to be most important triggers for getting into flow. The unifying of the self and the bonding among teammates were viewed as triggers for the concept of community building and are applicable to both flow and the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit. The second higher order theme emerging in this general dimension was perfection as the respondents' quotes described feeling loss of consciousness, feeling in the groove, being in rhythm, and feeling the flow. The professional athletes used similar terminology as they described triggers for an exalted experience of the Holy Spirit when they reported unity with the transcendent power and feelings of new love.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4

What situational blocks or hindrances disrupt flow of sport and the Holy Spirit of Christianity?

Conversely, it is just as important to learn what intervening factors may preclude entry into flow or the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit. The inductive procedure applied to professional athletes' responses regarding triggers was again applied to their responses concerning blocks or hindrances of flow. The specific quotes or raw data themes were grouped into the more common higher order themes which were placed into four general dimensions comparably to those identified by Jackson (1992).
Part 1: Situations blocks or hindrances which disrupt flow in sport.

Through inductive analysis of the professional athletes' responses to the above question, four general dimensions were identified as the most important situational blocks or hindrances to disrupt flow as found in Appendix E. These four general dimensions were based on 17 raw data themes and three higher order themes. Drawing from the research of Jackson (1992) the following general dimensions were found by this researcher: (1) physical problems, (2) inability to maintain focus, (3) negative mental attitude, and (4) crowd distraction.

Physical Problems

In this general dimension, three raw data themes were identified as follows: (a) injury, (b) physically unprepared, and (c) fatigue. Two professional athletes reported that injury hampered their entry into flow and three stated that being physically unprepared disrupted flow. The following quote of a professional soccer player described the hindrances of not being physically prepared:

[A block to getting into flow] would be lack of preparation. . . . if I'm not physically right. If I have not trained and paid the dues. . . . I think [that] can torpedo [the] flow. (S5)

A professional football player offered the following regarding the need to be prepared:

As long as you are prepared, then you have the confidence. . . . to keep flowing. (S2)

Inability to Maintain Focus

Two higher order themes were identified under the general dimension of inability to maintain focus as follows: (1) losing concentration and (2) distractions or interruptions. In the higher order theme of losing concentration, professional athletes' responses were grouped into three raw data themes as follows: (a) losing concentration, (b) leaving the moment, and (c) lack of focus.

A professional baseball player addressed all three of the raw data themes in the first higher order theme by the

following description of factors which disrupt his flow experience:

. . . there is a change [from being in flow] because sometimes things distract me. If all of a sudden the best hitter in the league get's up [to bat], I'll start looking at him and I start thinking 'I've got to do something different.' Right there I'm taking my eyes off the mitt and what I need to do. I'm starting to think about him or if a man is on second, now [I think] I've got to pitch better because this guy is here. Plus, I'm looking back making sure he's not going. I'm averting my concentration because now I've got to keep him close and I've got to concentrate on the batter, keeping him from knocking him in. Plus, I've got to throw my game, so it's no longer just me in the groove. (S4)

Two professional athletes reported disruptions to flow occur when one loses concentration by leaving the moment. A professional soccer player described leaving the moment of flow as he considered a possible record-breaking performance:

In retrospect, I probably knocked myself out of whatever zone I was in. I wanted to score a fourth goal [in the first half]. . . . It broke that focus for me. (S5)

In the second higher order theme of distractions and interruptions, four raw data themes emerged from the professional athletes' responses: (a) distractions, (b) personal problems, (c) inability to calm down, and (d) being distracted by people before the performance. Various distractions were reported by the professional athletes. A professional football player described the inability to maintain focus because of personal problems as follows:

. . . the death of someone or something like that. It could block you from getting into flow. (S3)

The inability to relax or calm down was reported as a block to flow. A professional football player reported that his coach recognized the problems he was experiencing with blocks to flow as follows:

If it [flow] is not there, it can get you. It takes something to overcome [the blocks to flow]. Whether it's your coach sitting you down for a while and saying 'calm down'. (S3)

A professional swimmer reported that blocks to flow may come from external sources such as detractors, who for various reasons, disturb a performer prior to an event. He offered the following comment:

You will have people who daily break you down and always want to see you fail. . . . Why? Because [that means] you are better than me. And no one wants that. That is how they think and I don't understand these emotions. (S6)

Negative Mental Attitude

The third general dimension regarding situational blocks or hindrances to flow was negative mental attitude. The lack of unification within the individual as reported by the professional athletes was termed as a higher order theme called lack of community. Within this higher order theme, professional athletes' quotes were grouped into five raw data themes as follows: (a) negative self-talk, (b) self-doubt, (c) selfish goals, (d) negative feedback, and (e) worry.

Negative self-talk was reported by two professional athletes as a definite block to flow in sport. A

professional swimmer described the affect of negative self-talk as follows:

The fact is most of the time or at least 99 percent of the time you feel fearful. . . . My only fear is failure. . . . (S6)

Self-doubt was proposed as a block to flow by two professional athletes. A professional baseball player discussed personal misgivings which blocked flow as follows:

. . . if all of a sudden I have given up three runs and I've got a man on first and second and no outs, it is hard to be in [the flow] state. (S4)

The selfish interest or goals that are harbored by the professional athlete may act as a disruption to flow. A professional swimmer observed that tokens may block flow:

Money is not a high. I am a living example. I had the world record and all I had to do was do it again. And it did not happen. . . . When you are swimming for money, that is business. (S6)

A professional football player reported the impending problems when being provided with negative feedback:

Positive feedback is always helpful [for getting into flow], but negative feedback is hurtful. (S3)

A professional swimmer adopted a posture of avoiding as much negative feedback as possible which may be observed in the following quote:

[Negative feedback] causes you to be counter-productive. You are taking steps backward when you listen to it. How can you not listen to it because it goes into your mind and your mind is a bottomless pit. You can disregard it, but the thought is still there. You must block them out. It is best to disregard these people altogether unless you can inspire them and change their way of thinking. (S6)

Being in a state of worry and anxiety has the potential to block one's getting into flow. A professional football player, who described himself as a chronic worrier, observed that on the night when he did have a flow-producing performance he fell asleep in the locker room prior to the game. His comments were as follows:

I would characterize myself as a worrier. I worry about what can go wrong. I've always thought that if I worried enough about it that it wouldn't go wrong. They had to wake me up that night [when I got into flow]. I was asleep in the locker room when we were to go out on the field. (S1)

Crowd Distractions

The fourth general dimension regarding situational blocks or hindrances to flow in sport was identified as crowd distraction. Some of the professional athletes reported being disturbed by negativism from the crowd. Two raw data themes which emerged from this research were: (a) tension from the crowd and (b) distracting noise levels.

Crowds are an important aspect of professional team sports, but some professional athletes reported feeling tension which may block getting into flow. A professional football player described it this way:

That happens sometimes, especially in a big game. You are at a more. . . intense level. Whether it is the crowd or the feeling that you have before the game, the nervousness. (S2)

A professional football player reported that his fellow teammates were having problems with the crowd noise which

kept them from entering flow on the day that he had a flow-producing performance. His comments were as follows:

Everyone else was having trouble with crowd noise blocking their guy, but I was able to handle [my opponent] all day. (S1)

Part 2: Situational Blocks or hindrance which disrupt an exalted experience of the Holy Spirit in Christianity.

Professional athletes reported having been involved in exalted experiences of the Holy Spirit. Conversely, they noted that counter-productive factors do have the tendency to block or hinder entry into this rare state of exalted consciousness as can be found in Appendix E. An inductive analysis of the professional athletes' responses to this question resulted in 15 raw data themes and four higher order themes: The general dimensions were as follows: (1) physical problems, (2) inability to maintain focus, and (3) negative mental attitude.

Physical Problems

Two raw data themes emerged from this research regarding physical problems which may disrupt an exalted experience of the Holy Spirit as follows: (a) pain and (b) injury. By keeping one's thoughts in the physical realm, pain and injury may preclude the spiritual features from being attained. A professional baseball player described his inability to attain an exalted experience of the Holy

Spirit as his prayers were unanswered for a considerable length of time:

. . . I was ready to be out of baseball and my wife and I were praying. . . .we were going to leave because I was playing terrible and after I would pitch, my knees would just kill me. I was coming off knee surgery. . . .So I said to God, 'if You really want me to finish out the year, you're going to have to take this pain out of my knee because it was killing me. (S4)

Inability to Maintain Focus

Two higher order themes emerged from the research under this general dimension as follows: (1) losing concentration and (b) distractions and interruptions. In the higher order theme of losing concentration, two raw data themes emerged from the research: (a) losing concentration and (b) losing focus on God. The following quote demonstrates the problems of concentration in order to have an exalted experience of Holy Spirit:

I have to concentrate on the Word and pray. . . . because I'm like hyper or thinking about too many things. Too many things on my mind. And I have to [ask], 'will You remove this for me now so I can just focus on You?' (S4)

A professional soccer player recognized that pride or vanity may destroy one's ability to focus on God as the following quote relates:

I needed to be broken of pride in that . . . there [were] only a few times in my career that I lost focus on Him. This was one of those times. That is why I regret that game even though I'm in the record book. A lot of people would say 'that had to be great for you' and statistically from a world view it was. But from a spiritual standpoint, it was not. (S5)

The second higher order theme was distractions and interruptions. Three raw data themes emerged from the respondents' reports as follows: (a) distracted by sin, (b) lack of obedience to God, and (c) negative lifestyle.

A professional baseball player described the distractions of sin which afflict many, prevent them from feeling peace and confidence, or obeying God. In the following quote, he states that these are not the winners, only the Christians are the winners:

All these other distractions that these guys have [such as] girls, money, or whatever they do or [are] concerned with. That's going to distract them from winning [in Christ]. But us, it shouldn't [for we are] Christians. So when we do that, we go out there and perform. Then, we are giving it all to glorify God.
(S4)

Negative Mental Attitude

An inductive analysis of the professional athletes' responses resulted in the following higher order themes: (1) lack of community and (2) inability to reach perfection. The lack of community was derived from six raw data themes as follows: (a) negative self-talk, (b) fear of failure, (c) worry or lack of faith, (d) selfishness, (e) lack of spiritual formation, and (f) unwilling to relinquish control.

A professional soccer player's quote indicates the problem with selfishness acting as a block to having an exalted experience of the Holy Spirit:

I think there is a tremendous danger in trying to turn your relation with God into a good luck charm. You

kind of put God in a box and he becomes your genie.
(S5)

The failure to adhere to basic spiritual features such as religious study, prayer and worship results in the lack of spiritual formation as the following quote indicates:

I want the presence of God in all of my life and not just capsuled and targeted for special things. [Hindrances include] an unconfessed state of sin. My base point is I have to confess up and [have] a right relationship with God. That is my core relationship. And if that is not right, then, everything else gets messed up. (S5)

Two raw data themes emerged from this research and were grouped in the higher order theme of inability to reach perfection as follows: (a) refusing the Holy Spirit and (b) negative force such as Satan and drugs.

Three professional athletes stated that blocks to an exalted experience of the Holy Spirit may come about by one's direct refusal of the Holy Spirit. By being unwilling to relinquish control to a transcendent power, the opportunity for a rare exalted state of consciousness is missed. A professional football player described recommended the following in order to avoid these missed opportunities of basking in the Spirit:

[Is there anything that would block you from the Holy Spirit. . .?] Not if you just keep yourself open. (S2)

A second professional football player observed that there are negative forces such as Satan or drugs which may prevent one from uniting in the Holy Spirit:

Maybe it is just my overall stubbornness. . . . it is Satan who is not allowing me to hear what Someone is

saying or [to] feel how I want to feel. It can totally block me out. (S3)

Discussion

Situational blocks or hindrances which were perceived by professional athletes to disrupt flow in sport or an exalted experience of the Holy Spirit were comparable in three general dimensions which were: (1) physical problems (2) inability to maintain focus, and (3) negative mental attitude. Crowd distractions was a fourth general dimension reported by the professional athletes regarding disruptions in flow. This was not mentioned as a disruption to an exalted experience in the Holy Spirit.

In both experiences, physical problems were considered as disruptive to some extent. While injury was reported as a block to flow in sport, it appeared to be paradoxical in the rare state of consciousness of the Holy Spirit. For one, pain was a serious factor in disrupting flow, and for another athlete it promoted praying for relief from pain which eventually triggered an exalted experience of the Holy Spirit.

Being physically unprepared was mentioned by half of the respondents as a block to flow in sport. None of the athletes reported physical unpreparedness as a hindrance to an exalted state of rare consciousness.

In both experiences, the inability to maintain focus was noteworthy general dimension. Losing concentration was

an important higher order theme, although the center of that concentration was somewhat different. Those who reported losing concentration as a block to a flow in sport noted that the loss of focus was on the task at hand. Those who reported losing concentration as a block to a exalted experience of the Holy Spirit described it as losing focus on God.

Also, in each experience professional athletes reported disruptions to rare states of consciousness because of distractions or interruptions. Again the higher order themes were the same but the raw data themes varied greatly from distractions from the physical nature to the spiritual realm.

In both experiences, a negative mental attitude was considered a hindrance to a rare state of consciousness. The lack of community building within the person and within the team was factor most prominent in both experiences. When individuals felt doubt, selfish, worry, or had negative self-talk, they were divided within themselves and did not get into a flow experience. It was the same for the Holy Spirit experience. There was a difference observed by the researcher regarding the higher order theme relating to the inability to reach perfection. None of the professional athletes reported refusing to enter a flow experience, but three mentioned being blocked from an exalted experience of

the Holy Spirit because of their personal refusal or unwillingness to relinquish control.

A second difference was observed regarding the general dimension of crowd distractions. Two of the professional athletes reported that crowd distractions had blocked flow experiences in sport, but none observed this feature as a block to a rare state of consciousness of the Holy Spirit.

RESEARCH QUESTION 5

What were the results of the personal experience while in flow, in the Holy Spirit, or a combination thereof?

Investigating flow states, the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit, or the combination thereof in professional athletes was for the purpose of gaining insight as to their perceived personal gain from the experiences. Their descriptions were congruent with Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) eight components of flow.

Thus, the personal gains of flow were the effects of the ecstatic experiences which left landmarks in memory and set standards for that which were hoped for again. This is somewhat like Csikszentmihalyi's autotelic experience, or an end in itself. One professional athlete reported not knowing how fast he had run during a particular play until he saw a video later. Another described the powerfulness of

his body during a flow experience in football, amazed at his own strength. A third described the passage of a block of time which seemed only minutes to him. This merging of action and awareness and loss of self-consciousness left them eager to duplicate the level of focus and concentration as well as giving them deeper personal insight.

During a rare state of consciousness of the Holy Spirit, ecstatic experiences were also of great personal gain to the professional athletes. Their reports were similar to Laski's (1962) intensity experiences as the respondents described feeling the involvement of something else, feeling that this must be what heaven is like, or feeling set apart for an entire afternoon. These are described as lasting memories which also set standards for which they strive to find again. Another result of the personal experience while in flow was the opportunity to unify oneself and one's teammates. When one has a positive mental attitude, relaxes, focuses and concentrates, and is physically ready to perform, one has the potential to enter a unitive state. As each individual or a team strives together for a clear goal, community is being built. This may be the unifying of the divided self, or merging with the action of teamwork. Augustine (Bourke, 1974) described the unity of self in his writings on the Trinity. All of the respondents reported feelings of peace, elation and freedom, and new energy through their exalted experience of the Holy

Spirit. The Apostle Paul described community in 1 Corinthians Chapters 12-14. Here he wrote that the disciples should use the gifts of the Spirit for the betterment of all. In this research, the respondents described the bonding with inspirational leaders, teammates, and coaches as well as a more pronounced reconciliation of the self.

A third result of the personal experience while in flow is the opportunity to involve oneself with a challenging activity. All of the professional athletes reported that they reached a different level of skills when the competition rose to a greater height. Flow was the result when they focused on the task at hand, took charge or was willing to relinquish control. The result of the personal experience while in flow was a near-perfect performance. Every respondent noted that his statistics were positively effected when he had a flow experience.

A result of the personal experience of a rare state of consciousness of the Holy Spirit was the ability to accept challenges for self-growth leading to perfection in the Spirit. Similar to the Wesley's (Outler, 1964) internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, professional athletes noted positive affects of these experiences which gave them direction and purpose, allowed them to be healed physically, or offered them a sense of comfort through unity with the transcendent power.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the findings and conclusions concerning the transcendent quality of sport found in Csikszentmihalyi's (1975; 1990) flow theory and the subjective ecstatic experience of the Holy Spirit within Christianity. Recommendations for further study are also offered.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to explore the qualitative similarities and differences between the rare states of exalted consciousness and performance reported in sporting contexts and the analogous states of exaltation occasionally reported in the contexts of Christianity. Although many conflicting claims can be found in the literature, a rigorous analysis of the theological aspects as well as dynamics of enhanced performance has never been investigated. Thus, this investigator sought to determine whether the two concepts were mutually exclusive, or whether they were somewhat congruent, given the social and religious assumptions of modern American culture.

Csikszentmihalyi (1975; 1990) studied glimpses of mystical exaltation in the sport experience and coined the phrase "flow theory" which he derived from writings on self-actualization and peak experiences by Maslow (1968, 1970) and Laski's (1962) study of ecstatic experiences. Csikszentmihalyi offered the flow theory in order to explain the special dimension of enjoyment not commonly experienced. Flow is defined as a dynamic feeling state denoting the holistic sensation a person experiences with total enjoyment.

The second concept studied was that of rare states of exaltation of the Holy Spirit within the context of the Christian religion. This study used James' (1985) definition of religion which was "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine" (p. 34). For purposes of adding clarity and understanding to this research regarding rare states of exaltation of the Holy Spirit, the review of literature included a cross-cultural explanation of religious experiences both eastern and western; three classical passages within the New Testament that deal with the experience of the Holy Spirit or describe people who are being lifted up in the Holy Spirit; and for balance, the work of two key figures concerning the Holy Spirit were selected from outside the Christian tradition. As a result

of this review of the literature on the Christian experience, three central themes emerged regarding the affects of the Holy Spirit: (1) ecstasy, (2) community building, and (3) perfection.

Many athletes have attributed their successful athletic performances to spiritual inspiration and labelled the event as a worship experience (Prebish, 1984). Thus, questions were posed to selected professional athletes in order to address the athletes' ecstatic experiences of flow/Holy Spirit in sport and Christianity during the performance of sport.

In order to explore the flow theory of sport and the rare states of exaltation of the Holy Spirit within Christianity, an open-ended semi-structured interview guide was designed. The qualitative tool included 11 items which described the eight components of flow as derived from Csikszentmihalyi (1975; Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Jackson, 1992) and 11 items which dealt with the features of the Holy Spirit as an exaltation experience.

During July, August, and September of 1992, six professional athletes were interviewed in Knoxville, Tennessee and Richmond, Virginia. Six professional male athletes representing the sports of football, baseball, soccer, and swimming participated in the interview process.

The recorded interviews were transcribed and reviewed for evidence concerning the concept of flow within sport and

the nature of possession of the Holy Spirit in Christianity during performance of sport. In addition, information concerning how the athletes described the characteristics of the flow experience and the rare states of exalted consciousness of the Holy Spirit concerning the central themes of ecstasy, community building, and perfection were sought.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were drawn based on the interviews conducted with professional athletes regarding Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) flow theory and the analogous rare states of exalted consciousness within the Christian context. Responses to the questions set forth in the statement of the problem were expressed as follows:

1. How is the experiential state of flow during the height of competition and the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit described by the professional athletes?

The professional athletes offered descriptions of flow which supported Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) definition of flow. The terminology was often similar as descriptions of flow and the Holy Spirit experiences were discussed. The enjoyment and the overall good feelings were characteristics in both experiences most prominently found in the research. There were also some reports of their inability to express

their feelings, the sense of overpoweringness as if one was submerged in something greater than oneself, and the feeling of being acted on by a superior power.

2. In order to understand the similarities and differences involved in the ecstatic moment while participating in sport, were any or all of the following components of flow described by professional athletes during the altered experiential state associated with sporting activities: (a) they were involved in a challenging activity that requires skills, (b) there was a merging of action and awareness, (c) they had clear goals and feedback, (d) they felt a sense of control or were not worried about losing control, (e) they sensed a loss of self-consciousness, egolessness, (f) there was a transformation of time, and (g) the combination of all these elements caused a sense of deep enjoyment that is so rewarding that they would expend a great deal of energy simply to be able to feel it, It was an autotelic experience, an end in itself.

Professional athletes reported that there were similarities between the flow experience and the exalted experience of possession by the Holy Spirit. The similarities included feelings of ecstasy with the presence of at least one to as many as all of the eight components of flow.

Differences were also reported by those who have been involved in the ecstatic moment while participating in sport

and the exalted experience with the transcendent power or the Holy Spirit. The respondents reported that the feature of competition promoted flow. Also, in meeting spiritual challenges and moving through the stages of perfection, intrapersonal competitive affect was reported as an impetus to a union with the transcendent power. While all had indicated that the flow experience was so rewarding that they had sought it for its autotelic nature, none reported that an exalted experience with the transcendent power was pursued as an end in itself.

3. What events or triggers lead to flow in sport or the exalted experience of the Holy Spirit in Christianity?

Triggers or events which were perceived to enhance one's entry into flow centered on four of Jackson's (1992) general dimensions : (1) positive mental attitude, (2) positive pre-competitive and competitive affect, (3) maintain appropriate focus, and (4) physical readiness. A fifth general dimension was found in this study and was applicable as a trigger for both the flow experience in sport and rare states of exalted consciousness of the Holy Spirit termed the unitive state. The general dimension of unitive state varied from Jackson's unity with partner general dimension because the professional athletes of this study were involved in team sports as opposed to Jackson's elite pair skaters.

The findings of this study went beyond Jackson's general dimensions for triggers to entering flow and exaltation of the Holy Spirit and were identified in two general dimensions--physical readiness and the unitive state. In the general dimension of physical readiness, the professional athletes reported following rituals in preparing for a game which led to flow states and rare states of exaltation within the Holy Spirit.

A second finding within the general dimension of physical readiness was the paradox of injury acting as a trigger for rare states of exaltation of the Holy Spirit. Three of the respondents reported being free of injury was a trigger of flow. Another reported being freed from the pain of injury through prayer was a trigger for being lifted up in the Holy Spirit.

Findings were also noteworthy in the general dimension of unitive state. As the professional athletes felt a sense of unification within themselves or bonded with teammates, coaches, and inspirational leaders, they were participating in community building as described by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians and by Augustine in his writing on The Trinity.

Another finding of this research was in the general dimension of unitive state was that of reaching perfection. Reaching perfection was a trigger for both flow and exaltation of the Holy Spirit. Professional athletes reported feeling a loss of consciousness, in the groove, or

in rhythm as they reached the perfection of flow. They also described feelings of perfection as they overcame challenges within themselves, united with a transcendent power, and experienced the concept of new love.

4. What situational blocks or hindrances disrupt flow of sport and the Holy Spirit of Christianity?

Situational blocks or hindrances which were perceived by professional athletes to disrupt flow or an exaltation of the Holy Spirit within Christianity were comparable to Jackson's (1992) general dimensions in her study of flow within sport: Agreement was found on three general dimensions: (1) physical problems, (2) inability to maintain focus, and (3) negative mental attitude.

In the general dimension of negative mental attitude, situational blocks or hindrances to flow or exaltation of the Holy Spirit was found to be in the failure to build community within oneself as negative self-talk, fear of failure, worry, lack of faith, selfishness, lack of spiritual formation, and unwillingness to relinquish control developed. Also, for the exaltation of the Holy Spirit there was the block to the concept of unity and new love as the Holy Spirit was refused and negative forces came into focus.

5. What were the results of the personal experience while in flow, in the Holy Spirit, or a combination thereof?

The reports of the professional athletes were congruent with Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) eight components of flow. Personal gains of flow were the effects of the ecstatic experiences which left landmarks in the memory of the recipient and set standards for that which was hoped to be felt again. A second personal gain was the participation in community building within the individual and among the teammates, coaches, and inspirational leaders. A third was the feelings of reaching perfection and the concept of new love.

In analyzing the combination of the two experiences, the question was posed, "How can one distinguish between flow in sport and the rare states of consciousness of the Holy Spirit within Christianity?" Three of the six professional athletes reported a feeling state of new love when the Holy Spirit was involved. They stated that these feelings appeared in rare instances and the concept of new love was the prominent feature. Support for the professional athletes' reports was included in a classical passage of the New Testament--1 Corinthians Chapter 13--where the Apostle Paul pointed out that love was the greatest of all of the "gifts of the Spirit" and would be present if the believers were operating in the Spirit.

Previous research by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) offered two sets of factors for getting into flow--those which were psychological and those which were situational (p. 71).

From this research, with the understanding that the Holy Spirit is present during sport performance, a third underlying mechanism for producing flow was identified. Through the complex interplay of the Holy Spirit and its trigger of the rare states of exaltation within Christianity during sport performance, a new trigger was determined to exist. In this study, this combined exalted experience was labelled a **quasi-religious sport flow**.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Use two interview sessions in order to establish rapport and more thoroughly discuss each concept.
2. Study flow in the context of team sports to a greater degree in order to determine if the crowd factor could be flow producing.
3. Study different athlete populations to determine if the triggers or blocks found for flow/Holy Spirit in this study have application.
4. Seek responses from athletes participating in a variety of sport contexts.
5. Study the problems associated with the inability to enter flow of sport and the exaltation of the Holy Spirit

within Christianity such as the sport slump or the "sick soul".

6. Study the triggers and blocks of flow/Holy Spirit as they affect women participating in sport performances.

7. Study flow/Holy Spirit experiences during winning/losing competitions.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE ONE: FLOW/HOLY SPIRIT EXPERIENCES OF PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES

PART I

These questions are related to your most positive experiences while participating in sport.

1. What performance in sport stands out as your most satisfying personally, the one you will want to remember for the rest of your life?
2. What features highlight this performance in sport that made it stand out?
3. How would you describe your level of confidence at the time?
4. How long did it last?
5. How did you feel afterwards?
6. Were there any long-lasting or life-changing effects?
7. Describe how you felt during your special moment in sport.

(If no answer is forthcoming, please read the following:)

Some athletes have described their special moment in sport where they are not only performing at their peak, but are also experiencing heightened levels of awareness. One athlete described it as follows:

"Once I get into the game, I just float along, having fun, not thinking of anything except the game itself. I am energized and my body feels unusually powerful. I am not aware of surroundings, noises, or distractions. I feel as if I am in slow motion, but I know I'm moving at my fastest pace."

The above quote is used here to describe the FLOW experience, but each athlete may experience this state somewhat differently. Is this anything similar to your experience?

8. Is there anything that triggers this special performance in sport?
9. Do you feel that you have the ability to control this flow state?
10. What may act as hindrances or blocks to disrupt the special performance in sport?
11. In what way did the flow experience effect your performance such as statistics or new personal achievements?

PART II

These quesstions are related to your most positive experiences while being involved with religion.

1. What experience with the Holy Spirit stands out for you as your most satisfying personally, the one you will want to remember the rest of your life?
2. What features highlight this experience with the Holy Spirit that made it stand out?
3. How would you describe your level of confidence at the time?
4. How long did it last?
5. How did you feel afterwards?
6. Were there any long-lasting or life-changing effects?
7. Describe how your encounter with the Holy Spirit felt.

(If no answer is forthcoming, please read the following:)

Some individuals who have described their experience with the Holy Spirit have made statements such as the following:

"All at once I experienced a feeling of being raised above myself. I felt the presence of God. His goodness and His power was penetrating me altogether. I seem to be filled overwhelmingly with His love. I felt a love for others and all things like I had heretofore never experienced. I sensed a boldness or new courage and was carried to new heights in the spirit."

If this description is similar to your experience with the Holy Spirit, describe how your encounter with the Holy Spirit felt?

8. Is there anything that triggers this spiritual state for you?
9. Do you feel you have the ability to control this spiritual state?
10. What may act as hindrances or blocks to disrupt the onset of the spiritual state?
11. The Holy Bible lists several gifts of the spirit that one may experience:
 - a. Do you remember any unusual experiences which were emphasized by an overabundance of love, joy or courage?
If yes, please explain.
 - b. Do you remember any extraordinary experiences with the Holy Spirit involving divine healing, miracles, or special knowledge? If yes, please explain.
 - c. Do you recall any unusual liberties of speech, keen insight or visionary experiences? If yes, please explain.

PART III

These questions are designed to elicit responses regarding

athletes perceptions of the relationship between the experiences of flow/Holy Spirit while participating in sport.

1. Have you ever felt the power of the Holy Spirit while participating in sport? If yes, please describe.
2. If you used similar words to describe the flow experience in sport and the flow of the Holy Spirit experience, how do you distinguish between the two feeling states while participating in your sport?

APPENDIX B

FORM B

CRP _____
Date Received _____THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE
Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

I. Identification of Project:

Project Directors: Dr. Joy DeSensi
(615) 974-1282
Human Performance & Sport
Studies
Room 343, HPER Bldg.

Charles R. Hopson
(615) 626-3315
Human Performance & Sport
Studies
Route 2, Box 52
Tazewell, TN 37879

Project Advisor: Dr. David Dungan
(615) 974-2466
Religious Studies
Fifth Floor, Humanities &
Social Science Bldg.

Title of Project: An Exploration of the Flow
Theory and the Holy Spirit
Among Selected
Professional Athletes

Department: Human Performance & Sport
Studies

Starting date: Upon CRP approval

Estimated completion date: December, 1992

External Funding Agency and Identification Number: NA

II. Objectives of Project:

The objectives of this project are to develop an understanding of the symbiotic relationship that has been reported in the literature between the two modern institutions of sport and Christianity, to explore the transcendent quality of sport found in the flow theory and the subjective experience of the Holy Spirit within Christianity and to comprehend whether there are qualitative similarities and differences between the rare states of exalted consciousness and performance reported in sporting contexts. Suggestions for future research have pointed to the necessity of delving into the athletes' perceptions and personal reactions in a more in-depth manner than allowed for in objective questionnaires and rigid measurement techniques, so that a broader knowledge base can be obtained. The purpose of this investigation is twofold: first, to ascertain the personal experiences of professional athletes using the interview technique; second, to achieve a general characterization of those experiences by examining both the reported similarities and differences involved in the athletes' ecstatic moment while participating in sport in order to determine, upon reflection, to what extent the athletes attributed the ecstasy to flow, to the Holy Spirit, or a combination thereof.

III. Description of Subjects:

All subjects ($N = 6-10$) will be volunteers. They will consist of either current or former professional athletes from the sports of baseball, basketball and football. The athletes will be recruited by the networking and snowballing sampling technique utilized by Allison and Meyer (1988).

IV. Methods or Procedures:

This investigation will utilize the interview technique because of its strength in promoting self-reflection and the ability to gain an in-depth understanding of a person's experience as well as the meaning the person attached to the experience. The interview questions will be open-ended and semi-structured to allow each respondent's reflections and their own frame of reference to emerge. A modified version of the questions developed by Jackson (1992) from her unpublished dissertation on the flow theory will be utilized (See Appendix A). The interview questions were modified to directly approach the issue of flow/Holy Spirit within sport participation.

Interviews are anticipated to consist of one session per subject totaling approximately two hours. Interviews are to be tape recorded for accuracy purposes. The interviews will be too lengthy for reliance on memory and written notes. Costs of employing a stenographer are prohibitive in this instance. In view of the nature of the study, accuracy is absolutely essential, and is simply not feasible without the use of tape recordings. Tapes, questionnaires, and related information will be kept under lock and key in the home of the doctoral student.

V. Specific Risks and Protection Measures:

Subjects participating in this study are expected to be subjected to minimal risk. Procedures are non-invasive. Participation in interviews will be strictly voluntary, and subjects will be advised that they may terminate the interview at any time. Interviews will be conducted in a clinical, private setting to maintain confidentiality. Subjects will be advised that the interviews are to be taped, and they will be given the opportunity to refuse the interview if they do not agree. Access to the data will be limited to the project directors and project advisor. Subjects will be identified on the audio tape by a coded synonym which will be known by the project directors and the project advisor. Tape recordings will be utilized for accuracy purposes only and will be erased at the end of the required three-year period for data maintenance.

VI. Benefits vs. Risks:

No physical risks are anticipated and the psychological risks are minimal at best. Since athletes have offered diverging explanations regarding the presence or absence of the Holy Spirit in their greatest experiences in sport, this study will broaden the information base. A rigorous analysis of athletes' perceptions regarding the flow theory and the Holy Spirit has never been carried out, therefore, this study has the potential for being beneficial to those researchers interested in the socio-cultural aspects of sport.

VII. Method of Obtaining "Informed Consent" from Subjects:

The investigation will be explained to all potential subjects. Those interested in participating will sign an informed consent statement prior to being interviewed.

VIII. Qualifications of the Investigators:

The investigators have collected comparable data in the past and have practical, professional and theoretical experience in interviewing techniques.

IX. Responsibility of Project Directors:

By the compliance with the policies established by the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Committee on Research Participation, the project directors subscribe to the principles stated in "The Belmont Report" and standards of professional ethics in all research, development, and related activities involving human subjects under the auspices of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

- a. Approval will be obtained from the University Committee prior to instituting any change in the research project.
- b. Development of any unexpected risks will be reported to the University Committee.
- c. Signed consent statements will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter.
- d. A status reported (Form D) will be submitted at 12 month-intervals or as requested attesting to the current status of the project.

Project Directors: _____ Date: _____

_____ Date: _____

X. Departmental Review:

COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

Department Head: _____ Date: _____

Chair, Departmental
Review Committee _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

INDUCTIVE ANALYSIS FORM

specific-----general

Raw Data Theme	Higher Order Theme	General Dimension
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APPENDIX D

TRIGGERS

Triggers perceived by professional athletes to be most important for entering flow.

specific-----general

Raw Data Theme	Higher Order Theme	General Dimension
+Confidence (6)		
+Total Belief	Confidence	
+Self-Belief (2)		
+Positive self-concept (6)		
+Positive self-talk (4)	Positive Thinking	POSITIVE
+Clear mentally and focused on strengths (3)		MENTAL ATTITUDE
+Motivation--internal (3)		
+Motivation--external (6)	High Motivation To Do	
+Desire to succeed (2)	Well	
+Won't be denied (2)		
.		
+Being at peace (3)		
+Feeling calm (3)		
+Being Relaxed (2)	Being Relaxed	
+Nervous, but at ease (2)		
+Feeling pumped up		
+Controlling nerves (2)		
+Not allowing crowd to make nervous (3)	Controlling Anxiety	POSITIVE
+Absorbing energy from crowd (2)		PRE-
+Coping with stress (2)		COMPETITIVE & COMPETITIVE AFFECT
+Overall good feeling about what you are doing	Enjoying what you are doing	
+Ecstatic feelings and satisfaction		
+New energy and elation (4)		
.		

Triggers Continued

specific-----general

Raw Data Theme	Higher Order Theme	General Dimension
+Focus(4) +Concentrated (2)	Pre-Event Focus & Concentration	
+Balance between total focus and total release (2) +Maximizing abilities in a focused manner +Merging of focus and awareness +Stay in the present (2)	Competitive Focus & Concentration	MAINTAINING APPROPRIATE FOCUS
+Being well trained (6) +Being well prepared (2) +Having good practice sessions before competition (3)	Trained & Prepared	PHYSICAL READINESS
+No pain (2)	Free of Injury	
+Following rituals in preparing for game (3)	Physical Rituals	
+Bonding with teammates +Bonding with coaches	Community Building	
+Feeling loss of consciousness +Feeling in the groove +Being in rhythm +Feeling the flow	Perfection	UNITIVE STATE

Notes. The general dimensions and some of the raw data and higher order themes are from Athletes in Flow: A Qualitative Investigation of Flow States in Elite Figure Skaters" by S. A. Jackson, 1992, Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 4.

Triggers Continued

1. () numbers in parentheses indicate number of professional athletes citing theme if greater than one.
2. Total of 38 raw data themes.

Triggers perceived by professional athletes to be most important for an exalted experience in the Holy Spirit.

specific-----general

Raw Data Theme	Higher Order Theme	General Dimension
+Faith (6)		
+Obedience (2)		
+Identity in Christ (3)	Confidence	
+Self-Belief (2)		
+Positive self-talk (6)		
+Spiritual formation (3)	Positive Thinking	POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE
+Motivation--internal (3)		
+Motivation through reading, e.g. Bible, commentaries, books (3)	High Motivation To Do Well	
+Music (2)		
+Prayer (6)		
.....		
+Being at peace (3)		
+Feeling calm (3)		
+Feeling secure (2)	Peace	
+Allowing Holy Spirit to block out distractions (2)		
+Dedication of the performance to God (3)	Controlling Anxiety	POSITIVE PRE- COMPETITIVE & COMPETI- TIVE AFFECT
+Overall good feeling about what you are doing (6)	Enjoying what you are doing	
+Intensity experience (6)		
+New energy and elation (4)		
.....		
+Focus(3)	Pre-Event	
+Concentration (2)	Focus & Concentration	
+Balance between total focus and total release (2)	Competitive Focus & Concentration	MAINTAINING APPROPRIATE FOCUS
+Maximizing abilities through focus of Holy Spirit		

Triggers Continued

specific-----general

Raw Data Theme	Higher Order Theme	General Dimension
+Merging of focus and awareness		
.....		
+Being well prepared (6)		
+Purpose Oriented	Preparation	
+No pain/having pain (3)	Paradox of Injury	PHYSICAL
		READINESS
+Following rituals in preparing for game (3)	Physical Rituals	
.....		
+Bonding with inspirational leaders (2)	Community Building	
+Spiritual bonding with teammates (2)		UNITIVE STATE
+Unity with the transcendent power (6)	Perfection	
+Feelings of new love		

Notes. Four of the five general dimensions are from "Athletes in Flow: A Qualitative Investigation of Flow States in Elite Skaters" by S. A. Jackson, 1992, Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 4.

1. () numbers in parentheses indicate number of professional athletes citing theme if greater than one.

2. Total of 31 raw data themes.

APPENDIX E
HINDRANCES

Situational blocks or hindrances perceived by
professional athletes to disrupt flow

specific-----general

Raw Data Theme	Higher Order Theme	General Dimension
+Injury (2)		
+Physicall unprepared (3)		PHYSICAL PROBLEMS
+Fatigue		
.....		
+Losing concentration (2)		
+Leaving the moment (2)	Losing Concentration	
+Lack of focus (2)		
.....		
+Distractions (1)		
+Personal problems (2)		INABILITY TO MAINTAIN
+Inability to calm down	Distractions or Interruptions	FOCUS
+Being distracted by people before performance		
.....		
+Negative self-talk(2)		
+Self-doubt (2)	Lack of Community	NEGATIVE
+Selfish goals (2)		MENTAL
+Negative feedback (2)		ATTITUDE
+Worry		
.....		
+Tension from crowd		
+Distracting noise level		CROWD DISTRACTION

Notes. Three of the four general dimensions are from "Athletes in flow: A Qualitative Investigation of Flow States in Elite Skaters" by S. A. Jackson, 1992, Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 4.

1. () numbers in parentheses indicate number of professional athletes citing theme if greater than one.

2. Total of 17 raw data themes.

Situational blocks or hindrances as perceived by
professional athletes to disrupt an exalted
experience in the Holy Spirit.

specific-----general

Raw Data Theme	Higher Order Theme	General Dimension
+Pain		PHYSICAL
+Injury		PROBLEMS
.		
+Losing concentration	Losing Concentration	
+Losing focus on God		INABILITY TO MAINTAIN FOCUS
+Distracted by sin	Distractions and Interruptions	
+Lack of obedience to God		
+Negative lifestyle		
.		
+Negative self-talk		
+Fear of failure		
+Worry or lack of faith	Lack of Community	
+Selfishness		
+Lack of spiritual formation		NEGATIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE
+Unwilling to relinquish control		
+Refusing the Holy Spirit (3)	Inability to reach Perfection	
+Negative force, e.g., Satan, drugs (3)		

Notes. Two of the three general dimensions are from "Athletes in Flow: A Qualitative Investigation of Flow States in Elite Skaters" by S. A. Jackson, 1992, Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 4.

1. () numbers in parentheses indicate number of professional athletes citing theme if greater than one.

2. Total of 15 raw data themes.

VITA

Charles Ray Hopson was born in Tazewell, Tennessee on June 24, 1952. He attended elementary schools in the Claiborne County School District and graduated from Claiborne County High School in May, 1969. The following September he entered Lincoln Memorial University at Harrogate, Tennessee and in May, 1973 received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Education in Physical Education. He then entered The University of Tennessee, Knoxville in June, 1979 and in August 1981 received a Master of Science degree in Physical Education. In June, 1984 he reentered The University of Tennessee, Knoxville and in December, 1992 received a Doctor of Education degree.

He is presently employed with the family durable medical equipment company and living at Tazewell, Tennessee.