Motivation of high-achieving athletes and musicians: A person-context perspective.

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This dissertation is the report of an investigation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Murdoch University.

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I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary institution.
Abstract

This research explores how motivation is shaped at the interface of person and context, with a focus on motivation in sport and music. From a social cognitive perspective, motivation research traditionally focuses on factors within the individual, whereas a more situated conceptualisation requires that motivation be studied within a person in context perspective. This study combines elements of both perspectives. It is proposed that motivation is shaped at the interface of person and context, where individuals make appraisals of social (other people) and structural (physical or organisational) aspects of their environments. A holistic view of motivation is adopted that incorporates initial engagement, ongoing involvement and persistence.

One challenge in current motivation research is to develop appropriate methods to capture such a dynamic, complex construct. In this study, semi-structured interviews and innovative tasks are used to gather biographical and longitudinal data about high-achieving athletes and musicians from diverse settings.

The findings reveal that complex personal and contextual factors operate reciprocally and dynamically as individuals make ongoing appraisals of their current situations. For example, personal factors such as aptitude, and contextual factors such as the existence of community programs, operate in a reciprocal way to shape participants’ initial engagement in sport or music. Complexity is highlighted when examining the role of a unique group of others in sport and music.
- onlookers (spectators or audience). A powerful effect on continuing involvement occurs when communities overlap and family members take on roles associated with onlookers. Participants face a range of potential problems in their lives and there are variations in the way these are perceived, in strategies and resources used, and in their impact on persistence. An important finding is the dynamic nature of motivation as the nature and extent of participants’ involvement in sport or music changes over time.

In addition to deepening our understanding of how motivation is shaped at the interface of person and context, the study offers a unique methodological contribution and the findings have implications for enhancing motivation in applied settings.
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**Purpose and Structure of the Chapter**

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**Research Relating to Onlookers**

- Impact of Performers on Onlookers
- Impact of Onlookers on Performers
- Relationship Between Performers and Onlookers

**Data Relating to Onlookers**

**Performer-Onlooker Interactions are Complex**

- Complexity of Motivational Responses
- Complexity of Onlookers and Overlapping Communities

**Performer-Onlooker Interactions are Reciprocal**

**Performer-Onlooker Interactions are Dynamic**

**Analysis of Subgroups**

**Concluding Discussion**

### Chapter Eight: Problems and Motivation

**Purpose and Structure of the Chapter**

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- The Problem of Finding Time
- Subgroup Analysis and Problems
- Individual Variations and Problems
- Discussion of Problems

**Problems and Strategies**

- Categorisation of Strategies
- Discussion of Strategy Use

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