

An exploratory study of the utility for educational leaders of Anders K. Ericsson's theory  
of expert performance within the domain of service to others

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## Abstract

The application of research-based methods of skill development has enabled people across a variety of different fields to reach extraordinary levels of achievement. Among the various fields where superior achievement might be attained, training individuals to recognize the dignity of others and strive for remarkable accomplishment in humanitarian service would be an area that would greatly affect our society and world.

The purpose of this study was to test the applicability of K. Anders Ericsson's theory of the attainment of expert performance through deliberate practice on those who demonstrate a superior level of achievement in terms of service to others. The project consisted of the study of two participants who were identified as having demonstrated outstanding achievement in serving others. These people participated in a series of retrospective interviews. The study also included data from retrospective interviews with a close friend or relative with long-term familiarity of the participant's service to others, and with a person identified by the participant as a coach or mentor.

Analysis of the interview data demonstrated a reasonable connection between the lives of the expert humanitarians and Ericsson's framework. The data from both participants related well to Ericsson's framework particularly in regards to incremental growth, use of strategies, and focused attention. Although both participants used mentors, one did not use the mentor in order to design tasks and set goals but rather to seek feedback and advice. There is reasonable cause to conclude that this model will serve as a valuable tool for educators.

Additionally, five practical and one theoretical recommendations are offered to help administrators engage students in incremental growth, including a focus on teaching

students to listen attentively to find their cause in life, the promotion of travel as a form of education, and assisting and encouraging students when they want to become active and involved.

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In a very special way I am greatly indebted to the participants of this study. Their time and effort are greatly appreciated. Their tireless work for others has been an extraordinary example and has had a tremendous impact on my life. I am honoured to have met and worked with both participants and their friends and family members throughout the interview process.

## Preface

This study has grown out of my own spiritual and educational travels. Through many different experiences in my life, and while working and reflecting on those experiences as a Catholic theologian, I have become convinced that most of the problems we face in the world derive from a lack of respect for human dignity. In part, this perspective derives from my own religious faith. One element of that faith is a firm belief that each and every human life is sacred, and therefore, all people at all stages of life have a right to be treated with dignity. This idea is the foundation for my research and what influences my thesis questions.

As an educator, I want to know how this concern for human dignity might have a greater impact in my work. This thesis is one way I wish to respond to the unjust situations that many of our brothers and sisters throughout the world endure. A specific example might help illustrate how this thesis project has come about. Nearly three years ago, I spent a week volunteering at a school in Haiti. One morning I was in an orphanage run by the Missionaries of Charity in Port au Prince when my life changed. One of the areas of the orphanage housed babies who were either severely malnourished or were HIV positive. Both groups of young children faced a painful and untimely death. As I stood there feeling helpless, one of the emotions I experienced was anger. I became enraged and wondered why the care of all these children in desperate need was left to the one sister who, alone, was changing as many diapers and hugging as many children as she could. I heard an angry voice in my mind ask why no one else was doing anything about this. No sooner had I thought this when a difficult question arose in my mind: why aren't you doing anything about this?

My thesis is one small way that I will work at answering that question which continues to haunt me. It functions for me in the way that Groome (1998) described as a *dangerous memory*, one that has “an endless capacity to disturb complacency and birth new life” (p. 359). I want to know how those who live extraordinary lives of service, like the sister serving the orphaned children, develop those attitudes and practices. I hope to come to a better understanding of how individuals grow in their devotion to others so that I might do likewise, and educate others to become aware of, and work on behalf of those in need.

Most of my work as a teacher has taken place in Roman Catholic schools. My future teaching will likely take place within the realm of Catholic education as well. I choose to use the language, perspective, and context of this faith for this study when it is fitting. My personal faith and study of theology have such an impact on me that they are impossible to shed. However, the themes and concerns that I have are not unique to Catholic, Christian, or even religious people. Therefore, even though my faith will motivate this research, the ideas should be applicable to educators who care about human dignity regardless of religious worldview.

## 1 Introduction

In order to articulate the mission of Notre Dame College in Wilcox, Saskatchewan, Canadian educator Fr. Athol Murray wrote a poem entitled *The Notre Dame Man*. As founder and visionary of the school, Murray illustrated the mission by describing the person he desired to form through his college. In the conclusion to his poem, Murray (2007) described his graduates by stating that,

Not only will they be better prepared to fulfil their duties as a citizen, they should make a better friend, a better husband, a better father, a better wife, because free people do. They will, in short, be better prepared to live, and when their hour comes, they will know better how to die because free people do.

Interestingly, Murray's vision for the educational output of his institution did not include any reference to academic achievement. Rather, he focused entirely on the graduate's character. Murray's focus was not on *what* you became, but on *who* you became. Like Murray, today's school leaders must provide a clear vision of human formation in their school mission and practice.

It is my contention that one of the most significant responsibilities of a school administrator is to focus on *who* the students are becoming. The type of person being formed in these schools takes precedence over the type of work that person will do. Rather than eventual occupation, the primary focus in Catholic education ought to be lifelong vocation, in particular the fundamental calling of each person to love God and neighbour. Thomas Groome (1998) illustrates this vision when he states, "Consider the worthiest purpose of education as that learners become fully alive human beings who help to create a society that serves the common good" (p. 36). The common good is defined by Woodard (2007) as the "social conditions necessary for the development of the whole person" and the "conditions that allow all people to more easily live a more

humane existence” (p. 213). A focus on the common good of all people, however, can only rest upon a foundation that aims to promote human dignity (*Gaudium et spes*, 26).

Although speaking to parents about the formation of their children, the words of educator James Stenson (2007) seem quite fitting. He writes, “Your children will not grow up when they can take care of themselves. They will really and truly grow up only when they can take care of others—and want to” (p. 20). Educators like Groom, Murray, and Stenson surely place great value in intellectual outputs of education. However, their vision of the human person that derives from their religious faith leads them to envision a deeper meaning to education. Specifically, the principle of respect for the dignity of all human life should be paramount. This thesis takes as a starting point that Catholic school administrators must work to promote a deep respect for human dignity as a core element of institutional mission and identity. This vision may be shared by people of various other faith traditions, as well as people with no faith perspective. However, because of a belief that the human person is created in the image and likeness of God and that humanity is connected in a universal solidarity and, therefore, called to love one another, administrators in Catholic schools have a responsibility to keep this aim at the forefront of their work.

In order to offer meaningful suggestions that will allow school administrators to promote education for human dignity, I have studied the lives of persons who have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to the service to others. From these people, I have come to a greater understanding as to how they arrived at this extraordinary level of service in order to offer suggestions for educating others in this manner. By humanitarian service, I mean the practice of serving (caring for the needs of) others (particularly those

in serious want) without concern for personal gain. Additionally, this may take place in concrete ways (providing medicine for a child) or in working for policy and or social change to benefit those in need.

It is important to briefly discuss the social and religious context used in the conceptual framework of service to others, service to human dignity, and service to life. As explained above, each of these terms (and any other I may use in the paper) speaks of the practice of serving the needs of others for their own sake.

### The Problem

Catholic school leaders should be reading the “signs of the times” (*Gaudium et spes*, 4) and should be responding to the needs of the world and Church. It does not take much searching to discover that there are serious and enduring needs and problems in the world. Even a cursory look at modern history paints a very bleak picture. Researcher Rudolph Rummel (1994) studied government sponsored mass murder and genocide and has estimated the number at *one-hundred and fifty one million* persons in the last century alone (p. 2). This number does not reflect those killed in warfare. This statistic, along with our current capacity (and frequent willingness) to destroy so many of the world’s people through war and terrorism demonstrates, in practice, an egregious contempt for the value of human life. One could continue to list the offences against life, from the many continued ethnic, racial, and religious conflicts, the situation of the world’s extreme poor when seen in the context of the world’s rich, the exploitation of people through a slave trade that continues uninterrupted, to the disregard for the unborn, elderly, disabled, and prisoners, who, in many places are seen only as a waste of time, money, or resources.

The underlying issue at stake in all of these examples is a lack of respect for the inherent dignity of the human person. In each situation, greed, convenience, power, ideology, and lust, all trump the inherent value of all human life. If we take Stenson's idea, that people have matured once they take care of others and want to seriously, we must admit that a pivotal outcome of Catholic education has to be students who take care of others who are in need (Cf. Matthew 25: 31 ff.). Further, in his *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, John Paul II (1990) defines Catholic higher education as the place where one can labour to think rigorously, in order to act rightly and to *serve humanity better* (#2). Although written in relation to higher education, this message is important to other levels as well. If students at these institutions throughout the world were challenged to respect the intrinsic worth of each and every person with whom they came in contact, there would be dramatic change. If students at Catholic institutions became aware of the tragic and urgent threats to life around the globe and *cared enough to do something*, thinking of the needs of their brothers and sisters as *their own*, we would experience a great shift in the state of human dignity around the world.

We need people willing to reject selfishness, indifference, and the use and manipulation of their brothers and sisters, and people who are willing to sacrifice in order to promote human dignity and work towards the common good. If we are to take seriously the desperate needs of our world alongside of our call to promote human dignity, the goal of promoting respect for the dignity of all human life must be reemphasized as a foundational outcome of education. In an address to the National Catholic Educational Association, then president of the University of Notre Dame, Theodore Hesburgh (1979) explained this idea well. Reflecting on the role of the Catholic

faith in education he explains, “While I personally have been greatly concerned in turning out graduates who are intellectually competent, I am even more concerned in turning out students who are deeply compassionate. Failing this latter, Catholic institutions of higher learning would with great difficulty justify their special existence, whatever else we do” (p. 79). It is out of this worldview that my conceptual framework of service to others derives.

There is no doubt that identifying an individual as a role model of service is a result of how one constructs a definition of service. Recognizing a person as a hero, role model, or even expert, is always a result of a social construction. Conflicts frequently result from decisions to honour a person with formal recognition. For example, a school in which I worked always recognized one graduating student as “Catholic Student of the Year.” The person one would choose to be the recipient of this award would depend on how one would define Catholic, and the criteria one would use to assess a person’s successful practice of the Catholic faith. In this regard, Mieg (2001) explains that expertise is a social construction since at its core, the notion of expertise is relational. Expertise is a form of interaction between at least two parties. For Mieg, because expertise is a form of interaction and a relationship where issues of truth and value occur, it is a social construction (p. 43-45). Additionally, Noblit and Dempsey (1996) speak of virtue in much the same way. In their study of the moral life of schools they found, “What constitutes virtue is contextually specific. The schools we studied constructed their own sets of virtues” (p. 14). My description of the two people who are the subjects of this study as exemplary models of service to others is no different. Deriving from ontological and epistemological assumptions that arise from the worldview I have

constructed, I have created criteria used to label some people experts in service to others. It will be helpful for me to provide an explicit statement concerning what the practice of serving others looks like.

Others use different criteria to judge exemplary models of service than I do. Johnson & O'Grady (2006) for example, assert that legitimate service ought to lead to social change. For these authors, efforts that do not aim at eliminating the roots of social inequality can often be, "oppressive, racist, and unlikely to result in long-term circumstances of either the server or those being served" (p. 11). Their point is very important. Putting ice over the eye of a child who is abused by a parent daily does not help much to improve the lot of the child. Additionally, in his reflections on social justice and curriculum reform, DeAngelis (1995) explains that students ought to go one step further. He suggests that social justice education will take root if students "know not only the structural causes of poverty, but they also need to understand what the world looks like through the eyes of the impoverished and oppressed" (p. 118).

These are assertions with which I agree. However, it might be presumptuous to hold that service to others that brings about systematic overhaul of social inequality is a reasonable aspiration for all people. When there are displaced persons, for example, living in unsanitary conditions with no food or water, it is reasonable to care for the immediate physical needs of those people in addition to (or even before) working on the deeper structural issues that have displaced them. It might be just as oppressive to engage in diplomatic efforts from the comfort of an office while people have no food. In my estimation, there are immediate needs that must be met through service to others, in addition to service that attempts to root out structural inequality. Therefore, service to

others can take the form of serving the immediate needs of others, and it can also take the form of working to transform the conditions of those in need. Groome (1998) speaks of the diverse goals of service when he contrasts two very influential humanitarians.

Groome explains, “For every Mother Teresa who consoled the poor and dying, there is a Dorothy Day who committed to reform the social structures that are the root cause of poverty” (p. 238). Both of these types of service to others are necessary in my estimation. There is not only one right way to serve others.

As Noblit and Dempsey explained above, virtues are constructed in a particular context. The construction zone for my understanding of virtue and service to others is a framework known as Catholic Social Thought (CST). Providing an overview of four of its many key terms will help to describe what I am looking for when I speak of service to others. These four terms are: human dignity, the preferential option for the poor, solidarity, and the common good.

The first and most central concept in this framework is the dignity of the human person. This principle asserts that each and every human being, regardless of all distinguishing characteristics, is worthy of respect and ought to be treated in a manner befitting his or her membership in the human family. This notion derives from the biblical understanding that humanity was created in the image and likeness of God (Gn. 1:27). In his encyclical letter, *The Gospel of Life* (1995), John Paul II uses “incomparable” and “inestimable” (#2) to describe the value of human life. Additionally, Rausch (2003) states that, “Each human being is created in the image of God, and therefore each human life is sacred and may never be treated as a means. A consequence is that everything in the economic and political realm must be judged in light of whether

it protects or undermines human dignity.” He offers a powerful conclusion when he explains, “This is the foundational principle of Catholic social thought” (p. 164). The Second Vatican Council refers to the words of Jesus at the final judgment scene in Matthew’s gospel when it reflects on human dignity: “As you did it for the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt. 25: 40). Speaking of human dignity, the Council Fathers explain, “Everyone should look upon his neighbour (without any exception) as another self... Today there is an inescapable duty to make ourselves the neighbour of every man, no matter who he is” (*Gaudium et spes* # 27). This principle, therefore, highlights the value, sacredness, and importance of each and every human life without exceptions.

A second relevant idea of CST is the preferential option for the poor which asks individuals and society to keep the needs of those marginalized at the forefront of all decisions made. Reflecting on their situation in the United States, the US Catholic bishops (1986) offered the following comments on the option for the poor, “As followers of Christ, we are challenged to make a fundamental "option for the poor" to speak for the voiceless, to defend the defenceless, to assess life styles, policies, and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor.” The bishops continue, “As Christians, we are called to respond to the needs of all our brothers and sisters, but those with the greatest needs require the greatest response” (# 16). In other words, this principle encourages individuals, families, groups, and governments to put the needs of our most impoverished and needy first. Those who are in the direst situations ought to be considered in a preferred status due to their serious need and the moral obligations that arise because of their situation.

The third important principle is the concept of solidarity, which describes the interdependence of all people as one human family. This term describes humanity as one united body of brothers and sisters. In his encyclical letter, *On Social Concern* (1987), John Paul II described solidarity as, “not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all” (# 38). Not only does this principle assert a bond between all, it affirms that the rights and needs of some are a duty for others. Additionally, when considering individualism and the rejection of solidarity in his *Gospel of Life* (1995), John Paul II offers this additional reflection,

Another root of this contradiction between affirmation and practice lies in a notion of freedom that exalts the individual in an absolute way giving no place to solidarity, openness to others, or service of them, asking like Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Yes, human beings are their brother's and sister's keepers. God entrusts us to one another. Our freedom has a relational dimension; we find our fulfillment through the gift of self to others (# 19).

The principle of solidarity demands that the bonds of family be extended to wider human community. This sense of universal brother and sisterhood brings with it specific moral demands. Not only does it encourage a different perspective on the connection between people around the globe, it calls all people to act on behalf of our family members in need.

The concept of the common good is the final characteristic of CST related to service to others. From this perspective, we are called to serve others by developing conditions conducive to the good of the whole human person. The common good derives from a Catholic understanding that the human person is a composite of body, mind and

soul. We are called to care for each element of the human person and seek to promote the good of the whole human person. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) defines common good as, “the sum total of social conditions which allow people... to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily” (# 1906). Additionally, the Catechism of the Catholic Church offers three essential parts to the common good: respect for the human person, social well being and development, and peace (# 1907-1909). Rausch (2003) adds that the common good, “Rejects the individualist bias of modern secular society which privileges individual rights at the expense of the good of community” (164).

Although this is a very brief overview of a complex subject, the criteria for service to others should be clearer. This service should respect the dignity of the human person, be focused on the needs of the poor and marginalized, demonstrate the common humanity between the server and the served, and promote social conditions for a better life of those in need. Robert Coles (2001) speaks eloquently of moral leadership when he describes the lives of people who have made an extraordinary difference in the world. One particular phrase is powerfully used to articulate his vision of moral leadership. Coles explains this leadership as an instance, “in which a person showed himself or herself to stand for something, even be determined to stand up to others, stand against them (p. 173). By defending their dignity, sharing their common humanity, giving preference to those in need, and by promoting the common good, the participants, using Cole’s phrase are “standing” in service of those in need.

Many people do indeed provide exemplary service to others, and this study examined the lives of two of them. Participant 1 (P1) is a religious sister who worked to help establish a very important inner city social justice foundation, eventually serving as

its co-director. P1 and several colleagues moved to the inner city of her hometown and planted seeds for the eventual opening of the foundation. In addition to her service at this foundation, P1 currently works with a variety of organizations that focus on helping those who are in need. She is on the board of directors for several foundations. Additionally, P1 founded, and is on the board of directors for an organization working to assist women recovering from chemical dependency. She is a recipient of an Honorary Doctorate in Divinity from a university. When given this award, she was recognized for her outstanding dedication to the youth of the city, her perseverance, and for the example she has provided to others. Furthermore, P1 received national recognition for her dedication to others when she was honoured by a national news magazine.

Participant 2 (P2) is the founder of an organization determined to make a significant difference in the lives of the poor. As a young man, P2 left a comfortable life and a possible career as a professional athlete to work and live with the poor. Currently, P2's group works in several countries. In one particular country, P2's group has established an orphanage, a project to fight intestinal worms, a therapeutic feeding centre for malnourished children, a school, a community centre, and a group dedicated to assisting abandoned children with AIDS. P2's goal is to provide medicine to fight intestinal worms to the entire infected population of several countries. His work there has already helped over twenty thousand people. This organization has established homes in several countries to help orphans addicted to glue sniffing. Because of his outstanding dedication to those in need, P2 was recently recognized by a major news provider.

Now that the thesis objectives and the participants have been introduced, we will move into an analysis of the relevant data on expert performance theory, educational

objectives, and the framework used for the study. Following this will be a description of the research design and method of analysis. Finally, the findings of the study and the discussion, conclusions, and recommendations will bring the thesis to a close.

## 2 Review of Literature and Conceptual Framework

### **Review of Literature**

In this review of the relevant literature, I will provide an overview of the two central components of this investigation. First, I will provide a brief overview of the goals of education as seen from an educational administration perspective. Secondly, I will proffer a short review of expert performance studies and also of the theoretical framework that will instruct this study, namely, Ericsson's model of deliberate practice.

Within educational administration, there are vastly different perspectives when it comes to articulating the mission of schooling. One does not need to look beyond the issue of school testing to see how great a divide there is within educational circles.

William Ouchi (2003), for example, asserts that the way to successful school transformation is found in "good data from standardized tests" (p. 139). People like Wolk, however, decry our current system and its focus on testing arguing that we are preparing robots and workers, not human beings. Wolk (2007) demands that "We must deeply question the schools and the curricula we have; we must ask what it means to be educated and what it means to be human" (p. 650).

It would be difficult to determine if a school or student were successful, if we did not articulate to some degree the purpose or mission of education. However, it might be best to speak of the purposes or missions of education when dealing with the mission of our contemporary schools. This is a hotly debated issue. Some, like Wolk (2007), critique our "textbook driven curricula" and rightly connect the question of what it means to be educated, with the question of what it means to be human (p. 650). Wolk asks if we want to educate our students to be workers, or if our vision of education can rise above the

question of future employment. It must be admitted that the eventual employment status of students is important. However, Wolk provides a meaningful list of themes that ought to be central to education that do not seem to play as important a role as they should. Rather than outcomes that relate more specifically to economic growth, Wolk's list includes love for learning, learning about the self, social responsibility, caring and empathy, and global awareness as underemphasized goals of education.

Goldberg & Morrison (2003) seem to agree with Wolk in terms of the diverse goals of education. Although they seem to more readily accept that economic interests do influence educational mission and identity, Goldberg & Morrison (2003) articulate three general purposes of education: lifelong learning, productive work, and responsible citizenship (p. 61). Like Wolk, these authors emphasize the need to go much further than school being a place of memorizing facts; rather, they situate a school's mission in terms of preparing students to live responsibility within a democracy as well as being able to work toward the common good for all. For Goldberg & Morrison (2003) each of these goals falls within the general mission of schools to develop human capital (skills) and social capital (building relationships of trust) (p. 62). Although the acquisition of new knowledge and skills that will help students achieve their employment and financial goals is vital, this investigation has focused primarily on promoting the mission of education in terms of social capital. The focus is on the type of people we are educating students to become. Wolk (2007) asks a pressing question about the focus in education when he asks what can be more important to the health of a democracy than educating caring citizens (p. 653). The timing is urgent. As mentioned above, it seems as though our respect for others has not been getting better. Interestingly, after asking what could be more

important than educating a caring citizenry, Wolk (2007) continues that “It certainly seems that the more ‘civilized’ we become as a species, the more brutal we become as people. What does the 21st century hold in store for us? Will we survive? What are schools doing to improve our chances?” (p. 653). This thesis has approached educational administration and the goals of education with these questions in mind.

In addition to a brief overview of where this thesis fits in relation to the mission of education, it will be helpful to provide an introduction to expert performance theory. The study of expert performance is as complex and diverse as any other field. Even in terms of a definition of expertise, there is a great variety of responses. For Mieg (2001), expertise can be rightly applied to persons who are outstanding within a domain (p. 3). Further, these people are distinguished from non-experts in terms of either knowledge or experience. An academic, for example, could have knowledge expertise without much personal experience within a particular domain, whereas a performer would gain his or her expertise through extended periods of practice. It is important to note, however, that an academic would have obtained personal experience in terms of the normal practices within the domain of that particular subject area (intense research, publication, political understanding, and so forth).

Additionally, Leithwood & Steinbach (1995) define an expert in contrast to a novice within the same domain rather than in comparison to a member of a general population. This is a significant distinction within expert studies. In his study of expert problem solving principals, Leithwood defines an expert as one who could be classified as highly effective when compared with other administrators within that particular domain (pp. 42-43). However, Leithwood & Steinbach (1995) do admit that the selection

of the sample of the respondents in this particular study (p. 42) did not rely on any single method that could be considered “sufficiently robust to be relied upon exclusively” (p. 42). Leithwood & Steinbach (1995) do caution that it would be a mistake to substitute ‘effective’ for ‘expert’ since expert should be more reflective of skills and knowledge rather than simply achieving desired outcomes (p. 12). Interestingly, however, Leithwood & Steinbach (1995) do utilize effectiveness in their selection of their expert problem solvers. They use two criteria to identify leaders as expert problem solvers. First, two central administrators were asked to identify leaders as “highly effective.” Secondly, those deemed highly effective decision makers were subjected to a set of tests conducted through interviews (p. 42). Those who measured up to these two criteria were labelled as experts because they performed at a level deemed “expert” by those carrying out the study.

Mieg (2001) describes this as “outstanding performance” expertise (p. 4) rather than professional expertise. For Mieg, professional expertise is determined when one compares an expert to a member of the general population. A physician, for example, would be classified as a medical expert in light of the intense specialized training that he or she has endured. Therefore, when compared to the average citizen (and not other practitioners within this domain) he or she is an expert. Thus, we see an important distinction introduced into the very definition of expertise. We can speak of *professional expertise* where there are clear and established criteria to obtain expert status.

Additionally, some (but not all) of these professions lack any discernible competition in which the top performers within the domain could be determined. The clearly established criteria can be seen in some sports like hockey or football where professional and non-

professional leagues exist. A person either played in a professional hockey league or did not. In other fields, such as medicine and law, established norms and standards exist to divide professional from non-professional. However, fields like teaching or school administration do not always have clear distinctions of outstanding performance when compared to a domain such as golf, chess, or darts. Rather, domains such as these frequently, but not always use certification as evidence of meeting performance standards. Therefore, the expert status of these fields is based on attaining professional status or certification rather than through competition and performance.

Chi (2006) distinguishes two general ways of defining expertise. The first is referred to as “relative expertise.” This type of expertise is grounded in proficiency level relative to others in the domain (p. 22). Experts are those within a domain who have reached a certain level of performance or knowledge relative to those who are less experienced and successful within the domain. Chi (2006) explains that the level of proficiency can be determined by academic qualifications, seniority, years of experience, or through the consensus of peers within the domain (pp. 22-23). Within this framework, experts are those who have “acquired more knowledge in a domain” and because of this, the “differences in the performance of experts and non-experts are determined by the differences in the way their knowledge is represented” (Chi, 2006, p. 23). For Chi, (2006) the use of the term expert in this framework can be used with less precision because it speaks of the performance of those on one end of a continuum relative to others in the domain (p. 23).

Secondly, Chi (2006) also speaks of “absolute expertise” in regards to those who are, simply put, truly exceptional (p. 21). These experts can be recognized through

retrospective means (which musical composer has been played most often), or by some type of rating system (as used in chess or other direct competitions). Chi (2006) describes this type of expert when she explains, “this approach studies the remarkable few to understand how they are distinguished from the masses” (p. 22). Differing from the relative experts, Chi (2006) characterizes the abilities of this group as being related to innate and genetic capabilities, rather than only training (p. 22).

In addition to the professional and outstanding performance distinction, there is another important area of expertise. Agnew, Ford, and Hayes (1997) assert that one’s *role* ought to be the determinant of expertise. They hold that if you function as an expert to a particular group, your role as an expert solidifies your status. Remarkably, they ask why expert status is not offered to people who play roles as varied as television evangelist and small motor mechanic (p. 219). Mieg (2001) also speaks of relative expertise which is demonstrated in the daily practice of being in the know about certain things. He points to the example that someone in each family will know how to fix things as well as a person in an organization who knows “everything and everyone” (p. 8). These forms of expertise could conceivably be a result of extended experience and hard work, but would also clearly not enjoy a professional – non-professional distinction.

Leithwood & Steinbach (1995) offer a final comment and a useful definition of expertise. First, they point out that experts should be expected to fail from time to time. They rightly point out that expert hitters in baseball are only expected to hit in the range of 30-40% of pitches, while we would not accept that range of success from airline pilots. Additionally, they explain that domain specific expectations vary extensively from field to field. Therefore it is the “accumulated record of accomplishment” (p. 13) rather than

the individual successes or failures that determine expert status. It is logical to consider the varied domains in determining expertise because of the circumstances and different level of control one has over the desired outcomes within a specific domain. Leithwood & Steinbach (1995) amusingly comment, “Therefore baseball batters, teachers, and many types of medical practitioners are judged by relatively low standards of goal accomplishment because pitchers, families, and God are considered to be worthy challengers to their control” (p. 13). Finally, Leithwood & Steinbach (1995) offer a useful definition of expertise that will help shape our understanding of expertise. They use three criteria to determine expert status in research studies:

- A) the possession of complex knowledge and skill;
- B) its reliable application in actions intended to accomplish generally endorsed goal states; and
- C) a record of goal accomplishment, as a consequence of those actions, which meets standards appropriate for the occupation or field of practice, as judged by clients or other experts in the field.

### Conceptual Framework

Does Tiger Woods have anything to teach school administrators? Can famed musician Paganini, chess master Capablanca, and others who achieve superior levels of expertise offer a model that can be used in the field of education? What, if anything can successful athletes, scholars, and performers offer to the domain of education? The purpose of this study was to test the applicability of K. Anders Ericsson’s theory of the attainment of expert performance through deliberate practice on those who demonstrate a superior level of achievement in terms of service to others. That is, can the behaviours of

those who demonstrate this type of superior performance be attributed to a system of deliberate practice?

Psychologist K. Anders Ericsson's, (Conradi Eminent Scholar and Professor at Florida State University) model was selected for this research because of his impressive publication record and his international reputation as a leading authority on expertise and expert performance. Additionally, there seemed to be a logical correlation between Ericsson's studies of experts in domains such as musical performance and growth in many other domains such as spiritual or moral growth. In our personal correspondence (January 7, 2008) Ericsson encouraged this study and expressed his desire to see how the results relate to his theory (see Appendix VI). Those in the field of expert studies look to Ericsson's model as a foundation for their further studies. After decades of observing superior achievement through domains as diverse as hockey, typing, surgery, chess, and musical mastery, Ericsson (2002) has advanced a theory to explain how some individuals transcend the levels of performance that even very motivated individuals cannot attain. The two people participating in this study are those who have demonstrated a level of service to others that is not normally matched by the general public. These people have demonstrated a level of "expert performance" in their dedication to and service to others.

As mentioned above, this work tested Ericsson's theory within the domain of service to others in order to gain insight that can be used to direct school administration to more actively promote the dignity of human life through service to others. Although a brief overview of Eriksson's work was provided when discussing the theoretical framework, it will be helpful to offer a short review of Ericsson's work in context of the expert performance literature before moving to a detailed analysis of his framework.

There are two characteristics of Ericsson's theory of expert performance that ought to be mentioned in a review of his theory. First, unlike some scholars, Ericsson downplays the role of genetics in the attainment of expertise. Secondly, he asserts that it is not simply experience that creates experts, rather, only specific types of experience.

Unlike others, Ericsson does not attribute much relevance to the role of genetics within expert performance. As the result of his observations of high achieving British families in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Galton (1979) concluded that the capacity for excellence was hereditary (p. 39). More recently, Brown & Mahoney (1984) described important physical characteristics of elite athletes as almost all "determined by heredity" (p. 609). Ericsson, on the other hand, holds that hereditary characteristics do not play an important role even in domains of athletic excellence. Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Romer (1993) argue that there is no evidence that genetic traits influence excellence except height (which can be beneficial for sports like basketball, while being a hindrance for gymnastics), pitch recognition in some musicians, and the ability of some expert typists to tap their fingers at a more rapid pace (p. 365). Even in terms of youth who demonstrate extraordinary talent, Ericsson et al. (1993) dismiss the role that innate characteristics play in accounting for achievement. They explain that the support of parents, environmental factors, and early training are more relevant to superior accomplishment at a young age, rather than heredity. Ericsson et al. (1993) assert that the search for "stable heritable characteristics that could predict or at least account for the superior performance of eminent individuals has been surprisingly unsuccessful" (p. 365).

In addition to the difference of thought in relation to inherited talent, there is also difference of opinion concerning the role of experience in the accomplishment of

expertise. It is evident to most that a great deal of practice is a significant factor in the acquisition of expertise. In some fields, it is the accumulation of years of experience that determines one's status as expert. Additionally, in many professional fields, salary is determined by years of experience (teaching, for example). Chase & Simon (1973) assert that at least ten years is required for chess players (as well as experts in most other domains) to attain master status. Although Ericsson et al. (1993) do frequently make reference to the ten year rule (e.g., p. 366), they explain that the "belief that a sufficient amount of experience or practice leads to maximal performance appears incorrect" (1993 p. 366). Many of us could name a golfer or other recreational athlete who has played for longer than ten years and may have worked very hard to develop his or her skill. This type of practice, which Ericsson (2006) labels "mindless, routine performance and playful engagement" (p. 692), does not correlate with outstanding performance. Ericsson holds that it is not genetics and neither is it simply extended periods of experience. Rather, Ericsson advances the concept of deliberate practice to account for expert performance. Important to note is that Ericsson et al. (1993) do not seem to hold to a strict definition of expert. Rather, they explain that it is different for each domain, and that the criteria of expert performance are constantly developing (p. 366).

Ericsson's influence in the scholarly study of expertise cannot be overstated. Not only does his publication record and position in an endowed chair speak to the respected position he enjoys, additionally, the number of citations to his work demonstrate the respect he commands in the field of expert studies. Two brief examples of recent citations help to illustrate this. In his recent article on genius for *New Scientist* magazine, Dobbs (2006) looks to the research of Ericsson as his principal source. Likewise, in his recent

article for *Scientific American*, Phillip Ross (2006) cites Ericsson to articulate the importance of effortful study (deliberate practice). These and other writers and scholars routinely use Ericsson's model to articulate the best research in the field of expert studies.

Ericsson's model has been used with frequency in many studies related to expertise. Mieg (2001), for example, uses Ericsson's work to define expert (p. 3) and his theoretical framework to explain the importance of deliberate practice, feedback, and training (p. 24). Proctor & Vu (2006) use the model to advance the ten year rule for expertise (p. 266) while Lehmann & Gruber (2006) use this model to argue against the biological nature of expertise (p. 458) as well as to advance Ericsson's thoughts on goal setting (p. 464).

In addition to the frequency of the model being used, Ericsson's research methods are employed by a variety of researchers. Leithwood & Steinbach (1995) discuss Ericsson's research methods in regards to verbal reporting (p. 15), data collection (p. 89), and interview processes (p. 259). Sosniak (2006) makes use of Ericsson's research methods when describing retrospective interviewing. Deakin, Cote, & Harvey (2006) are also indebted to Ericsson's research methods, employing his strategies from the studies at the Music Academy of West Berlin in their own research (p. 306-307).

For Ericsson (2002), expert performance does not just mean excellence in a field. Rather, he defines it as, "consistently superior achievement in the core activities of a domain..." (p. 5). Normally, expertise is not found in people without at least ten years of focused and extended practice (p. 9) even though some argue that it is inherited gifts that determine superior performance, not extended hard work. For the purpose of this study, I

speak of the participants as expert performers in their field. In particular, the domain that is being investigated is that of service to others.

Although many people debate the role of our natural innate gifts and the choices made by us and for us, Ericsson (2002) attributes superior performance to what he calls “deliberate practice” (p. 30). According to Ericsson, most people reach basic levels of performance only because they do not engage in deliberate practice. Briefly, by deliberate practice, Ericsson (2002) means, active and intentional work focused on going beyond one’s current abilities (p. 13) or “extended amounts of designated deliberate practice over many years” (Ericsson, 2006, p. 699). A new golfer, for example may only strive for growth until he or she reaches the level of his or her golf partners. Once the new golfer reaches that comfortable and acceptable level, the golfer will move to a state of automation where a levelling off of skill will take place as he or she is not pushing actively for continued growth any more (Ericsson, 2002, p. 10). In this case, the amount of time spent playing or practicing an activity is not the central issue since a recreational golfer may have more experience than a young elite golfer. Rather, for Ericsson (2002), “the attainment of expert performance requires an extended period of high-level deliberate practice...” (p. 15).

While it was mentioned above, it is important to articulate Ericsson’s model of deliberate practice. For Ericsson the road to expert performance is unambiguous. “Our clear assumption” he asserts, “is that the amount of time an individual is engaged in deliberate practice activities is monotonically [causally] related to that individual’s acquired performance” (Ericsson et al., 1993, p. 368). Additionally, Ericsson (2006) explains that the “core assumption[s]” of deliberate practice are that it occurs gradually

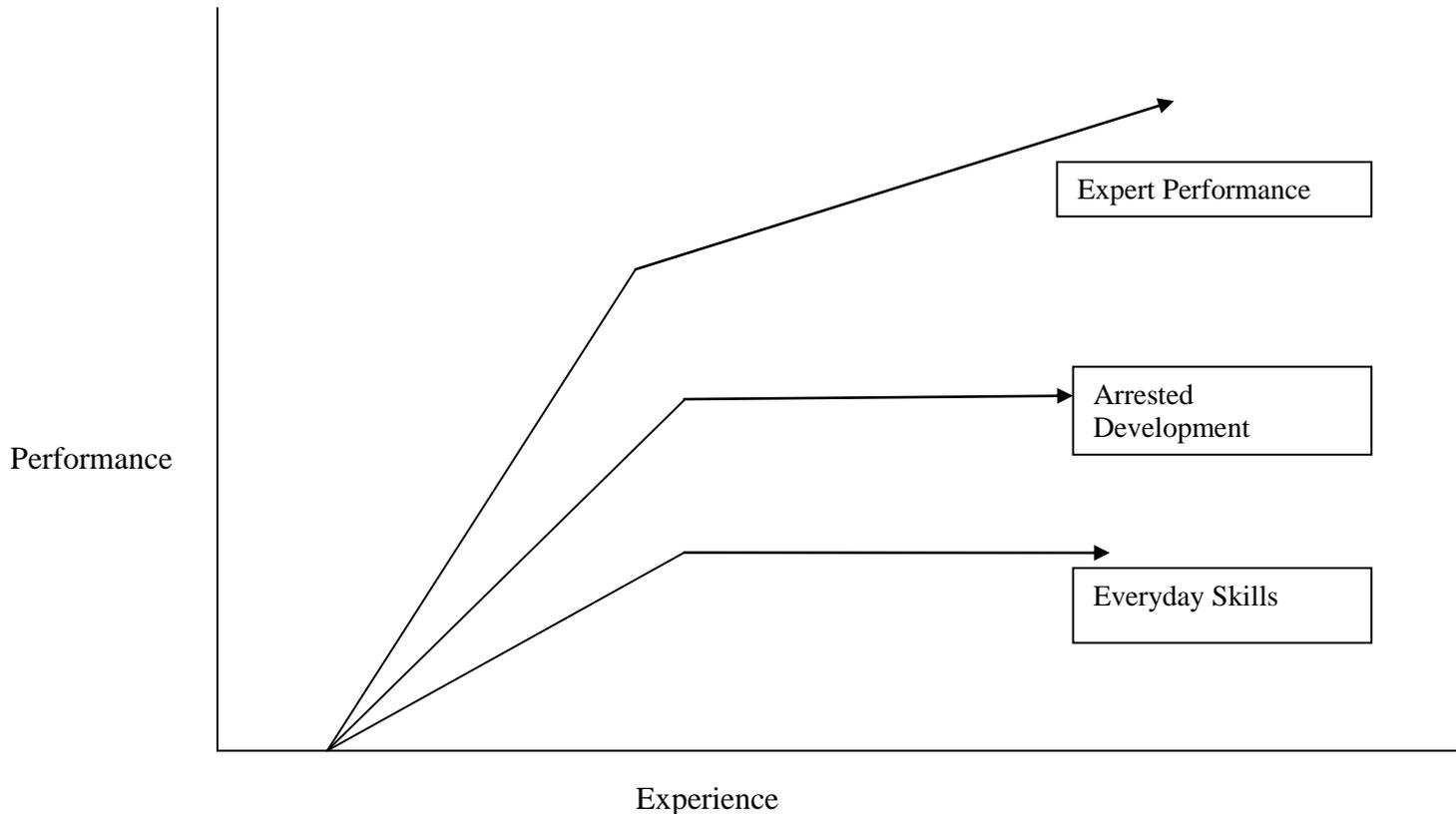
over an extended period of time, that a coach normally oversees and monitors suitable and adequate training tasks that take a person beyond the current level of attainment, that there is critical feedback, and that by using the feedback and suitable training tasks the expert in training makes use of focused attention (p. 692). Thus, the following characteristics of Ericsson's model function as the focus of this study. For Ericsson (2007), deliberate practice is characterized by (p. 692-698):

1. Incremental and gradual improvements,
2. The use of training tasks and strategies that take the performer outside of the current capacities,
3. Focused attention to eliminate automaticity (p. 694), and
4. The use of coaches or mentors to help set goals, design training tasks to accomplish goals, and to provide meaningful feedback.

Figure 1 (below) articulates the different results attained by expert performers when compared with others who do not attain that status. The dramatic rise at the beginning of all three levels demonstrates the early phase of a skill development. After a short period of skill development, people can begin to lapse into a stage of automation. At this time, those who are interested in a basic or satisfactory ability stop developing. In the second level, some people will give more effort, and become even more accomplished than those at the ordinary skill level. However, their discontinuation of deliberate practice will take them to a stage of "arrested development" where they, like the first group, end their struggle to grow. The top group, which illustrates expert performance, shows how these people will continue to improve because they reject automation (they never say 'good enough'). Expert performers, therefore, continue to use

the core elements of deliberate practice to keep them moving towards continual improvement.

Figure 1 Graph Showing the Correlation Between Levels of Performance Over Time and use of Deliberate Practice (Adapted from Ericsson, 1993, 363)



Along with Chase & Simon (1973), Ericsson et al. (1993) explain that expertise in a domain normally takes at least ten years to develop (p. 368). Even in the case of apparent prodigies, Ericsson et al. (1993) believe that they normally excel as a result of early parental support and through extended deliberate practice (p. 365). The length of time needed to excel at an outstanding level demonstrates the necessity of deliberate practice. It is through a lengthy period of extending one's boundaries using intentional strategies that one develops to the point of being seen as an expert. Thus it is only after about a decade of consistently being pushed beyond one's capacities that one arrives at a level that can be considered expert. His research has found that it takes this period for a

person to reach a level of international recognition. In a research study with violinists at the Music Academy of West Berlin, Ericsson et al. (1993) found that there was a significant difference between the students selected by their teachers as the ones to most likely have careers as international soloists and the others at the Academy. By age eighteen, the best students had spent an average of 7410 hours of intense practice, compared with the students ranked as “good” who had accumulated 5301 hours (p. 379). These hours of intense practice had taken place within the ten years of dedicated practice it took to reach the skill level needed to be admitted to this advanced music academy (p. 374). Similar results were found in his study of pianists at the same academy. The findings indicated that the experts had amassed 19.1 years of formal instruction compared to the 9.9 years of amateurs. In addition, coaching had a very significant impact. The experts averaged 4.7 instructors, while amateurs had studied with only three instructors (1993, p. 382).

In addition to the length of time needed to achieve outstanding performance, Ericsson also emphasizes the importance of coaching. Within this framework, the typical expert begins an activity in youth, having been introduced to the activity by parents or another person close to him or her, and then someone noticing a skill level that sets him or her apart from the peer group. At this point, people who demonstrate outstanding promise will find a coach capable of helping him or her arrive at the next level. In his study of expert pianists, Ericsson et al. (1993) found that there had been “considerable efforts to seek out the very best musical teachers during their musical development (p. 380). Coaches help to provide individualized instruction (Cote, Ericsson & Law, 2005, p. 6), design and implement effective training strategies, and offer feedback to those in

training. These strategies include the “planning, analysis, execution, and monitoring of performance” (Ericsson, 2005, p. 698). Ultimately, once experts reach the highest levels of international achievement, they become able to monitor themselves offering meaningful and critical feedback based on their own performances.

Besides the importance of coaches in deliberate practice, Ericsson explains that the types of activities used to practice within the domain are paramount. It is not the hours of experience alone that makes experts; rather, it is deliberate, focused activities that incorporate domain specific strategies into the process of incremental growth. For Ericsson (2002), these activities are characterized by: specific goals that take a person beyond his or her own capacity in the domain, extended periods of intense activity, the design to promote incremental improvement in the domain, and the use of mentors to offer critical feedback (p. 11).

Two final elements help to distinguish deliberate practice, feedback and focus. Feedback has been mentioned, but needs to be reemphasized. Ericsson (2006) explains that individualized feedback is essential because it allows one’s practice to directly lead to the actual acquisition of skills that help one develop in the domain (p. 694). This is because people must use “adequate strategies” in order to advance from their already existing talent level (Ericsson et al., 1993, p. 367). The idea is that people who practice using flawed methods will repeat their flawed performance. Individualized feedback given immediately from an informed coach is an essential element of deliberate practice. Finally, focus is a central part of deliberate practice. Ericsson et al. (1993) explain that people who lack specific focus and find themselves in an “enjoyable state of effortless mastery” (p. 368) will not develop. He compares this to recreational athletes who find a

groove and stay in the groove (better described as a rut). This type of behaviour described as “cruise control” or “automation” is the enemy of expertise. Ericsson compares this to tying one’s shoes or casual driving where one does not improve because one does not shake oneself out of the automatic response. Rather, Ericsson (2006) explains that,

The key challenge for aspiring expert performers is to avoid the arrested development associated with automaticity and to acquire cognitive skills to support their continued learning and improvement. By actively seeking out demanding tasks – often provided by teachers and coaches – that force the performers to engage in problem solving and to stretch their performance, the expert performers overcome the detrimental effects of automaticity and actively acquire and refine cognitive mechanisms to support continued learning and improvement (p. 694).

A final word about deliberate practice will allow us to conclude this review of Ericsson’s work. Although a minor part of his theory, it is important to note that the strategic activities of deliberate practice are normally not enjoyable. These intense practices require great effort and are completed as a means to improve, not as a means of play (Ericsson et al., 1993, p. 371).

These characteristics define what is meant by deliberate practice in Ericsson’s theoretical framework and will thus be used to determine the relevance of his model to those in the domain of extraordinary service to others. This will be carried out by asking two questions. First, does Ericsson’s framework of deliberate practice leading to expert performance fit high achieving (expert) humanitarians (a domain which lacks some of the clear standards of other expert fields)? Secondly, if deliberate practice does seem to provide a useful method of encouraging people to serve those in need, how can this theory be used by school administrators? It is my contention that a lived concern for others is a central goal of education. Thus, the study will ask if Ericsson’s theory of expert performance can be used to help educational administrators form students who

will demonstrate high levels of achievement in the domain of service to others (respect for the human person). Flescher and Worthen (2007) articulate this well when they ask “Are heroes and saints, for example, born heroic and saintly, or did they become so through repetition and effort?” (p. 49). The lives of the participants will be evaluated based on Ericsson’s model. In other words, this study will ask if educators can apply the methods used to train expert achievers in other domains to “train” people to work for the good of those in need.

### 3 Methodology

#### Design and Identification of Interviewees

In order to test K. Anders Ericsson's theory of deliberate practice in the achievement of expert performance, the lives of those who have reached a level of expertise in their service to others were studied. This was done in order to focus on the research question of the applicability of Ericsson's model in the domain of service and its applicability to the field of education. In certain fields there are clear and definitive experts. In a marathon, golf championship, or sprint, one person can be named champion based on his or her performance within comparable standardized conditions. In other fields, superior performance is not always so evident. In many scholarly fields, athletic events (figure skating for example), or in fields where artistic performance is judged by peers (acting), there can be great differences of opinion in relation to superior performance. In regards to humanitarian service, the determination of superior performance lacks the clear standard or judgment found in some sports. Praise and acknowledgment for these people are more clearly related to that of a figure skater or actor. They are normally recognized by a group of persons with a great knowledge of the particular domain. However, a great deal of bias can enter into the acknowledgement of humanitarians based on the type of service being provided as well as the people being served. People on different ends of the political spectrum would differ drastically when selecting an "expert humanitarian." Determining who demonstrates superior performance in terms of service to others is not a question that is easily determined by external criteria.

Admittedly it is very difficult to offer objective criteria to choose a person who has demonstrated extraordinary service to others. However, informed by my reading of

the relevant literature, I used the following criteria to identify and select for study the two expert performers.

- A. They have demonstrated service to others that clearly “transcend[s] a level of performance that we and other people in our immediate environment could attain” (Ericsson, 2002, 4).
- B. They have had their service to others acknowledged by some significant group or community.
- C. They have been active in some type of service for an extended period (generally close to ten years).
- D. They are able, and willing to articulate their own growth in regards to their own service.

P1 and P2 both meet the criteria outlined above. Each of them has demonstrated a dedication to those in need that clearly transcends the norm. Both have been recognized for their outstanding service to those in need, and have both committed themselves to others in an extraordinary manner for an extended period of time.

Additionally, I employed a framework of purposeful sampling to identify participants. This is justified since I want to study exemplary responses to human needs. These two people were not randomly chosen from the population; rather, they are shining examples of service to others. I selected the participants from a context of extraordinary volunteering in order to select what Patton (2002) describes as “information-rich cases” (p. 230). The rationale for this is the desire to do a project that would look deeply at the lives of a few people in order to test Ericsson’s theory of deliberate practice in human achievement. It is much more difficult to designate someone as an expert performer in

service than to determine an expert achiever in golf or chess. However, awards such as honorary degrees and citations are given by organizations and nations to pay tribute to those who have reached extraordinary levels of achievement. The study analyzed P1 and P2, two people who have clearly achieved a superior level of achievement in the domain of service to others. Ericsson (2006), however, notes that depending on the domain, experts are not able to demonstrate their outstanding performance on demand in laboratories (p. 13). Thus it can be very difficult, not only to reliably label someone an expert, but also to measure and analyse. However, I described the achievements and criteria used to select the participants in a clear manner regardless of the difficulty involved in measurement and analysis.

Both of these participants will remain anonymous in this thesis in order to protect their identities as well as the identities of all of the groups with which the participants are associated. This allowed the participants to be honest about their family, friends, and work associates without worry of what others might think. The participants were invited to take part in the study through a letter (see Appendix V for letters and research instruments). In their reply to the request for participation, P1 and P2 provided the names of a mentor and a person who had long term knowledge of the participant's work. All of these people were formally invited to participate in the project through letters. At the completion of the transcription and data analysis, all interviewees were provided the data transcription as well as the relevant sections of the analysis for their comments. None of the interviewees responded to offer any negative comments or to ask for changes.

P1 and P2, in Ericsson's terms, (2002) "clearly transcend a level of performance that we and people in our immediate environment could attain" (p. 4). These individuals

clearly stand out in this regard. Although not a sign that they live a perfect life in all respects, the attention that these people have received has demonstrated the high regard people have for their actions. I have selected these individuals for several reasons. First, the vision of these individuals is extraordinary. They have stood among the poor, saw concrete solutions, and are working to bring them about. P1's organization has brought countless people together and has made a concrete difference in the lives of many of the city's youth. Additionally, many other people have been inspired by the vision and example of P1. P2's organization has already provided deworming medication for over twenty-thousand people in addition to the several orphanages, and homes established to help those in need in [several countries]. Secondly, the participants have demonstrated particular respect for the dignity of these people in their sustained and superior level of humanitarian work. Finally, the actions of these participants have distinguished themselves through their practices. Their actions demonstrate not only a vision of respect for the dignity of others; moreover, their vision moves them to extraordinary accomplishment in practice.

Both participants have given to others in extraordinary ways that transcends the norm and have been recognized as such by significant organizations. They are exemplary models of humanitarian "expertise" and provide examples of the incredible capacity we have to promote the dignity of others.

Two additional sources, other than the participants were interviewed to gather data about each of the study participants. The participants were asked to provide the name of a close friend or relative who has direct knowledge of the participant's growth (F1 and F2) as well as a person they would identify as a mentor (M1 and M2). I provided

the following criteria to each participant and asked them to select the additional interviewees:

- A) The interviewee will have known the participant for an extended period of time (hopefully at least ten years),
- B) The interviewee will have personal knowledge of the participant's history of service,
- C) The interviewee is able and willing to speak about the participant's development into a person of service, and
- D) The interviewee will have functioned as a coach or mentor to the participant's growth in service to others. This would have been the one who was sought out for feedback, advice on how to accomplish tasks, or other types of assistance.

Once these names were provided, I invited these people to participate in the study by being interviewed (see recruitment letters in Appendix V). The friend and mentor had the opportunity to decline the interview. Both the original participant and the friend (F) and mentor (M) were offered an opportunity to review these interview transcripts in order to comment upon the accuracy of the interviews, or to decline to have the interviews included in the research. No requests for changes or omissions were received.

The rationale is that the study of two participants will allow for a greater depth of information while keeping the research and analysis reasonable. A study of more than two participants would limit my ability to gather relevant data as more than two participants would multiply the number of interviewees, since data were collected from two additional people for each study participant. Further, more than two participants would limit my ability to get a deeper picture of the presence of deliberate practice activities in the participant's past (and current practice). Since the study asked if the high

achievement of the participants' service to others can be traced to Ericsson's theory of deliberate practice, the depth of data from two participants were more useful to consider the characteristics of Ericsson's theory of expert performance than a more superficial study of more participants.

The participants, friends, and mentors remained anonymous in this study. Additionally, their organizational affiliation was disguised, and even the countries in which they work was concealed. The data were gathered using a recording device that did not identify them physically. I did not use their proper names in interviews, and they are referred to by pseudonyms in the reporting of the data. Finally, during the research phase, all data were stored in a locked file, and when the study is completed; all recorded interviews and transcripts will be destroyed. Dissemination of findings could compromise confidentiality if the participant's names, organizational affiliations, and the groups they work with are not properly disguised. I have changed all of these possible means of revealing their identities, as well as offered the participants the opportunity to receive a copy of the report in order to eliminate any possible breaches of confidentiality.

### **Use of Retrospective Interviews in the Collection of Data**

The purpose of the research mentioned above determined many of the decisions made in terms of sampling strategies and data collection. First of all, I analyzed two cases to test Ericsson's conceptual framework in relation to service using retrospective interviews of six people. For Sosniak (2006), retrospective interviews are biographical studies that allow the researcher, within his or her own framework to "mine [the] life experiences" of the interviewee (p. 288). Retrospective interviews were employed in the conversations with the two participants, as well as a mentor for each, and a close friend or

relative for each. The interviews took between three and four hours for each participant, and about one hour with each other interviewee. The interviews with participant one (P1) were completed over four-one hour phone calls. The interview with P2 was completed in one face to face interview that lasted almost three hours. The remainder of the interviews took place over the telephone for about one hour each.

The interviews were carried out based on availability. I was able to physically meet both participants. However, the interviews with P1 took place over the phone, while P2 was interviewed face to face. Both of the F interviews also took place over the phone in one hour segments. The M interview for P1 was also completed on the phone, while time permitted the interview of M2 to take place in a face to face format. When speaking of gathering information related to deliberate practice, Ericsson (2006) notes that outside of the domain of music expertise, it can be very difficult to isolate activities that “meet all the criteria of deliberate practice” (p. 692). This was the case with these interviews. Domain specific examples of deliberate practice may not be easy to identify. Nevertheless, listening to each participant, and interviewing two other people who can speak to their development was helpful.

The data were collected using open ended interview questions (see Appendix V) and were audio recorded in order to aid with the transcription of interviews. Each set of questions was created in order to draw out the four markers of Ericsson’s model. There were basic introductory questions, and then the issues of incremental improvement, training tasks, focused attention, and the use of mentors (the schedule of questions for each interview are available in Appendix V) were introduced. Various scholars have used different methods to study expert performance. Ericsson has used retrospective

interviews (1993, 2005), diaries (1993), and talk aloud strategies (2006). Leithwood & Steinbach (1995) employ “think aloud protocols” using case studies (p. 15). In this thesis, retrospective interviews were the primary means of gathering data. The principal reason for this is that the study is focused on the performance of the participants. Unlike chess or other domains where case studies would allow for meaningful talk aloud interviews, retrospective interviews were used to see the gradual and incremental development of the lived concern for others. For Sosniak (2006) this type of research is described as an “imperfect but necessary method of research” (p. 292). These interviews provide information that would likely not be uncovered in any other way, and also provide depth as well as a long term perspective (Sosniak, 2006, p. 292). Additionally, Proctor & Vu (2006) explain that since the experts have already acquired the skill before the investigation, self reports and these types of interviews are the best type of research to use (p. 265). Further, Ericsson et al. (1993) argue for the “internal consistency” of retrospective interviews in their studies of expert musician’s practice times (p. 380).

Sosniak (2006) points out several weaknesses of retrospective interviews. She asserts that memories across the span of a person’s life (particularly if it is long) can be suspect (p. 296). Additionally, she holds that while looking back through time, researchers can be tempted to confuse “what was the case for the experts with what needs to be the case or what might be the case in other circumstances” (p. 296). However, Sosniak (2006) does admit that there is no other reasonable method to uncover much of the information that can be elicited via retrospective interviews and that these interviews also allow for prompts that can bring forth great depth of data from participants (p. 292).

Sosniak (2006) aptly asserts that “Studies concerned with the development of exceptional talent over time have little choice but to make use of retrospective interviews” (p. 292).

The interviews were all completed by me in order to build rapport and create a comfortable environment. The interview questions were offered to the participants before the interviews in order to allow them the chance to reflect upon the questions. The intention was that that this would provide more information rich interviews as it gave the participants the opportunity to recall any events, people, lessons, or other experiences that helped to bring about the expert performance. However, as Sosniak (2006) articulates, we can never collect all relevant information (p. 295). I used a prearranged schedule of questions, but also used prompts when it was judged helpful to collect any relevant information. I closed each interview with an open-ended question that allowed the participant to share any data that had not been asked. This allowed each participant to include any information that he or she thought was important to add. However, the design and data collection remained open and flexible. Each participant received a transcription of the interviews and a copy of the relevant sections of the data analysis for comments and corrections. There was no negative feedback received or changes requested from either participant.

As mentioned above, I gained access to other people with a long history with the participant in order to look for additional observations about the participant’s gradual growth into an expert performer. The intent to interview two additional people (beyond the participant) was to look for additional insight for each participant. One was a close friend or family member (F), and one was a coach or mentor to the participant (M). Ericsson (2006) holds that expertise is incremental (p. 692). Thus, the perspectives of

family or close friends in these retrospective interviews added to my understanding of the participant's gradual growth in expertise. Also, Cote, Ericsson & Law (2006) explain that the dependability of retrospective interviews can be deemed more reliable when it is supported by outside sources (coaches, parents, workout partners for athletic domains) (pp. 9-12). In addition to the participants of this study, these individuals offered critical insight into the means used to attain the superior level of achievement of service to others. The friend or family member can offer a close, personal perspective, while the person who would be seen as a coach or mentor in the person's development can offer a description from a different perspective. The "coach" will help identify characteristics of deliberate practice, such as feedback, training tasks, and focused attention. Both participants identified someone in their lives as a mentor. In one case this person was a co-worker and in a subordinate position (P1) and in the other (P2) it was a boss. This does not seem to conflict with Ericsson's model since P1 looked to the mentor in order to grow in relation to cultural understanding, relationships, and important lessons about a group of people that M1 had a unique situational expertise.

### **Method of Analysis**

As mentioned above, the basic elements of Ericsson's (2007) framework of deliberate practice are the following categories (p. 692-698):

1. Incremental and gradual improvements,
2. The use of training tasks and strategies that take the performer outside of the current capacities,
3. Focused attention to eliminate automaticity (p. 694), and

4. The use of coaches or mentors to help set goals, design training tasks to accomplish goals, and to provide meaningful feedback.

This four-point breakdown was the model used to interpret the data collected from the participants. Since these characteristics are the essence of Ericsson's model of deliberate practice, these were determined to be the criteria for the analysis of data. Each transcript was read several times and marked to match the above categories when the categories were recognized by the researcher. This same method was used to categorize the transcripts for the participants as well as the mentors and friends. It was noted in the analysis below when the criteria were collaborated by the participant as well as additional interviewee. Some of the data was difficult to put clearly in one category. There were several situations, particularly when evaluating training tasks (2) and methods of focused attention (3) that it was difficult to distinguish clearly between the two. However, in the end, I relied on Ericsson's four criteria as literally as possible and categorized in the area determined to be the best fit.

### **Limitations**

Like any study, this framework has limitations in its scope and framework. First of all, there are countless individuals and groups that could be studied as experts in service. Many other people demonstrate extraordinary respect for all people in a variety of different ways and by caring for very different groups. Not only could other people be studied, it is very difficult to define a person as "expert" in terms of service of others. There is no scholastic designation or clear measure of expertise in this regard. I understand this, but based on the extraordinary life of these people and the public regard for them, I hold that they offer very valuable insight into the amazing possibilities of the

human person for service to others. When viewed in the context of their peers, P1 and P2 demonstrate superior achievement.

There are limitations in relation to my own experience. Although I have taken part in several academic research projects and have extensive experience working with people in my seven years of teaching as well as while volunteering, I have a limited experience with interviewing participants. However, two of my recent courses on academic research, along with the two other graduate degrees I have completed, and finally the academic presentations and writing I have done have provided a suitable foundation in terms of interview skills to carry out this thesis. Additionally, it is possible that when the analysis took place that I might look for elements of deliberate practice and read into the interviews. Being aware of this issue, I had the participants read over pertinent sections of the thesis in order to offer feedback and correct any of my conclusions that did not represent their intentions.

A final limitation of the study is that it isolates one particular goal of education, while ignoring others. One might disagree with the notion that an outcome of Catholic education is encouraging students to give up security, safety, and privilege in order to work among those who are destitute. Further, one might argue that intellectual formation is the foundation of Catholic education, and that social justice and human dignity are not at the heart of the Catholic faith. Although true that this thesis can not hope to provide a thorough analysis of Catholic school mission and identity, I hope to argue in my thesis that a lack of respect for the inherent dignity of the human person is behind many of the most serious social problems of our time, and that the promotion of respect for human life is at the core of the mission of the Catholic school.

#### 4 Findings of Data

This chapter will provide detail of the relationships found when comparing Ericsson's framework and the results from the interviews. After completing the interviews with the six participants and the mentor and close friend for each participant, I analyzed the data for the characteristics of deliberate practice as outlined above. For Ericsson (2007), deliberate practice is characterized by incremental growth and gradual improvement into mastery of service to others, the use of activities that intentionally stretched the capabilities of the participant, intense focus to eliminate automaticity, and the use of a coach or mentor to gather feedback, design tasks, and to set goals (p. 692-698).

Figure 2. Correlation of Data Collected from Participants to the Four Markers of Ericsson's Model

Marker	Participant 1	Participant 2
Incremental growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of attitudes</li> <li>• Religious community</li> <li>• Moving to the inner city</li> <li>• Listening skills leading to action</li> <li>• People / administrative skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire to work with the homeless</li> <li>• Radical service to the homeless</li> <li>• International service</li> <li>• Sharp increase in practical skills</li> </ul>
Training Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jumping into projects</li> <li>• Intentional placement of self in places to encounter others</li> <li>• Serious self-reflection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living and working with mentor</li> <li>• Jumping in to difficult projects</li> <li>• Intense study</li> </ul>
Focused Attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentional listening</li> <li>• Travel</li> <li>• Religious based practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Openness to the moment</li> <li>• Openness to encouragement</li> <li>• Openness to new ideas.</li> </ul>
Use of Mentors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting goals</li> <li>• Creating tasks to help accomplish goals</li> <li>• Providing feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice</li> <li>• Creative ideas</li> <li>• Inspiration</li> <li>• Feedback</li> </ul>

The extent to which each of the participants demonstrates an alignment with Ericsson's theory will be described and analyzed in order to offer some meaningful conclusions and questions for educators in regards to the utility of deliberate practice for educating students for service for others.

### **Incremental Growth**

The two participants seem to demonstrate several different characteristics that relate to Ericsson's idea of incremental growth and gradual improvement. However, one difficulty that arose was distinguishing between the reality of gradual improvement and Ericsson's second criteria, the use of training tasks. It seemed as though a new level of growth began with a certain training task that would drive both participants outside their previous skill level. At certain points it was difficult to categorize an event as either a training task or an incremental improvement.

#### **Incremental Growth for Participant 1**

Participant 1 demonstrated growth in different areas of service to others.

Frequently there was a task or encounter that seemed to lead her to the next level of commitment to the lives of others. Specifically, I recognized five different incremental improvements: the evolving childhood attitudes, joining a religious community, moving to the inner city, developing a keen sense of listening and acting, and developing skills related to working with people or administration.

In terms of the development of childhood attitudes and ideas, there are two specific stories that emerged from P1's interviews that described key events of childhood and adolescence that formed an essential element of P1's outlook on human life. The first story was recalled from age four or five. P1 and her mother were riding on a bus when

they encountered an Aboriginal gentleman who was drunk. She recalls, “I remember staring at the man and my mom saying, ‘Don’t stare at him, that man is sick.’ I think I’ll always remember that. He wasn’t disgusting or anything else, he was sick. He was a person who was sick and deserved respect.” For P1, the lesson learned that day was profound. “That’s a very formative memory for me in terms of how I’ve related with people,” she explained. This simple encounter makes it clear that negative attitudes and stereotypes were not tolerated in her family. Perhaps a lesson, which could have seemed so insignificant to the mother at this time, helped to cultivate an attitude that made P1’s choice to live among Aboriginal people grow naturally out of her own self. She later recounted that her attitude toward one of the difficult children she taught was shaped by her mother. “I’ve always been sensitive to other people’s issues. I think that’s what made me go into teaching. I always loved the hardest students to handle and I still keep contact with some of the students that other teachers had issues with. I always had a soft spot and related with them because I think I could always manage to see their strengths and goodness. I won them over very easily by focusing on the good in them. I think this goes back to my mom saying ‘That man’s sick.’ There is nothing wrong with him, he’s not a derelict or something. He’s a strong man who is right now sick.” This encounter on the bus appears very significant and played a role far into the future. When asked about the impact if her mother had said something negative on the bus she explained that it would have certainly changed how she saw the one man, but would have also had a significant lasting impact on her future.

Secondly, a story from high school similarly had an impact on P1’s attitudes toward others. At the request of a teacher, P1 joined a group of peers who went to assist a

family by cleaning their home. The mother of the family was in an institution while the father struggled to manage seven or eight kids. When the class discussed the situation P1, “thinking I was astute and analytical,” questioned why the family had an aquarium with tropical fish and a large dog while not having enough food for the family. The teacher, a religious sister corrected her firmly and said something that remained with her. “The sister, very firmly, but very kindly said to me, ‘Who do you think you are to make judgments to how these people spend their money? The dog and the fish might be the only beauty, and the only ones in society that don’t judge them and actually treat them in a kind way.’ That was a very strong learning experience.” Not only did the words stick with her, but P1 also mentioned that she continues to see the same attitude in other people throughout her life. In regards to these two situations she recalls that “these were two formative experiences” and that they “helped to form me.” Again, the situation was one related to people living in the inner city area and was a lesson of respect and not judging others. P1 also spoke about the examples given by her parents and by a good peer group. She spoke about the example given by her father, who was sensitive to the needs of others. He would give her money to share with those in need. Additionally, she mentioned that her father’s issues with alcoholism also helped to shape her attitudes. “My father was an alcoholic, and so I have a lot of sensitivity when it comes to people suffering in that way.” This sensitivity was noted in the interview with her mentor (M1). While working in a position under P1, he explained that his own alcoholism was interfering with his work. P1 took steps to address his issues, but demonstrated tolerance, patience and did not seem judgmental. M1 described the situation as difficult for P1 to work with him, but that he knew that P1’s interest was based in her care for him as a

person. He explained that “change needed to happen for me because it was not conducive to work... and [our] relationship.” The examples of her mother and father certainly helped to lay a foundation of tolerance and respect for the dignity of others. When reflecting on these early experiences, P1 stated that, “There was an inclusive feel in my family” and that “those were so important, the initial experiences where kids view their parents and learn to think.”

The second significant incremental change in P1’s life was her entry into religious community. Although I did not learn much about P1’s entry into the religious life, there seemed to be three concrete elements from life in community that helped her gradually become who she is. These are opportunity, encouragement, and outlook. When specifically asked what steps took her from a teen to the person she was at present, she took no time to say “becoming a sister. I would not have moved into the north end by myself. It is where my community had been.” The opportunities offered to someone in her situation are different from others. She explained that belonging to her community afforded the chance to take in part and initiate several projects. She explained, “It’s been hard at times, but you can take initiatives when you belong to a community. For instance, I have not worked with a salary for 25 years. Since 1982 I have not earned a salary. That is a huge gift of my community. I just could not work for nothing if not a part of a community.” So, belonging to the community provided her with an important opportunity in terms of taking part in, as well as initiating, creative projects. It is important to note that just because someone has the freedom to work alongside the disenfranchised, that he or she will naturally move in that direction. However, there is a distinct opportunity that P1 was afforded because of the religious community.

Secondly, there was encouragement that came from the community. The religious community has sisters in many different countries all around the world and also has a particular focus on justice and solidarity. “The focus of my community is working in the broad field of education especially with those who are disenfranchised or marginalized; it’s the touchstone, it’s how I weigh what I do.” Additionally, there are specific committees within her order that she has been able to serve, which likewise, provided concrete experiences in justice work and creating relationships of solidarity. When speaking of the influence of her community, P1 commented, “They are amazing women, really committed. People who love people and wanted to live together and work through things... I’ve been really blessed with some fantastic sisters with whom I have lived. And in community I have always served on justice and peace committees. We have an international committee so I have been in touch with people all over the world... There is a broad education that happens because many of my sisters have been really involved in doing things to create a world where there can be some equality and where everyone has a place.” Interesting to note is her use of the term ‘education.’ The religious sisters have been teachers to her in terms of human dignity, solidarity, and equality. The encouragement and culture created by those women in her community have been an astounding support as well as a form of education. P1 makes it very clear when she explains, “My life would never been this way if I had not been a sister [of a specific order]. Not just a sister, but a [specific order] sister.”

The third element of community life that helped to provide a measure of growth is the community’s focus on art and beauty. The focus on aesthetics has helped to shape a specific outlook on life. When she was asked about the impact her community life has

offered, P1 explained that having art as an important part of community life has shaped her ability to connect with others because it lets her see the goodness and beauty in people. Additionally, she explained that this focus “influences the way you respect people.” When asked to reflect on this in more detail, she explained,

Art and beauty touch a person’s inner life and soul. When you meet people and those parts of our inner being are activated and alive you see their beauty, their strength. I’ve mentioned it’s important for me to see people’s inner beauty and the strength. Not that we’re all artists, but there is a sense which allows you to see in the other a beauty, strength, light, and creativity, and capitalize on that. It has influenced our teaching, our community, and our movement into justice... We’re not getting strongly pushed into anything in our documents or anything else. There is lightness or joy when one is attentive to the creative elements in oneself and you bring that into a relationship with others. It helps us to communicate with other people and influences our vision and how we respect people.

This point is very important and could be easily missed if she had not provided this detailed analysis. The community has a tradition of artistic appreciation which in turn helps form how one views people. When I met P1, one of the things she did was provide a tour of her community with reference to the different sculptures and paintings. Each work of art had a story and the story was always about a person. I could see the excitement in P1’s eyes and voice as she told me about the artist’s life. The beauty in art (although she told me she is not an artist) has been a stepping stone in regards to how she views other people, and in particular, respects, connects with, and sees the beauty in other people.

Thus, in addition to the childhood experiences, her life in religious community has shown some parallels to Ericsson’s concept of incremental improvement. In terms of the opportunities, encouragement, and outlook, this area of her life has been extraordinarily transformative.

The next area to mention could be the most important for P1. In a move she described as a “leap” she, with some other members of her community moved to the inner city. Still teaching at a school in a suburb at the time, P1 took the step which seems to have been one of the key moments in her work with others. This move brings out one of the most important parts of her continued transformation - listening. The idea to move came about when P1 and a very close friend and mentor went out for coffee and discussed its possibility. There was no specific motivation in regards to a type of service or program that was to begin. P1 explains, “We wanted to move back to the inner city. The intention (and this is really key) was not to do anything (and this is part of my whole life pattern) but to move there, live among people, observe, learn, and just knowing, that in making that one leap, in moving into that situation that some doors would be opened. And be excited about what doors would open. To move among and to be located among more disenfranchised people. And to learn from them, that was the key.” Not only did listening to the desire of a close friend and her own heart motivate this pivotal move, the intention was, likewise to listen. There was no specific action planned other than being present and learning. She describes the idea, “And we knew that God would lead us with that move. We just had to stay awake, stay alert, keep our eyes open and learn from the people. And we knew we would be led.” The move to the inner city may have been one of the most significant increments in P1’s work and service to others because the move itself and the notion of listening and learning ultimately lead P1 to each of the following organizations she founded and worked with.

After living there and living among her new neighbours, she and the close friend founded an organization that has touched the lives of so many. That lead to her helping

establish an alternative school, an opportunity to gain administrative experience (after the passing of her close friend and mentor), and then to the founding of another organization to serve the immigrant population. When asked if there were stages that lead to a pronounced growth, she immediately commented, “Yes, moving down to the inner city and walking alongside people.” When asked about her move to the inner city, the person listed as P1’s mentor described it as a significant learning experience. M1 explained “I think there was a boldness there to step into circles that most would be hesitant to, and so she was always quite daring and willing to do it. To get to know the people and get to know some of the concerns and basically ask, what are the needs? And how can I factor into that?” Later, her keen listening would lead to several other smaller projects as well as play a continued role as a training task or strategy that will be described in the next section. However, it looks like the move to the inner city may have been one of the most pronounced changes of her life, and it also seems to have provided the opportunity for many of the other incremental changes to take place.

The last series of gradual changes are a result of the leap mentioned above. These include several skills that were developed as well as skill sets that developed as necessary steps to be successful in the projects evolving from the move and desire to listen. The first would be her administrative skills. P1 described the move into administration as a “huge leap for me.” When describing her transition into administration, M1 explained that this move took “her outside of her comfort zone” and that she successfully “pushed the bar and got outside of herself. She was resourceful in connecting and communicating. She stepped up to the plate.” When it came to specific administrative skills, her long time friend mentioned that the financial responsibilities and details involved were the biggest

challenges. M1 explained that she chose to “develop herself” and that she “has done a lot of work in that area” to meet the needs of her calling.

In addition to administrative and financial tasks, P1 has demonstrated an incremental growth in terms of her ability to work with other people and network. When describing her entry into inner city life her mentor stated that she had a lot to learn, but that she was entirely open to the learning. Over time her ability to organize and network with people from different cultures and social backgrounds increased exponentially. In particular, she developed the ability to be with both the people in the inner city as well as with the wealthy and influential. That was a struggle. As she positioned herself among Aboriginal people, P1 had to actively learn the culture and did this as a hard working student. However, a struggle that later emerged, and then was left behind, was the ability to work among the wealthy. She explained that “There is a self righteous streak to me that could, in my younger years, could be very harsh. The softness was always there with those who were struggling, but with different politicians or very wealthy people, I was harsh.” This was also described by her long time friend (F1). He also told of an occasion when she seemed to lack a level of comfort with those outside of the inner city, those in positions of power. She demonstrated “more suspicion in the early days around people who didn’t understand. I think that just changed over time.” Again, it seems that openness and listening is what helped to bring about this transformation. P1 explained,

I’ve been exposed to many more wealthy people who I have found just amazingly good. And because I’ve been in positions to see them and work with them so my attitude toward them has changed. When I was younger my attitude might have been a little harsher, well not a little, I probably was harsh with wealthy people, because I’m surrounded by people who are trying to keep their heads above water. But that is not my feeling now. I’m much more, not tolerant, but the wonder of their personhood too, and

that was as much a cultural change for me as it was moving with Aboriginal people.

Thus, not only in terms of administrative duties and specific skills, but also in terms of building relationships and recognizing the goodness of all people in a widening circle, there has been pronounced and gradual growth.

Not only has she demonstrated gradual and incremental improvement stemming from the childhood experiences, religious community, and through the move into the inner city motivated by a desire to listen and grow, specific skills that have allowed her to function very successfully in each of her different roles have allowed a constant and steady growth that has allowed her to advance steadily and faithfully in service to others.

### **Incremental Growth for Participant 2**

There are several ways that P2 demonstrated incremental improvement. Based on the interviews, it seems as though P2 always had a big heart. However, there were a few significant improvements that took him far beyond the typical person. These improvements were the desire to work with the homeless, working with the homeless, frequently in a radical way, the movement into international service, and then a very steep development in the skills needed for that type of work.

In his early life, P2 demonstrated a concern for the poor. He remembers having “an overwhelming feeling within me to help others” from a young age. His relative with long term knowledge of his work (F2) tells of a first date P2 had. F2 explained that on their way to a restaurant they came across a homeless man. Not only did P2 give his jacket to the man, he invited him to join them for dinner. Additionally, F2 recalled a story of a trip P2 took to New York City when he was seven years old. Near the end of the trip,

he gave away his allotted spending money to a homeless person and mentioned that he had been watching during the whole trip for someone to whom he could give the money. F2 also mentioned that it seemed as though P2 had always had a problem losing clothing. Different items of clothing would be constantly missing. It was not until his early twenties that P2 admitted having always given away his clothes to those in need. He was able to do this because his childhood was spent in a comfortable environment. "I grew up on a resort playing golf two or three times a day and never really knew. I was sheltered. I grew up in a well-off town. There was not a lot of suffering or mental suffering here. I was sheltered from worldly issues." It does not seem to be a surprise that a person with this type of heart and attitude ends up working with the homeless. After spending a brief time in college, P2 decided that it was not the route he would take and he looked for something else in life. This is what brought out two significant milestones that would transform him --- traveling and working in a particular homeless shelter.

After leaving college, P2 spent some time traveling. This experience seems to have been one that provided P2 with a new outlook and a new understanding of his purpose. Before the trip to [a foreign country], P2 had considered working with the homeless, but upon his return, he moved immediately on the idea. "When I was in [this country], I realized when I come back I am going to do something like focus on helping the homeless as a start or work with a charity that helped homeless people." Upon his return, P2 contacted an acquaintance who put him in touch with a man running a homeless shelter in his area. The relationship that came about through that connection and the traveling abroad that took place soon after helped to bring about some of the biggest increments in P2's life.

Once he took the job at the homeless shelter with the man who eventually become his mentor (M2) and close friend, P2 began some of the very pronounced changes.

Working at the shelter with M2 provided a constant training ground for P2. Their lives working with the homeless were not typical. It was a radical dedication to those in need.

This was one of the significant steps for P2. M2 lives in the shelter and has an extraordinary devotion to, and relationships with, those in the shelter. At one point, P2 also lived in the shelter with M2. Describing their work relationship, M2 explains,

If we worked at the Red Cross, we worked eight hours and then went home. We have been sleeping on the floor for five years. We just got a bedroom because of the hurricane so we just put a wall here. Before that, we just slept here. [A friend], who just died, would go to bed at night on the floor here under the desk. [P2] is just so small, and is skinny. We just found a spot to curl up. He'd wake up at 3am and we work for a few hours. 24 hour shifts. No days off. When you work together like that, it's different.

P2 later spoke of this work experience as “an apprenticeship.” P2 explains, “I started working for [him] and of course he was a phenomenal person. Out of every shelter director in the world [he] is a little different; not the 9 to 5 type. He is a true advocate. He has probably the largest shelter in the world that is not government funded. [He] is completely different on a thousand different levels.” Not only did he provide a unique training environment and mentoring experience, M2 offered the financial resources to begin some of the international work. While driving together one day, M2 mentioned the fact that about ten thousand children die each day from starvation and related causes.

This simple statement seems to have had an enormous impact on P2.

We were driving down the road one day and he asked me if I knew how many kids died from starvation every day. And I think that is when it really hit me. It was the next day that I came in and resigned from working with him and said that I was going to go start doing something to help starving children. He said ‘Don’t quit. We will open an international

charity.” He didn’t want me to go and wanted to give me the opportunity to do something. He gave me the position of the director of the international side of things and I started working on that and visiting [a very impoverished country].

As this relationship will be discussed further in this section, it will suffice to say here that this friendship and, in particular, the mutual encouragement and financial help provided a spark that provided the conditions for two significant growth periods.

Following up on the relationship and opportunity that grew from their work together, the second significant incremental step that emerged was a result of the international traveling. When asked about the pronounced changes she had seen in P2, F2 explained that, “I really think the turning point in his life was taking that trip to [the foreign country] and seeing how little the people there had and how much just a little bit could help them.” The trip to the foreign country seems to have come about somewhat randomly. According to P2, he heard a report on the radio about a famine in there and decided to go there to help. Reflecting on the same trip, F2 said it just kind of happened as a result of it being a short flight (as he hated flying). But, explains F2, when he returned, he was changed. He knew he “had to help those kids” she explained. The international service was a significant leap for P2. When he was asked how he went from golf loving teen to the man he is today he answered, “Traveling.”

Not only did the travel and the work with M2 help bring about significant changes, this work brought about growth in P2’s skill sets. P2 described his first trip to [a foreign country] with a smile on his face. “A lot of naiveté” he quipped. Working at a homeless shelter provided the opportunity to buy food at a significant discount. He planned to solicit funds from churches and bring a lot of food to [a foreign country] to meet the needs of the starving people he heard about on the radio. “I didn’t even

understand how to get food into a country but I just jumped into it not even knowing how I was going to go about it. I just jumped into it.” One church out of about two hundred responded to his request with a seven hundred dollar check. P2 explains the learning curve,

After receiving the money (even though it was a measly amount of money) I said well I have to do something with this money. I was now talking to the government and they said they would charge me \$20,000 dollars in taxes to bring food in. So, I saw that was a no go with my \$700. I didn't do good in school but I could still figure that out.

Reflecting on his growth over time, F2 explained that being a beginner did not curtail P2's efforts. Looking back on the first trip, she explains, “Though he didn't have any idea, he didn't know how to get them food, or anything, and he just went and did it. It is like he sees a need for something and he just does it no matter how big the challenge.” After a struggle, the trip went off and was a success. This was the beginning. After that trip, things grew. One orphanage, then more, then different countries, more travel, other projects and the work continues to branch off and grow. The capability to organize people and projects has improved radically with experience and reflection. The plans for the first trip to [a foreign country] demonstrate the pronounced development in planning and skills related to international travel, and organization. The incremental growth has been steady, but really seems to have been established when he met M2 and began to travel.

It would seem reasonable to assert that both participants do demonstrate in their lives and work similarities to Ericsson's concept of gradual and incremental improvements. Each participant went through several stages of growth in order to reach the level where they have been recognized by others as outstanding in their work. In fact,

both had similar experiences of jumping into projects even though they may not have been prepared to carry out the tasks necessary for success. Therefore, it seems realistic to hold that both participants demonstrate Ericsson's idea of incremental and gradual improvements taking a person to expert levels of performance.

### **The Use of Training Tasks**

Important to Ericsson's framework are the specific training tasks that enable one to be pushed beyond one's capacities. Generally, these are exercises that one deliberately engages in to provide an opportunity to stretch one's self from one level of ability to the next.

### **The Use of Training Tasks for Participant 1**

For P1 there seemed to be three broad methods of intentional training. The first, although mentioned already, is significant enough to return to. At many different junctures, P1 took part in a listen-then-jump type behaviour. One of the things that stood out in the interviews was the number of times that a key initiative, project, or insight would come to P1 after she spent time in focused listening. The listening would frequently lead her to jump into a new project, transform an existing project or encounter the external in a new way. As mentioned above, the move to the inner city was prompted by a conversation over coffee and the specific intention of the move was to be in a place to listen to the people encountered there. Once the move took place and the encounter and listening began, several initiatives took root. One example:

I heard this when I was going for a walk with a woman who worked at [a non-profit home], with women who were in treatment. Often by the 25<sup>th</sup> day they would be getting sick again. It would be because they would work so hard to achieve sobriety and they would be scared stiff to leave and there was no place safe for women to go to. I take that kind of stuff seriously, and whenever I hear that type of thing I think 'this is ridiculous'

in a city this size that there isn't a place where women coming out of treatment can go and live and be safe if their partner is drinking, or if they lost their kids, or have to make new friends who are sober. So I gathered people around me that I knew could dream in this line and have a skill base, so we started [one of the projects], that was the project. There were other projects [names a few] and they all come from the expressed need of the people who are within my space. When I hear that need and really see their kind of commitment to really wanting to... experience life and contribute more as citizens. ...I feel like there is a call there. You have to do something. You can't just hear that and walk away with your integrity intact.

Along with the listening came the jumping into new projects. The above quotation demonstrates how listening to others, taking them seriously, and seeing their needs could lead to action. One of the reasons this seems to happen is a unique characteristic already mentioned, the jumping into. Even though other people might hear the same needs in their community, P1 would move quickly into new projects, or transform old projects because she was willing to leap without having everything worked out. This attitude is demonstrated when she articulates, "This enabled me to move down to the inner city and now into the centre of the city with refugees. It is that kind of attitude and willingness not to go into everything with perfection. That sometimes holds a lot of people back. They can't leap until all the ducks are in order. I am gifted that way; I don't have the ducks in order. I have a gut intuition and go." Thus, a pattern of really listening to others with an ability to respond to the needs of others effectively without dragging her feet has been a strategy that has brought P1 to new levels of achievement and growth. Rather than taking the time to slowly respond to the needs of others (and thus allow for distractions, loss of interest, reasons and excuses not to get involved) the immediate jumping has transformed her work. The power of this strategy was confirmed by F1, who explained it stating,

Her fundamental strength is always the beginning of things and the dreaming stage and responding to a need. She will usually take first steps

before everything is set in stone. She won't plot out a methodical course. You can bet on that. She will see a need, respond to it, and then almost immediately, I'm amazed. Oh God, you're going to do what? She will take a step a bold step. That's what she will do. Many people will know as much about things or know it more in depth. They are just not taking certain steps. She will just take those steps. She'll make those calls, involve someone, do something. The goals come after that in a sense so the next step reveals itself after taking the first steps... She would create a list, but she is a real first step person. When she is on to something, wow! She'll make 2 or 3 calls within an hour of something to start the ball rolling.

The pattern of listening and jumping, or listening and then taking a step, a bold step, has been a powerful strategy for P1 in her growth and transformation.

A second effective training task that allowed P1 to continually grow is related to the listening and jumping already mentioned. Frequently, great strides were taken because she intentionally placed herself in situations that would put her face to face with people. The second training task is being with, and remaining genuinely open to people. This serves almost as the foundation for the listening and bold step pattern. When asked what elements of her life have remained the same from the move to the inner city until the present time, P1 answered, "What remained the same is... whenever I enter into something, if it is a classroom when I start to teach or starting up something new... I connect with people and also look for people's strengths. That has remained the same... For me, it is absolutely critical to remain in touch with those struggling, because those are my teachers." In essence, this is the description of a training task. More than an attitude of respect and a focus on people, it is an intentionally designed way of connecting to people and knowing others and allowing others to be the teachers and guides. P1 further stated,

Doing administration work does not give me life per se, it gives me power to do things for people, and as I get older I can make some differences that

way, but the guiding points... are the grassroots people and in most cases those who are disenfranchised. So in any service that I do – it is in loving the most vulnerable in whatever I do, whether it's in the classroom, or the drop-in... or wherever I am it's in staying close and in focusing on them and in working with them and in learning from them. In letting the child or those people direct me. That is the same.

It is through these personal encounters that P1 is pushed in ways that take her outside of her known capacities. The intentionality of her positioning and openness to these personal encounters is what has helped her to drive forward into work that derives from the needs of the world she places herself into. The following quote describes this well and serves as a fitting conclusion for this second intentional training task. She commented, “For me, it works with the face to face encounter. If you want me to do something for trafficked women, put one in my face. It's not an issue, *it's a person*. When that person is in my face and I see a need, I've got to move.”

The third intentional training task that has helped P1 advance outside of her capacities is her practice of self-reflection. Because her self-reflection will be articulated in more detail in section 5.3, this section will speak in general terms and provide one example. In general, P1 described herself as “reflective by nature” and described several specific strategies that she used to reflect in order to grow. There was a very genuine openness in the interviews about her limitations and how being aware of these limitations and working to address them was a regular part of life. In part, some of her critical self-reflection derived from her religious life as well as from a desire to be in genuine relationships. P1 stated, “Being a religious you make an eight day retreat every year and I am reflective by nature but my lifestyle makes me reflective too, I think that is how I deal with my limitations... reflecting seriously with myself, with friends, and then getting help, professional help.” Additionally, P1's use of books to grow was something that

stood out. Many people will read books to become more aware of what is taking place in the world. P1 seemed to be quite effective at really allowing what she read to engage her, much the same as personal encounters have done. Her long term friend commented that she not only reads, and meets a lot of great people, but that she truly “integrated those things into her work, and she was very good at doing that.”

The self-reflection has lead to some pronounced changes in her life. One example is the help she sought out from the Adult Children of Alcoholics. She comments,

I wanted to face what was in me that was dysfunctional, what was not helpful to anyone that I wanted to work with or help. So I am able to look, learn things about myself, and I am okay to get help, to go to whatever resource. I have gone to adult children of alcoholics for four years. That was very helpful in dealing with interior things that sometimes get in the way of relationships, you know, deep relationships have been key in anything I have done. That is what leads me, guides me, that is what it's all about.

F1 confirmed the practice of self-reflection and its transforming ability in P1's life. He not only saw the self-reflection, but explained that it directly related to her work with others. He explains, “In her personal development she did some work in terms of issues of co-dependence that really gave her a way to extend herself so she would take better care of herself. She worked toward self awareness in terms of those issues in order to continue and grow and be of service to other people as well.” Although brief, we can see that her self-reflective nature and use of reflection has been a training task used to advance her capacity to work among and serve others. Using her reflection time as a strategy to know herself and others has been a means of opening herself up in order to appreciate and truly listen to those with whom she comes in contact.

## **The Use of Training Tasks for Participant 2**

In respect to the training tasks chosen by P2, these appear to be three categories of activities that have been used to push him outside of his then current capacities. These are living and working with M2, intense study, and jumping into activities or projects that he had not been able to do earlier. As mentioned above, the relationship with M2 will be discussed later, but it is important to mention here briefly. It is interesting to note that P2 did describe his relationship with M2 as an “apprenticeship.” Beyond the tasks offered to P2 by this person and the financial assistance with the different projects, the relationship did end up functioning like an extended training session. P2 reflected on this idea when he said,

In any type of job you would want to go to the best if you were going to be an apprentice under somebody. As someone who is an advocate, he’s the best. It’s just by the stroke of luck – I didn’t know I wanted to work under this guy. But he is by far the best. There is no homeless advocate in the country that can compare to his accomplishments and drive. He lives in the shelter, he’s a multi millionaire who lives in the shelter and advocates. He uses so many different techniques in advocating.

The dedication, creativity, and success of M2 were a prolonged and daily opportunity for P2 to be pushed along in his growth and development. P2 gave several examples of the resourcefulness of M2 in advocating for the homeless community and explained how the intelligence and cunning had changed the way he understood service to those in need.

Secondly, P2’s willingness to jump into activities and projects that may have been beyond his capacity functioned as a strategy that brought about his growth and improvement. The initial trip to [a foreign country] demonstrates a great willingness to make a difference and act upon important information, but it was also not the best way to go about providing for the hungry. However, it was in the context of jumping into a project that P2 met some of the people who helped get the organization off the ground.

Additionally, it was within the context of these trips that some of the vital learning took place. Had he not been in the country (and very aware of the local situation), P2 would not have learned about parasites, which ended up being a primary focus of the organization. When asked to contrast the earlier travels with more recent trips, P2 answered very matter-of-factly, “Now I know what I am doing when I show up.” There were several times throughout the interviews that P2 would speak in such a way as to make the tremendous success of his work seem simple. He articulated this well when he said, “People ask, ‘how can you do this?’ Because you just go do it, no matter if a million people say it can’t be done. When it is done everyone is like, ‘Wow, how did you do that?’ I say it wasn’t hard. It is not like a miracle. All I did, was I got a plan, flew to [a foreign country] and started treating people.” This attitude seems to flow from the series of times that P2 made an effort to just act. Rather than sit and debate and consider different options, he just jumps forward and acts. The traveling seems to encourage this as well. Jumping into a new situation and seeing poverty and need encourages him to respond. It may be a cycle of action that stems from his practice of engaging the world rather than thinking about it. This, I suspect came about through the practice of, and training of the self to act.

The final training task that seems to have driven P2 forward in his work is intense study. This came as a bit of a surprise from someone who did not seem to enjoy great success in the academic world. However, P2 has made study a key part of his performance. At one point, early in his travels, P2 had to ask a close friend why children’s bellies were distended. Now, he studies medical reports on parasite infestation and global economics. During the interviews it was evident that I was speaking with

someone who knew a great deal about different cultures, geography, politics, and infectious disease. When asked how P2 has changed in the course of their relationship, M2 mentioned his education and his understanding of facts and figures. This helps in his work explains M2, since “He can back up what he says with facts. Not just ‘kids are starving.’ He gives real life examples.” In addition to knowledge about world events, throughout our interview P2 referred to several religious and moral leaders. Not only did he quote Jesus, Ghandi, and Buddha, but he was familiar with the work of economists, Thich Naht Hahn, and several documentary films. This knowledge has been the result of hard work and serious study. Beyond books, P2 explained that he spends a great deal of time listening to talks and immersing himself in images of social problems. The reading, watching of videos, and acquisition of knowledge does not seem to be for simple accumulation. Rather, they lead to action. He explains,

I would say physically seeing things. I’ve probably youtubed the word starvation too many times. Watching videos, seeing what people are posting and seeing kids dying from starvation. Even though I know in my head it’s happening, seeing it inspires me to decide – we need to send this million treatments that way and show that someone cares about them. It inspires and informs me that it needs to be done when I see it.

The three most utilized strategies that have brought about growth and transformation are the time spent with M2, the learned ability to jump into tasks that will stretch his abilities, as well as intense study.

Reviewing the use of training tasks, there seems to be a reasonable relationship between both participants and Ericsson’s concept. Both P1 and P2 engaged in deliberate activities and strategies to bring themselves outside of their capacities.

### **Focused Attention to Eliminate Automaticity**

According to Ericsson's framework, expert performers use some type of activity to knock them out of ruts. One of the problems that leads to stages of arrested development or stagnation in growth are periods of cruise control where a person gets into a rut and does not continue to grow. This section will evaluate the interview transcripts for strategies used to guard against automations.

#### **Focused Attention to Eliminate Automaticity for Participant 1**

P1 demonstrated three activities that were used to eliminate stagnation. They were intentional listening, travel, and religious based practices. The first strategy has been mentioned and described, and so one specific example will be provided. P1 had helped to found a drop-in center. At a certain point, the centre started to be broken into at night. Rather than becoming angry that someone would break into a place she had worked so hard to establish, it caused her to focus and consider what it might mean. This was an example of her focused attention. She stepped back, refused to let anger cloud her judgment, and focused on what was being communicated. She explains the situation as, "We were closing at 11 at night. Every morning we would go back to open and it was broken into. Someone broke in. Nothing broken, nothing wrecked... You can either say, 'Who did this?' Put guards on, but the feedback is, why are people coming in, getting out in the morning and not destroying anything? They need a place to stay, that's what they are saying. Do something!" This repeats some of the material from the two above sections, but it is important enough to mention. Her living among the people she works with and the radical openness to others created a very intense focus on the words and actions of others so that she would not be on cruise control. This focused attention is also exemplified in her forward thinking. She mentioned that she would be very aware of the

work being done and would be critical of herself so that her work would not end up as oppressive to others. She used the example of the people who ran residential schools in Canada and mentioned that she had built in a level of focus in order to avoid that trap.

She explains,

I was always conscious of asking, especially working with Aboriginal people, (or in working with refugees) what am I doing right now that in 10 years people would look at and say “this was destructive” “this hurt” “this was offensive and destructive”. Things I said or my behaviour. Me, in my pious or self righteous way feeling I’m doing what was good, with the best intentions. For me the safeguard is I don’t want to be part of that system. That safeguard is listening and taking the lead from the people. So it was really important for me never to meddle in, to really listen – what do you really want? What do you need? Not what I think you need.

This intense focus allowed her to question if she had ended up in a rut and had avoided growth and authentic love of the other.

Secondly, P1 used travel and breaks as a means to avoid automaticity. Her mentor explained that she was prone to taking on too many projects and described one of his roles as mentor to help her become aware of that. “She sometimes bit off more than she could chew to the point to where it... affected her in a way that she was running on auto pilot and I had to step in and say ‘Look, I notice this, this and this, and what is going on and what are you up to?’ How long can we do this, before we actually fall down from exhaustion?” When asked how she would respond to this feedback, the mentor said that she would use retreats and holidays to refocus.

Likewise, F1 described situations when P1 would get “the blahs.” Normally this would be a result of “her being physically tired and exhausted from over committing herself.” He mentioned one example when P1 had taken on too much. “The spark had gone out. Well not gone out, but not sparking as often. I think in some ways when she

over commits herself she goes on cruise control. I think that's why she put in the mechanism of grounding herself and doing what keeps her passionate." When asked what this mechanism was, he responded "taking breaks." Speaking of her general desire to grow, F1 explained, "If she would find something impeding her development, or keeping her from being at the kind of service level she would want to be in, or from developing authentic relationships, she would take steps to do something about that."

One break in particular can help to exemplify this mechanism for P1. One of the most significant dangers for P1 would be insensitivity to the needs of others. Since her desire is to truly listen to the needs of others and enter into authentic relationships with others, ignoring people and their needs would be a sure sign of regression. At one point she saw this in herself and used a mechanism to avoid this automaticity. She explains,

What comes to mind is when I was becoming insensitive to the kids' needs. Or, falling back, not listening to the people. I would have been on cruise control if I did not pick up on that... Or if I'm not sensitive to some kid who's been beaten up or has no place to sleep or I would have opened the door before, or stayed up all night and then I stop doing that. My level of happiness, interior happiness just goes. That's where I went and stuck myself in New York and lived with [the homeless]. Something had to break open my heart again. When people's pain becomes ... when I become numb to it because there is so much around me, there is something wrong. I am not alive and I can't stand it.

When she noticed (through self-reflection) that she had entered a period of arrested development in regards to the needs of others, she intentionally placed herself in a situation to "break open" her heart through the use of focused attention, by immersing herself into the world of New York's homeless community. In essence, she took a break to reconnect with those she regards as her "teachers."

The final examples of focus to end periods of automaticity are religious practices. In particular, the use of a daily examination of conscience seems to play this role in her life and work. Her words below not only explain the practice, but demonstrate its impact on her focus.

I see life as a real learning opportunity. The daily examination of conscience is a particular practice that is part of our community practice. Looking at the day and seeing – dealing with memories that need to be healed, interactions, looking at my day of interactions, giving thanks, knowing, oh dear- made a mistake there and bringing that into the day and into the light and trying to stay rooted in the ambiguity of the day, centered and that type of thing. So the examination of conscience has been a very important tool in my growth though I'm not sure of its full impact. It's certainly helped me to become a better person.

When asked to explain her use of the discipline, she stated,

It's an Ignatian practice; St. Ignatius believed a daily examination was more critical than any prayer or meditation. He felt it was the only way that anyone could really proclaim the gospel without having one's ego at the forefront. It really brings peace in a family, community or world. That's been part of the community practice. I was taught it and you're supposed to do it twice a day. When I was in novitiate I did it twice a day; if I am on retreat I'll do it twice a day. It's normally 15 minutes of peace, but my day to day life now, no. I do it at night and I do it every night. I look back over my day and give thanks and try to recognize where was God taking me, leading me and putting the movements, the interactions, the crises, the joys, demands of the day before God and just giving thanks and not looking to beat myself up in any way, but wanting to move forward with that.

In addition to the examination of conscience, M1 explained that retreats, prayer, and spiritual direction were important parts to her getting off autopilot.

Additionally, F1 explained that her spiritual discipline, her making space to be reflective, and her contemplative life all help her to focus. Asked about the impact of these experiences, F1 said, "I think she makes the most of them and gets a lot out of them. I think that she becomes much more self aware." Each of these tools, the

focused listening, the travel, and the religious practices has been a very explicit means to avoid automaticity and autopilot for P1. She has used each of these practices as mechanisms for growth and the avoidance of automatic in her work and life.

### **Focused Attention to Eliminate Automaticity for Participant 2**

Like the first participant, P2 does demonstrate several methods of focusing himself in order to remain off autopilot. The different techniques can be arranged into three groups: openness to the moment, openness to encouragement, and openness to new ideas. The first category of openness to the moment was described by P2 as a form of engaged Buddhism. This seemed to imply focused and intentional meditation for the purpose of acting. There were several times in the interviews when P2 explained that an idea came from seeing or listening. P2 explained this well when she described his general outlook, “It is like he sees a need for something and he just does it.” She also added, “He’s not out planning how to serve the world, he’s out doing it and he does it one step at a time with what is directly in front of him and then he moves to the next thing.” Reflecting on Mother Theresa’s use of this concept, P2 said that she was an example to him because of her attitude of “just being, not knowing what the next day held. Just doing it in the moment.” The appreciation of the present moment and his desire to be engaged seem to provide the opportunity for P2 to reflect deeply on the current moment, and then act upon the needs of the moment. This way of engaging the world was particularly evident when P2 stated, “To be honest with you I don’t know why I choose to act like this compared to someone else who might not. What

is in me? The basics, I care. It is a lot of common sense, there is child starving, feed the child.” This attitude seems to derive from the engaged mediation perspective. Meditation and mindfulness are not ends in themselves; rather, they are a means used to enter into the world through enlightened engagement and compassion. This worldview provides a fertile field for the cultivation of focused attention that leads to action in the world.

Secondly, several activities that might be grouped together as openness to encouragement help P2 eliminate automaticity. There seem to be several activities that motivate and encourage him. Already mentioned is the intense study of people who take part in the same type of work. Also mentioned above is the use of videos and photographs depicting suffering in order to encourage his work. He explains, “Watching videos, seeing what people are posting, and seeing starvation... Even though I know in my head that it’s happening; seeing it inspires me to decide – we need to send a million treatments that way and conquer this issue and show people that someone cares about them. It inspires and informs me that it needs to be done when I see it.” The decision to study medical reports and learn the details of starvation and its effects on the body have also been a method of focusing attention. Besides these activities, the international travel and his presence among people who are affected with disease and suffer from hunger are also powerful ways of keeping engaged and avoiding a rut in his work with others. Each of these activities gives P2 encouragement to push forward with his work and help to keep the experience of hunger, disease and poverty present in his life.

The final set of activities used to eliminate automaticity is grouped together as openness to new ideas. A change he made early on in his work, moving from providing food to treating parasites, was the realization that the focus on food alone made people dependent. When faced with this new information, he refocused his work. An interesting comment that he made while quoting Jesus also shared a similar notion. Looking at Jesus' comment to the rich young man that he ought to sell what he had and give the proceeds to the poor, P2 stated that it was "one of those flip the page quotes." It stood out because he seemed willing to incorporate new information, even information that was challenging and let it transform him. P2 also became a vegetarian for the same reason. For the same reason, namely, that new information about the environmental impact of meat production made him change. Additionally, this openness to new information has allowed P2 to entertain and act upon alternative news and information. This information allows P2 to question and reject the status quo and to consider ideas that many would not consider. This has opened P2 to a critical reading of systems and information that can perpetuate oppression. In other words, he has learned to approach information as well as social structures with suspicion, questioning the source and intention of information providers. These different strategies, taken together, are means of using diverse tools to eliminate being on autopilot in his work, attitudes, and beliefs.

Although some differences are clear, each of the two participants uses different methods of keeping themselves focused in order to circumvent the automaticity that can lead to arrested development. The two participants utilized this method of avoiding the possibility of levelling off in their growth and ability to be involved in

the lives of others, thereby demonstrating a correlation between the participants and Ericsson's framework.

### **Use of Mentors**

One of the final categories of Ericsson's theory is the use of mentors or coaches. In practice, this means that expert performers use someone outside of themselves in order to assist their growth. Mentorship can take many forms, but primarily mentors offer feedback, assist in designing training tasks, and help to set goals. The two participants could name an individual in their lives as a primary mentor, but each also named others during interviews. Both made reference to nameless mentors who had helped their growth at some point along the way.

#### **Use of Mentors for Participant 1**

When looking at P1 there seem to be mentors or coaches in each of these areas: setting goals, creating tasks to help accomplish goals, and providing feedback. In terms of setting goals, there would be no doubt that P1's goals were designed by the people she set out to serve and work with. Each of the major projects she was involved with came as a result of her listening to someone in need of something. The people she lived among asked for all of the things she worked at and can be said to have set the goals. Although quoted above, this practice can be seen when P1 says, "So in any service, it is in loving the most vulnerable in whatever I do, whether it's in the classroom,... or wherever I am it's in staying close and in focusing on them and in working with them and in learning from them. In letting the child or those people direct me." Later in an interview she explained that the Aboriginal people she worked with were her "teachers" and "guiding

points.” One example is the time she met a Mexican couple after mass. A woman happened to ask P1 if there were English language instruction. After considering it, and being upset that there was none, P1 made some phone calls and arranged classes for the couple. It was not a goal of hers; it had not been her idea. Rather, by truly listening to someone, a new goal and direction emerged. When asked a question to address where she got feedback, her answer makes it clear, “The main focus is really being one with people. The people that I work with, the street kids, there is no way you can work with street children and not become honest, especially aboriginal people. They are so honest; their humour lets you move to some tough points. So, I am willing to learn and take direction from everyone, even if it’s a person I bump into on the street.” This is further illustrated by her mentor, who had been a co-worker, and someone she supervised. Instead, their relationship became one he described as “students of one another.” When asked who inspired P1, he answered quite firmly, “the children.” When asked about how she set goals and found direction, P1’s long time friend explained, “If some of the young people or staff or someone she was in a relationship with were expressing a need to go this way, she was going to go that way.”

In terms of the second concept, the use of training tasks to grow, two ideas seem to flow from the interviews. First, there was a very close friend of P1 who died after they spent many years working and living together. This was the friend who initially approached P1 to live in the inner city and thus, helped to design some of the most significant events outlined above. This close friend was involved in several of the big jumps and had a big impact on her daily life and general attitudes. When asked about the influence of this one particular friend, F1 explained,

I would think of [her] as a mentor for [P1]... I think [P1] was definitely affected by [this friend]'s call for social justice and being a person of action. That's a long time ago that [close friend] died, but she had a big impact on [P1]. I'm thinking of who [P1] would say is that the people that she was involved with the kids were her mentors. I know what she means from doing the work. They lead you in a way that is pretty obvious in a lot of incidences. If you're listening to them and are aware of them, the kind of work [this close friend] started, that was her mentorship. The first thing she told me and it was the attitude around [P1]'s household. You're not coming here to save anyone. You're going to learn more from them than you will give to them. That was the formula that [this close friend] professed and I think [P1] took as well. That you will learn a lot from the people you would so call 'serve.' They would be your best mentor.

It would be difficult to truly put the impact of this friendship and mentor into words.

Even years after her death, this close friend was spoken of with such respect by P1 in the interviews. There was almost a notion of awe and a deep respect whenever this close friend was mentioned. She seems to have provided some of the intellectual structure to the work and attitudes being taken on. For that reason, she can be seen as one who may have provided (and still provides) much of the mentoring for P1. Along with this close friend, as stated above, P1's religious community has helped to structure, encourage and provide support for the daily practices that have allowed P1 to reach such a level of dedication to others. Apart from the very close friend and the religious community, there are several others who functioned as mentors, namely, the coworkers, board members, and especially those with whom P1 set out to live who helped provide the daily experiences of patience, compassion, and dedication that helped to shape P1's practices. Additionally, a very unique relationship developed with the person designated as mentor by P1. As mentioned earlier, he described their relationship as "students of one another." Specifically, he explained that P1 was able to be mentored in regards to the Aboriginal

life, culture, and values. He provided information and worked as a “sounding board” for P1.

In the last respect, feedback, P1 had three means of gathering feedback about her growth, success and performance. The first, addressed already, were the people with whom she lived and worked. When asked who gave her feedback, P1’s mentor said “the children.” They are the ones who she listened to in order to see if she was heading in the right direction. When asked about who gave her feedback, P1 explained that, “The type of feedback most important to me is from grassroots people... at one point it would have been the kids. Here it is with immigrants and refugees. I’m most in tune and learning what is meaningful to them, and what isn’t, or if I made a mistake. I am most open to that because at the basis of everything, a child will lead you.” The example of the drop-in centre being broken into remains a powerful story of P1 listening to the community and the children for feedback. F1 further validated this when he offered, “Her checks are other people and involving herself with other people. Those are her checks.”

The second and third means of gathering feedback were mentioned earlier. They are the close friend who passed away and the mentor who was specifically named by P1. Each of these people offered P1 encouragement and criticism. In one particular example, the close friend who passed away offered P1 criticism in terms of her treatment of others. At one point in their work, P1 was told, “you’re so manipulative,” by this dear friend. Additionally, while reflecting on those who have been mentors, P1 explained how this dear friend had been a mentor in a profound way, teaching her daily to keep the focus away from herself and on others. She explains, [this dear friend] “was a mentor for me. She is dead. She was truly a mentor. A mentor who would walk side by side with and she

was my best friend. We moved into the unknown together and she was very different than I was. She mentored me and I think because she challenged me so much and made me grow up. She just really challenged me to grow up and to keep the focus off myself.” As mentioned earlier, the interviewee who was listed as a mentor provided feedback in terms of criticism, suggestions, and encouragement. In a manner similar to Ericsson’s framework, P1 intentionally gathered feedback that was used to correct herself, provide guidance, and grow continually.

### **Use of Mentors for Participant 2**

Ericsson (2007) explains that expert performers primarily use mentors to set goals, design tasks, and provide feedback (pp. 692-698). This pattern seems to be present in the work of P2. The weakest relationship seems to be in respect to setting goals. Both the participant and his long term friend spoke about the lack of strategic planning and goal setting in P2’s work and life. When asked about goal setting, F2 said that besides planning the number of pills needed to assist specific groups with their medical treatment, there was not much planning. “I guess in that sense he does have some goals. Really though, he deals with what he is faced with.” Although there was not a person who played the clearly defined role of setting goals, it looks like this does take place implicitly in terms of examples. At the onset of our interview, P2 spoke very favourably of two men he had met in his work. Both men worked independently and had accomplished great things. After introducing their stories, P2 explained, “He is single man doing it by himself. Just one person, so it is interesting to me that people just think they can’t do something. It is an issue for other people or the government to conquer.” These people have provided a goal in their dedication, initiative, and perseverance. This may not have

translated into specific goals, but helped shape an attitude and ethic. More specifically, M2 did seem to play a small role in the planning process. Since P2 is prone to jumping (and it may be a great asset), M2 explained that he has helped to slow P2 down and asked him to think through different ideas. M2 shared a specific example of his asking P2 to slow down and consider a plan of action. “When we had the hurricane in [the foreign country] last time I had to ask him, what are you possibly going to do? You have no car, no food... what are you going to do? You can’t just go. You need to plan from here and ask what can I do?” Thus, although one of the weakest relationships to Ericsson’s framework, there is some mentoring done in respect to P2’s planning.

In terms of the daily exercise of tasks, there appears to be a more direct link to Ericsson’s framework, particularly in the relationship with M2. In their relationship, already described above as an “apprenticeship,” P2 explained that he frequently approaches M2 for advice. M2’s creativity in dealing with daily issues has been a great example for P2. The mentor explained, “I would say yes I helped. Our whole day is a chance for mentoring, full of problems... We battle 15-20 problems each day.” P2 provided several examples of M2’s creative ways of advocating for the homeless. This creativity and drive have been influential in P2’s work. When asked what mentor has made a significant impact, M2 was singled out. “I ask [M2] for advice: ‘Why is the state of Florida riding me for this?’ ‘What do you think about that?’ I likely go to [him] more than anyone else. [He] is my main mentor. We do a lot of projects together. He believed in me from day one, but we’re also best friends.” Specifically, M2 has encouraged P2 to be more diplomatic with the press and politicians as well as with public relations. For example, once when speaking to the media, P2 told a story that made a colleague look

bad. M2 challenged P2 to be more tactful when speaking to the press about problems he had with others. More than anything, M2's love of the homeless, respect for those he serves, creativity, and direct personal contact with the homeless has made a great impact on P2. This presence was unmistakable. Throughout and after our interview, I witnessed M2 engage a variety of people. The respect and admiration each person had for M2 was evident. The impact of their years together in respect to P2's training for his work cannot be overstated. Their time together is a constant schedule of becoming more refined in their service of others.

Finally, Ericsson describes feedback as a central role for a mentor. As mentioned above, M2 has provided assistance with P2's relationships and dealings with politicians and the media. Being quite experienced with television and radio interviews, M2 was able and willing to give direct feedback to P2 in this regard. M2 explained that he was involved in giving feedback after media appearances as well as with daily questions. "I think having an open ear, he can vent and he figures it out on his own. He'll write an e-mail and ask, 'What do you think? I am putting too much pressure? Is this the right answer?'" When asked who gives P2 feedback, F2 stated quite frankly that it is the kids. "If you watched the [television] video and you see the kids hugging him and calling him Papa [last name] that is his feedback right there." As the goal setting is not very explicit, it seems logical that the feedback loop does not correspond to Ericsson's framework in a very pronounced way. The evaluation of the use of mentors would correspond to Ericsson's framework with the exceptions noted with P2.

### **Summary**

There seems to be a reasonable overlap between the four markers of Ericsson's model and the data from the interviews. Both participants demonstrated a progression of growth towards their current capacities in a pattern that resembled incremental improvements. Likewise, P1 and P2 both employed specific methods of improvement that resembled Ericsson's second marker of training tasks that bring about growth in a particular domain. Additionally, each of the two participants did use very specific tools to shake them out of plateaus that might cause a period of arrested development. Although a pronounced feedback loop and specific goal setting mechanisms were not explicitly present in P2's experience of mentorship, these elements were evident in P1's experience.

## 5. Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

In essence, this study attempted to shed light on two related questions. The first question asked if Ericsson's model of expert performance and in particular, deliberate practice is applicable to the domain of service to others. Secondly, if the model does apply to the domain of service to others, how might educators utilize the framework in educational settings? Through the use of retrospective interviews, a great deal of overlap between the experience of the participants and Ericsson's framework was brought out in the analysis of chapter four. Each of Ericsson's markers (incremental improvement, use of specific training tasks, focused attention, and the use of mentors) is evident in the lives of the participants to some degree as discussed in chapter four. It will now be possible to discuss the results, offer some concluding remarks and offer several recommendations in terms of the theory and its educational significance. It is important to point out once again that the motivation for this study was to reflect on education aimed at serving others. Although not the only goal of education, this motivation certainly has its place in the world today, which can often deny respect to many, but also within educational circles, which has various other goals to meet.

Dealing with the first question, the applicability of Ericsson's framework, I have seen enough correlation between the lives of the two participants and the model to advance it as a meaningful interpretive structure. However, it is important to point out that this research was limited to two specific cases, and two cases are not enough to arrive decisively at any grand conclusions. Nevertheless, I advance Ericsson's model as a means for administrators to focus on the domain of service to others for two particular reasons. First, my research has led me to see that service to others does resemble other

domains of expertise. Service work requires specific skills and a great commitment of time and hard work. In this respect, Ericsson himself seems to be open to this possibility. In our personal correspondence (January 7, 2008) about the connection between deliberate practice and humanitarian service, Ericsson commented, “I believe that expert performers are trying to lead lives that allow them to maximize their available energy to improve their performance. I have reviewed a lot of reports on how novelists seem to organize their lives similarly to maximize the quality and quantity of the writing. Furthermore, other very influential people, such as the Dalai Lama and the pope, also seem to exert a lot of control over their lives so they are able interact with people and create the best opportunities for improving the lives of others” (Appendix VI). Additionally, like other domains, there is evidence that some people remain in a stage of arrested development, while others end up continually improving and driving forward. In the domain of service to others, the two participants used tools such as mentors and focused attention so that they would be driven past the plateau of “good enough” and arrive in a place of excellence.

More specifically, the four categories of Ericsson’s framework were evident (although to different degrees) in the lives of the participants. As the detailed analysis of this was already presented in chapter four, the following will function as a brief overview. Both P1 and P2 showed the process of incremental growth in their openness to others and abilities to effectively work on behalf of others. In both of their stories, I see a development in the ability to detach from self-interest and become more inclined (and successful) to serve the other (rather than the self). For both participants, this developed over a long period of time and seems to have come about by the hard work that Ericsson

defines as deliberate practice. The difficult research and reading allowing P2 to stand confidently on national television and speak on behalf of others and the gradual development of P1's capacity to work lovingly with both Aboriginal people and the rich, demonstrate the slow and incremental growth Ericsson describes.

In addition to the incremental improvements demonstrated by both participants, both have also intentionally developed through the use of training tasks. Not only did both participants jump into projects that were outside of their (then) current capacities, each used methods of improvement that allowed them to arrive at new skill level, both intentionally placed themselves in situations where they would learn skills and attitudes that allowed them to grow in concern for others. For P1 much of this was derived from serious self-reflection and spiritual practices such as a daily examination of conscience. For P2, intense study and the time spent living and working with his mentor functioned as a training task to drive him outside of his skill levels.

The third category witnessed in the lives of both participants is the exercise of focused attention to eliminate automaticity. Both participants demonstrated this focused attention in their travels. While one traveled internationally and one went to new areas of her town, both participants used this as a way to dramatically change their lives. Many people travel internationally or to different areas of town, but not all use these experiences as a means to listen attentively to those around them. Both participants used experiences like travel and intentional reading to increase their awareness of those in need. These practices led to concrete action.

Finally, although differing in respect to the use of goal setting, both participants utilized a form of mentoring. While P1 used mentoring to set goals, determine her

shortcomings and to gather feedback, P2 seems to have used his mentors to gather feedback, ask for advice and gain inspiration. Like other expert performers, both participants used this method of growth as a means of continued development in their work for others. Thus, as mentioned in more detail in chapter four, the lived experience of both participants does seem to demonstrate various elements of Ericsson's framework to a certain degree.

Colvin (2008) advances deliberate practice as the only road to excellence in his recent work, *Talent is Overrated*. In it Colvin holds that we like to explain away the outstanding achievements of expert performers by saying that they are superhuman. Rather, argues Colvin, "We're wrong in thinking, as many do, that the exceptional nature of great performers is some kind of eternal mystery or preordained outcome. It is, rather, the result of a process, the general elements of which are clear" (p. 104). Colvin then explains that the process is Ericsson's model of deliberate practice, the road that takes people in any domain to excellence. Like the example of an expert golfer mentioned earlier, those who become outstanding in a particular domain are there because of deliberate practice, which is not simply what Ericsson et al. (1993) describe as the "enjoyable state of effortless mastery" (p. 368) Rather, the lives of both participants resembled those in various other fields that have arrived at an outstanding level of achievement through deliberate practice.

Secondly, it is important to reflect on whether Ericsson's model will be a helpful construct to view service to others because it takes into account the need to grow slowly in a domain. Rather than expecting students to find immediate motivation and success in their endeavours into service, this model reminds us that, like athletics, music, or many

other domains, the progress into mastery is slow, and difficult. Thus, a life of selfless service will take a long time to grow into. Additionally, this model relates to service since deliberate practice focuses on specific activities designed to improve skills, rather than simply talking about skills. Study can be an important element in terms of listening to the needs of the world and discovering where one's interests and skills intersect with these needs, but Ericsson's model of deliberate practice highlights the need to seek incremental growth from the deliberate practice of specific skills. Both participants took part in the activities of working with and for others, not just thinking about it. In this way, Ericsson's model corresponds to the lives of the participants as their work looked very much like other domains in respect to the attainment of expertise. Thus, like an athlete or musician, the participants had to focus their motivation and grow in specific skill sets, while employing feedback from others, using mentors, and setting goals for growth over an extended period of time. Perhaps classroom settings could utilize this framework in order to further allow students to become active participants in working for others. Flescher and Worthen (2007), who offer an interdisciplinary text on altruism, provide an excellent argument for the inclusion of altruism as a domain related to expert performance and deliberate practice. Using Ericsson's work on deliberate practice they assert the following in their concluding chapter:

Most often, success comes not from the manifestation of a God-given trait but from the always exhausting and sometimes frustrating experience of doing something over and over until the improbable becomes routine. In this book, against the commonsense wisdom, we have suggested that the same is true in matters of morality. Good deeds flow from good character. Good character is a matter of habituating oneself to a virtuous life such that when an occasion arises in which a virtuous response is called for, a prospective moral agent will be prepared to act in kind (p. 251).

Related to the question of the utility of Ericsson's model for the domain of service to others is the use of retrospective interviews. The drawback of this approach is the question of reading into the lives of the participants. Even though each participant and additional interviewee was given the opportunity to point out inconsistencies in my selection of quotations, analysis, and framework it is important to acknowledge that I was searching for elements of deliberate practice in the interview transcripts. On a related note, I have come to hold that retrospective interviews are a reasonable means to gather the data needed for this study. At first I had planned to follow the participants as they did their work, but for practical and ethical reasons decided not to do so. The glimpse into their lives would have been helpful in order to see the actual performance and how much it differs from the typical person, but the use of interviews seemed to grasp the essence of the domain. Particularly helpful was the use of the additional interviewees. Without the additional transcripts it would have been impossible to support and substantiate many of the ideas provided by the participants.

In addition to affirming the relevance of Ericsson's theory in regards to the domain of service to others, I do have one suggestion in regards to his theory. Although this study was only carried out on two people in order to investigate deliberate practice in the lives of these expert performers, I would suggest a broadening of the term coach and mentor. When viewed in respect to world class athletes and expert achievers in performance arts it becomes evident that world class coaching has played a role in their attainment of expertise. However, in regards to the domain of service to others, this specific role, although present, might need to be broadened. Both participants easily identified a mentor, but the mentors were different than expected in two ways. First, one

of the mentors was a subordinate to the expert performer (in the case of P1 and M1). In some respects this might offer a challenge to current notions of mentoring for expert performance. Although the mentor in this situation did not necessarily seem to coach the participant in the general practice of service to others, the specific skills offered in this relationship were pivotal to P1's ability to relate to Aboriginal people. In this respect, M1 did possess and help to pass along a certain type of expertise, even though it may be atypical for a coach to be in a subordinate position to the expert performer.

In addition to the unique relationship between P1 and M1, a second question also related to the mentor relationship arose. Unlike the formal mentor or coaching relationships found in other domains, the relationships for both participants seemed very loose and informal. In contrast, with the specific strategies used when high achieving musical performers go to a school designed to train them for excellence, both participants had formed loose and informal relationships with their mentors. In fact, M1 was surprised when he was designated as P1's mentor. He had always considered P1 a mentor to him. Ericsson's model, as it has been based on domains where success is measured and defined with more precision, rightly would view coaching in this more formal perspective. However, the experience of these participants might call for a more fluid and open notion of mentor.

In terms of the practical significance of this research, there is really one intended outcome. If service is seen as a domain that can be developed using Ericsson's model of deliberate practice, school administrators ought to look for ways of using specific practices that will help form their students into people who will promote human dignity by serving others in extraordinary ways. If the educational experience can be amended to

help educate people like the participants, who will serve others with extraordinary devotion, we should incorporate methods of deliberate practice to make it a reality. As mentioned earlier, there seem to be four explicit elements of Catholic social teaching (CST) that relate to this study and the work of the participants, namely: human dignity, the option for the poor, solidarity and the common good. Both participants have been exemplars of these principles in their own different ways. When reduced to the simplest form, I would assert that these principles are the choice to actively live the Golden Rule: “Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets” (Mt. 7:12). In other words one becomes less self-interested and more other-interested. The principles are lived when a person recognizes the dignity and worth of the other and chooses to care for the needs of others in an extraordinary manner. Therefore, in order to educate students to work actively for others, it is essential to cultivate a proper respect for self, but also to teach restraint and moderation in respect to self love so that one might become radically open to working on behalf of the needs of others (rather than living a life of self-service). I would argue that this concept is what is under the surface of each of the four main principles of CST. We need to moderate love of self and place a proper notion of self love within the context of concern, justice and responsibility for the needs of the other. The “skill” of being other-interested is what should be one of the primary concepts built into a form of expertise using Ericsson’s model. However, it is essential to adapt the principles of this model to the specific context of each school (and individual student). If used, Ericsson’s framework will not replace logic and the judgment of particular communities. Rather, it can be applied to the needs of a person, in that person’s

own context, to set goals, design tasks, eliminate cruise control, and establish mentoring practices to enable continued and incremental growth.

The two cases seem to demonstrate that a growth or development in regard to concern for others that evolves into respect for dignity, a commitment to solidarity, active pursuit of the common good and dedication to the preference for the poor is possible. Initially, both participants seemed to live somewhat typical lives until each began to show a gradual, but pronounced transformation in their lives. The use of specific tasks and mentors allowed both to begin a long period of growth that has not ended since both continue to avoid automaticity by their intentional practices. Although the vision of the four principles of CST may differ in both participants, P1 and P2 have shown that the skills and characteristics (specifically living a selfless life of concern for others) they possess have been slowly developed to the point that they might now be considered expert performers (as articulated above by the recognition awarded to both). The development in concrete skills of management and contact building have been impressive, but even more so has been the continued ability to live selfless lives for others in such a radical way. That capacity has developed slowly from a typical young man playing golf to a man dedicated to transforming the lives of children around the world. Likewise, a typical young woman has become a woman who has spent her life living with and for others on the margins of society in a powerful way. Both of them, have touched the lives of so many and in so doing, have transformed themselves into, as the Jesuit motto has it, people for others.

Based on the data analysis it seems that Ericsson's model is a reasonable way to help people develop their capacities in respect to serving others. This leads to five

recommendations for practice, each focused on training students to become other-interested so that the principles of CST may be integrated into the lives of students more effectively.

The first recommendation for practice is the suggestion that teachers and administrators become familiar with the model of expert performance as a tool for their educational systems. Beyond its relevance for the domain of service of others, it seems like a tool of great potential for the field of teaching and learning. Specifically for the domain of service of others, deliberate practice can serve as a model for education since it provides a systematic analysis of how people become outstanding. I have argued that the participants have demonstrated enough resemblance to the model in their lives to make it a worthwhile pursuit. To be used in the field of education, school administrators would need to become familiar with the categories of incremental improvement, specific training tasks to transform performance, focused attention, and the use of mentors. Then, schools would be able to apply Ericsson's framework depending on the involvement and specific needs of their school. For this to take place, it would be central for the school community to clearly articulate service to others and a firm resolve to act on behalf of the good of others as central outputs of the educational process, rather than a peripheral goal. This will always be a very difficult thing to accomplish because it is (rightly) not the only objective of education. Each stakeholder in education can have vastly different expectations with the educational system. This is evident whenever education is discussed in the political arena. It may also be tough to sell things like compassion, a desire to care for others, and dedication to life as the priorities for education when people

are justly concerned for the other goals of education, such as content knowledge, preparation for continued education, workplace preparation and so forth.

Rather than dismissing the other important goals of education, the training of students to work for the needs of others should be competently assimilated into the broader curriculum and be a shadow that adheres to every possible element of the educational system. Within a Catholic system, where all of the other educational demands and pressures are also present there must be an explicit focus on human dignity and a focus on preparing students to serve the needs of the world in their own particular way. Dealing with this suggestion concretely, administrators might decide to ask the following question: how can we incorporate gradual improvement, specific strategies to transform capacities, encourage focused attention, and provide mentoring in the overall life of the school and specifically into the focus on human dignity, promoting the common good and promoting solidarity with others? Each school or group of schools would need to identify the key values and principles to be articulated as pivotal (areas such as human dignity, common good, solidarity, equality) and work on very specifically designed goals and methods based on the expert performance theory. This work should respect that incremental growth in concern for others (being other-interested) is a form of development that takes time and effort. Secondly, the responsibility should then be shared with teachers who will ask and then act upon the following question: when reviewing, planning, or creating curriculum, how can I incorporate gradual improvement, specific strategies to transform capacities, encourage focused attention, and provide mentoring in my teaching? Also, when asking this question within each discipline, teachers must also ask how respect for others and training for selflessness can be embedded in the

instructional design. Both participants were introduced into their domain gradually by several important players in their lives. Schools can provide the same invitations to all students through careful planning. Finally, it is essential for educators to remember that the incorporation of this goal through the use of deliberate practice is just like any other domain. It is thus suggested that a format of deliberate practice be used to accomplish this work. Administrators should use the framework to seek gradual improvements in their overall system, be very aware of new strategies and practices to take themselves outside of their current capacities, use focused attention to renew their dedication to this goal, as well as use the mentoring process to set goals, design tasks, and gather (and use) feedback.

The second recommendation is for educational administrators to consider the social supports available for students in their goal setting, training and feedback. In his work *Outliers* (2008), Malcom Gladwell provides a detailed analysis of the process used to become outstanding (an 'outlier'). He discusses Ericsson's framework and argues that deliberate practice seems to be what creates an outlier. However, Gladwell raises the importance of opportunity as a central piece of expert performance. Contrasting the lives of two geniuses, Chris Langan and Robert Oppenheimer, Gladwell asserts that in addition to some natural talent and deliberate practice, family context and cultural supports are central. This does not contradict Ericsson. He discussed the importance of early contact with a domain and adult support in the process of early exposure. However, Gladwell singles out the difference between those who are markedly different in their accomplishments and those who are average. When reflecting on the low achievers [the C group] he asks, "What did the Cs lack, though? Not something expensive or impossible to

find; not something encoded in DNA or hardwired into the circuits of their brains. They lacked something that could have been given to them if we'd only known they needed it; a community around them that prepared them properly for the world. The Cs were squandered talent. But they didn't need to be" (p. 112).

Teachers and administrators already have great demands on their time and effort. However, the simple idea offered by Gladwell can be a wonderful encouragement. Schools know well that students come to school with diverse gifts and challenges based on their backgrounds and lives outside of school. What is central is for schools to intentionally become a social support structure for growth in this particular domain. Squandered talent can come in many forms, and it is difficult to add anything to the mission and list of goals to be accomplished in schools. For P1 we do see how a particular service venture and the discussion of it took place within the context of school. In addition the practice of service within schools (and reflection on the service) it is also central to focus on questions of human dignity in practice. Particularly within schools with a religious tradition, the study of the meaning and value of life is central. However, as the model of expert performance demonstrates, it is not enough to share some information, study and pass a test on material. Rather, specific goals are set to enable students to incrementally improve, tasks are used to allow for this improvement, focus is practiced, and feedback is used. Schools have a powerful opportunity to become the structure that supports and encourages students in their work to balance self respect with the important goal of concern for the other.

Most of P2's development took place outside of the classroom, but we can see how his development can affect schools. Not only did he grow in his understanding of the

plight of the poor in his local community, but also around the world. Schools can provide the social and intellectual community and support structure to help form outliers in terms of service. As Gladwell points out, the social structure is important in a person's development into an outlier. The same seems to hold true as people grow in their reflection on the dignity of all and our responsibility for the well-being of others.

Three more practical suggestions that derived from the data analysis will round out this discussion. The first is that students be offered the opportunity to be trained in how to focus and listen. Each of the participants had established practices of listening that enabled them to focus on practical elements that would allow them to improve and grow. Additionally, each participant used focused attention, reflection, prayer or meditation to focus on their values. Time spent training people to appreciate and use silence to set goals, grow in self knowledge, and consider one's place in the world is essential. It is not enough to tell people to do this. Experience in the practice of silence is essential. The practice of silence can provide an opportunity for people to consider their capacity to care for the needs of others. Within the Catholic tradition, focus might be placed less on traditional memorised prayers, and more on prayers of contemplation and listening. This is particularly important in our current age when people might consider themselves too busy to get involved in service while so much time is spent on computers and television. Not only could people be challenged to consider a more reasonable amount of time using technology in order to create space for reflection (and then action), but the actual time on the internet and using television can also be used to listen and learn. Both participants used silence as a means of self-improvement, but also used technology or books as a tool for transformation and focus. Attention to training people to listen to the needs of the

world as well as their own desires and skills might be one of the most effective ways to move forward. That will not only encourage a more attentive response to the world, it will encourage students to find their own personal connection to the world's needs, and additionally provide the opportunity to hear one's calling. In particular, students can be trained to listen to the needs and desires of particular groups who have been marginalized so that each student can be given a structure to contemplate how her own strengths, desires, and gifts can match the needs discovered in listening and contemplating. How else can people become aware of the needs of others? It was from her attention to the world that P1 jumped into several projects and in his openness to new information that P2 was able to see how fighting parasites would be his way of transforming the lives of millions. With the tremendous amount of information bombarding our lives, it is essential to learn how to spend time slowing down, listening, and considering how one might engage the world.

The second practical suggestion is to find ways to encourage travel. For both participants this was an essential element of their growth. For P2 international travel to several countries made the reality of poverty present in a way it had not done before. "I would say that that experience of being a first time traveler and seeing things of that nature really did open my eyes and that is when I decided that I was going to do something to help even though the interest was there." P1 did not have to travel internationally, but had a similar experience when she traveled into different areas of her own city. It was a trip on a bus, a journey to the home of a family in need and planting herself in a part of town that most would avoid if they had the choice that created the opportunities. It was through their physical journeys that both participants took

significant strides on their journey to become other-interested. Their movement out of their own worlds opened them up to the world of those who had on the margins. Logic might tell us that encouraging people to travel, visit, and move to areas that might be dangerous is a bad idea. A culture of fear can often put up a barrier between people that can never allow people to be authentically present to one another. The natural instinct of parents, and teachers who want to ensure the safety of their children and students might be to discourage these central experiences. A stronger notion of the principle of solidarity and the option for the poor may help to transform our attitudes. People don't have to travel to dangerous, remote locations. Rather, a focus on these principles might first lead people to new neighbourhoods, parts of town, or a table at lunch. An intentional effort can be made for us to find ways to cross these boundaries and really be present to other human beings. These experiences allowed each of the participants to truly encounter other people on their own terms and to become immersed in the lives of others. It seems as though both participants really became other-interested in a deep way when they met certain people. The initial response to the needs of others did not take place when they simply thought about the needs of others from a comfortable space (although that was used as a means of avoiding automaticity), but the transformation took place when they met the other. Only then were the participants able to discern their own role, and I would hold that at this point each of the participants began to discover who they were. Rather than put up boundaries, age appropriate travel experiences (understood to mean around the world, across town, or across other boundaries) that allow students to see the reality of the world should be planned. Additionally, although not as powerful as actual

experiences, videos, literature, and a variety of other methods can supplement this suggestion.

The final suggestion is for administrators and teachers to encourage jumping. Both of the participants at certain points jumped into projects that were outside of their capacities. When P2 organized his first trip out of the country it was not well planned. His initial idea of importing large quantities of food was not appropriate. A more experienced person may have discouraged the idea or even mocked it. When P1 moved to the inner city, she struggled with the presence of violence and was tempted to move away. It was a conscious choice to stay and be truly present to the community, but it was not easy. It was the decision to act boldly rather than sit back and wait for someone else to move that drove each of the interviewees into their current states of accomplishments. This attitude might also reflect what is really meant by the term faith. Things do not have to be perfectly in place and plans might not make economic sense, but people will be encouraged to act on behalf of those whom society has pushed to the margins.

This idea will be difficult to implement because it runs contrary to some attitudes. First of all we tend to avoid making mistakes and biting off more than we can chew. Rather than sticking to things we can already do, or can accomplish with reasonable effort, we should be open to encouraging bold dreams. An important part of deliberate practice is incremental improvement. This notion means striving to accomplish things that which I cannot currently do. Implicit in this is failing several times before succeeding. Essential to the training of experts in the domain of service to others are failures. To encourage people to jump into projects and work that may be over their heads and that takes people beyond their own capacities may run counter to logic, but it is just

what the participants did. Each participant took bold steps and through hard work and in spite of failures and frustration made things work. People need to be trained to recognize failure as a part of growth and transformation and teach students (and one another) to jump. Failure should be firmly distinguished from evil. Too often we consider mistakes and missteps to be avoided at all cost because they are some kind of moral or ethical failures. If a balance between proper self-concern and other-concern is at the root of CST, we can see that this perspective might be very helpful. The struggle against an exaggerated sense of self-love and selfishness will not be overcome by wishing it away. This struggle is something that most people will deal with their entire lives. In fact, self-interested desire within Buddhism is said to be the cause of suffering and dissatisfaction. When dealing with the work of becoming less self-interested and self-serving, we must expect mistakes and continual shortcomings. But the journey undertaken to become an 'experts' in self-giving love must begin with one small step, or perhaps with a big jump. The maturity of selfless living, like any other virtue (moral habit) must be slowly developed over time with practice. Failure will be a part of the journey and people should expect that and be ready to deal with it.

Corresponding to the areas where there seems to be a relationship to the lives of the participants and Ericsson's model, it seems fitting for educators to implement strategies and attitudes that will engage students to seek improvement in their service of others. Establishing the service of others as a key educational output, using the methods Ericsson points out to establish and improve programs, providing a social structure that encourages training in this domain, teaching students to listen attentively to the needs of the world to find their own particular calling, establishing encounters with those in need,

and jumping into projects that take one into a new zone of performance are ideas that can help us to engage students in this important domain. It is through the hard work of creating structures to encourage respect for all that a difference will be made.

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### **Appendix I: Schedule of Example Questions – Participant**

As you know, I am a graduate student doing research with people who have demonstrated a superior level of achievement in their service to others. Your answers will be important because they will help shed light on the ways in which individuals develop in their respect for others and their service to those in need.

#### Introduction:

1. Can you describe what your thoughts were when you were asked to be included in this study?
2. What would you say is really the essence of being able to give yourself to others in service?

#### Incremental and gradual improvement in domain:

1. Others would say that you have distinguished yourself in your service to others. Can you briefly take me through your history of service?
2. What are some of your first recollections of working for or caring about the needs of others? What do you recall being your first endeavour into service? What was that experience like for you?
3. How would you compare / contrast some of your recent service with some of your first efforts? How have things changed in that time? How have you changed in that time?
4. Can you briefly take me through some of the different service projects that you have taken part in? What roles did you play? What type of work was it?
5. Can you describe any stages that you went through as you began to develop in your work?

#### The use of training tasks and strategies that take the performer outside of the current capacities.

1. What elements have been most challenging for you in your work? What types of things have you done to overcome these challenges?
2. What would you describe as some of your most significant limitations? In general, how do you respond to limitations in your life? What types of tasks have you used in order to meet these limitations? What kind of examples can you give of methods you have used to overcome limitations?
3. What types of activities have you used in order to become very good at what you do?

4. What types of tasks helped you to gain skill in this area?
5. As a youth, could you have looked forward in time and seen yourself accomplish the tasks you have mastered today? (also – incremental growth)
6. What would you describe as the practices that took you from that point (youth) to where you are today?
7. What would be the most pronounced changes that you have seen in yourself over time? What activities brought these changes about?
8. What types of demanding tasks would you describe taking part in? What impact have these had in your growth?
9. What things have stretched your capabilities to help and want to help others?
10. What situations can you describe in which you intentionally and consciously worked to change yourself?

The use of coaches or mentors to help set goals, design training tasks to accomplish goals, and to provide meaningful feedback:

1. What people in your life would you describe as mentors in relation to your service work? How have these people impacted you and your work?
2. Who would you say you admire within this type of work? Why? What contact have you had with them?
- 3.. How often and in what ways do you seek the guidance or advice of your mentors?
4. In what other ways have you approached other people to seek guidance?
5. In what ways do you open yourself up to criticism from others? Who do you allow to offer criticism? How does that happen?
6. What types of feedback have been important for you in your practice of service? Who provided this feedback? What do you do when you are given this feedback?
7. Can you describe the ways that you keep yourself in check in terms of your service? Personal feedback, rubrics, goal setting sessions, reviews, coaching, mentoring.... (also coaching). How do you use that feedback?
8. Please describe the types of planning, strategising or goal setting that you do / have done in relation to your development of serving others.

9. What means do you use to monitor your own performance and growth? What types of things have you discovered about yourself via self-analysis? How do you use the information you discover?

Focus:

1. What tasks would you say that you have had to actively concentrate in order to succeed?
2. Have you had periods of “cruise control” “automation” or a plateau in terms of your development? Can you describe some of these experiences? How did you handle this experience?
3. What have been some of the most difficult times for you to continue to serve others?
4. What methods have you employed in order to continue your work through tough times?

Conclusion:

Are there any other things that you would like to share with me that I didn't ask?

## Appendix II Schedule of Example Questions – Additional Interviewee

As you know, I am a graduate student doing research with people who have demonstrated a superior level of achievement in their service to others. Your answers will be important because they will help shed light on the ways in which individuals develop in their respect for others and their service to those in need.

### Introduction:

1. Can you describe your relationship with and knowledge of \_\_\_\_\_'s service to others?

### Incremental and gradual improvement in domain:

1. Others would say that \_\_\_\_\_ has distinguished him / herself in terms of service to others. Can you briefly take me through some of the steps of this journey?

2. What are some of your earliest recollections of \_\_\_\_\_ working for or caring about the needs of others? What do you recall being his / her first endeavour into service? What can you tell me about that experience for him / her?

3. What distinct steps have you seen \_\_\_\_\_ pass through on the way to the current state?

4. How would you compare / contrast some of the more recent service that \_\_\_\_\_ is doing with some of the earliest efforts? How have things changed in that time? How has \_\_\_\_\_ changed in that time?

5. What are some of the most significant service projects that \_\_\_\_\_ has taken part in? What roles did he / she play? What type of work was it?

6. What significant milestones have you observed in \_\_\_\_\_'s development?

### The use of training tasks and strategies that take the performer outside of the current capacities:

1. What would you say has been most challenging for \_\_\_\_\_ in relation to his / her service work? What types of things has he / she done to overcome these challenges?

2. What would you describe as some of \_\_\_\_\_'s most significant limitations? What types of tasks has \_\_\_\_\_ gone through in order to meet these limitations? What kind of examples can you give of methods \_\_\_\_\_ has used to overcome limitations?

3. What types of activities / practices has \_\_\_\_\_ used in order to become very good at what he / she does?

4. What would you say really motivates \_\_\_\_\_ able to give his / her self to others in service?

5. What types of smaller tasks helped prepare \_\_\_\_\_ to achieve such a high level of self giving?
6. What would you describe as the steps and practices that took \_\_\_\_\_ from his / her early work to where he / she is today?
7. What would be the most pronounced changes that you have you seen in \_\_\_\_\_'s life over time? What activities brought these changes about?
8. What types of demanding tasks have you observed \_\_\_\_\_ taking part in? What impact have these had in his / her growth?
9. What things have stretched \_\_\_\_\_'s capabilities to help and want to help others?
10. What situations can you describe in which you have observed \_\_\_\_\_ intentionally and consciously worked to change him / herself? What activities did \_\_\_\_\_ use in order to accomplish this change?
11. Many elite athletes will have a very unique training schedule. In what ways can you compare \_\_\_\_\_ to that of an elite athlete?
12. What does \_\_\_\_\_ work the hardest at? Why does \_\_\_\_\_ work the hardest on that?
13. In what ways would you describe \_\_\_\_\_'s ability to serve others as the result of hard work and effort? What elements of \_\_\_\_\_'s work would you say he / she had to work the hardest to accomplish? Why? What examples come to mind?
14. In what ways would you describe \_\_\_\_\_'s abilities as more innate or natural gifts?

The use of coaches or mentors to help set goals, design training tasks to accomplish goals, and to provide meaningful feedback:

1. What people in \_\_\_\_\_'s life could be described as mentors in relation to the service work? What role / impact would you give to these people in relation to \_\_\_\_\_'s service?
2. What has this person provided for or offered to \_\_\_\_\_ that has been meaningful in terms of his / her growth?
3. When \_\_\_\_\_ struggles with completing the desired goals, who would you say he / she will go to? Why do you think he/ she would go to this person?
4. What types of feedback have been important for \_\_\_\_\_ in his / her service work? Who provided this feedback? What would you say \_\_\_\_\_ does when he / she is given this feedback?

5. Can you describe the ways that \_\_\_\_\_ keeps him / herself in check in terms of service? Personal feedback, rubrics, goal setting sessions, reviews, coaching, mentoring.... How does \_\_\_\_\_ use that information?
6. What sorts of feedback does \_\_\_\_\_ gather and use from others? How does \_\_\_\_\_ use that feedback?
7. Please describe the types of planning, strategising or goal setting that \_\_\_\_\_ does / has done in relation to his / her development in serving others.
8. What means does \_\_\_\_\_ use to monitor his / her own performance and growth? What types of things has \_\_\_\_\_ discovered about him/ herself via self-analysis? How does he / she use the information he / she discovers?
9. How does \_\_\_\_\_ come up with her / his goals and vision of service? In what ways have you observed \_\_\_\_\_'s goals change over time? Please describe the changes you have observed. How did the \_\_\_\_\_'s routine develop in relation to the changing goals?
10. What methods have you observed \_\_\_\_\_ use to determine if the goals were met?
11. Can you comment about \_\_\_\_\_'s perspective of whether or not the goals have been / are being successfully accomplished?
12. What can you tell me who functions as \_\_\_\_\_'s critic? How do they do that? What examples can you give me?
13. How does \_\_\_\_\_ deal with perceived weaknesses? What examples can you provide for me?

#### Focus

1. Have you observed periods where \_\_\_\_\_ went through a "cruise control" "automation" or hit a plateau period in terms of his / her development? Can you describe some of these experiences? How did \_\_\_\_\_ handle these experiences?
2. What difficult times have you observed in \_\_\_\_\_'s service work? What would you attribute this to? How did \_\_\_\_\_ deal with these difficult times?
3. What methods has \_\_\_\_\_ employed in order to continue to serve through tough times?
4. When \_\_\_\_\_ was younger could you have looked forward in time and seen him / her accomplish the tasks he / she has mastered today?
5. What types of things do you observe frustrating for \_\_\_\_\_? What does \_\_\_\_\_ do with these obstacles?

6. Can you describe a situation in which \_\_\_\_\_ felt she/ he failed? What was that like for \_\_\_\_\_? In what ways did he/ she respond to failure?

### Appendix III: Schedule of Example Questions – Coach / Mentor

As you know, I am a graduate student doing research with people who have demonstrated a superior level of achievement in their service to others. Your answers will be important because they will help shed light on the ways in which individuals develop in their respect for others and their service to those in need.

#### Introduction:

1. Can you describe your relationship with and knowledge of \_\_\_\_\_'s service to others?

#### Incremental and gradual improvement in domain:

1. Others would say that \_\_\_\_\_ has distinguished him / herself in terms of service to others. Can you briefly take me through some of the steps of this journey?
2. What are some of your earliest recollections of \_\_\_\_\_ working for or caring about the needs of others? What do you recall being his / her first endeavour into service? What can you tell me about that experience for him / her?
3. What distinct steps have you seen \_\_\_\_\_ pass through on the way to the current state?
4. How would you compare / contrast some of the more recent service that \_\_\_\_\_ is doing with some of the earliest efforts? How have things changed in that time? How has \_\_\_\_\_ changed in that time?
5. What significant milestones have you observed in \_\_\_\_\_'s development?

#### The use of training tasks and strategies that take the performer outside of the current capacities.

1. What would you say has been most challenging for \_\_\_\_\_ in relation to his / her service work? What types of things has he / she done to overcome these challenges? How have you as a mentor played a role in his / her overcoming of challenges?
2. What would you describe as some of \_\_\_\_\_'s most significant limitations? What types of tasks has \_\_\_\_\_ gone through in order to meet these limitations? What kind of examples can you give of methods \_\_\_\_\_ has used to overcome limitations? What role did you as a mentor play in this?
3. What types of activities / practices has \_\_\_\_\_ used in order to become very good at what he / she does? What role did your mentoring play in this?
4. What types of smaller tasks helped prepare \_\_\_\_\_ to achieve such a high level of self giving? What role did your mentoring play in this?

5. What types of demanding tasks have you observed \_\_\_\_\_ taking part in? What impact have you had in the creation of these tasks?
6. What things have stretched \_\_\_\_\_'s capabilities to help and want to help others? How has mentoring helped this come about?
7. In what ways have you and \_\_\_\_\_ intentionally and consciously worked to change him / herself? What activities did \_\_\_\_\_ use in order to accomplish this change?
8. Many elite athletes will have a very unique training schedule. In what ways can you compare \_\_\_\_\_'s work to that of an elite athlete? What role would you say you played in that training schedule?
9. What does \_\_\_\_\_ work the hardest at? Why does \_\_\_\_\_ work the hardest on that?
10. In what ways would you describe \_\_\_\_\_'s ability to serve others as the result of hard work and effort?
11. In what ways would you describe \_\_\_\_\_'s abilities as more innate or natural gifts?
12. What elements of \_\_\_\_\_'s work would you say he / she had to work the hardest to accomplish? Why? What examples come to mind? How do you think you may have been involved in this?

The use of coaches or mentors to help set goals, design training tasks to accomplish goals, and to provide meaningful feedback:

1. What other people in \_\_\_\_\_'s life would he / she describe as mentors in relation to the service work? What role / impact would you give to these people in relation to \_\_\_\_\_'s service?
2. You have been described by \_\_\_\_\_ as a mentor or coach. What does that mean to you?
3. Why would \_\_\_\_\_ point to you as mentor? What role have you provided for \_\_\_\_\_?
4. What role do you play when \_\_\_\_\_ struggles with completing goals?
5. What examples of mentoring / coaching can you offer?
6. What types of feedback have been most important for \_\_\_\_\_ in his / her service work? How do you offer this feedback? What would you say \_\_\_\_\_ does when he / she is given this feedback?
7. Can you describe other ways that \_\_\_\_\_ keeps him / herself in check in terms of service? Personal feedback, rubrics, goal setting sessions, reviews, coaching, mentoring.... How does \_\_\_\_\_ use that feedback?

5. Please describe the types of planning, strategising or goal setting that \_\_\_\_\_ does / has done in relation to his / her development in serving others. What role do you plan in this?
6. What means do you and \_\_\_\_\_ use to monitor his / her performance and growth? What types of things have you and \_\_\_\_\_ discovered about him/ herself via self-analysis? How does he / she use the information you discover?
7. How does \_\_\_\_\_ come up with her / his goals and vision of service? In what ways have you been a part of goal setting and vision of service?
8. What methods have you and \_\_\_\_\_ use to determine if the goals were met?
9. In what ways can you describe yourself as \_\_\_\_\_'s critic? How do you do that? What examples can you give me?
10. How do you and \_\_\_\_\_ deal with perceived weaknesses? What examples can you provide for me?

#### Focus

1. Have you observed periods where \_\_\_\_\_ went through a “cruise control” “automation” or a plateau period in terms of his / her development? Can you describe some of these experiences? How did you and \_\_\_\_\_ handle these experiences?
2. What difficult times have you observed in \_\_\_\_\_'s service work? What would you attribute this to? How did you both deal with these difficult times?
3. What methods are employed in order for \_\_\_\_\_ to continue to serve through tough times?
4. What types of things do you observe frustrating for \_\_\_\_\_? What does \_\_\_\_\_ do with these obstacles? What role do you play in this?
5. Can you describe a situation in which \_\_\_\_\_ felt she/ he failed? What was that like for \_\_\_\_\_? In what ways did he/ she respond to failure?

## **Appendix IV: ENREB Proposal and Certificate of Approval**

### 1. Summary of Project:

Randall Woodard

The purpose of this study is to test the applicability of K. Anders Ericsson's theory of the attainment of expert performance through deliberate practice on those who demonstrate a superior level of achievement in terms of service to others. This will be carried out in order to determine the theory's applicability to Catholic school administration.

Additionally, this study will also be testing the relevance of Ericsson's theory within a domain that lacks the clear standards of many other expert fields. It is my contention that a lived concern for others is a central goal of Catholic education. Thus, the study will ask if Ericsson's theory of expert performance can be used to help Catholic school administrators form students who will demonstrate high levels of achievement in the domain of service to others (respect for the human person). Additionally, it will ask if Ericsson's theory of expert practice can be applied to the domain of service to others.

#### Methodology:

I will identify two people who have demonstrated outstanding achievement in terms of service to others. These people will be invited to participate in the study which will consist of approximately five (recorded) interviews of about an hour duration each. In addition, I will ask to interview a close friend or relative who can speak of the participant's service to others and a person who identified by the participant as a coach or mentor. This will be one (audio recorded) interview of about one to two hours in length.

### 2. Research Instruments:

See attached

### 3. Study Subjects:

I plan to invite six people to participate in this study. (two participants, two people with close knowledge of the participant, two people identified as a coach or mentor to the participant).

These people will be identified using the following criteria:

The participants will:

- A. Demonstrate service to others that clearly "transcend[s] a level of performance that we and other people in our immediate environment could attain" (Ericsson, 2002, 4).
- B. Have had their service to others acknowledged by some significant group or community.
- C. Have been active in some type of service for an extended period (generally close to ten years, but this is negotiable).
- D. Be able, and willing to articulate their own growth in regards to their own service.

Those interviewees close to the participant will be identified by the participant as people who:

- A. Will have known the participant for an extended period of time (hopefully at least ten years).
- B. Will have personal knowledge of the participant's history of service.

C. Is able and willing to speak about the participant's development into a person of service.

Finally, the two interviewees identified as coacher or mentors will be selected by the following criteria:

A. The person chosen by the participants who functioned as a coach or mentor to their growth in service to others. This would have been the one who was sought out for feedback, advice on how to accomplish tasks, or other types of assistance.

I will invite the six individuals to take part in the study via a formal letter that describes the purpose of the project, the methods used, the time commitment, my desire to interview a friend and mentor, as well as written consent.

These participants do not show any characteristics of being especially vulnerable, nor do they show any need for extra measures.

#### 4. Informed Consent:

Consent in writing will be obtained from all participants.

#### 5. Deception:

Deception will not be used.

#### 6. Feedback and Debriefing:

After the interviews have been transcribed, each interviewee will be given a copy of the interview in order to provide feedback to me. I will take into account their comments and use their feedback to more fully complete / revise the interview.

After the study and analysis have been completed, I will provide a written copy of the relevant sections to each participant for their comments and feedback to me.

#### 7. Risks and Benefits:

These are no apparent risks to the participants or to the third party interviewees. If at any point the participants or other interviewees feel they would like to withdraw from the study and have all records destroyed or returned to them, they will have that right (and be informed of that right at the onset of the study).

#### 8. Anonymity and Confidentiality:

The level of confidentiality used will depend upon the desire of each individual participant. If the participants so desire, I will use their names and affiliations in the report. If they desire confidentiality, then names, affiliations, places of service, city of residence, and name and relationship of other interviewee will be omitted. If this is the case, the participant will be spoken of using vague methods that will not reveal his / her identity.

No confidential records will be consulted.

Hard data will be stored in a locked file. Electronic data will likewise, be kept secure by being locked in a file, and through the use of password protected storage devices.



## Appendix V: Recruitment Letters

### Participant Recruitment Letter

Dear Participant,

I am a Master's of Education student at the University of Manitoba and I am currently doing research for my thesis. I would like to study what brings about your profound dedication to the good of others and compare it to K. Anders Ericsson's theoretical model of outstanding performance. I am interested in why some people dedicate themselves to others at such a high level and the implications this information might have in educational settings.

I would like you to participate in this study because I believe that much can be learned from your dedication to others. Your superior achievement in regards to your service can have important implications in relation to educating others to respect and promote human dignity. If you are interested in participating in this study, I would like to ask three things of you. First, I hope to schedule about five, one hour interviews. These interviews will help me to understand your own growth and development in relation to your work and the correlation between your experience and Ericsson's model of high achievement. Secondly, I hope to schedule one interview with someone of your choosing who might be able to further illustrate your development and growth as a person of service. Finally, I would love to spend any amount of time with you as you do some of your typical work in order to experience what you do first hand. This final possibility is negotiable and open to meet your schedule. Your total time commitment for interviews and reviewing transcripts will likely be less than ten hours. The time spend with me as a "shadow" is up to you.

My hope is to record each of the interviews that I conduct. Each interview will be transcribed and returned to you for your comments and approval. I will gladly provide you with the list of questions for you to review before the interviews in order to help you prepare. The interviews with the person of your choosing will, likewise be made available to that person, as well as to you for comment and approval. Additionally, the notes and comments made during the time spent with you, would also be offered to you in a written transcript for your comment and approval. The transcribed interviews will be used as data for analysis in the writing of the thesis. You may elect, upon review of the transcripts that certain comments not be used, or that comments not be attributed to you. When the final analysis is completed I will also provide the relevant sections to you, for your comment. Importantly, at any time during this study you may formally choose to end your involvement. At the conclusion of the study, you may request to keep the recordings, or you may request their destruction. If you do not request either, I will erase the tapes. Finally, at the conclusion of the study, I will provide you with a copy of the final and complete version of the thesis.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please reply using the enclosed document. I have also included a letter of informed consent for you to review. If you have any questions about the study, please contact me at my office (204) 480-1472 or home (204)

287-8524. I may also be contacted by e mail at [rwoody3@juno.com](mailto:rwoody3@juno.com) If you would like, you can also contact my thesis advisor, Dr. John Stapleton (204) 272-1500.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,

Randy Woodard  
M.Ed. Student,  
University of Manitoba

Cc:  
Dr. John Stapleton,  
Professor & Dean Emeritus  
Faculty of Education  
University of Manitoba

## Recruitment Letter to Mentor

Dear (Mentor),

I am a Master's of Education student at the University of Manitoba and I am currently doing research for my thesis. I plan to study (\_\_\_\_\_) in order to learn about his profound dedication to the good of others and compare it to K. Anders Ericsson's theoretical model of outstanding performance. I am interested in why some people dedicate themselves to others at such a high level and the implications this information might have in educational settings.

I would like you to participate in this study because I believe that much can be learned from (\_\_\_\_\_)’s dedication to others. His superior achievement in regards to service can have important implications in relation to educating others to respect and promote human dignity. If you are interested in participating in this study, I would like to ask one thing of you. I hope to schedule about a one hour interview to be done over the phone. This interview will help me to understand your experience working with (\_\_\_\_\_) and help to shed light on his dedication to others.

My hope is to record each of the interviews that I conduct. Each interview will be transcribed and returned to you for your comments and approval. I will gladly provide the list of questions for you to review before the interviews in order to help you prepare. Additionally, the notes and comments made during the time spent with you would also be offered to you in a written transcript for your comment and approval. The transcribed interviews will be used as data for analysis in the writing of the thesis. You may elect, upon review of the transcripts that certain comments not be used, or that comments not be attributed to you. Importantly, at any time during this study you may formally choose to end your involvement. At the conclusion of the study the transcripts will be destroyed.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please reply using the enclosed document. You may do so via fax at (352) 588-8404 or to my mailing address at 11905 Orangewood Dr. Dade City, Fl 33523. I have also included a letter of informed consent for you to review. If you have any questions about the study, please contact me at my office (352) 588-8239 or home (352) 437-4941. I may also be contacted by e mail at [rwoody3@juno.com](mailto:rwoody3@juno.com) If you would like, you can also contact my thesis advisor, Dr. John Stapleton (204) 272-1500.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,

Randy Woodard  
M.Ed. Student,  
University of Manitoba

Cc:  
Dr. John Stapleton,  
Professor & Dean Emeritus  
Faculty of Education  
University of Manitoba

## Recruitment Letter to Friend

Dear (Long term friend or relative),

I am a Master's of Education student at the University of Manitoba and I am currently doing research for my thesis. I plan to study (\_\_\_\_\_) in order to learn about his profound dedication to the good of others and compare it to K. Anders Ericsson's theoretical model of outstanding performance. I am interested in why some people dedicate themselves to others at such a high level and the implications this information might have in educational settings.

I would like you to participate in this study because I believe that much can be learned from (\_\_\_\_\_)’s dedication to others. His superior achievement in regards to service can have important implications in relation to educating others to respect and promote human dignity. If you are interested in participating in this study, I would like to ask one thing of you. I hope to schedule about a one hour interview to be done over the phone. This interview will help me to understand your experience working with (\_\_\_\_\_) and help to shed light on his dedication to others.

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With best wishes.

Sincerely,

Randy Woodard  
M.Ed. Student,  
University of Manitoba

Cc:  
Dr. John Stapleton,  
Professor & Dean Emeritus  
Faculty of Education  
University of Manitoba

**Appendix VI: Personal Correspondence from K. Anders Ericsson**

From: "K. Anders Ericsson" <[ericsson@psy.fsu.edu](mailto:ericsson@psy.fsu.edu)>  
Reply-To: "K. Anders Ericsson" <[ericsson@psy.fsu.edu](mailto:ericsson@psy.fsu.edu)>  
Subject: Re: Educational / Humanitarian Research using Deliberate Practice  
To: Randall Woodard <[umwooda2@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:umwooda2@cc.umanitoba.ca)>

Dear Randall Woodard:

Thank you so much for your warm email!!

I am not sure how much useful advice I can give. I have heard recently from a few people with similar interests to yours. Last year I attended a conference hosted by the Dalai Lama on research on how to improve longevity and health. I have attached a paper that will appear in the Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences this year that I presented in revised form at that conference. I am also attaching a copy of chapter that I wrote some ten years ago that tried to address more generally the life of the expert performer. Finally I attached a paper on deliberate practice and aging that is kind of relevant.

I believe that expert performers are trying to lead lives that allow them to maximize their available energy to improve their performance. I have reviewed a lot of reports on how novelists seem to organize their lives similarly to maximize the quality and quantity of the writing. Furthermore, other very influential people, such as the Dalai Lama and the pope, also seem to exert a lot of control over their lives so they are able to interact with people and create the best opportunities for improving the lives of others. I have not done a review of the daily lives of great humanitarians, but several people approached me at the Dalai Lama conference with suggestions that monks and other people meditating seemed to report similar limits in duration of meditation and distinctions regarding full and insufficient concentration. Finally, here is a chance that I might join a group going to India to study expert meditators who would be summoned by the Lama to come to the Dalai Lama's residence in India.

Please keep me informed about what you find!! I would be happy to comment on anything that you find. I would be especially interested in anything that would seem to differ from what we have previously found.

Have a great new year with a lot exciting discoveries,  
very best wishes,  
Anders