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**TEAM FEEL: AN EXPLORATION OF A GROUP RESONANCE-BASED
INTERVENTION AND RELATIONSHIPS**

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School of Human Kinetics
University of Ottawa**

**Thesis submitted to the University of Ottawa in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts in Human Kinetics
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore and document the process through which a team of athletes and coaches felt and attempted to learn and apply resonance in a group context throughout a season. Resonance is a process that allows people to identify how they want to feel, prepare to experience that desired 'feel,' recognize obstacles that prevent them from feeling the way they want, and reconnecting when they are disengaged (Newburg, 2006; Newburg et al., 2002). Sixteen synchronized swimmers, one head coach, and one assistant coach participated in a group resonance based intervention over the span of a four month competitive season. The results, which are presented as two narratives, suggest that a group resonance process is possible. However, participants must be prepared to take ownership of this process and engage in challenging, deliberate work to incorporate their individual desired feel and the desired feel of others in the everyday experiences of a competitive team. This story also indicates that unresolved conflict can be detrimental to (a) relationships between athletes and coach, (b) performance, and (c) how people want to feel in the context of their sport.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Interpersonal relationships play a fundamental role in athletic achievement and enjoyment (Wylleman, 2000). Over the past few decades, the study of interpersonal relationships has grown considerably (Hinde, 1996), and yet the domain continues to be underdeveloped in the field of sport psychology as a whole (Wylleman, 2000). Thus far, research regarding interpersonal relationships in sport has focused on three principle areas: coach-athlete relationships, athletes' parents, and the social network perspective (Wylleman, 2000).

In terms of the coach-athlete relationship, it has been demonstrated that quality interpersonal relationships between coaches and athletes are critical for all aspects of the sport experience, including performance and satisfaction (Cox, 2002; Jowett & Meek, 2000; Poczwadowski, Barott, & Henschen, 2002; Salminen & Liukkonen, 1996). However, most of the research in this realm has focused on preferred leadership behaviours and coach effectiveness (Vanden Auweele & Rzewnicki, 2000), without taking into account the emotional component and the duality of the coach-athlete relationship. Namely, relationships imply a two-way interaction; not only is the athlete impacted by the coach's influence, but the coach may also use the interpersonal connection as a foundation for emotional growth (Poczwadowski et al., 2002; Wylleman, 2000).

The second area, relationships involving athletes' parents, has also received some attention within sport psychology research. In response to concerns about the effect of parental behaviours on youth participation and development in sport, researchers conceptualized the 'athletic triangle' to bring awareness to parents' functions in sport relationships (Wylleman,

2000). This conceptualization allowed for new dimensions of interpersonal relationships to be examined, including interactions between athletes and parents, and coaches and parents.

The third area, the social network perspective, has expanded the study of relationships past dyadic interaction, and included the athletes' psychological environment (Wylleman, 2000). Integral to this perspective are network resources to which athletes have access, the most important of which is social support. While these three areas (i.e., coach-athlete relationship, parents of athletes, social network) have allowed for relationships to be considered with the inclusion of coaches, parents, teachers, peers, and partners, the primary focus has been on the coach-athlete relationship. As a result, the impact of important others in the athletic setting has been neglected (Wylleman, 2000).

In order to formulate a complete understanding of relationships that shape the athletic experience, there is a need for research with a focus beyond the coach-athlete relationship. In the field of sport psychology, relationships have been examined at many levels, including the coach-athlete relationship within dyads and larger teams (Chelladurai, Imamura, Yamaguchi, Oinuma, & Miyauchi, 1988; Jowett & Meek, 2000), and athlete-athlete relationships within dyads and larger teams (Carron & Hausenblas, 1998; Wickwire, Bloom, & Loughhead, 2004). Specifically, an examination of both coaches and athletes' involvement is necessary to comprehend their respective contributions to team relationships and their outcomes (Jowett & Meek, 2000).

The purpose of this study was to explore the interpersonal relationships that occurred within a team (i.e., coach and athlete, coach and the entire team, athlete and athlete, athlete and the entire team), from the perspective of both the coach and the athletes, using a resonance-based intervention. Again, the majority of research regarding sport relationships has converged on that of the coach and athlete, and these studies have generally focused on one of five main

psychological perspectives: psychodynamics and personality, behavioural, cognitive, social-psychological, and interactionist (Poczwadowski et al., 2002). As such, there has been a lack of direct focus on the socio-emotional component of relationships (Wylleman, 2000), a fundamental part of interpersonal interaction. Truly, emotions are manifested and regulated not just internally but externally, in relationships with other people (Goleman, 2002).

Much research has focused on the role of emotion in sport (Hanin, 2000), however there is a lack of intervention-based studies to inform people how to enhance their emotional experiences to achieve optimal performance, well-being, and relationships. Most studies on emotions in sport have focused on arousal regulation and its impact on anxiety (Botterill & Brown, 2002). The recent positive psychology trend, however, has incited several researchers to focus their studies on more “positive” emotions (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

One concept that is increasingly attracting more attention is resonance. Resonance is a process that allows people to feel the way they want to feel, prepare to experience desired feelings, recognize obstacles that prevent them from feeling the way they want to feel, and reconnect with desired feelings when they are not experiencing them (Newburg, Kimiecik, Durand-Bush, & Doell, 2002). Research on resonance has shown that a resonance-based intervention lasting between 4 to 12 weeks has had a positive impact on the performance, well-being, and motivation of athletes of different levels and sports (Arcand, Durand-Bush, & Miall, in press; Baldry, Faubert, & Durand-Bush, 2005; Burke & Durand-Bush, 2004; Callary, 2004; Durand-Bush, Faubert, & Newburg, 2004; Doell, Durand-Bush, & Newburg, 2006; Faubert, Durand-Bush, Trudel, & Newburg, 2005; Leroux, Doell, & Durand-Bush, 2005; Short, 2004; Soulard, 2003). More importantly, it helped participants not only in their sport or physical

activity context but also in other aspects of their life, for example, at work, school, and in their personal relationships.

To date, all resonance-based interventions were delivered on an individual basis with individual sport athletes. Although it is advocated as the best approach due to the individualized nature of each person's resonance process, it might not be the most practical, efficient, and encompassing approach to deal with teams. In a team setting, there is a need to consider individuals but also the team as a whole. Consequently, a team resonance-based intervention was employed in this study in order to examine the relationships and underlying desired 'feel' of a team comprised of coaches and athletes. After a brief review of the literature regarding team relationships, and the process of resonance, the research questions, and methodological issues of this study are described. In the remaining chapters of this thesis, two articles and a general discussion are also presented.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Interpersonal Relationships

According to Hinde (1996), relationships are dynamic, and interactions between two or more different people involve unique actions, reactions, and rules. These governing rules help to ensure that each member of a particular relationship achieves the goals of that association. The goals expressed by each member of the relationship help to classify the interaction in terms of what the individuals do together, and how each person satisfies, or attempts to satisfy the needs of the other (Hinde, 1996). In the sport context, there is a unique bond among coaches and athletes; while conventional interpersonal processes are utilized in these interactions, the relationships often further revolve around the specific task of performance excellence and winning, and without this task, the relationships would generally not exist (Poczwardowski et al., 2002).

Interpersonal relationships have been conceptualized in different ways. Hinde (1997) argues that all relationships are dyadic in nature, but that they are also rooted in a social network of other relationships. Iso-Ahola (1995), meanwhile, argues that interpersonal factors are only one part of one's psychological makeup, which also includes psychological core and intrapersonal factors. According to Iso-Ahola, characteristics that are inherent to athletes' interpersonal qualities include social support, audience and media, team spirit, cohesiveness, and the coach-athlete relationship. Researchers have thus begun to expand the conceptualization of sport relationships to include further variables. Unfortunately, these proposed models are largely theoretical, providing only a small basis from which sport psychology researchers can examine

inter- and intrapersonal processes (Wylleman, 2000), and at this point in time the coach-athlete relationship continues to be the most highly researched.

Coach-Athlete Relationships

The coach-athlete relationship is the best understood and most researched relationship occurring at the sport level (Wylleman, 2000). Although the task component of the coach-athlete relationship is often regarded as the most important mediating variable, interpersonal characteristics such as behaviours, emotions, hopes, and regrets have a strong impact on the dynamic process of forming and sustaining relationships (Hinde, 1996). These emotionally, behaviourally, and cognitively charged factors maintain the interactions, and allow relationships to endure, lending themselves to defining the rules of each relationship (Hinde, 1996). The physical environment and socio-cultural structure also affect how roles and other social behaviours are carried out (Acitelli, Duck, & West, 2000; Hinde, 1996). The unique circumstances of each exchange, as well as particular beliefs, values and conventions that each individual advocates, influence the complexity of the relationship both positively and negatively. Thus, all interpersonal relationships, including that of athlete and coach, need to be viewed as multifaceted, and influenced by numerous contexts and factors (Poczwadowski et al., 2002).

The coach-athlete relationship has typically been examined using one of five main psychological perspectives: psychodynamics and personality, behavioural, cognitive, social-psychological, and interactionist (Poczwadowski et al., 2002). The first of these perspectives, psychodynamics and personality, concentrates on both the coach's and the athlete's personalities, needs, and experiences as an explanation for tendencies toward certain interpersonal behaviour. The second perspective, behavioural, deals with the coach's verbal and nonverbal behaviour, and the athlete's cognitive responses to such behaviour. Third, the cognitive perspective takes a step

beyond the behavioural view, exploring the athlete and coach's perceptions of one another. The fourth perspective, social-psychological, explores factors such as roles, leadership styles, and the athlete's family and support network. The final interactionist perspective brings into account cognitive, behavioural, and emotional characteristics of the athlete and coach, as well as the influence of situational factors on the relationship. Clearly, then, emotional characteristics have not been extensively researched.

Leadership. Research based on the aforementioned five perspectives has generally distinguished the factors that are important to coaches and athletes within their interpersonal relationship. When examining variables that affect the athletes, it is imperative to consider leadership characteristics, which fall under both the social-psychological and behavioural perspectives. According to the multidimensional model of leadership in coaching, three main categories of leader behaviour (i.e., required, actual, and preferred) need to be harmonious to optimize the athletes' satisfaction and performance (Chelladurai, 1984). From this model, five important coaching variables of behaviour have been identified, including training and instruction, democratic behaviour, autocratic behaviour, social support, and rewarding behaviour (Chelladurai, 1984). Training and instruction encompasses behaviours directed specifically at the teaching aspect of coaching. Democratic behaviour is the degree to which coaches allow athletes to engage in the decision making process. Social support is the extent to which coaches offer a nurturing environment for the athletes, while rewarding behaviour can include verbal or physical praise. Finally, autocratic behaviour is the degree to which the coach is authoritarian in nature (Chelladurai, 1984). It appears that with increasing sport experience, athletes prefer an authoritarian approach with great social support from the coach (Chelladurai, 1984). However,

the key is matching the athletes' preferences for specific types of coaching behaviours to those actually elicited by the coach.

Chelladurai (1984) operationalized the effectiveness of the coach-athlete relationship based on athlete satisfaction, finding that when there were discrepancies between perceived and preferred leader behaviours, the athletes' levels of satisfaction with their coaches decreased. Furthermore, as a function of these discrepancies, satisfaction with overall involvement and team performance also decreased, while satisfaction with individual performance did not change. The fact that satisfaction with the team's performance changed is not surprising. Individuals generally set their own performance goals, but for the team as a whole, all members and the coach usually engage in and are part of the setting of performance standards (Chelladurai, 1984). Based on the notion that the collective group can be affected as a unit, this study emphasized the team's collective feelings in addition to individual ones.

Using Chelladurai's (1984) work as a basis, Salminen and Liukkonen (1996) studied leadership behaviours, not only from the athletes' perspective, but from that of the coaches as well. They found that coaches generally rated themselves more positively than their athletes did, but that the most significant correlations between coaches' and athletes' assessments came from the affective component of coaching behaviour. In other words, the coaches and athletes perceived and rated the emotionally based behaviours of the coaches most similarly. Subsequently, they concluded that the coach-athlete relationship is emotional in tone, and that the coaches who reflected on and cared for the opinions and feelings of the athletes seemed to have the best relationship with them. Interestingly, women athletes tended to want to be more active in decision making than men, but expected less social support than men (Salminen & Liukkonen, 1996).

Compatibility. While several studies have examined the coach-athlete relationship from both the athletes' and coaches' perspective using a self-evaluative approach (Chelladurai, 1984; Chelladurai, Imamura, Yamaguchi, Oinuma, & Miyauchi, 1988; Moser, 1992; Salminen & Liukkonen, 1996), few studies have examined how coaches analyze their relationship with their players. According to Carron and Chelladurai (1978), one determining factor in how coaches approach their relationship with their athletes involves compatibility. Some aspects of compatibility include whether the behaviours of each member of the dyad conflict or not, and whether or not the norms and roles established by the coach are accepted by the athlete(s). While the majority of the research on compatibility has focused on task compatibility, this study also examined the possibility of social compatibility within the coach-athlete relationship, as personality characteristics of both the coach and the athletes can play a large role in how they interact (Smoll & Smith, 1989).

Communication. Another important variable that has been considered when examining the coach-athlete relationship is that of communication. Both athletes and coaches agree that communication is critical to the process of performing (Culver & Trudel, 2000). While many coaches may expect their athletes to initiate the communication process themselves, younger athletes often struggle with the assertiveness that this effort requires (Culver & Trudel, 2000). Rather, coaches should create an environment that promotes open discussion to encourage their athletes to communicate their needs to them (Culver & Trudel, 2000). In this sense, both the coach and the athletes take responsibility for communicating effectively with each other.

Emotional connection. Research using the aforementioned perspectives has elicited many critical findings about the coach-athlete relationship. Few researchers, however, have attempted to study and explain emotionally based components of the coach-athlete relationship.

Of these studies, extensive interviews have been conducted in the development of two holistic models that interpret the meanings attached to the relationship by both athletes and coaches. In particular, Jowett and Meek (2000) described the coach-athlete relationship using a conceptual model involving three parts: closeness, co-orientation, and complementarity. Closeness was operationalized as an emotional interdependence that connected the athlete and coach, and involved personal and generic feelings. These were reflected in responses of love, caring, like, genuine concern, respect, commitment, and belief. Co-orientation was operationalized as the verbal interactions between coaches and athletes that allowed them to share each other's experiences, knowledge, and understanding. Being co-oriented meant striving for the same outcome in the context of goals, training, competitions, and other sport or non-related issues. Finally, complementarity was operationalized as cooperative and effective interactions that allowed coaches and athletes to help each other's performance and coordinate efforts. While this factor often involved the symbiotic teacher-student nature of the coach-athlete relationship, it more importantly allowed for both the coach and the athlete to mutually confirm that the other's expectations were important (Jowett & Meek, 2000).

Although Jowett and Meek's (2000) conceptual model provided a convincing framework from which to examine the emotional qualities of the coach-athlete relationship, only married coach-athlete dyads were studied. Further, they hypothesized that this model may have only held true in the context of individual sports, in which coaches and athletes had the opportunity to work more collaboratively. Working with the similar objective of gaining a holistic understanding of the coach-athlete relationship, Poczwardowski et al. (2002) studied a group of women gymnasts to understand the world of experience from the point of view of the coaches and athletes. Three main categories emerged that conceptually described and provided

understanding of the coach-athlete relationship: activity, interaction, and care (Poczwardowski et al., 2002). The essence of their conceptualization was that the coach-athlete dyad involved relationship-oriented activities and interactions, the meanings that athletes and coaches made about these activities and interactions, and mutual care between the athlete and coach.

The first category, relationship-oriented activities, included what happened before, during, and after practice sessions or competitions. These relationship-oriented activities involved physical movement, and verbal and nonverbal communication. The second category, interaction, was defined by what the coach and athletes did together, including the influence one had over the other's actions and behaviours. For example, coaches and athletes spoke, listened to each other, and asked questions, to which they responded. The third defining category, care, was more complex because it attempted to capture multifaceted cognitive and emotional responses that the athletes and coaches developed in the course of their interpersonal relationship. Care involved the particular meanings that both the coach and the athletes derived from each activity and interaction. This referred to each individual's personal experiences and behaviour toward the other person. Care also involved a mutual component; each person recognized the other on a cognitive and emotional level. With this awareness, they subsequently formed a standard for each other's welfare, which in turn guided their behaviour, including activities and interactions.

While athletes of individual sports were the participants in this study, Poczwardowski et al.'s (2002) model was postulated to be a global conceptualization of the coach-athlete relationship, with pertinence to all types (i.e., individual and team) of sports. Their reasoning for this argument was that a holistic approach was employed; both the coach and athlete were accounted for, the variables were described in the primary context, and each of the five perspectives of studying the coach-athlete relationship was employed in the collection, analysis,

and synthesis of the data. However, this conceptualization should be interpreted with some caution since it was based on the results of only one study with one population of individual sport athletes; significant variables and the primary context could be different for team sports.

Clearly, there is crossover between Jowett and Meek (2000) and Poczwadowski et al.'s (2002) conceptualizations; they have both accounted for emotional and interpersonal factors within the coach-athlete relationship. While these studies have offered a foundation to examine emotions existing within the coach-athlete relationship, there has been little research that describes the process of how that emotional bond is formed or how emotional awareness might play a role in this relationship. This is an issue that was addressed in this study.

Athlete-Athlete Relationships

One of the objectives of this study was to explore within-team relationships using the RPM (Newburg et al., 2002) as a guiding framework. As such, discussing the coach-athlete relationship, and critical characteristics of that interaction, only addresses one part of this study's focus; 'within-team relationships' also include athlete-athlete relationships.

In a recent review of the literature, Wylleman (2000) noted that there is a need to study relationships in sport beyond the coach-athlete interaction. In this review, Wylleman discussed how the significance of other members of an athlete's social support network (i.e., parents, peers, teachers, media, partners) needs to be re-evaluated in sport psychology research. Although Wylleman advocated the inclusion of all members of athletes' support circles, his review focused on the role of parental relationships, stating that both coaches and parents remained significant throughout the careers of athletes, but that teachers, partners, and most notably peers played a lesser role. Furthermore, in discussing how to build on current interpersonal relationship research, Wylleman encouraged the creation of additional psychometric instruments without

taking into consideration the use of qualitative measures to complement what has already been found through quantitative research (Vergeer, 2000).

Although Wylleman's review did not necessarily have a comprehensive focus, his message is clear. Little is actually known about the processes of most of the relationships athletes form during their career, and currently there are almost no psychological intervention techniques developed to optimize the interpersonal functioning of athletes or coaches (Wylleman, 2000). In this sense, it is unclear what actually occurs at the interpersonal level beyond the coach-athlete relationship, and even less known is how to help facilitate each athlete's interactions. Interestingly, when student-athletes were asked to name the most influential people in their support network, parents and coaches were included, but so were their peers (Wylleman, 2000). It becomes apparent, then, that the study of athlete-athlete relationships has an important place in sport psychology.

Group dynamics. Generally speaking, sport psychology researchers have not used the term athlete-athlete relationships, but rather used the term group dynamics to characterize the processes within these relationships. According to Carron and Hausenblas (1998), group dynamics refers to the nature of groups, the laws of their development, and their interrelations with individuals, other groups, and larger institutions, as well as the energy, vitality, and activity of groups. Clearly, interpersonal relationships are only one small component of the much broader theme of group dynamics. In order to address the topics that are critical to athlete-athlete relationships, however, a study of group dynamic literature is essential, as the literature regarding athlete-athlete interpersonal functioning is almost non-existent. For this study, critical topics include group structure, cohesion, communication, satisfaction, and emotional connection.

Group structure. Relationships are often characterized by dyadic interactions, but when functioning within a team, athletes move beyond dyads, interacting with and creating a relationship between themselves and the group as a whole. When it comes to a larger team, such as team synchronized swimming, group structure becomes a critical element in the maintenance of team relationships. The study of group structure has generally focused on performance and productivity. Some important questions that have been asked include, “What is the ideal number of athletes a team should be comprised of?” (Carron, Widmeyer, & Brawley, 1989), “How do the characteristics of group members determine the behaviour of that group?” and “How does individual orientation influence team effectiveness?” (Shaw, 1981). Less research has focused on the link between group structure and the organization and maintenance of relationships on a team.

Cohesion. One variable that is often connected to group structure is cohesion. Cohesion is defined as a dynamic process that is reflected in the team’s tendency to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of objectives (i.e., around a task) and/or the satisfaction of each member’s emotional needs (i.e., socially) (Carron & Hausenblas, 1998). In a recent study, Wickwire and colleagues (2004) found that cohesion was a critical component of the dyadic interaction process, and a by-product of both a solid team structure and effective communication. Furthermore, positive interpersonal cohesiveness helps to facilitate coordinated group efforts and performance so that bonds are created, and positive feelings are maintained as group tasks are completed (Spoor & Kelly, 2004). Research on cohesiveness has demonstrated two resulting outcomes with regard to sport teams. First, cohesion has a positive effect on team performance and task-related success (Carron & Hausenblas, 1998). Second, and more pertinent to this study,

cohesion aids in the process of creating mutual friendships, and shared feelings of closeness and togetherness (Carron & Hausenblas, 1998).

Communication. A variable that is irrevocably tied to cohesion is communication. Recently, Wickwire et al. (2004) argued that cohesion and communication are co-dependent and of equal importance, noting that it is difficult to determine whether cohesion is a product of good communication or whether communication is the result of team cohesion. What is clear is that communication is as critical to the interaction process of athletes as it is to the coach-athlete relationship. In the non-sport literature, it has been well documented that communication skills are an excellent predictor of interpersonal relationship maintenance, and that effective communication skills allow for greater satisfaction in relationships (Miczo, 2001).

Satisfaction. Satisfaction is an internal response to our external environment, and is linked to the fulfillment of expectations (Miczo, 2001). It is recognized as a key element to physical and psychological well-being in close relationships (Miczo, 2001). According to Carron and Hausenblas (1998), satisfaction is an essential element of the team building process, involving variables such as role involvement, norms, and goals, as well as interpersonal relationships. Satisfaction is also linked to resonance, in that engaging in the process of resonance allows people to experience a feeling of satisfaction with their lives (Newburg, 2006; Newburg et al., 2002).

Emotional connection. While the roles of cohesion, communication, group structure, satisfaction, and general emotions in sport have been acknowledged, the function of emotional connection between athletes has not been well documented. There has been a recent increased interest in the notion of groups developing shared emotions and moods, with differing focuses on how the heterogeneity, and alternatively, the homogeneity of individual group members' affect

creates group moods and emotions (Spoor & Kelly, 2004). In natural settings, groups are more likely to form when the individuals develop shared feelings, and these shared feelings help unite the members to one another and allow for a coordinated effort among the group members (Spoor & Kelly, 2004). In the sport environment, teams are often not formed naturally, but consist of players who have been put together with an explicit purpose (i.e., to win), or without (i.e., for convenience's sake or for pure participation) (Galipeau & Trudel, 2006). Examining shared feelings among people who have intentionally or unintentionally connected is paramount as research on this topic is sparse. The fact that the emotions of both coaches and athletes matter within team relationships suggests that actively working towards feeling the way one wants to feel could have an important impact on coach-athlete and athlete-athlete relationships.

Resonance

Resonance is a process that can help people feel the way they want to feel, perform better, and lead more fulfilling lives (Newburg et al., 2002). The theme underlying this process is that the way we feel matters and affects how we perform (Newburg, 2006). There are very few people, however, who can actually say they regularly reflect on how they want to feel in life, and take an active approach to experience those feelings on a day to day basis (Newburg et al., 2002). Resonance requires ongoing self-awareness, self-knowledge, and self-regulation, and allows people to feel fully engaged in what they do so that there is a positive reciprocity between their internal selves and what surrounds them externally.

According to Ravizza (2001), athletes need to become aware of their emotional states before they can effectively carry out self-regulatory techniques. Through awareness, athletes exert more control on their emotions, cognitions, and physiological responses, and are thus able to self-regulate to optimize their performances. Lanning (1979) suggests that in order for coaches

to be effective in their leadership role, they should come to know themselves very well through introspection. While it is clear within the literature that self-awareness and knowledge are critical for both coaches and athletes, researchers have failed to take the next step. Specifically, research has failed to show exactly how to help individuals to increase awareness to regulate behaviours, thoughts, and emotions. Resonance is a process that empowers individuals to self-regulate and take ownership of their life based on how they want it to feel.

The Resonance Performance Model. In order to represent the process in which individuals engage to feel the way they want to feel and experience a harmonious connection between their internal selves and environment, the Resonance Performance Model (RPM; Newburg et al., 2002) was created. This model, emerging from hundreds of interviews with expert performers in various fields, comprises four main components: dream feeling, preparation, obstacles, and revisit the dream feeling (see Appendix A). The dream feeling represents how people want to feel as they participate in a certain activity. This dream feeling is not an outcome (e.g., winning a championship), but is rather an internal feeling that incites people to engage and perform.

Preparation is the next component of the RPM and involves everything that individuals do to develop skills and to feel the way they want in this process. Preparation can include physical, mental, technical, tactical, emotional, or social activities or strategies (Durand-Bush et al., 2004), and is individualized since each person's preparation skills, perspectives, and strategies are different (Newburg et al., 2002). Time, effort, commitment, energy, and awareness are necessary in order for people to prepare to feel the way they want on a regular basis.

Obstacles make up the third component of the RPM; these internal and external hurdles typically disrupt the resonance experience. Because of the personal nature of the resonance

process, obstacles are usually unique for each individual. Internal obstacles may include fear, self-doubt and anxiety, while external obstacles may include rejection, loss, and injury (Newburg et al., 2002). In facing obstacles, it is easy to become trapped in the “obstacle-preparation loop,” where people work harder to overcome their problems by going back to the preparation phase, but do not necessarily work smarter. Getting out of this vicious cycle requires introspection and self-examination to connect back to the dream feeling.

Finally, revisiting the dream feeling represents the fourth component of the RPM. It involves reconnecting to how one wants to feel and re-energizing to continue engaging in the preparation required to achieve optimal performance and well-being. Previous research has shown that revisiting strategies can involve anything from reflecting on best performances, talking to a friend, going to a movie, or taking a break from the activity (Newburg et al., 2002)

While this model works as an excellent tool to educate and encourage people to design their lives to feel the way they want as often as possible, it is important to not get caught up in the components of the model. Rather than being seen linearly, the model is circular, dynamic, and connected, as it represents a process with no beginning and no end. Engaging in the resonance process does not mean that people will be able to experience their dream feeling all the time, nor that through simple awareness of the model will they be able to instantly connect or reconnect with these feelings. Rather, the RPM acts as a guide to develop a way of mindful living that gets individuals to actively work toward experiencing desired feelings on a daily basis.

Facilitating the Process of Resonance. As a facilitator of the resonance process, it is imperative to help people connect with their dream feeling. Newburg and colleagues (2002) have found that by experiencing their dream feeling on a regular basis, performers can become more

engaged in, satisfied with, and intrinsically motivated by their chosen activity. Recent intervention-based research using the RPM as a framework has lent support for the model and shown that developing and experiencing one's personal process of resonance has a positive impact on performance, well-being, and motivation (Arcand, et al., in press; Baldry, et al., 2004; Callary, 2004; Durand-Bush, et al., 2004; Doell, et al., 2006; Faubert, et al., 2005; Leroux, et al., 2005; Short, 2004; Soulard, 2003). While much of the research on resonance has focused on elite performers, non-elite athletes have also been studied. Results have suggested that the latter may have more difficulty identifying and communicating their dream feeling than elite athletes (Callary, 2004; Doell et al., 2006; Short, 2004). However, through a resonance-based intervention, they were able to increase their self-awareness and ability to regulate how they wanted to feel, and realized that how they felt mattered (Durand-Bush et al., 2004).

The RPM can be used as a framework to help individuals design their lives, however, the actual resonance process of each individual is very unique and contextual (Faubert et al., 2005). Again, engaging in one's resonance process requires self-awareness, self-knowledge, and self-regulation or discipline. Many individuals have never been asked to make a conscious effort to purposely identify and experience desired feelings on a daily basis (Durand-Bush et al., 2004). Research suggests that a resonance-based intervention will only be beneficial to those who are willing to invest time and effort into making conscious observations about themselves and engaging in regular self-reflection (Durand-Bush et al., 2004). One element of participating in resonance-based interventions involves the use of daily reflective journaling. Short (2004) found that adolescents seldom engaged in the journaling, which was postulated as one of the reasons they did not fully benefit from the intervention; without self-reflection, developing and applying one's process of resonance is limited.

While research has shown that resonance is effective for individual sport athletes participating in a one-on-one resonance-based intervention, there have been no studies examining how the resonance process may affect a team collectively. People can determine individually how they want to feel on a daily basis, but groups can also experience a collective emotional awareness (Goleman, 2002). According to Goleman, a group or team can experience shared or consensual emotions when guided by a leader who establishes positive norms. When a team “resonates” there is an increase in productive energy and emotional intelligence; the group values the subjective experiences of others and maintains collective values, priorities, sense of meaning, and goals (Goleman, 2002). In this process, a shared mission is articulated, and positive energy is exercised. In order to determine what a team’s collective RPM might look like, a group intervention would need to be implemented.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to observe and explore one team’s experience with a group resonance-based intervention, along with the interpersonal relationships within the team during this time. Following are specific questions that helped me document the team’s process: (a) How can a team develop a group RPM and what does this process entail? (b) How do the relationships within the team, that is, coach-athlete, coach-team, athlete-athlete, and athlete-team, manifest themselves during a competitive season and with the addition of a group resonance-based intervention?

Theoretically speaking, this study will add to the growing literature on resonance and the RPM. Once again, this was the first study to truly focus on the team’s resonance process, and was the first to attempt to describe a team RPM. My study will also contribute to the literature on interpersonal relationships in sport. In particular this study will help to fill the void in the sport

psychology literature regarding the interpersonal context. Most studies on relationships in sport have examined variables in isolation (i.e., cohesion, communication). They have also shown that emotions are important in interpersonal relationships. Unfortunately, few studies have discussed the process or 'how to' of developing relationships and regulating emotions.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

This section will outline the paradigm informing my study, the participants, the group resonance-based intervention, data collection techniques, and also detail the procedures I used to analyze the data and insure credibility, believability, and fidelity. Most importantly, I begin with a lesson learned in choosing a research paradigm.

Research Paradigm

From the outset of my research I was determined to employ a post-positivist paradigm. Fresh out of my undergraduate degree in Psychology, I had mastered the voice of the ‘disinterested scientist’ and was barely aware of other ways to conduct research and view the world. I argued for its use in my research proposal document; the very first resonance-based studies were based on post-positivist methods and, and I had largely modeled my study on these examples. I was the first to focus on resonance with groups and I believed we needed to establish that a group process was possible and then explain it. Once my data collection had commenced I came to the realization that the method I was employing to facilitate the intervention and analyze the data was, in actuality, based on the tenets of the constructivist paradigm.

Ontologically speaking, constructivism was a better match for my study. To be honest I was not looking at my research questions with the post-positivist view that ‘reality’ was out there and I would do my best to uncover the closest approximation of it. I did not want to generalize or explain the group resonance approach as it would be for all teams. Rather, I was a relativist in every sense. According to the constructivist paradigm, multiple realities are achievable through our social and experiential mental constructions, and are specific and based on the individual persons sustaining the constructions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). My research goals evolved into

exploring the process a particular team went through as they engaged in a resonance-based intervention. There was no absolute or approximate ‘truth’ to be known, but I did try to create an informed and appropriately complex reconstruction of their experiences (Guba, 1990).

Ultimately, I wanted to describe what happened in this instance for this team.

Constructivism was also a better fit for my research with regard to epistemology. This was an intervention-based study that required my involvement in mediating many delicate team issues. My participants and I were truly interactively linked and my communicated results are our shared creation. I honestly believe that the outcome of this season would have been very different without my involvement. In essence, I have both recognized and readily admitted to my active role in this line of research. Clearly then, this subjectivist approach also blurs the lines between ontology and epistemology (Guba, 1990; Guba & Lincoln, 1994); I cannot be separate from what I am studying because I am part of it as well. The use of the RPM (Newburg et al., 2002) as a framework to guide the group resonance-based intervention also lends itself to the use of the constructivist paradigm, as the interaction in both sharing knowledge and learning from one another as participants and facilitator is acknowledged as integral to the process.

Finally, although my proposed methodology was originally post-positivist in nature, it became clear from day one of my data collection that I was utilizing constructivist principles. This study was intervention-based and involved multiple interviews; my findings are both interpretive and descriptive, and based on the exchange between my participants and I. My research design also evolved and changed as my study progressed and I allowed for the most relevant issues to take precedence over my initial research agenda (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The results are disseminated in the form of a narrative of this team’s experiences (Sparkes, 2002), which lends itself better to the constructivist paradigm than the post-positivist.

It is imperative for us to address the significance of our personal research philosophies as we undertake our work (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Even as I originally attempted to conduct my study within the strict parameters of post-positivism, I wondered how I could possibly pretend to be an (almost completely) objective observer whose presence had little impact on what I was investigating. Luckily, my basic beliefs and views of the nature of our world were challenged as I began to do qualitative work. Though it might not be customary to change paradigms midway through a research project, I am proud that my awareness and knowledge of research practices has evolved to a point where I can say I chose to conduct my work in this way and did not blindly follow the only model I had ever really known.

Participants

At the beginning of this study, my participants included 16 female synchronized swimmers at the university club level, one female head coach, and one female “assistant.” The assistant had a very small role in the organizational and leadership aspects of the team and was rather seen more as a “helper” than a coach. During the course of the season, my 16 participants dwindled to 14, and the intervention sessions generally involved a group of eight swimmers that differed each week. Fortunately, there was a core group of five or six swimmers who came each week and really became the foundation for this process. The swimmers’ ages ranged from 18 to 23, the coach was 24, and the assistant was 23 years old. Because of my lack of experience in this sport, I attended several practices to situate myself in the context of synchronized swimming and also attended one of the team’s competitions. Participation in the study was completely voluntary and while attendance was poor for the majority of the sessions, during critical moments in the season and this study, the turnout improved vastly. I conducted a pre- and post-intervention interview, 11 group resonance-based sessions (i.e., intervention), all of which

spanned the entire course of the 2005-2006 competitive season, from the pre-season in late September to the last competition in mid-January.

Researcher Preparation

Because the proposed study was intervention-based, I familiarized myself with previously used resonance-based interventions, which typically involved multiple interviews and journaling. Once again, all previous resonance-based interventions had been individually based, and as such my thesis supervisor and I devised the group resonance approach used in this study. To prepare for my role as a facilitator of the resonance process, I completed a counselling course, engaged in weekly discussions based on resonance research and fundamental assumptions of resonance, and further developed my own personal RPM. I felt more prepared to work with a team after completing a pilot study to assess my methodology and after also gaining valuable experience in facilitating team sessions. For the pilot study, I facilitated a four-week group resonance-based intervention with an under-16 female soccer team. My personal experience as a team sport athlete for over a decade also afforded me the comfort of working within a group context. Each of these facets of preparation allowed me to work confidently within the proposed parameters of a resonance-based intervention.

Group Resonance-Based Intervention

My sessions were conducted over a span of four months. At week one of this study, I conducted an initial interview with the athletes as a group and then with the coach and assistant together. The purpose of these interviews was to assess the current nature of relationships existing within the team (i.e., coach-athlete, coach-team, athlete-athlete, athlete-team) and to situate myself in the general context of the team. Within these interviews, I asked the athletes and the coaches to discuss issues of leadership, compatibility, group structure, cohesion,

communication, satisfaction, and emotional connection, as they have been identified as important variables for interpersonal relationships in sport. Further questions targeted the coaches' and athletes' general perceptions of each other, as well as the meaning they derived from their mutual relationships. Although an interview guide was prepared and adapted from my pilot study guide, I allowed for emerging topics to be discussed. At this point in the season, the team was in its final stages of training camp; many of the swimmers had just met each other.

After the initial interviews were conducted with both the athletes and the coaches, the team participated in 11 weeks of a group resonance-based intervention (see Appendix C for outline of intervention). Once again, the ultimate design of this study emerged over the course of my research, typical of a constructivist approach (Guba, 1990). Each session lasted between one and two hours and was audio-recorded. Initially, I also video-recorded the sessions because I felt that with a large group, the added recording would improve the debriefing and revisiting of my sessions. After the first few sessions it became apparent that the video-recording was not necessary and that the girls felt more comfortable without it. After week four of the intervention, I stopped videotaping.

I conducted the sessions in three ways, with the athletes only, the coach only, and with both the athletes and coach together (see Appendix C). Although I had originally proposed a schedule that saw the athletes and coach engaging in open dialogue every third week, it became apparent after the first two sessions that the swimmers were not ready to openly and honestly share their opinions and stories with the coach present. As such, I waited until I felt I had developed a good rapport with both the team and the coach, and was in a better position to act as a mediator for potential conflict, before introducing this kind of session into the intervention.

The schedule of my interviews was as follows; sessions with the athletes as a group proceeded from the first week to the sixth week of the intervention. During this time I also interviewed the coach alone three times. Although I had intended to conduct the same amount of interviews for the athletes and coach, this did not happen due to conflicting schedules. At week seven, a session was conducted with both the athletes and the head coach together. For weeks eight and nine of the intervention, I saw the athletes as a group and did not see the coach at all. At week 10, a second session was conducted with the athletes and the head coach together, and the assistant was also present. At this point, the head coach basically suspended her involvement in my study. I saw the athletes as a group during week 11 and then during week 12, I conducted a session with the athletes and the assistant coach who had, in essence, taken over many of the coaching duties. A clearer picture of how this intervention timeline emerged is provided within the results sections of my two articles.

Within the sessions, every participant was asked to share and contribute to the team RPM and resonance process. As the facilitator, I educated the team during the first few sessions about the important concepts underlying the resonance process (see interview guide in Appendix C). Much discussion was encouraged so that a general, meaningful RPM could ultimately be developed by the team. I emphasized respect, honesty, and an open mind so that team members worked together and were able to face many difficult challenges openly. The group sessions were flexible in that emerging topics were discussed, allowing for an open dialogue between my participants and I, and also amongst themselves. In addition to the group sessions, individual reflective journaling was proposed to be completed daily by each member of the team in order to increase self-awareness and encourage self-reflection, and to track their individual and team resonance process. Unfortunately, this tool was not used to its potential and the journaling was

not a successful aspect of this study. Each of my participants were given journal forms to use but the only ones I received back were those I asked the team to complete during the sessions.

Although it has been advocated that ongoing reflection through journaling greatly contributes to the individual resonance process, it was not clear from this study whether the journaling was a critical tool for the group process. As a constructivist, I was able to let go of the journaling without fear; it was clear that this tool was not fitting for this team (see Appendix D for journal form).

Post-Intervention Interviews

Finally, at week 13, I conducted a follow-up interview with the group of athletes and also with the former head coach alone. These two interviews were held after the completion of the team's last competition, and the purpose was to learn about their overall experience, their most valuable lessons, and other important stories regarding their process of resonance and relationships.

Data Analysis

Each tape-recorded interview/group session was transcribed verbatim and then "cleaned up" for grammatical errors. The transcripts were sent to the participants for authentication, and 3 of the 16 participants responded. As the primary researcher, I felt comfortable that the transcripts accurately depicted the process and events of each session and those who did respond also felt they were appropriate. Following this, I analyzed the data using both paradigmatic reasoning to classify and categorize the qualitative data, and narrative reasoning to generate a story from the data (Bruner, 1985). As a result, my analysis consisted of both an analysis of narratives and a narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995).

Narrative configuration, in which events and actions are organized into a logical and coherent whole, has received an increased interest in the field of sport (Sparkes, 2002) and qualitative research in general (Polkinghorne, 1995). Narratives are significant because they are undeniably suited for describing “human activity as purposeful engagement in the world” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5); simply, we as humans express our lived experiences through stories. The purpose of this study, to explore and describe a team’s experiences, was well-matched for such an analysis. I have employed an analysis of narratives in the first article and a narrative analysis in the second one, both of which figure in the results chapter.

An analysis of narratives utilizes a paradigmatic approach where specific ‘happenings’ or responses (i.e., participants’ stories) are organized into more generalized themes and categories. These categories can be predetermined, resulting in a deductive approach to the data, or can emerge, allowing for an inductive approach (Polkinghorne, 1995). In the case of this study, the analysis was largely deductive in that resonance was used as a framework and the RPM components were used to organize the data. An inductive approach was utilized, however, as themes emerged regarding interpersonal relationships, and within specific components of the RPM itself (e.g., different classifications of dream feelings, see Article 1). Essentially, the text was divided into meaning units and then placed into the more general categories. The context of these categories then helped me prepare my results and discussion.

While an analysis of narratives is the more commonly employed procedure to examine storied data, a narrative analysis is also a significant way to organize data. In the narrative analysis, the researcher constructs the data in such a way that gives events and circumstances cohesive meaning; the result is a story (Polkinghorne, 1995). The data is not necessarily ‘narrative’ or ‘storied’ in nature, but rather generally includes descriptions or depictions of

events and situations that the researcher synthesizes and interprets. For this study, a narrative analysis was performed to relate the story of the exploration of coach-athlete relationships; it is a retrospective account that incorporates actions, decisions, chance circumstances, interpersonal processes, and other environmental factors to describe the coach-athlete relationships within a team as it evolved and changed (Polkinghorne, 1995).

Once again, I was informed by the constructivist paradigm, and as such readily acknowledge my contribution to the storied findings of this study. My place within this story is clear, and the fact that this story is a joint construction by my participants and I must also be evident. Narratives are the result of interactions between the participant and researcher (Polkinghorne, 1995), and I hope that through the use of the constructivist paradigm and my own confessional testimonial throughout these pages, I have made myself and my goals transparent.

Finally, while the few journal entries I initially received were examined to inform subsequent sessions and allow for personal reflection, I did not systematically analyze them.

Credibility, Believability, and Fidelity

While the majority of quantitative work is evaluated in terms of validity and reliability, qualitative work is generally spoken of in terms of trustworthiness and authenticity. In the case of narratives, however, other evaluative criteria become critical: credibility, believability, and fidelity. Credibility is established when the researcher ensures that the data is accurate (that the events occurred), and that the plot is plausible (Polkinghorne, 1995). Believability is established when it is assured that the communicated results convey events and felt encounters that were experienced as the author portrays (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995). Fidelity is a criterion that binds objective truth with subjective interpretation (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995), and quite simply refers to what the ‘truth’ means to the individual describing it.

These elements can be solidified by triangulation, where several independent reports of the same event are sought (Polkinghorne, 1995). Triangulation proved to be critical in this study as often, the same event was related by the athletes, the head coach, the assistant, and even witnessed by myself, the researcher. Second, the transcribed data was sent to the participants for review; they had access to the data collected to ensure that I had, in fact, accurately captured their voice and story. In creating a relationship with my participants, I also became responsible to them. In my mind, we had created a partnership where I was consciously obligated and bound to portraying their story as accurately as possible. I have also attempted to account for the social embeddedness of my participants and myself, as the researcher and narrator, by situating us within the social context of our experiences (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995). Finally, I stayed immersed in my own research context of resonance and intervention-based literature to maximize my competencies as the facilitator and regularly debriefed with my supervisor and research team of colleagues who were also conducting resonance based research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

CHAPTER IV

Results

The results section of this thesis is presented in the form of two articles. The first article is titled “Group ‘Feel’: Facilitating the Process of Resonance of a Team.” This article will likely be submitted to a counseling journal. The second article is titled “The Coach-Athlete Relationship: A Narrative” and will likely be submitted to a coaching journal.

Although both the athletes’ collective RPM and the coach’s individual RPM were articulated and are discussed at length within my first article, the visual representation of the RPMs are only included in Appendices F and G of this thesis and not in the articles due to space constraints.

ARTICLE 1:

GROUP 'FEEL': FACILITATING THE PROCESS OF RESONANCE OF A TEAM

GROUP 'FEEL': FACILITATING THE PROCESS OF RESONANCE OF A TEAM

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore and document a process, that is, the way a team involving athletes and coaches felt and attempted to learn and apply resonance (Newburg, Kimiecik, Durand-Bush, & Doell, 2002) in a group context throughout a season. Resonance is a process that allows people to identify how they want to feel, prepare to experience that desired 'feel,' recognize obstacles that prevent them from feeling the way they want, and reconnecting when they are disengaged (Newburg, 2006; Newburg et al., 2002). Sixteen synchronized swimmers, one head coach, and one assistant coach participated in a group resonance based intervention over the span of a four month competitive season. The results, which are presented as a narrative, suggest that a group resonance process is possible. However, participants must be prepared to take ownership of this process and engage in challenging, deliberate work to incorporate their individual desired feel and the desired feel of others in the everyday experiences of a competitive team. This story also highlights the necessity for us to efficiently respond to inevitable obstacles in order to truly feel the way we want more of the time.

Group 'Feel': Facilitating the Process of Resonance of a Team

How we feel plays a critical role in our everyday experiences and can affect our levels of motivation, performance, engagement, well-being, and interpersonal relationships (Davidson & Cacioppo, 1992; Newburg, Kimiciek, Durand-Bush, & Doell, 2002). Although 'feel' is often linked to emotions, there is much more to the subjective experience of feel than pure affect. Feel can also be experienced cognitively (i.e., I feel confident), physically (i.e., I feel strong), and spiritually (i.e., I feel at peace, Damazio, 1994). It is thus critical to acknowledge the multidimensional nature of feel and recognize its significance in human experiences.

While there has been a plethora of research in the field of sport and performance psychology regarding optimal experiences, research focusing on the process through which experiences are felt is scarce (Doell, Durand-Bush, & Newburg, 2006). There has also been a lack of intervention-based research to show athletes and coaches how to integrate personal data related to how they want to feel in order to optimize their athletic experiences.

In response to this growing need to acknowledge and document the process through which we attempt to feel the way we want, Newburg and colleagues (2002) developed a framework that they termed resonance. Resonance is a process that allows us to feel the way we want as often as possible by preparing to experience desired feelings, recognizing and embracing obstacles that prevent us from feeling the way we want, and revisiting how we want to feel when required (Newburg, 2006; Newburg et al., 2002). Resonance is typically experienced as a seamless fit or harmony between our inner self and environment, which allows us to experience satisfaction, well-being, and enjoyment, and to become fully engaged in what we do (Doell et al., 2006; Durand-Bush, Faubert, & Newburg, 2004; Newburg et al., 2002). In order to visually

represent this process, Newburg and colleagues (2002) developed the Resonance Performance Model (RPM, see Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 here

Essentially, the dream feeling component represents the way we want to feel in a given context or situation. Preparation, meanwhile, is everything we do to allow the dream feeling to happen. Obstacles are the inevitable challenges and setbacks we face in your life that prevent us from feeling the way we want, and revisiting the dream feeling is what we do to reconnect with our desired feelings when we are not experiencing them. Once again, our desired feel can include affective, cognitive, physical, and spiritual components. The dream feeling is central to the resonance process; once we are able to articulate how it is that we want to feel in any context, we can actively work towards experiencing those desired feelings, especially in the face of obstacles. Unfortunately, one could argue that in today's society, we are rarely encouraged to focus on how we want to feel, and even less often urged to reconnect with our desired feelings when we do not experience them. The purpose of a resonance-based intervention, therefore, is to encourage observation and self-reflection to increase our awareness and ability to regulate how we want to feel as often as possible.

A resonance-based intervention typically consists of multiple in-depth interviews/sessions with a consultant-researcher based on the participant's evolving RPM, in conjunction with daily reflective journaling. The interviews are semi-structured in that key questions are asked to help the participant to develop his or her personal resonance model (i.e., RPM), but questions and overall discussions are also left largely open and fluid so that the participant can address specific topics of his or her choosing that shape personal lived experiences, much like any person-centered approach would do. Resonance-based studies have

been conducted with over 50 individual sport athletes and to date, all participants have increased their awareness of feel and over 90 percent have also enhanced their well-being and/or performance (Arcand, Durand-Bush, & Miall, in press; Doell et al., 2006; Durand-Bush et al., 2004).

The resonance process is generally advocated as being very personal and individualized (Arcand et al., 2006; Doell et al., 2006; Faubert, Durand-Bush, Trudel, & Newburg, 2005), which has been reflected in the trend to work one-on-one with athletes. However, this approach may not be the most encompassing or appropriate for working with teams, although working towards feeling the way we want could arguably have a potential impact in a group context as well. Resonance is the experience of a seamless fit with our environment, which inadvertently includes other people. By articulating to our teammates and coaches how it is that we want to feel, we are communicating important data about how we can perform at our best and these significant members of our social support system can actively help us feel the way we want more of the time.

For this study, a group resonance based intervention was employed for the first time. The participants in this study included 16 university club-level synchronized swimmers, one female head coach, and one female assistant. The purpose of this study was to explore how a team could develop and engage in the process of resonance, and more specifically, design a group RPM through an intervention and document this process. Ultimately, the intent was to allow for open dialogue between the athletes and coaching staff so that the entire team could respectively pursue their desired feelings, improve their interactions with one another, and actively create an environment in which everyone could feel the way they wanted more often. This study was the first to empirically examine if a team could develop a unique 'group feel' using resonance as a

framework, although it has previously been found that when group members develop shared feelings, these shared feelings help unite the members and allow for a coordinated effort among them (Spoor & Kelly, 2004).

The concept of developing ‘group feel’ or using feel-related data to improve interactions with others is not entirely new. For example, the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) has been around for almost two decades and is defined as “the ability to monitor one’s own feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189). Emotionally intelligent people are self-aware and able to regulate their emotions in order to fit the norms and roles of their social environment; they are able to restrain socially unacceptable emotional impulses in order to fit in and avoid potentially harmful conflict (Prati, Douglas, Ferris, Ammeter, & Buckley, 2003). Groups with high EI tend to form and maintain mutually supportive relationships (George, 2000), and establish a supportive team environment (Barrick, Stewart, & Neubert, 1998). The driving force behind EI is that we should be cognizant of our own emotions and feelings and that of others, and use our knowledge and understanding of emotional states for the betterment of group or team functioning.

Of interest is that individuals with EI are said to be aware of their feelings and those of others, but they regulate potentially negative feelings in order to comply and conform to their social environment. Team goals always remain a priority and overshadow any personal affective conflict or struggle; conflict, in turn, is seen as wasted mental energy directed toward inconsequential emotional disturbances (Prati et al., 2003) rather than an obstacle that should be embraced. At the heart of EI appears to be a desire for emotional equilibrium and positive outcomes but perhaps at the expense of expressing our true feelings and remaining engaged in

the process; the outcome is given more weight than the process. Conversely, resonance involves developing our self awareness and regulating all dimensions of what we feel, which includes but is not limited to emotions. It empowers us to use our awareness as a tool to reflect on how we truly want to feel and apply this reflective data to try to reconnect when we are not feeling the way we want. The emphasis here is not on suppression of 'feel' to avoid conflict, but rather on embracing obstacles as part of the process and actively trying to connect with our desired feel in the face of challenges.

Although resonance was not always seen as a consulting/counseling approach, it is emerging as one (Durand-Bush, Arcand, & Newburg, 2005). While researchers involved in the first studies on resonance employed a more deductive, post-positivist, qualitative approach to explore if and how different types of athletes experienced the process of resonance, it became apparent that various changes and transitions were taking place as the multiple interviews progressed (Durand-Bush et al., 2004). In the simplest sense, participants were able to learn about themselves and use their new personal insights to grow as people and improve their daily functioning. This work clearly fell into the 'helping' or 'consulting' category. As our intervention-based research on resonance has progressed, our approach has shifted to a more inductive, constructivist or participatory one that is grounded in adequate training in both consulting/counseling and sport psychology.

Resonance is evolving into a potentially powerful helping/consulting approach (Doell et al., 2006; Durand-Bush et al., 2004) that is rooted in humanistic counseling. It is client-centered and emphasizes the clients' experiences and perspectives (Rogers, 1965). Ultimately, resonance allows practitioners/researchers to empower individuals to 'do the work' to improve their daily functioning and become their own experts (Newburg, 2006). Similarly, the humanistic approach

asserts that individuals have the ability and are responsible to understand and reorder their lives as they work towards self-actualization (Kirschenbaum, 2004). Unlike the approach advocated by Rogers, resonance does, however, involve using challenging questions, in addition to listening and supporting, as a means to nurture reflection, growth, and knowledge of feel, while embracing obstacles that are an inevitable part of the process.

Resonance allows the focus to be placed on the client's lived experiences. The process-experiential approach also places emphasis on awareness of present experiences (Greenberg, Rice, & Elliott, 1993) and is guided by the tenets of humanistic counseling. While the latter approach asserts that the counselor is able to diagnose and treat individuals facing problems, resonance supports the notion that the client is the expert, and as such, a diagnosis is never made. In sum, resonance is educational in nature; it not used to treat but rather encourages clients to learn about themselves and their environment, and design their life to be able to feel the way they want as often as possible (Arcand et al., 2006; Doell et al., 2006; Newburg et al., 2002).

Method

Because the purpose of this study was to explore and document a process, that is, the way a team involving athletes and coaches felt and attempted to learn and apply resonance in a group context throughout a season, there were several elements of the methodology critical to achieving this objective. I employed a constructivist paradigm, which ultimately allowed for an emergent design (Guba, 1990). This approach proved to be essential; I was attempting to conduct a client-centered intervention and explore the feel of as many as 18 individuals, all of whom I believed were their own expert. The intervention took place over a four month period with a varying schedule of sessions held with the coach separately, the group of athletes, and the coach and athletes together. In total, I conducted 11 session with the athletes as a group, 5 with the

coach alone, and 2 with the athletes and coach together. It is important to note that throughout the intervention, a lack of commitment from many the athletes was apparent. Some of the sessions involved the entire team, but most involved an ever-changing group of about eight swimmers. Please refer to Table 1 for a breakdown of the intervention timeline, as well as the most salient issues that arose in each session.

Insert Table 1 here

Following the intervention, I felt that the most fitting way to analyze and present the data was to perform an analysis of narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995). This allowed me to describe the process and share the team's story and experiences as well as my own. Narratives are well suited for describing "human activity as purposeful engagement in the world" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5); simply, we as humans express our lived experiences through stories. An analysis of narratives is based on a paradigmatic approach where the participants' stories are transcribed verbatim and organized into more generalized themes and categories (Polkinghorne, 1995). In this case, these categories were based on the resonance framework, that is, the RPM components (Newburg et al., 2002). The participants also had the opportunity to authenticate the transcripts and no revisions were suggested.

The following results section, which I have termed 'The Story,' presents intricate pieces of the extensive dialogue that emerged over the course of four months as well as my interpretations of the events that transpired. The larger blocks of citations are, in fact, intact pieces of conversations that were directly taken from verbatim transcripts. This narrative approach will allow you to gain insight into how the team's resonance process evolved and understand the intricate role I played as the consultant/researcher in facilitating the intervention. I

hope that you will feel the experience we lived and draw valuable lessons as you read through the story.

The Story

In this story, I, the consultant/researcher share the intervention that took place with the 16 club level female synchronized swimmers, the female head coach, the female assistant coach, and myself over the team's four month competitive season. My interpretations of this story are indeed interpretations, however, I believe I conducted this research and shared the results with much transparency. In line with Guba and Lincoln's (1994) recommendations, I acknowledged my philosophy and biases. I participated in this study as the consultant/researcher and feel I was adequately prepared to do this through intense course work, various applied consulting and research experiences, and also my previous competitive sport experiences as a varsity athlete. As this study is grounded in the constructivist paradigm, I acknowledge that the participants and I influenced each other, however, by keeping an audit trail and engaging in regular peer debriefing (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), I believe I have made every effort possible to give you an account that reflects the reality this team and I experienced. To facilitate your understanding of the narrative, note that an (A) denotes athlete comments, (C) coach comments, (AC) assistant coach comments, and (I) designates my own comments as consultant/researcher.

Pre-Intervention Interviews

At the end of September, I conducted my pre-intervention interviews with the athletes and the coaching staff in order to situate myself in the team's current context. I was working with a synchronized swimming club comprised of 16 swimmers, which was enough to make two teams. At this point in the season, the day of their last pre-season tryout, the coach had explained

to the girls that from here, the teams would be split into two groups of eight in order to accommodate all the swimmers' needs.

Athletes as a group: First impressions. The interview with the athletes was very positive and passed with a lot of laughter. The girls seemed to legitimately like each other and spoke highly of their coach.

*"You can just **be yourself** right off the bat. It's **awesome**."*

*"These smiles are **not fake**."*

*"The group we have so far...we **get along really well**."*

*"We all have a great level of **respect for (the coach)**."*

*"She's very very **patient with us**."* (A)

It was also clear that the swimmers needed a great level of commitment and drive to swim with this club. Already, the team spoke of several obstacles including a lack of funding, lack of pool time, and in general a perceived lack of respect from their university.

*"We're on the **bottom of the totem pole** so we get whatever's left over and take whatever we can get."* (A)

This initial interview was conducted to get a general idea for the emotional and social climate I was about to be entering. I did not ask a single question directly related to resonance, but already several points were made about the team process and how the athletes wanted to feel in general. When asked about how they got along as a group, there were varied answers.

*"You just kind of have **an understanding** for each other."*

*"Yeah, you really have to **relate to other people**."*

*"One thing I think you really have to figure out is what makes another person tick, what gets them motivated and stuff. Like what do I have to say to (my teammate) **to really make her swim good**."* (A)

Later within the interview, I mentioned that my study revolved around how they wanted to feel as a team. Right away, someone jumped in with an answer without being prompted.

*"Usually we just want to **be proud** of our swim...Like we want to swim and afterwards be like, 'Yeah that's good'."* (A)

Coaching staff: Initial interview. Later that week I met with the head coach and the assistant coach for the first time as well. Both young women had been on the team as athletes last year, and had very distinct roles in their current positions. The head coach was in charge of all organizational and technical aspects of the team; she picked the music, she ran practices, and she would be coming up with the majority of the choreography. She was soft spoken, and had a gentle demeanor. Importantly, the coach was also francophone, and while language was not a barrier, she was less expressive in her second language of English and felt less comfortable using it than French. Unfortunately, I am unilingual and was unable to accommodate for potential sessions in French. The assistant was less of a coach and more of a helper. She saw herself as a potential 'go-between' for the coach and swimmers and was really involved to be another set of eyes for the head coach. It was clear that while they were excited by the potential to see their club grow to two teams, the reality was slightly overwhelming and something they had not anticipated.

While the swimmers had spoken of being placed onto two teams during the pre-intervention interview, this had not occurred yet. My meeting with the coaches, however, was just days after this had been officially carried out. Already, there was an indication of the challenges this decision had created. The two coaches had split the teams based on how they felt the girls would swim best.

"They're all at the same level and could together compete very well but if you would put one person from that team with the other it just wouldn't look synchronized...wouldn't look nice." (C)

"I mean we had to take a lot of things into consideration. The effort they're putting in now, where they would be in a couple of months, their progress, attitude-wise and personality wise." (AC)

It was also clear that they felt a lot of anguish in splitting the teams and their goal was simply to allow everyone to swim and feel good.

*"I mean it was hard... **it was very difficult**. ... I just find it frustrating and sad. ... I just want them to **feel okay**." (C)*

"I'm still impressed with them, though. It's hard...and we want to get them on the right track." (AC)

The coaches noted that there were several swimmers who were not taking the split well and did not understand why they had been placed on the apparent "lower" team, which will be referred to as the B team from here on. The coaches felt that at this point, they had done their best to communicate the reasons behind their decisions and that these unhappy swimmers probably had an inaccurate view of their abilities.

"Communication is really easy." (AC)

*"I think **communication is great** for the time being. ... I think it's just the initial shock and we need to show them that we didn't want to be mean and that they are very strong girls and they can push themselves very hard. But again it's getting through to them that's very difficult. They're young and they just don't see that they might be a little lower than others." (C)*

Unfortunately, this small group of swimmers from the B team was also causing frustration for the head coach and leaving her concerned about the next couple of practices.

"They don't listen to me." (C)

"They don't let us do our job and it's really frustrating." (AC)

After discussing how to proceed from this point, we decided that I would interview the head coach alone, and would not interview the assistant. This decision was based on the amount of commitment and work the assistant wanted to put into the season, as she desired to remain a 'helper' with a smaller role on the team. We also decided that if it was needed, the assistant coach would attend some of the team sessions including the athletes and head coach in order to get the entire team's perspective. We also made the decision that I would work with both teams at the same time rather than single out the already struggling B team. As such, the group RPM and resonance process would be created by two separately competing teams within one larger group.

From these pre-intervention interviews it was clear that the team was already facing many obstacles. While the athletes had only discussed obstacles that were external to the team, there were clearly internal issues that also needed to be addressed.

Resonance-Based Intervention

My first session of the intervention with the athletes came two weeks after the pre-intervention interview. Within this two week period, several major changes had taken place. Two girls from the B team had quit, leaving an already beleaguered group with yet another obstacle to face. In synchronized swimming eight is considered a perfect number; if you have more swimmers, the routine will look sloppy and if you have less, it is much more difficult to execute lifts and intricate patterns, which are both integral to winning routines.

Unfortunately, the team was not yet prepared to talk about their many internal obstacles. It was clear from their body language and evasive answers to my questions regarding how they felt about the team division that they were simply not prepared to share these concerns with me and would rather change the subject. When difficult questions were brought up, no one would meet my eyes and there seemed to be a lot of shifting around.

"You have your new teams now... so how did that go?" (I)

"Pretty good..." (A)

(silence)

"How do you feel about your music and being placed on the two teams?" (I)

"Ummm....yeah....."

(laughter)

"How can you not like (the music)?"

"It's just I don't know..."

"Remember last year... (discussion about last year's music and routine)" (A)

Individual and team 'feel'. Rather than try to force the girls to talk about the split when they were not ready, I focused the discussion on the group RPM. We would deal with obstacles eventually because simply, they were part of the process. Over the course of the next few

sessions, the athletes articulated how they wanted to feel in the context of synchronized swimming. This was revisited throughout the intervention and also discussed within the sessions at length to allow the members of the group to reflect on and articulate how they felt and wanted to feel. Depending on the context or situation, the athletes wanted to feel differently.

In their general sport context, they wanted to feel excited, proud, challenged, confident, prepared, ready, and like they were having fun.

*"I want to say I'm **having fun**, and no matter how tired I am I'm thinking, 'Oh wow, I love the next arm sequence or I love this figure coming up or I want to push higher in this figure.'"* (A)

"What does fun feel like?" (I)

*"I want to feel like I'm **enjoying my routine and excited** to do it."*

*"I don't know, kind of **proud** to be in the water, wanting everyone to look at you and see what you're doing."*

*"I want to feel **challenged and stimulated**."*

*"I just want to feel **confident**."* (A)

"What does confident feel like?" (I)

*"**Prepared**."*

"Calm inside the storm."

*"**Proud** of my teammates and myself."*

*"**Ready**."* (A)

While swimming and competing, the athletes communicated that they wanted to feel "good" pain, sharp, and again, excited and like they are having fun.

*"I'm sure you feel quite a lot of **pain** while you're swimming."* (I)

"Oh yeah."

*"It's fun though. **I want it!**"*

(laughter)

*"**I love it**."*

"Yeah, me too."

*"It's rewarding. Do you ever go and work out and you hurt like hell the next day...you're so sore but **you feel good because you're sore**. It's **THAT** kind of feeling."*

*"I swim so much better when I have that **nervous excited feeling**. It just seems like everyone's higher and stronger."*

*"I want to feel **fireworks** going off around me and **crazy music, bright lights**. I want to feel like I'm projecting something awesome and **exciting**."*

*"I want it to feel **sharp**."* (A)

Finally, as a team, the athletes wanted to feel unified.

"What does it feel like for the whole group?" (I)

*"The **relationship between the two teams needs to be strong** too because I don't want to feel like we're two teams. I want to feel like we're one club...that just happens to swim two different routines."*

*"If everyone is hating each other by the time competition comes, you're not going to swim well...like as individuals not as a team. It **needs to feel like we're one.**" (A)*

While many similarities were highlighted, there were also notable differences. Although the girls agreed that there was a 'team feeling' they could experience, it tended to be a bit elusive.

"I feel sometimes when you feel like it was the best swim ever and then you turn around and half the team is like, 'Man I swam like crap' and everyone else is like, 'Yeah that wasn't a good one for me' and that just kind of kills the whole thing."

*"But sometimes there is that **team feeling**...you can feel it on the bulkhead before you hit the water." (A)*

"What does that feel like?" (I)

*"Knowing that you can do it and **faith that everyone else can do it too.**"*

*"When you're swimming can you **get an idea of whether it's good for the whole team** or if it is just individual."*

*"And you all have a **common goal when you hit the water.** It's all the same thing." (A)*

For the athletes, the 'team feeling' was truly experienced in lifts, which happened when the team worked together to lift one or more athletes out of the water gracefully and with strength.

*"**Lifts are the epitome of team unity.** I mean you **need everybody.** Everybody's strengths. It's when everyone's strengths **come together to work as one.**"*

*"It seems like **one image** and everybody is just part of this one image you're projecting. It's not like you're out there on your own as yourself. **You're part of one persona.**" (A)*

It appeared as though the 'team feeling' was tied to how they individually wanted to feel, yet it was not something they had been actively seeking or of which they were really conscious. At that point, it seemed to be a by-product of all other things going right.

Individual and team preparation. The athletes also articulated how they prepared to feel how they wanted to feel as a team and individually. There was some variation in the athletes'

answers and during the discussion, it was clear that for certain strategies, a consensus could not be met. For example, some athletes required sleep right up to the moment they had to warm up. Others felt sluggish with that approach and rather needed to swim more laps than the team warm up required. Still others wanted to simply relax, neither sleeping nor swimming much beforehand. It was evident, however, that there were commonalities in the types of preparation in which the athletes engaged. There were four basic types of preparation strategies, that is, physical, mental, social-emotional, and coach related strategies.

For physical preparation, the athletes agreed that in general, sleep, food, and physical conditioning were critical to feeling the way they wanted; it was simply the amount of each that was different.

*“For me, I have to **sleep**. If I don’t sleep then I don’t function. I just can’t think and I can’t swim. Other people need to go do **workouts** before they swim, or **listen to music** or **interact with each other** before going to swim together.”*

*“You try to **eat healthy**. No pop, junk, fast food, as a rule.”*

“You definitely don’t eat right before, you’ll puke!” (A)

There were also aspects of the training process that needed to be in place for the girls to feel ready, prepared, and confident. Although this process was physical in nature, there was a tactical element as well. Namely, the girls had to have enough practice time to feel in shape and conditioned because they only had two practices a week, and also to choreograph the routines, learn the counts of their music, and simulate competitions.

*“I want to **spend more time working on the routine and learning the routine** because we are competing soon and I’m getting really nervous that we don’t know more than we know.”*

*“And we need to have the **CD to land drill**. I mean that’s just a given.”*

*“I just need **more time in the pool** to feel like I’m getting something accomplished.” (A)*

*“Would you guys want **another practice** if you could get pool time?” (I)*

“Oh yeah.” (A)

Another aspect of the team's preparation was mental and included strategies like focusing, visualizing, and land drilling, which was defined by the girls as practicing the routine to music out of the water.

*"You have to **prepare mentally** before you hit the water, because if you don't and you try to swim then it's going to be a disaster right off the bat."* (A)

(I) *"What about going over your routine?"* (I)

(A) *"Yeah."*

"A lot."

*"**Visualize** and **land drill** before you hit the water."*

*"You need to be **focused** on how good we are, not how good they are."* (A)

The social-emotional component of their preparation basically revolved around their teammates. For this group of athletes, teammates were seen as a positive asset and a means to feel the way they wanted.

*"We **support each other** throughout the entire process."*

*"You just kind of develop things to **make everybody laugh**."*

*"We have to **be positive with each other** all the way through. You have to **come together** and have fun."* (A)

The final category of preparation strategies involved the coach. While the coach related activities were originally included under social-emotional aspects of preparation, they played too big of a role in allowing the girls to feel the way they wanted to not be in a separate category. Furthermore, not all of the preparation involving the coach was social-emotional and interestingly had to do with her own level of preparation and expressed behaviors.

*"I need **(the coach)** to be prepared."* (A)

*"Would you say then that the **coaches and their level of preparedness** and the way they come to practice has a big impact on the way you want to feel?"* (I)

"Huge impact."

*"I need **specific correction** from her to feel like I can improve my performance...because it's so, so specific."*

*"I just really need **more structure** from (the coach)."* (A)

Over the course of the intervention, the athletes' perceptions of how they wanted to feel or how they needed to prepare to feel that way remained constant. This demonstrated that they

were both honest and self-aware from the very first session. It was a greater challenge, however, to get the coach to clearly and purposefully articulate how she wanted to feel.

Coach's dream feeling. During that period of time, the coach was also developing her RPM. She was much less expressive than the athletes were and it was difficult to draw out how she wanted to feel. As I mentioned earlier, however, the coach was attempting to express herself in her second language and it is possible that this may have affected her communication. The coach appeared to want to feel the same way in the context of synchronized swimming and that of her everyday life. She wanted to feel happy, relaxed, organized, respected, and in control as though things were following her plan.

"Do you know how you want to feel while coaching?" (I)

*"**Happy. Relaxed.** Sunday was perfect. Everything went well and **followed my plan.**" (C)*

"So you like to be in control?" (I)

*"I like to be **in control.** Usually I give a schedule and I like **them to respect it.**" (C)*

"What does happy feel like?" (I)

*"I don't know...when things are going well. **Everyone is doing their share.** No one's mad at anyone. I want it under control...**organized.** I want to **enjoy what I'm doing.**" (C)*

Coach's preparation. When asked to share what allowed her to feel this way, her answers were again slightly vague and seemed difficult to articulate. The coach's preparation strategies could be categorized into two main types: those she performed herself and those related to her athletes. To feel organized, relaxed, and in control, the coach needed to have a plan, listen to music, sleep, take time for herself, and know the schedule.

*"For practice I make sure **everything is planned** before I go so there are no surprises. I know what to do. It's all under control." (C)*

"What does your plan look like? (I)

*"**I write it in my binder** so the girls can always go and look at it if they want. I put those plans in plastic wrap....same as at school (when she teaches)." (C)*

"What else do you do? (I)

*"I try to (listen to the music)...to remember what they are swimming. Also, if I don't have anything to do, I will **sleep** if I have time. I usually **make time for myself.** Competition is different. There are so many things going on that competition you have to have control.*

*You have to **know the schedule**, get the girls, prepare, get the makeup and hair done. You have to run because it's not on time."* (C)

It appeared as though for her to feel the way she wanted, the athletes' responses to her wishes and actions were also crucial.

*"I want them to **use the time** we have in the pool...And I want them to **respect my decisions**, to **listen to me**. They need to do that."* (C)

"You said you wanted them to listen to you. How do you make sure they do that?" (I)

"Usually I don't yell. I'll stop them and make a speech, make them realize...usually that's what I do." (C)

We revisited how the coach wanted to feel and how she prepared for this throughout the intervention but she was very steadfast and I was not able to draw any other verbalizations from her on the topic.

External and internal team obstacles. After the first few sessions with the athletes and the coach, it became clear that feeling the way they wanted and preparing to feel this way were already not happening. Instead, the obstacles that this team was facing were starting to take hold. Several external obstacles were communicated by both the athletes and the coaches during their separate sessions with me. These included lack of pool time, perceived lack of respect from the university, and lack of money. As the two teams approached their first competition, which was a mere three weeks away, other obstacles became apparent. Everyone was feeling the pressure of finishing their routine, or at least getting the bulk of it finished.

*"I don't think we're spending enough time working on the routine or learning the routine. I **didn't feel very productive**."*

*"It was such a **waste of time** when we have so little practice time to do things and didn't get to swim to music."*

*"I feel like we **don't have enough time** to get everything done."*

*"Yeah, we **don't have much pool time** at all."* (A)

On top of these external obstacles, which did not allow them to prepare the way they wanted and was clearly holding the team back, others emerged. Although the athletes originally

held back from discussing their problems openly, they could not ignore them any longer. The lack of commitment from some athletes and working with certain girls within the two different teams were causing frustration.

*"As a teammate the most frustrating thing is **not showing up at practice**. If that person is constantly not showing up or leaving early, or late coming in and you're learning counts, then you have to stop everything."*

"It's the little things."

*"**Tension between the girls.**"*

"Yeah, huge." (A)

*"**Between each other?**" (I)*

"Oh yeah."

*"Someone might say something, like just some passé comment and you want to **take their head off**."*

*"Plus, **two of our teammates quit**."*

"I'm frustrated!"

"Well now we're down to a team of 6 which is...."

"Brutal." (A)

In addition to the problems between the athletes in general, some of the issues appeared to be specifically tied to the two different teams within the larger group. The A team was progressing more quickly than the B team and also had an easier time working with the coach.

"So what's the difference between the two teams?" (I)

"Huge." (A)

*"**One team feels pretty good** going into their competition, other than a few minor glitches..." (I)*

"Yup." (A)

*"...And the **other team feels kind of...**" (I)*

*"**Like shit!**"*

*"I was watching their team, and I'm like, "**Wow, they have so much more than us**. Like, you guys have so much more, I don't even know!"*

*"Not really. Obviously there are some of the same problems as the other team, just not as drastic. I think (the coach) just lacks experience. I think **she's a little nervous** about it too sometimes...comes off as she's not quite sure and **she's afraid to step up...**"*

"Especially with all the problems." (A)

While the athletes were having these problems amongst themselves, it appeared that at the root of them not feeling the way they wanted was the coach and her decisions. Once the athletes communicated that they were not happy with the team division, all the other problems

with their coach came flooding out. Almost three full sessions were dedicated to talking about how their coach was an obstacle for them. The main obstacles they felt from working with their coach were that she was not clear about how she divided and worked with the teams, she was not effective in dealing with the problems, she was not giving feedback, she did not communicate enough, and she never had anything ready for them choreography-wise.

*"I mean I'm not trying to be rude but I'm being honest. She can't count to the music and it's **frustrating** when your coach can't count it and we're trying to count it. Makes for difficult synchronization."*

*"Your coach should have things made up for you. And I think **what's frustrating me** is that we have a competition in three weeks...it's so close and it's like, 'Okay we're going to make up a figure ourselves.'"*

"She just kind of stands there and stares at you and just does nothing." (A)

"So you're not getting specific feedback?" (I)

"No. None. Nothing."

*"I feel like I don't get that (corrective feedback) from her which is **more frustrating**." (A)*

Revisiting the dream feeling: Athletes' perspectives. Because the athletes were facing so many obstacles and were feeling very frustrated, they needed to revisit how they wanted to feel. When asked outright whether they were feeling the way they wanted at all, the general consensus was that they were not. In fact, the only time they had felt the way they wanted as a team was when they were working together without the coach, rallying around one another in the face of problems with their coach, and 'pumping each other up.' This reliance on one another was just one of the strategies they came up with in order to face their obstacles and reconnect with their original desired feelings.

"How did that feel, being left up to your own devices?" (I)

"Good...(laughter)"

*"We were **bonding against the enemy**. Like okay we can **only rely on each other** and not our coach."*

*"Yeah, so we changed stuff. We said, 'This isn't working, let's do this and this instead.' And there was a lot of, 'Oh this is good, awesome' and just **pumping each other up**."*

*"I felt like we were **more productive when we had no coach**." (A)*

The athletes articulated several ways they revisited the way they wanted to feel and also ways they countered their initial responses to obstacles. For example, some of the girls had initially been very angry with their coach at the split, or became immediately frustrated when something went wrong at practice. Some of the ways they revisited, or responded to those responses, in addition to relying on their teammates included taking it ‘practice by practice,’ and taking a break.

“If it’s physical you usually suck it up.”

*“**Suck it up** and do it.” (A)*

“But you just can’t say, ‘Yup, suck it up. Now I feel the way I want,’ all of the time.” (I)

*“No, you just **work through** it.”*

*“Just be focused on what you need to do and you’ll **cry later**.”*

*“This is where your **teammates** come in.”*

*“You have to take it **practice by practice** sometimes. If I have a bad practice tonight I’m not going to carry that into my practice on Sunday...or I’ll try not to. You try to **start fresh** all the time or you start working on something different. You **approach each thing differently** and take the time to say, ‘Okay that didn’t go the way I wanted it to but that doesn’t mean that this doesn’t have to.’”*

“You don’t keep hammering out at something if it’s not working. If it’s not working...”

“Leave it.”

*“...move on...**take a break**” (A)*

I asked them what they were doing now to get through their rocky relationship with their coach. The reality was that they were not doing much, even though they had suggested that communication with their coach was a revisiting strategy.

“Did people go talk to her or did you wait for the next practice? I mean what has been done?” (I)

*“Well...I don’t think people were frustrated beyond belief that we couldn’t...I don’t know. **No one was so frustrated that they wanted to go talk to her about it.**”*

*“**Just grumbling.**”*

“It’s just I can’t wait to fix this.”

*“**No one wants to talk about it.**” (A)*

“I did notice that no one wanted to talk about it. I didn’t want to push it because I understand you wanted to get to know me first before you could trust me.” (I)

*“And also to an extent we don’t really know each other that well either. So we’re like **who’s going to do it?**”*

*“I kind of try to **ignore** her. Like I actually do.” (A)*

*“You guys **didn’t meet with her** or anything?” (I)*

"No." (A)

"I want to bring her in for a session. Do you think you'd be able to **be honest with her?**" (I)

"No."

"Some would be, some wouldn't."

"Some would, but overall **I don't think it's going to work.** You might get some honesty but not the same as normal." (A)

"I remember last week I said, 'Well what's been done to rectify the situation,' and it was like, 'Nothing.'" (I)

"Yeah I guess **we pretty much hang in the corner.**" (A)

"I know it will be a challenge but I really think we need to bring (the coach) into a session." (I)

"Bringing the coach in will definitely be useful. It's a good idea." (A)

Coach's obstacles. During this tumultuous time leading up to their first competition, the coach was also talking about her obstacles and discussing how she revisited the way she wanted to feel. Many of her challenges were the same as those experienced by the athletes, including the lack of time, both in the pool and in general, and also the loss of the two athletes from the B team.

"The second team has issues. We don't have much finished." (C)

"How does that make you feel?" (I)

"I'm **sick of it. I'm frustrated.** It's **not my fault.** They've been out of the water for two weeks so...what can I do? **I don't have time** to concentrate on stuff. They want to land drill outside of the pool and then when they swim they want to talk about it and when I finally have time to talk about it...it's over...**We lost two girls** along the way. Now I have to think of everything new to do...it's kind of **hard right now.** It was a **crazy** practice last time. With a team of six it's getting harder and harder." (C)

The coach was also dealing with many challenges in her everyday life. She was a full-time teacher and had a lot of stress from her job.

"I am a teacher and I have new classes. I usually teach French but they've given me Geography and an English class and it's **so hard for me.** I need to prepare every single class with lesson plans. It's like giving an oral presentation everyday." (C)

"Does that affect how you feel when you go to practice?" (I)

"It **affects my level of tiredness**...and then when I think about what we've done, what we have to do still...should I have done that, should we do this again..." (C)

"And how does that feel?" (I)

"Well if it went bad, then **bad.**" (C)

Although the coach was facing many obstacles, there were certain issues she kept coming back to in our sessions. Almost immediately, it became evident that her main obstacle was the athletes, and more specifically, their responses to her and their lack of understanding of what she was trying to accomplish.

"What's the main problem?" (I)

*"They (**the athletes**) **feel rejected** in some way when they shouldn't be...and they just **change what I make** and then we're back at the start. It's **negative attitudes**." (C)*

"How does that make you feel?" (I)

*"They're **wasting my time**. I think they're **not ready to listen** to my comments. They're thinking I put too much say in, but **I feel like I don't have enough**. I don't know why they think that. And they're struggling with the music...which isn't hard...There are things that **bothered me** and some girls who **don't want to listen**. And when I left them alone to practice with what we had worked on, I was with the other team. (One athlete) told the rest what happened with how I divided the team, which had been misrepeated by (one athlete who quit), and misrepeated again...so **all the team was frustrated** and that's the way it went." (C)*

"Do you think it's something that needs to be revisited with that team or do you think that you can move beyond it?" (I)

*"I don't know...I think **everything can be revisited** with that team. It's **not good**." (C)*

"What happened at practice?" (I)

*"I don't know...**they had boycotted me**." (C)*

"What do you mean boycotted?" (I)

*"I **couldn't even approach them**. I tried to give them feedback and they **wouldn't listen** to me. It seems like they have decided not to listen to me anymore. I gave them a workout to do and then went to work with the solos and duets and they did not do anything. They sat on deck for an hour. Wasting time! But I went to talk to them and they said the opposite. They said I had boycotted them. They said they needed me...so I said they needed to listen. I said, 'When I say stop they need to take off their goggles and listen to me.'" (C)*

"Do you think they respect you as a coach? You had wanted to feel that." (I)

"Most of them. Well, maybe most." (C)

"Do you think right now you feel the way you want when coaching?" (I)

"Sometimes." (C)

"In what sense?" (I)

"I'm almost at the point of...I mean it's still going okay." (C)

Revisiting the dream feeling: The coach's perspective. I felt it was imperative at this point to discuss how the coach revisited how she wanted to feel and also planned to work past her obstacles. Similar to my experience with the athletes, the coach did not appear to do many

things to reconnect with how she wanted to feel and was not doing very much work to deal with her challenges. She did, however, share that she needed to relax, continue to plan, and take time for herself away from swimming.

*"Just take time to **relax** for a bit before I go to practice. **Plan** what I need to do." (C)*

"But how are you getting back in control? When you're at practice and you don't feel the way you want, what do you do?" (I)

*"Last week I **took a step away**. I knew I had to. I let them do what they needed to do. But it went nowhere... **Before I go to bed I think about it**. Well I coached before and swam before and also at school I learned that although it's hard in one class, I don't have to be mad at the next one! Each group is its own." (C)*

Ultimately, the coach was reluctant to share ways she actually revisited and instead continued to communicate that she simply needed to 'just do it' and move forward.

"What are you doing then? Now you've got all these things... all these obstacles. You've got dissatisfied girls trying to bring everyone else down. You've got a lot of routines and you had to come up with another routine right off the bat. Lack of pool time, your schedule. So what do you do now?" (I)

*"That's a lot. (laughter) But I **forget about it**. It's not their problem, I don't have to take that out on them, my own problems." (C)*

"It must be difficult to let it all go and say, 'Okay now I put my problems aside' ...because the girls still bring their problems to the pool." (I)

"Yes." (C)

"So what do you do? You seem to be saying you just do it. What is that?"

*"It doesn't matter. **I just do it**...It hasn't been a good week. It's been rough. **I'm stressed** and have no time. Report card time is coming. I haven't had time to rest." (C)*

"What are you doing to deal with it?" (I)

*"**Count the days** until it's done." (C)*

*"What else can you do so that **you feel better**? There must be something to help you through the process?" (I)*

*"I don't know. **I just do it. I can't wait until Christmas.**" (C)*

It had seemed very positive and promising when the coach initiated a small meeting with the athletes to find out what was wrong. It appeared that the coach was taking proactive steps to get past the obstacle-riddled relationships with her athletes. Unfortunately, the meeting was more of a single question, and her attempts to deal with the situation did not involve asking the athletes what they needed or working through some of their biggest issues.

"What if you took people aside?" (I)

*"Yeah...I'll see how it goes for now and **then deal with it.**" (C)*

"Have you asked them what they want?" (I)

*"Have I asked them? **No.**" (C)*

"What do you think they want from you?" (I)

"They want my attention and comments but I'm already trying." (C)

"So what can you do now?" (I)

*"When I think of next year, I don't want to split them anymore. **I like coaching** and I would regret not doing it but...**I wouldn't like to cut teams.**" (C)*

"Have you thought about meeting with individual swimmers?" (I)

*"**I don't know.** I mean I met with (one athlete) alone and **look what happened.**" (C)*

"I want us to be able to get past the obstacles and work towards desired feelings. I want to bring you into the meetings and get you all on the same page." (I)

*"They could decide not to swim anymore, they **could be angry with me.**" (C)*

The athletes and coach were basically refusing to face each other. It appeared as though much of this avoidance had to do with the fear of facing an angry coach or athletes. Because they were not willing to organize a meeting themselves, and even though they had all claimed they did not know if they were ready to meet together, I decided to bring the coach in for a team session. While I was not sure if this would allow the team to resolve their problems and subsequently experience how they wanted to feel more often, I recognized that things were not going the way they wanted now. They had put off talking with one another long enough. We arranged for a group session the week after their first competition.

The team attended their first competition, which was actually a warm-up and opportunity to get comments from judges while their routines were still being put together. The B team finished second last and the A team placed one spot ahead of them. The athletes came back frustrated with their poor performances, and also with the fact that their 'assistant' coach had quit. The coach was also discouraged by the athletes' lack of execution and found the task of dealing with the group on her own daunting. From the assistant's point of view, she decided that she had had enough with the negative attitudes. Because she saw herself as a 'mediator' for the

athletes and head coach, she had been putting up with a lot of complaining and simply could not do it anymore.

First group session: Athletes and coach present. Our first session all together started off with some nervous chatter about the competition. They had faced many obstacles including getting lost and struggling to pay for their accommodations because the university would not give them money. Furthermore, the competition pool was very shallow, which meant that some of their routine was thrown off.

To facilitate the discussion, which I had anticipated would be awkward at the start, I asked everyone to perform an exercise. Each swimmer and the coach were asked to write down their expectations of themselves and their teammates and communicate whether these expectations had been met or not. Next, the athletes were asked to write down their expectations of the coach, and the coach to write her expectations of the athletes, and further indicate whether or not these had been met. Everyone was then asked to share their feelings aloud. In organizing the session this way, everyone was forced to take responsibility for their own actions before they attempted to place blame, or ask for anything of anyone else. Finally, the athletes were able to communicate to each other and their coach that they were not feeling the way they wanted and also describe their obstacles in detail.

"I want to enjoy swimming the routine and I'm having a problem with that this year. I'm really not (enjoying it). I'm just doing it."

"I find myself leaving practice, almost every practice, feeling completely like I'm losing my self esteem and that I suck basically. That's all I can think, and I don't know. I don't want to quit because I don't want to leave the team high and dry, but I feel awful...and I don't know how to deal with it." (A)

The athletes explained that they wanted everyone to show up ready and focused, that they wanted to support one another, and that they wanted to do their best. When it came to their coach, they wanted to have a clearer organization of the pool time, specific feedback, and more

responsiveness from her. These were all elements of their preparation they had identified to feel the way they wanted, but it was the first time they had actually communicated them to their coach.

While the athletes did a good job of opening up to the coach and each other, the coach had a more difficult time telling her athletes that she was not happy.

"Well I decided that whatever I ask of myself I ask of you and whatever I ask of you I ask of myself. So they ended up being the same except for one point for me....they are to be on time, be positive, be prepared, be open to comments and change, become cohesive, to be serious, have your own goals, have team goals, and my own one is survive." (C)

"Are they being met, not met?" (I)

"Well that depends on the day." (C)

(silence)

"How so?" (I)

"Just depends... Well like I said everything I ask of you I ask of myself. They are the same thing. I can't ask anything of you that I wouldn't ask of myself." (C)

Would you like to add anything? Would you say your expectations are being met? This is the opportunity..." (I)

"Depends on the day." (C)

Although I was a bit concerned that the coach did not communicate enough, we went forward with the discussion. After everyone had shared, I asked them how they felt. Most of the athletes felt much better, but some felt poorly about the possibility of hurting their teammates' and coach's feelings.

"I feel better!"

(laughter)

"There's a lot of weight lifted off of my shoulders but I feel like I wanted not to hurt other's feelings."

"I love each and every one of these girls individually and together as a group but I don't want there to be a coach-swimmer divide...and I don't want to hurt her feelings. I don't want her to feel like no one likes each other, but I feel better to know that a lot of people feel the same way about things."

"I feel really bad. I feel like I want to apologize..."

(laughter)

"...I'm one of those people who is sorry for everything but I just needed to say it and I feel bad for feeling bad. You know, I don't want to be a downer. I really want to help motivate the team but I feel like I'm at a point where I'm...I feel bad for saying it and I don't want anyone to get mad!" (A)

When I asked the coach how she felt, we finally made a breakthrough. She was upset and ready to communicate. She felt depressed, unsure of how to continue, and disrespected. For the most part, the coach simply did not know what to do and was not ready or willing to think of ways to improve the situation.

*"I don't know, I feel like the first two weeks I was so happy to come to practice but then since we've been in the pool I don't want to come anymore. No matter what I do, what I try, it always goes wrong. **Everything is falling apart.** (crying) People are quitting. Even (the assistant coach) quit. I don't know what to do anymore to please you. It's just like that. My life is crazy and I have no time to live right now... My break is when I come here... and I go home depressed because it's not working." (C)*

"Let me ask you a question. When you make a decision and you tell people to do something, do you feel like people respect your decision and what you say, or do you feel like that's not being met?" (I)

"Don't be afraid to tell us."

"Don't be afraid."

"Tell us, yell at us." (A)

*"**It (being respected) hasn't happened.** If I'm not working with someone I feel like the rest are not doing anything." (C)*

"If you want to go forward and right now you don't think it is going forward, what can you do?" (I)

"I don't know." (C)

"Do you think this was a valuable exercise?" (I)

"I think so." (C)

"Do you feel okay about what happened today, or do you feel worse?" (I)

"I just don't know what to do anymore. I don't know." (C)

The coach clearly felt a little overwhelmed by what had happened, which was understandable considering she had faced her athletes for the first time and did not even have her assistant coach anymore. She was not sure how to proceed from here. The athletes, however, felt better having had this meeting and were ready to move forward. They also acknowledged that finally understanding how everyone else was feeling had a huge impact on how they were going to respond.

"I mean I felt negative and angry and everything for a really long time. It's important to me to vent my frustrations and solve the problem."

*"I think it's good for us to have heard her (coach) speak and **how she feels**. Because we can all sit here and say, 'I wish this would happen' ...but we **don't know what she's feeling** and what's going on in her head and in her life. So I think it **helped for us to say what we were feeling** but also see what's going on with her (coach). It's not just on her, it's also on us to do something. And I think it really has to be on us to do something because we're all adults and we don't need the mommy coach. We just need someone to help us and be our eyes on deck. And I think you do that well...we need to organize ourselves and what we want to make it work." (A)*

"How do you feel right now?" (I)

"Okay." (C)

*"**I feel better**. I don't know how you all feel but..."*

*"**I feel like I can turn things** around now and be positive. The thing that bothers me most is that some people weren't here."*

"But now I think we will tell them, 'shut up.'"

*"I just feel bad because we do love you (coach)! **I feel bad I let my own personal stuff come into this** and I want to apologize to everyone for that, and that I'm not motivated. But I think we can work on it. I was just expecting this to be a release and it hasn't been. We need to talk to everyone else." (A)*

"I get the feeling that people feel a little better right now. I'm worried about how you feel (coach)." (I)

*"I don't know. **I feel okay** about things right now." (C)*

Coping with the obstacles. This sense of relief demonstrated by the athletes carried over into our next meeting but was also accompanied by the reality that they were quickly approaching the holidays without completed routines. They felt hopeful about how things could proceed with their coach, disappointed with the lack of attendance by some of their teammates, and doubtful that they could accomplish all of the things they needed to in order to erase the stress of not having a routine. In the following sessions, they continued to discuss their open talk with the coach as well as problems with their music.

*"**I think we needed to do that**. It was about time."*

*"And I think the feeling that our team has in this whole thing is that **we're all on the same page**. We all know what's going on now and it's not a secret. We can deal with it."*

*"She (the coach) **seemed really relaxed** as opposed to how she was earlier. It was a big **weight off of our shoulders**."*

"Yeah everyone felt like that, I did." (A)

"I hope things progress from here." (I)

*"Yeah but **I'll believe it when I see it**."*

*"Yeah, I think we **all should have been there** because we have huge problems with everything."*

*"I know everyone has opinions about this. I hear them in the change room and we all talk about it and were **upset about things**."*

*"I **hope my feelings change**. I want to feel like I want to be here. Last year and the year before I was like, 'YEAH!' It was nice as a release from the week. But lately it hasn't been like that so I'm hoping it will go back to that way." (A)*

"How did you feel coming into today's practice?" (I)

*"I **feel better**. I'm looking forward to choreographing stuff. I'm **hopeful**." (A)*

"What could still hold you back?" (I)

*"The second piece of the **music is just so bad**."*

"I can't even think about it."

"I like the theme but that second piece! I can't even hear it."

"I think it's now a point of change. We can either get a total turnaround for the positive or like just keep getting worse. We do have lots to do but..."

"Even here I'm like, 'Why is no one here right now?'"

"Yeah attendance is the worst."

*"I want it to be **less stressful**."*

"I want the routines to be done."

"A good part of it at least."

*"We need to...I'll be **stressed**."*

"We'll be off for so long." (A)

Finally, we discussed some of the strategies with which they had come up to improve their overall experience. Interestingly, the athletes seemed reluctant to actually follow through with the suggestions made.

"You talked about some of the strategies you wanted to put in place. Will you use them?" (I)

*"It's **the wrong moment**...the end of the semester. I mean I'll try to be there but..."*

*"It's hard. I **don't have the time**. I'm on the other side of the city and I don't know how I'll get there."*

"Even a half hour is enough."

"But we were talking about doing choreography for a full session."

"And some people aren't good at choreographing out of the water."

*"**We won't do it**." (A)*

I met with them one last time before the holidays. Things were not progressing as they had hoped and rather they were reverting back to many of their old habits and patterns of working with the coach. From their perspective, their coach had not attempted to change and in turn, they refused to adjust as well. The only thing holding them together was their fear of not having the routine done for their next competition.

"Do you remember how you wanted to feel at the beginning of the year?" (I)
 "Not really. I know **it's definitely not happening.**"
 "**Not at all.**"
 "It wouldn't be as **frustrating** if we had a routine because then we could work on the finer details. At least we'd have something. And we don't right now."
 "I came from a competitive club. This has been **a pain** for me. We're **not prepared ever.** If our routine was done we could perfect it but right now it's a mess." (A)
 "What can you do?" (I)
 "**Change the music...**we can't even hear it at this one part for 20 seconds."
 "Just try to plow through it."
 "We have some of it...but there are parts where we don't know what to do." (A)
 "Have you seen a difference in (your coach)...or in how you're getting along?" (I)
 "Not really."
 "I just don't think she has anyone's respect. I find I don't **really trust her** feedback anymore, trust what she says as a coach." (A)
 "Have you upheld your end of the bargain?" (I)
 "I don't know...**not really.**"
 "We've had three practices so we can't really tell."
 "For me, I feel like it's the same, the exact same."
 "**I feel nothing has changed.**"
 "We're trying to make an effort but **nothing's working.**" (A)
 "What is unifying you now?" (I)
 "**Fear.** Why do we do this? We need to finish the routine." (A)
 "Do you feel unified?" (I)
 "My team **feels unified** but we have a major **lack of leadership.**" (A)
 "Who is going to do it? Who is going to step up?" (I)
 "It's the **stepping on toes** thing. I don't want to get in her way." (A)
 "What are you saying? You need an action plan but you don't want to step on toes?" (I)
 "I'm **afraid of her.**"
 "She's the coach. I don't want to cross the line." (A)

Once again, the team recognized that they were not feeling the way they wanted and could be doing something to feel better. Unfortunately, they just were not willing to do anything about it. At this point, I was also trying to meet with the coach. Her personal life had become even more hectic and she was not able to meet with me before the holidays. In a telephone conversation, she related that she was so stressed with her job that she was not even going to practices until after the break. She had started a journal even though she did not enjoy completing the journal entries for the intervention, and she said she would share after the holidays. I asked the athletes and the coach if we could have a follow-up meeting before

everyone left for the break but no one was able to commit. As much as I believed the group session was imperative, we left for the break without organizing one.

Although I was concerned with the way things were going for the team, I was a little surprised when I was contacted by the assistant coach early into the new year. She had been contacted by the athletes and had returned to the team. She explained that at the first practice back from the holidays, things did not go well. The athletes changed some of the music without telling the coach, which was clearly a shock to her. Then, the coach tried to get the athletes to do a workout and the athletes responded that it was a waste of time and they felt working on the routine would be a better use of energy. When the coach stayed resolute in her stance on the workout, the team swam into the middle of the pool and turned their backs on her. Angry, the coach left and when no one came after her, she decided she had had enough and she would not be coming back.

The assistant coach did not know what to do and decided to run the next practice so the athletes had someone there for them. She was concerned that she would be left in charge and asked me to invite the head coach to another group session so that everyone could speak openly about the problems. This time, however, we decided to get representative athletes from both the A and B team instead of having the whole group attend. In doing so, I hoped the coach would feel more comfortable and less overwhelmed.

Second group session: Athletes and coaches present. The coach agreed to attend. When she arrived for the meeting, it was like seeing another person. Finally, she was not afraid to share her feelings and rather, opened up first. She had finally admitted to herself that she was not feeling the way she wanted and decided to take action.

"I haven't been sleeping all of this week and instead I've been writing. I've had a lot of stuff in my personal life. I feel depressed every time I come here for you. I was looking at

a picture of me and my brother and I was thinking, 'This is how I want to feel. I want to be happy'. And this does not make me happy...I'm not looking forward to coming and when I leave I'm depressed. I'm sorry about the way it's going, because I was expecting much more. I can count on the finger of one hand how many people give 100% in the pool... You don't respect me, you waste the pool time, you waste my time, you don't give 100%. I don't want to pursue this.' (C)

"What does that mean?" (I)

"I don't think I'm meeting everyone's expectations. Everything is going wrong. You are expecting something else. When I come I want to have fun. I want to feel good. If I feel like I'm wasting my time or I'm getting more depressed, then the little amount of free time I'm spending with you is a waste. I am depressed. Why would I want to go on with that?" (C)

The coach continued to explain what she saw as the main obstacles. In her mind, the athletes wasted time and did not respond well to her. It had moved past the point of just being one team who did not give her respect. Rather she felt that the entire group had rejected her. The athletes articulated once again that they felt the workouts were a waste of time, they were feeling a lot of anxiety about not having their routines completed, and they thought the coach had not responded well since our first group session.

"This is more personal but I feel like after the last meeting we all tried to incorporate you more in the process but it wasn't reciprocated. I didn't feel like it was both ways." (A)

After some debate as to how the coach could be reincorporated into the team so that everyone could feel the way they wanted, the coach decided that she would not work with the two teams. Instead, she would only work with two girls on their duet and two other girls on their solos. This seemed to be an appropriate decision; she would be working with four swimmers with whom she felt comfortable and would still get to coach in some capacity. Instead of continuing to 'just do it,' as she had in the early stages of the intervention, she had taken ownership of her life and made the difficult decision to quit.

As for the athletes, they agreed that they would be able to work on their own with the assistant coach as another set of eyes. When the decision was announced to the rest of the team, the athletes responded well to the fact that they were on their own.

*"We only have a few more practices so we all better **give it our all or else shut up and that's it.**"*

*"I know for some of us, it's been really shitty coming every practice and dragging our asses. I just **hope we can have fun.**"*

*"Yeah, otherwise **I won't make it.**" (A)*

The obstacles continue... I met with the athletes alone one last time before their rapidly approaching second competition. Within that week they finished their routines but still did not feel the way they wanted. They were literally drained from the turmoil of the season.

"Now that she's gone, can you feel the way you want?" (I)

*"**No. I'm done.**"*

"I'm going to try to have fun but..."

*"I **love** synchro so much but this year I'm like, '**Do I really want to swim?**'"*

"I'm just trying to get through it." (A)

"Do you think it's possible to feel the way you want to feel? The main issue seemed to be the relationship with the coach. That's gone. So why is it still different?" (I)

*"I think everyone is just **wiped out** from the whole thing."*

*"We just got so bottled up. **I'm not angry, just exhausted.**"*

*"I often **feel frustrated** when I leave practice but it's just that **I'm tired.**"*

*"I **want to feel confident and strong** but now when I come I **feel tired** and I'm afraid I'm going to bring that to the competition." (A)*

"How do you feel about not having a coach anymore?" (I)

*"I'm **really sad** that she left because I know her, I swam with her, I had a relationship with her before and I was sad to see her leave, but **I'm glad she did**...because it was getting really **frustrating** for both of us."*

*"I think she was an asset to our club but I think it's **better that she's gone.** It couldn't really have gotten much better." (A)*

Although there was no longer an issue with their coach, they were left dealing with the issues amongst themselves. They admitted that with the lack of leadership, their relationships with each other had also deteriorated. With so little time to actually prepare for their competition, they took things out on one another. Fortunately, they were able to put a routine together and this allowed them to be hopeful for their two remaining competitions.

*"Once we finished the routine that **pressure was gone.**"*

*"**I felt like I could breathe again.**"*

"Now everything is falling into place. We actually look like a team."

*"Now when we swim **I feel like we're swimming together.**" (A)*

"What does 'feels like we're together' mean?" (I)

"It doesn't feel like people are swimming for themselves."

*"It really **feels like we're swimming as a team and not as individuals.**"*

"Even when we're on the bulkhead, you can see that we're a team. At (the first competition) we weren't like that."

*"There's a **togetherness.** People are **excited** and get along."*

*"You **feel the togetherness** when something goes wrong. When it affects you, you know there's a connection." (A)*

The team attended their second competition with the assistant coach as their figurehead. Although they had been hopeful that they would perform better than they did the first time, both teams placed poorly. Interestingly, though, the B team placed ahead of the A team. This surprised everyone and created some conflict among the athletes. The B team was pleased and could not help but feel a little smug. They had truly rallied around one another in the face of losing their coach.

*"I was **happy that we did better than them.**"*

*"For me it **felt good.** We went in as a team. We weren't individuals anymore. And we have sharpness stuff to work on but it **feels good.**" (A)*

The A team, however, was not able to unite the way they had hoped. Some of the team members blamed the poor performance on the fact that their routine was not difficult enough, while others simply blamed poor attendance at team events for their lack of execution. In the end, they admitted they wanted to feel better but were not sure if they could do anything about it at this point in the season.

"We can swim better."

*"I **don't want to swim that again.**" (A)*

"You want it to feel better or just look better?" (I)

*"I **want it to feel better.** Because I have other things I can do with my time."*

"I want to swim better obviously. 11th place sucks."

*"I'm **frustrated.**"*

"I mean we half-ass it most of the time but I just don't get it. What are we supposed to do?" (A)

"There must be something you can do. I mean you are facing your last competition." (I)

"I don't think so." (A)

I decided to attend the last few practices and also traveled to the last competition, which was just 10 days after their previous one. We officially completed our sessions together before their third competition and I was not going to meet with the team again until the post-intervention interview. While the coach's departure seemed to be the 'rallying point' for the B team, for the A team, the breakthrough appeared to be finishing behind the purported 'lower' team. They had all finally hit a point so low that they could not continue on the way they were. As each team practiced, I could see the difference in their interactions. They made a point of listening to one another and they finished the practices with a team cheer.

At the final meet, both teams performed well. The B team finished in the lower half of the competition but the athletes were satisfied with their highest placing yet. The A team finished in the top five and the difference was obvious. As the two teams congratulated each other on deck, I could see their relief and happiness. They were proud of each other and finally felt the way they wanted.

Post-Intervention Interviews

From the coach's perspective. Although the head coach had been distant for the second half of the intervention and had quit two thirds of the way into it, she agreed to commit to a post-intervention interview. I was able to meet with her before the team left for the last competition, and was again amazed to see a new attitude and demeanor when she arrived. Previously, she had seemed drained and anxious; now, she was relaxed.

"How do you feel now? You seem so much more relaxed." (I)

"I'm good. I feel a lot better. (laughter) It's a relief for me." (C)

"How did you feel about making your decision? What was it that finally allowed you to quit?" (I)

*"It was hard but then I had to think, 'Do I go back or not?' And I didn't want to go back and it's **better for me not to work with them**. I had said to (the assistant coach) before that I might quit, so it was in my head already." (C)*

We talked about how she decided to make the choice to quit. She loved to coach but had to put how she felt first. When coaching had started to affect her sleep and everyday functioning, she realized that something really needed to be done. When she had difficulty sleeping, she started keeping a journal. While journaling is usually part of the resonance process, she had not enjoyed it when I had first asked her to keep a daily diary. In the end, the journal led her to reflect on her challenges and allowed her some peace of mind. She felt relieved.

*"I started keeping the **journal**. I wrote all the things **I was disappointed about**. I wrote what I would like to tell them. I realized nothing else could be done from me. **It helped me to sleep**." (C)*

"And what is it like for you now?" (I)

*"So much **better**. I'm **less stressed out** when I need to prepare for my day. I **don't have to worry about making people happy**. It is a **relief**. I don't have to think about it all the time. Sometimes I wonder if I would have quit earlier if it would have been better." (C)*

"What did you think about the group sessions with the girls?" (I)

*"It seemed strange at first. There were so many and then when I faced them the second time, I'd never heard one of them say a single word to me or listen to me. I don't think those meetings changed much. The girls are just too strong in their opinions and don't listen. **I was glad to tell them how I was feeling** but again they don't listen. I just realized I needed to walk away." (C)*

"Tell me about the process of you deciding that you didn't feel the way you wanted and that you needed to do something about it." (I)

*"It was the holidays. I **took a break** and then my first practice back was the one where I quit." (C)*

"If you hadn't had Christmas to force you into a break, would you have taken one or would you have kept going?" (I)

*"Kept going, I think...I would have liked to have stayed here and coached for a long time. Now **I would still like to coach** but not here. I won't go after it but if someone offers I will say yes...It has **helped to talk to you** about these things, basically because I could talk to someone. I needed to tell someone. And now my semester is easier and **I feel good again**." (C)*

I had been working with the coach for almost four months and it took her this time to make a decision to feel the way she wanted more often. Along the way, there were opportunities

to reflect on what was going wrong and make an effort to change but she was not ready. It took four months but ultimately she realized that even though she wanted to coach, it just was not working with this group of athletes. That did not mean she would not coach again, it just meant that she had to make a difficult decision for now. In the end, her decision was made based on how she felt at the time and how she wanted to feel for the future.

Although the coach quitting likely was not the athletes' preferred solution to their problems, her decision was a catalyst for action. They were left in a lurch: no routine, no coach, and at odds with one another. For the B team, the coach's decision to quit was an immediate rallying point; they were unified from that point on. On the other hand, the A team did not quite hit the point where they felt they needed to truly reconnect with each other. It took them an extra week but they too managed to pull together. Ultimately, it was the coach's work to revisit and make difficult decisions based on how she wanted to feel that forced the athletes into doing the same.

Interview with the athletes. In our last interview, I followed up with the athletes on their season. They admitted that had they not been able to attend the group sessions that I facilitated, things would have likely been much worse. They also agreed that the coach quitting was the best wake up call they could have received. Once she was gone, it showed them just how much of an obstacle she had been for them and it kept them from taking their frustrations out on one another.

*"When (she) was coaching I felt very **negatively** about the whole experience and **couldn't have the feelings I wanted while I was swimming**. But when (the coach) quit...it kept us from fighting with each other."*

*"We all decided to **bond together** and really **work as a team**." (A)*

"What did you get out of the team sessions?" (I)

*"It made me realize that **the girls have a similar feeling**. We mostly just want to be confident in ourselves, our teammates, and have fun."*

"Everyone was thinking what I was thinking as well."

*"And that it's important to **discuss issues before they get too heated**. I never experienced anything like this before."*

*"I don't know what would have happened had we not been able to **get together and talk** about different issues." (A)*

At the start of the intervention, the athletes had spoken of the elusive 'team feeling' that they sometimes experienced. It was clear that for the majority of the season, they did not come close to feeling that kind of alliance and bond. In the face of all their obstacles, it had not been possible. At the last meet, however, it appeared as though they finally felt it.

*"**I experienced the team feeling** at (the last meet). We were pretty motivated and unified, and **felt so strong**... we swam much better. We wanted to prove we could do it. It would have helped if we would have had more time together as a team without her (the coach)."*
*"Yeah, at the final meet..., everything really came together, **I was confident in myself and in my team.**"*

*"It's just unified motions, **positive energy from all, confidence** in each other. The only time I experienced it was our final run through at (the last meet). Everything came together and I was actually confident in everyone on the team. (laughter) I think because it was the last swim for everyone, that helped. More help and motivation by the coach would have helped unify the team. Also swimming to music we liked." (A)*

While I was ecstatic that the athletes were able to experience something positive in their season and feel the way they wanted during the last meet, I was not sure they would have been able to define, prepare for, and revisit how they wanted to feel on their own. Truthfully, they did not take ownership of the process to work towards feeling the way they wanted until it was forced upon them. In the end, they were able to derive valuable lessons for the future regarding not only how to deal with obstacles but also how feeling the way they wanted (or not) affected every aspect of their lived experiences. Although the athletes and the coach did not feel the way they wanted most of the time throughout the season, they developed their resonance process and came out of it with some positive experiences.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore how a team developed and engaged in the process of resonance, and more specifically, to design a group RPM through an intervention and

document this process. In general, the overarching goals of a resonance based intervention are to empower the participants to observe and self-reflect to increase their awareness and ability to regulate how they want to feel as often as possible. It is clear that in this case, the athletes and coaches were encouraged and given opportunities to pay attention to how they felt throughout the season but due to several obstacles they faced, they did not feel the way they wanted for the majority of the time. The results show, however, that the participants appreciated talking about how they felt, and in the coach's case particularly, learning and making decisions based on how they wanted to feel. As one athlete said, *"I don't know what would have happened had we not been able to get together and talk about different issues."* This story is real; it demonstrates how life and sport situations are often less than optimal and lead us to not feel the way we want. This team struggled immensely throughout their season, yet they were able to identify how they wanted to feel and connect with this once the coach left the team. It is clear from the athletes' and coach's perspective, that they felt better after this. As a result, I believe we can conclude that the intervention was successful. While it could be argued that stronger commitment to the process by all the participants could have helped, that perhaps the coach should have left earlier, or that the athletes should have tried harder to make it work, this was their reality and readiness was a huge factor in the process. Previous studies on resonance have also shown that readiness to pay attention, reflect, and do the work to grow and change toward better feeling the way we want is necessary (Doell et al., 2006).

It was interesting to see how both the coaches and athletes avoided their problems and feelings for such a long period of time. While this type of avoidance is seen as a hindrance to the process of resonance, the fact that it occurred is not surprising; our culture has not yet embraced the notion of using personal data about how we want to feel to design our lives to experience that

‘feel’ more often (Newburg, 2006). Furthermore, even research conducted in the realm of emotion and feelings has not yet acknowledged the importance of embracing how we feel and want to feel, especially in the face of obstacles. As I mentioned previously, the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) alludes to the fact that regulating or even suppressing our negative feelings in group situations is an effective way to ensure that the goals of the group remain the top priority (Prati et al., 2003). I would argue that, in fact, the athletes and coach of study did just that; they did not feel good, recognized that things were not progressing as they should, but continually avoided a confrontation out of fear of both hurting each other and causing more problems. In reality, they simply did not feel the way they wanted and tried to suppress this. This is the point where resonance moves beyond pure awareness and emotional regulation, to promote reflection and self regulation or action. It was only when the coach faced how poorly she was feeling (i.e., depressed, discouraged, stressed out), took the time to really reflect on her situation through journaling, and made the decision to quit that she was able to free herself to feel the way she wanted. This is why Newburg (2006) emphasizes the importance of one’s readiness to authentically look at oneself and answer the question: “What am I willing to work for?”

One of the reasons why resonance is perceived to be an effective approach by most participants partaking in such an intervention (Durand-Bush et al., 2004) is because it not only makes them realize that how they feel matters and influences their every day life, it also gives them power to embrace life’s inevitable obstacles, pay attention to how they want and do not want to feel, and develop appropriate responses that are powerful and meaningful to them. In comparison to the concept of EI (Prati et al., 2003) and other research on emotion (Hanin, 2000), resonance focuses on feel as a multi-dimensional concept (Damazio, 1994) rather than just on emotions. Because feel is a completely subjective experience (Damazio, 1994), it is defined and

articulated by the participant and not the practitioner or researcher. Furthermore, resonance is not concerned with helping individuals comply with societal norms and roles unless they say that it is when they “fit” that they truly feel the way they want. Helping individuals discover and stay true to themselves in the face of triumphs and setbacks is of the utmost importance when using the resonance approach (Newburg, 2006), thus asking them to regulate negative feelings in order to conform to their social environment, like EI suggests to do (Prati et al., 2003), is not advocated. This team’s story demonstrates how key it is to acknowledge both how we want and do not want to feel, how we must consider both individual and team needs, and how long it can take to change in an attempt to feel better.

The narrative also highlighted the role of the facilitator of resonance, which is unique and important because it helps us follow and better understand the process and the “how to” and “why” of the intervention. As the consultant/researcher, I was there to not only listen to but also challenge the athletes’ and coach’s beliefs and values, and bring awareness to the notion of feel. In theory, the resonance approach allows practitioners/researchers to help participants do the real work to be who they truly want to be (Newburg, 2006). The story reveals that the athletes and head coach were encouraged to be their own experts. I was not there to find solutions for them, but rather was a resource and tool to help them observe, collect data on themselves and their environment, and self-reflect. In this case, there was an obvious and imperative need for the participants to deal with the coach-athlete conflicts. Since resonance is a client-centered approach similar to humanistic (Rogers, 1965) and experiential (Greenberg et al., 1993) counseling, much time during the intervention was devoted to discussing obstacles and ways to resolve them so that everyone could move closer to self-actualization and feel the way they wanted more of the time in this process. Unlike traditional cognitive-behavioral methods of

helping (Hill, 2001), the group intervention was not about teaching pre-determined techniques, such as relaxation or visualization to reduce stress levels, although had the athletes or coaches asked for this, I would have been in a position to facilitate the use of these skills. The point here is that the athletes and coaches drove the process, and had I conducted this study with a different group or the same group a year later, the story and intervention could have been much different. This demonstrates the importance and need to use an emergent design grounded in the constructivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) to conduct this type of research and stay true to the resonance approach.

Having said this, from a consultant/researcher's standpoint, several critical lessons were learned. Throughout the intervention, I maintained that the athletes and head coach were the experts on how they wanted to feel; while designing the timeline for the group sessions, I allowed them to have input. As a result, when they told me they were not ready to meet as a team (i.e., coach and athletes together), I respected their wishes even though my instincts told me that it would likely be better for them to do this. Although resonance based interventions are designed to meet the needs of participants, as facilitators of this process, we cannot be afraid to challenge them to become more aware of themselves (Hill & O'Brien, 1999). Challenging is a skill used by many types of counselors and consultants when their clients become resistant to change and growth (Ivey & Ivey, 2003). According to Newburg (2006), paying attention to and reflecting on how we want to feel and why we are not feeling that way can be an uncomfortable process. When participants are not ready or willing to experience this discomfort, it can be difficult for the facilitator to help. Challenging or confronting can also be delicate and risky for counselors/consultants and must be carried out in a supportive manner (Ivey & Ivey, 2003). Based on the results of this study, I believe it will be critical for practitioners/researchers of the

resonance process to consider their instincts in determining when clients are truly not ready to face an obstacle, and alternatively when they simply need gentle prodding to support them through that sometimes scary process. In this case, more gentle prodding on my part might have led to a different experience.

One of my main research questions had included whether a team could design a group RPM. The results of this study indicate that it is possible, although in this case, the team was divided into two groups, that is, the athletes as a group, and head coach; the division came as a result of the conflict they experienced. Both the group of athletes and head coach identified with and learned the components of the RPM. They were able to individually articulate how they felt and wanted to feel and the group of athletes discussed how they collectively liked to feel. It is noteworthy that at the beginning of the intervention, the coach was more elusive in her responses to my questioning regarding feel. While this may have been due to the fact that our sessions were conducted in her second language, she may have also been in denial, trying to suppress how she felt because she was not ready to face reality and risk hurting herself and the athletes. More research should examine this notion of readiness and suppression of less than optimal feelings in relation to the process of resonance.

In terms of preparation, the athletes and coach identified strategies that were within their control and others that were not. It appeared as though every element of their preparation that was not within their control became an obstacle, allowing the athletes and coach to blame each other and not take responsibility. Strategies to revisit dream feelings were identified but seldom applied. For the head coach, the Christmas holidays forced her to take a break and begin some challenging self-reflection, and she shared that this was instrumental in helping her revisit how she wanted to feel. Previous research has shown that journaling can be an effective means to

increase awareness, connect with inner feelings, and experience change (Doell et al., 2006). For their part, the athletes shared that rallying around one another was a revisiting strategy for them, although it could be argued that up until the coach decided to quit, this led to greater frustration rather than feelings of unity (i.e., their group dream feeling). Because this study was the first to involve an intervention with a team, it will be important to conduct more research with teams in the future to further examine the role of ‘others’ in the process of resonance.

As Newburg (2006) stated, obstacles are inevitable in all facets of our lives. Previous studies on resonance differentiated between internal and external obstacles, and showed that internal obstacles are easier to overcome because they are within our control (Faubert et al., 2005). As an important step to dealing with external obstacles, however, we must learn to respond to our initial response (i.e., feel angry, frustrated, guilty, sad, Durand-Bush et al., 2004). In this study, it could be argued that the athletes and coach did not respond well to their initial responses to perceived external obstacles. During some of the intervention sessions, they tried to move beyond their typical responses of feeling frustrated, deceived, and stressed but failed to subsequently apply identified strategies, perhaps because they did not take responsibility for their actions (Newburg, 2006). From my viewpoint, the fact that most sessions were conducted with a group, rather than on an individual basis like in previous studies on resonance (Arcand et al., in press), was challenging at times because of differing and sometimes conflicting perspectives. It is also noteworthy that some obstacles have to take their course and require more time to overcome. This team’s experience reveals just how integral the athletes and coach were to each other’s functioning and desired feelings in the context of their sport, and furthermore how difficult it can be to make decisions based on personal feel when there are others relying on you. In the future, it will be critical for facilitators of the group resonance process to continue

documenting the impact that being in a group can have on learning about ‘feel’ and responding to obstacles, particularly when they pertain to the group itself.

Concluding Remarks

When discussing the potential for using resonance as a consulting/counseling approach, it is important to consider that this was the first time that a group resonance approach was empirically investigated. Under different circumstances, and certainly with a different facilitator, a different outcome could have been possible and even probable. Ultimately, the resonance approach is client-centred and educational in nature so that the participants can learn about themselves, how they want to feel, and how to feel that way more often. Although other approaches to consulting and counseling, such as Rogers’ humanistic approach (1965) and Greenberg et al.’s process experiential approach (1993) also emphasize clients’ experiences as they come to reorder their own lives, resonance takes another critical step by educating and empowering the individual or group to make changes with ‘feel’ as the main criterion. Empowerment has been defined as the social action process that promotes individuals, organizations, and communities to gain control over their lives in their given environment. It is the power to act with others to bring about change (Wallerstein and Bernstein, 1988). It has already been demonstrated that individuals have felt empowered through resonance to design their lives based on how they want to feel, and this study shows that this can also be done with a team. In the team context, however, further factors such as group dynamics, communication, as well as common goals and values are at play. In the future, it will be imperative for other researchers to explore the group resonance process in other contexts; this team’s experience was truly unique and certainly cannot be generalized to other teams.

By writing a narrative of this team's experience with the resonance process, I committed myself to obtaining the utmost credibility, believability, and fidelity (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995; Polkinghorne, 1995). Having developed a relationship with these participants over a five month period, it was my obligation to tell their story in a manner that truly captured what they went through. As a young researcher and helper/consultant, I have much to learn about working with people, but through constant reflection, debriefing, and preparation, I have learned to acknowledge my biases and potential pitfalls, and remain transparent in sharing with you my lessons and interpretations of the events that transpired.

Telling this story has demonstrated the need for further studies targeting the feel aspect of team performance and day-to-day living. It is hoped that using a narrative and story telling approach enabled you to get an intricate view of the process that evolved throughout this season. Hopefully, you were able to feel through this narrative what the athletes, coaches, and I experienced throughout this study. This study is innovative and I believe it makes an important contribution to the literature because it sheds light on the "how to" of working with a team, including how to help team members identify and work toward feeling the way they want, particularly in the face of adversity and obstacles. It is indeed a valuable exercise to document and learn from others' stories and so I ask, what are the lessons for you?

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Figure 1. The Resonance Performance Model (Newburg et al., 2002)

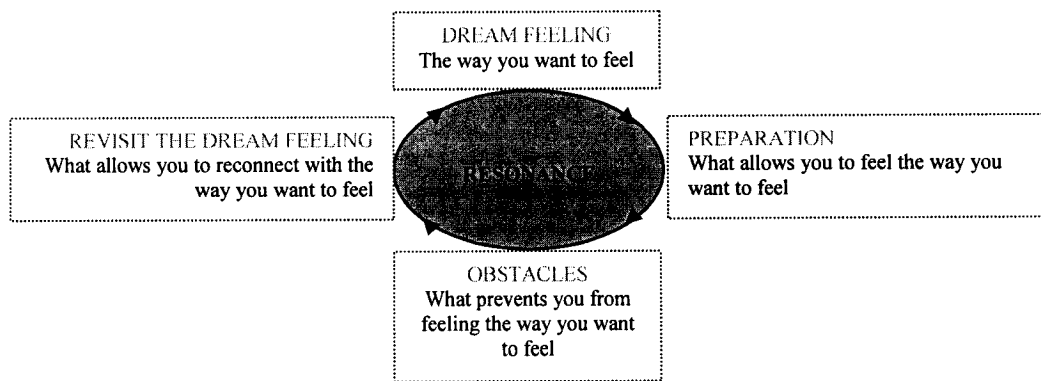


Table 1. Intervention Timeline and Session Topics

Week	Athletes Only	Athletes and Coach	Coach
1 (Pre-Intervention)	(Day 1) -Introduction to athletes and team atmosphere /issues -Obstacles (external to team)		(Day 5) -Introduction to coach/assistant and team issues -Obstacles (internal to team)
2 (Intervention 1)	(Day 14) -Dream feeling (DF), preparation -Team feeling while competing		
3 (Intervention 2)	(Day 21) -Full RPM -Obstacles – COACH		(Day 23) -Full RPM -Obstacles - ATHLETES
4 (Intervention 3)	(Day 25) -Obstacles – COACH -revisiting strategies		
5 (Intervention 4)	(Day 35) -Obstacles – COACH, routine -revisiting strategies		(Day 37) -Obstacles – ATHLETES -revisiting strategies
6 (Intervention 5)	(Day 42) -Pre-competition feel - RPM re-examined		
FIRST COMPETITION		(Day 43) -Assistant coach quits (Day 44)	
7 (Intervention 6)		(Day 51) -Team expectations -Current experienced feelings -Revisiting/coping strategies	
8 (Intervention 7)	(Day 56) -Revisiting -Obstacles		(Day 57) -Phone Conversation with coach (unable to make meetings) - Starts to keep journal
9 (Intervention 8)	(Day 65) -Revisiting and coping strategies for working through obstacles		
CHRISTMAS BREAK		-Coach quits (Day 98) -Assistant coach returns (Day 100)	
10 (Intervention 9)		(Day 105) -Obstacles – EACH OTHER -Current experienced feelings -Coping and decision making (coach does not return for team)	
11 (Intervention 10)	(Day 112) - coach's decision re-examined -Pre-competition feelings - RPM reconsidered -Team feeling		
SECOND COMPETITION		(Day 113)	
12 (Intervention 11)	(Day 117) - Obstacles- EACH OTHER - Revisiting and coping strategies		(Day 118) - Desired feelings - reflection and action - Revisit season
THIRD COMPETITION		(Day 123)	
13 (Post-Intervention)	(Day 137) - Rexamined desired feelings (and lack thereof) - Preparation and revisiting -Team feeling		

ARTICLE 2:

DEALING WITH COACH-ATHLETE CONFLICT USING A RESONANCE

INTERVENTION: A NARRATIVE

DEALING WITH COACH-ATHLETE CONFLICT USING A RESONANCE

INTERVENTION: A NARRATIVE

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to document and describe, through a narrative, the process in which coaches and athletes managed interpersonal conflict as they participated in a resonance intervention. Resonance is a process that allows people to feel the way they want as often as possible by preparing to experience desired feelings, recognizing and embracing obstacles that prevent them from feeling the way we want, and revisiting how they want to feel when required (Newburg, 2006; Newburg, Kimiecik, Durand-Bush, & Doell, 2002). A synchronized swimming team consisting of 16 athletes, one head coach, and one assistant coach participated in a group resonance based intervention over a four month span, and story telling was used to describe the nature and evolution of coach-athlete relationships within the team. Results indicate that unresolved conflict can be detrimental to (a) relationships between athletes and coach, (b) performance, and (c) how people want to feel in the context of their sport. It is also evident that research regarding coach-athlete relationships can no longer exclude the critical social context in which such relationships take place.

The Coach-Athlete Relationship: A Narrative

Interpersonal relationships are fundamental to the athletic experience, and yet the study of interpersonal interactions remains underdeveloped in the field of sport psychology as a whole (Iso-Ahola, 1995; Poczwadowski, Barott, & Jowett, 2006; Wylleman, 2000). Specifically, studies related to interpersonal relationships in sport have been lacking in quantity and diversity (Coppel, 1995; Jowett & Wylleman, 2006; Smith, 2003; Wylleman, 2000). Poczwadowski and colleagues (2006) have advocated the use of new methodological, conceptual, theoretical, and analytical approaches for the study of interpersonal relationships, especially the coach-athlete dyad, in order to diversify our knowledge of this topic. Some of their suggestions have included using exploratory qualitative methods, renewing and revisiting theoretical frameworks, and broadening the contexts from which we study relationships.

While research on interpersonal relationships in sport is growing, the primary focus has been on the coach-athlete relationship, and almost exclusively on leadership behaviours and coach effectiveness (Vanden Auweele & Rzewnicki, 2000). As a result, we have been left with an underdeveloped knowledge of other kinds of sport relationships (i.e., athlete-athlete and athlete-parent), and other aspects of relationships in general. For example, in the context of the coach-athlete relationship, only a small group of researchers have recognized the importance of emotions within these interactions (see Jowett & Meek, 2000; Poczwadowski, Barott, & Henschen, 2002 for examples), and few have acknowledged the duality of the coach-athlete relationship. Namely, relationships imply a two-way interaction; not only is the athlete impacted by the coach's influence, but the coach may also use the interpersonal connection as a foundation for emotional growth (Poczwadowski et al., 2002; Wylleman, 2000).

In an attempt to augment the diversification of the study of interpersonal relationships in sport and to add to a field largely devoid of narrative compositions and feel-based intervention studies, this study involved using an innovative approach. I have employed a qualitative, narrative approach, (Polkinghorne, 1995) guided by the constructivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) to present the story of one team's coach-athlete relationships as they engaged in a resonance-based intervention over the course of an entire competitive season.

Resonance is a process that allows people to feel the way they want as often as possible by preparing to experience desired feelings, recognizing and embracing obstacles that prevent them from feeling the way they want, and revisiting how they want to feel when required (Newburg et al., 2002; Newburg, 2006). The Resonance Performance Model (RPM, Newburg et al., 2002, see Figure 1), which visually represents this process, was used to guide the group resonance based intervention in this study.

Insert Figure 1 here

Because feel is at the core of resonance, and there is a need to examine the nature and role of feel and emotions in interpersonal relationships (Poczwardowski et al., 2002), the resonance framework was deemed a unique and appropriate one to help shed more light on the process through which coaches and athletes develop relationships and help each other feel the way they want. While previous research on resonance has involved using one-on-one interventions with individual sport athletes (Durand-Bush, Faubert, & Newburg, 2004), a unique feature of this study was that it was the first time a group intervention was conducted, and also the first time team sport athletes had participated.

Results from past studies show that developing and engaging in one's individual process of resonance in sport increases personal awareness and can also lead to enhanced perceptions of

performance and well-being (Arcand, Durand-Bush, & Miall, in press; Doell, Durand-Bush, & Newburg, 2006; Durand-Bush et al., 2004; Faubert, Durand-Bush, Trudel, & Newburg, 2005). However, it was not clear if this would be the case with a team of athletes, and as such, I hoped to explore this question through undertaking this study.

According to Durand-Bush and colleagues (2004), designing one's process of resonance and applying it in one's daily life requires (a) a level of readiness to explore feel, beliefs/values/conceptions, and obstacles, (b) ownership and commitment to the process, and (c) ongoing, deliberate work mediated by self-reflection or reflection generated by others in their environment, such as a consultant, coach, or teammates (Durand-Bush et al., 2004). Of interest here is that in a team context, one person could be willing and committed to examining feel and relationships while others may not be. Also, one could argue that the commitment and perceptions of the coach, who is presumably the leader, likely influences to a great extent the relationships and how people feel on a team.

Indeed, coaches have been found to play an important role in the social environment of athletes, affecting their perceptions of success and failure, their motivation (Feltz & Lirgg, 2001; Vallerand & Rousseau, 2001), and how they feel (Salminen & Liukkonen, 1996). Doell and colleagues (2006) also found that coaches impact how athletes feel and interestingly, they can either facilitate or inhibit desired feelings. Therefore, it could be surmised that it is in the best interest of coaches to nurture how their athletes want to feel to maximize their performance, well-being, and relationships. If how individual sport athletes feel affects how they perform (Arcand et al., in press; Doell et al., 2006; Durand-Bush et al., 2004), then there is merit in examining how team sport athletes and coaches make themselves feel and relate to one another.

The purpose of this study was to document and describe through a narrative the interpersonal relationships of a synchronized swimming team over the course of their competitive season as they participated in a group resonance based intervention. A resonance-based intervention is typically facilitated by a trained consultant-researcher who uses the RPM to conduct in-depth multiple interviews/sessions with participants. Although the RPM is used as a framework and the work is centered on the subjective experience of feel, the intervention remains client-centered and driven. Another important component of a resonance-based intervention is daily reflective journaling in which participants engage to increase self-awareness and knowledge. The resonance approach is in line with the tenets of humanistic counselling (Rogers, 1965) and constructivism, a paradigm promoting the use of an emergent research design and acknowledging that both researchers and participants influence each other in the investigation process (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

In this study, the resonance-based intervention was implemented over a four month period with a team comprised of 16 female, club-level synchronized swimmers performing as two teams, one female head coach, and one female assistant coach. The group of athletes participated in a pre- and post-intervention interview as well as eight intervention sessions facilitated by myself, the consultant-researcher approximately every two weeks. The head coach was interviewed alone before and after the intervention and participated in two intervention sessions by herself. Finally, over the four month period, the athletes, head coach, and assistant coach participated in two sessions together, and the athletes and assistant coach took part in one session together. While some of the sessions were conducted with the entire team, it is important to note that many of the participants lacked commitment to this process and several sessions

were conducted with a group of eight swimmers or less. Please refer to Figure 2 for a visual depiction of the intervention timeline.

Insert Figure 2 here

As you will see in the narrative, the timeline and participating members in each session were negotiated with the team so that they felt at ease with the intervention process and content. I used a narrative approach to collect and analyze the data because in a narrative analysis, the researcher constructs the data in such a way that gives events and circumstances cohesive meaning; the result is a story. The data includes descriptions or depictions of events and situations which the researcher synthesizes and interprets (Polkinghorne, 1995). The narrative analysis thus allowed me to provide a retrospective account incorporating actions, decisions, circumstances, interpersonal processes, and other environmental factors to describe coach-athlete relationships within this team as it evolved and changed. There are four key players in the following narrative, namely the athletes as a group (A), the head coach (C), the assistant coach (AC), and myself the consultant/researcher (I).

The Narrative

Pre-Intervention Interview

During the last week of the swimmers' pre-season training camp, I conducted my pre-intervention interview with the athletes as a group, and then with the coach and assistant together. These interviews were conducted to get a general feel for the social and emotional environment I was entering, and to also get an idea of interpersonal relationships on the team. I was interested in exploring a team resonance process, but also wanted to describe and capture the relationships that occurred between the athletes and coach. Although the initial interview was

largely fluid and allowed for topics to emerge, some of my guiding questions dealt specifically with coach-athlete relationships.

The team consisted of 16 swimmers of varying age; nine were new to the team this year but each had at least 10 years of experience in synchronized swimming. At this point, the team was swimming as a larger group but would soon be split into two teams. In synchronized swimming, eight is the perfect number for a team; with the addition of more swimmers or the removal of any team members, patterns and lifts, which are both key elements in synchronized swimming routines, and pure synchronization become difficult.

We begin on a high note... During the interview with the athletes, they expressed that while they were concerned about several obstacles, including lack of pool time, lack of funding, and a perceived lack of respect from the University, they were extremely optimistic about their coming season. They spoke highly of their coach and also identified several elements they felt were critical in order to have reciprocally positive relationships with one another and their coach. Interestingly, their coach was a swimmer on the team the previous year. When asked if this changed the dynamics between them or if this put a strain on their relationships, the athletes appeared slightly conflicted. While they felt that the coach's previous experience was an asset, they struggled with putting her into a position of authority.

*"I think it helps to have a coach that you swam with before, or that has actually swam. You know that **she can relate to you** about certain things." (A)*

"Do you find it difficult to respect her in that leadership role?" (I)

*"It's **not that hard to respect her**. I mean we all have a great level of respect for her. It's just hard when she's trying to assert herself. I mean **how much is she our friend, how much is she our authority figure?**"*

*"Like if we're slacking off and she has to say, 'GUYS listen up,' then it's a reality check like **OK she's our coach**...but I think for the most part we have respect for her, we know her, she has experience and everyone can respect that." (A)*

It appeared as though the athletes respected her as a leader and felt that she was trying to assert herself as a coach. They described her as having strong opinions and mentioned that currently, they had little input into their practices.

"How would you describe the relationship you have with your coach now?" (I)

*"It's kind of a **dictatorship**."*

(laughter)

"When she's getting us in shape."

"Training camp is really brutal because you just go-go-go and you don't question it. I think once we get more into our routine we'll get options or stuff like that. It's hard."

She'll get into being democratic eventually. At the beginning it has to be a...

"Dictatorship."

(laughter)

"...otherwise it doesn't work."

*"Everyone realizes **she is the coach and she has the final say**." (A)*

The athletes felt that many aspects of their relationship with their coach were positive, and identified respect, trust, flexibility, and patience as elements of their relationship that were both desired and present.

"Can you describe some of the most important elements of your relationship currently with (the coach)? Some key factors?" (I)

"Definitely respect."

"Yeah respect."

"I think you have to respect that they know what they're doing, their ideas."

"Trust."

"And understanding."

"Flexibility is a big one. The coach has to be flexible and the swimmers have to be flexible with their coach."

*"Definitely we have to **listen** to each other. I mean, sometimes as swimmers your coach wants you do this move and it's not possible, you have to give us more time whatever and so the **coach has to listen to the swimmers and the swimmers have to listen to the coach**."*

***"Patience** would be another one too for the coach because we drive her crazy."*

(laughter)

***"She's very, very patient with us."** (A)*

"It sounds like a very positive relationship." (I)

"For the most part."

*"Sometimes you walk away angry, but I personally would **never take it out on my coach**. Like I might be angry, and like not appreciate some things but other than that they're there to help."*

"You have them for your coach so you can ask for their criticism." (A)

Ultimately, the athletes felt that while there was room for improvement, the season had started off very well. They were already in a better position than the previous season, where their coach had quit within the first couple of weeks and they had been left to struggle on their own. The athletes were determined to make this season a positive and productive one. In their mind, the biggest issue was for each athlete, and the coaching staff, to be on the same page, with respect to both goals and expectations.

*“I think that we definitely need to have a **clear vision of what we want** because that’s the hardest thing...when you try to set goals and people have different goals and different expectations.” (A)*

Heading into my pre-intervention interview with the coaching staff, I had already developed some preconceived notions about how the season would evolve. The athletes had been so energetic and positive that I was expecting to have the coaching staff reiterate everything the athletes had discussed. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately so that I could keep my biases as a researcher in check, this was not the case.

The team split heard round the world... The interview with the coaches was conducted less than a week after the interview with the athletes. I met with the head coach, a 24 year old woman who was a swimmer on the team the previous year, and the assistant coach, a 23 year old woman who also swam with the club. The assistant coach wanted to be referred to as a 'helper' rather than a coach; she was simply another set of eyes for the head coach, played a very minor role in the organization, leadership, and choreography, and was a mediator between the athletes and coach. As staff, they seemed unified, in congruence, and backed one another up. When I met with the athletes, the coaches had not yet split the 16 swimmers into two teams; my interview with the coaches, however, came just days after the teams were divided.

Ultimately, this decision was a catalyst for action. The coaches divided the team based on how they felt the swimmers would perform and work together best, and with the hope that the teams would feel equal. Although the coaches divided the teams with synchronization and performance in mind, many of the athletes did not understand how the split was made. The coaches presented the two teams as though they were equal, but their decision or rationale was not clear to some of the swimmers. There was already dissension within the group.

"(Two swimmers) are having difficulties putting up with it." (AC)

"I really tried to make it so that we could avoid the problems. We had everyone come in and I sent half of them to train and I said that I would take the other half to do some tests, some physical tests. So they didn't know that this was the cut...and then we let them know that we cut them but they would have their own music and their own opportunities." (C)

"But it didn't go over very well." (I)

"With (these swimmers)." (C)

"Yes, they swam with us last year. They're good swimmers." (AC)

*"They're young and they just don't see, **they can't see that they might be a little lower capacity wise than others.**" (C)*

Clearly, while the coaches had intended to portray the teams as equal, they themselves saw the groups as having varying strengths. Furthermore, they told one group of athletes that they were being cut; it is not surprising, then, that this group of athletes felt inferior. When asked

how they made their decision, the coaches admitted it was not easy but they felt their communication level with the athletes was more than adequate. They seemed assured that any athletes with problems would come to them individually.

*"I think **they are comfortable enough to come to me or come to (the assistant) if there are problems.**" (C)*

While the coaches seemed comfortable with their communication with the athletes, they were disappointed with how some of them were responding to their coaching. They felt some of the athletes were not listening to them and often disregarded their instructions.

The team split had clearly stimulated change. In the interview with the athletes, a positive spin had been placed on everything, including areas that could be improved. During the interview with the coaches, however, the repercussions of their decision were clear. From the coaches' perspectives, the athletes were not only failing to listen, but also did not appreciate the feedback the coaches gave. The athletes were angry and hurt. Instead of allowing the positive energy to build from where they started initially, the team split was an unwelcome disruption.

At this point the coaches and I decided that I would only see the head coach from now on, rather than both the coach and the assistant. This decision was made based on the assistant's schedule and her desire to remain with little responsibility in the general operations of the team. She wanted to remain a helper who merely came to practice each week. We also decided that I would work with the entire group of athletes rather than with only one team or the two teams separately. We hoped that this way, the athletes would not feel that one team had preferential treatment and instead, everyone would benefit equally from participating in the intervention.

Group-Resonance Based Intervention

After the pre-intervention interviews were conducted, the athletes participated in an 11-week group resonance-based intervention, and the coach in a five-week intervention. Within

each session, the athletes articulated how they wanted to feel, how they prepared to feel that way, recognized the obstacles that prevented them from feeling the way they wanted, and worked towards reconnecting with their desired feelings. Although I was able to meet with the coach half as often as with the athletes due to her schedule, she also went through a similar process. It became clear within the first several weeks of the intervention that in general, no one was really feeling the way they wanted to feel, and much of the problem extended from weakening coach-athlete relationships.

A team in turmoil... The team division caused many athletes to feel disrespected and even mutinous. They wanted to know how the coach divided the teams because they were still not clear on how it was done.

*"I mean it bothers me that **there wasn't really a process to picking the teams.**"*

"Totally randomly."

*"It was just done for the people who talk, personally. If you think about it. **I voice my opinion and I know she doesn't like that.**"*

*"We looked at it after. It's like the people she's going to have problems with and the people she's not going to have problems with who don't say a word. I mean (one of the athletes) met with her and said, 'Can you just give me a reason as to why I was put on the team? Was my figure height not high enough, was my eggbeater crappy? What did I do to not deserve to be on the team?' And **she couldn't give her a straight answer.**"*

*"To me that's even more frustrating. I mean **what the hell did you look at then?** And yes you don't have to tell the person every negative thing...but I could say, 'I feel like you need to work on your cardio a bit this year and next year you'll definitely be on that team.' And there's a reason and I didn't do it in a bitchy way or a mean way at all." (A)*

They had also begun to question her other decisions, such as how much time they devoted to learning their routine and even her ability as a choreographer. Further obstacles became apparent like the difficulty of having only one coach and one assistant for two teams, especially if one of them had to be absent.

"I don't think we're spending enough time. We are competing soon and I'm getting really nervous that we don't know more than we know."

*"**She's handling twice as much** as she thought she would be handling in the first place. And **the assistant coach wasn't there** last Sunday either, so it was pretty frustrating." (A)*

"And how did you guys handle that?" (I)

"We ended up going off into our own corners and just ranting for a bit and being like, 'Fine we'll coach ourselves then.'"

"I mean I'm not trying to be rude but I'm being honest. She can't count to the music and it's frustrating when your coach can't count it and we're trying to count it. And it's different. Makes for difficult synchronization."

"I feel like we're not getting a lot of feedback from our coach as to how we're doing things."

*"Personally, to be blatantly honest I think **there's favouring as to which team people like to work with.** That's my personal opinion." (A)*

"Is it just the amount of time devoted to one group?" (I)

*"Not a time thing but I feel as though **when she works with us she gets so frustrated at us** and I don't know if it's our performance or what, but I feel a certain level of frustration towards our team." (A)*

Within all this turmoil, two athletes quit from the B team, leaving a struggling group of athletes in an even weaker state. They became further disheartened at the prospect of creating a routine with less swimmers than the purportedly stronger A team. The athletes were also upset with the lack of commitment from some of the swimmers, which made their task even more difficult.

*"**We're essentially weaker** because we're six. You can do less. You can't do the same patterns or get the same height." (A)*

The athletes' morale was clearly very low. I suggested they meet with the coach to discuss their worries, how they felt, and get answers to their main questions. The athletes, however, seemed conflicted in doing so. They felt the coach was asserting herself in a way that guaranteed their input would not be heard, but also contradicted themselves by admitting she was very open as well.

*"Uhhh...it's kind of **her way or the highway** so we don't even go there."*

"Yeah."

"Which is important for her to be strict and have structure but I mean..."

*"And it is **harder because she swam with us last year** so it's the whole image of oh you're a coach now and not a swimmer."*

"I don't think anyone has respect issues, like I can respect her as a coach and respect her as a friend. It's not anything like that...I just think that it's difficult." (A)

"But can you go to her and tell her that you feel frustrated?" (I)

*"She's super open. **You can go talk to her about anything.**" (A)*

"Did people go talk to her or did you wait for the next practice? I mean what has been done?" (I)

*"Well...I don't think people were frustrated beyond belief that we couldn't...I don't know. **No one was so frustrated that they wanted to go talk to her about it.**"*

"Just grumbling."

"It's just I can't wait to fix this."

"No one wants to talk about it." (A)

There was clearly some discrepancy between some of the athletes' perceptions. Overall, they were dissatisfied with how the teams were split, and they were not happy with how the coach dealt with them in the aftermath of that decision. However, they were not frustrated enough to go see her even though some of them felt she was open enough to talk about anything. The fact that the coach was a swimmer on the team the previous year and was a friend to some of the swimmers likely added to the confusion and feelings of betrayal.

Two sides to every story... When I met with the coach, she voiced similar grievances. She was struggling to deal with two teams and found the B team athletes' insubordination frustrating. On the other hand, she felt comfortable with how the A team was progressing.

*"I think **everything is a barrier.** I think they are **frustrated with me** on the second team. They are losing their teammates." (C)*

"And how about with the other team? Is everything going well with them?" (I)

*"Yeah. It's going....well it's completely different. I can leave them alone and they'll make up stuff. They'll look at themselves, they take turns coaching the team. And...**it's going fast, everything is getting done and I look at them everything looks good.** But the other ones...**there are things that bothered me and some girls who don't want to listen.**" (C)*

The coach related to me her version of the story that led to one athlete quitting, the other athletes getting upset, and the coach becoming even more frustrated. After she split the teams, one athlete spoke with her about how the decision was made. While the coach attempted to explain her choices in a constructive way, the athlete misunderstood her intentions and repeated these misconceptions to the other athletes.

*"She wanted to know why she wasn't on the first team. She wanted to know all the different points that I had evaluated her on. And so then it was hard, **it was in my head but I hadn't written it and we explained that to her.** The whole conversation was explaining and then her saying why again and again. Then I saw the email saying that she had quit. So that week we went from 8 to 7 to 6 and at practice I figured I should work with them first to feel the mood and feel okay because we have to change the patterns again. When I left them alone, (one athlete) told the rest what happened with (the athlete who quit) and **how I divided the team, which had been misrepeated and misrepeated again...so all the team was frustrated.**" (C)*

"So they had totally got the list wrong." (I)

*"**Everything was wrong.**" (C)*

"How did you deal with that then?" (I)

*"Well I didn't know because **they don't come and tell me!** But **I noticed that they looked so depressed** and I thought, 'What is going on with them?' and then I learned about that because she had told (the assistant coach)." (C)*

"Do you think it's something that needs to be revisited with that team or do you think that you can move beyond it?" (I)

*"I don't know, I think **everything can be revisited with that team.**" (C)*

When contrasting this version of the story (i.e., when the coach was unable to muster a 'straight answer') with that of the athletes, it was easier to see where some issues went wrong. The coach did not want the athlete who came to see her to feel poorly about the team split and tried to give her positives rather than reasons for not being on the A team. The athlete mistook this information as the coach not having no real division criteria. As a result, the coach unwittingly alienated the athlete and allowed for her to bring other athletes down with her.

For the next several weeks, the team continued to struggle with the events that unfolded. The remaining members on the B team became very conscious of their actions; no one wanted to disturb the precarious balance that was achieved. Even at my prompting, both the athletes and coach resisted having a larger group meeting, citing fear of arousing anger and the inability to be honest with one another as main reasons to avoid the confrontation. The group went to their first competition and both teams performed similarly; their execution was uninspired and weak, and they had an unpleasant time on the weekend in general. When they returned home, the assistant

coach quit, leaving the head coach overwhelmed by what she was left to accomplish alone. No one was feeling the way they wanted and had not been for the majority of the season.

Getting on the same page... At this point, I decided to take action. Although my intent was to allow the athletes and coach to decide when they were comfortable enough to have a group session together, it was clear that it would be purely destructive to continue on without more communication. Within a week of their competition, the entire group met to discuss their issues. The purpose of the group resonance based intervention was to incite dialogue and awareness of the team's desired feelings. I had hoped that in allowing the athletes and the coach to express how they wanted to feel, they could actively work towards creating an environment in which they could nurture those feelings in one another. For this first group session, the priority was clearly to get them to openly and honestly talk about how they were currently feeling before even attempting to discuss how they wanted to feel. To facilitate a potentially awkward and emotionally charged discussion, the athletes were asked to share their expectations of themselves and their teammates and then share whether or not these expectations had been met. I then asked the athletes to share their expectations of the coach and the coach to share her expectations of the athletes and whether or not these had been met. I hoped that in allowing the entire team to speak about what they wanted out of the season, themselves, and the coach (or athletes in the coach's case), they could finally get on the same page.

Many of the topics discussed demonstrated that the team was fairly unified in their dissatisfaction. Interestingly, they had many criticisms for themselves as a group, citing poor work ethic and insolent attitudes as reasons for their lack of positive felt experiences.

"Coming to practice ready to work, I think we need to work on because I think a lot of the time we come to practice not focused."

"...Everyone has lots of cool ideas and everyone can bring something different to the table so I think we just need to respect each other more."

*"We really **just need to listen to the coach** because...I think it's really important to be able to communicate with each other and with the coach."*

*"I think that the **listening part needs a little work**."*

*"The most important is a **positive attitude**...I find a lot of people kind of come in thinking, 'Oh this is going to be a shitty practice.' I think everyone kind of needs to get out of that mentality and actually think, 'Okay were going to make it better.'"* (A)

When it came to their expectations of the coach, the athletes were again unified. They wanted specific feedback and clearer organization of time. No one mentioned the division of the teams as a specific issue, but the repercussions were still being felt. The athletes wanted problems to be dealt with in a timelier manner.

*"I expect **preparedness and to address concerns with the team AS they arise, not just after**."*

*"I think sometimes maybe (the coach) could go deeper into, **not just choreographing but running the practices too and more in places where she can ask for help**."*

*"One more thing I would add to that is **feedback**....I think I would probably get a lot more out of swimming this year if I got **specific correction**. And I know a lot of other people feel that way too and maybe that might be one of the things to get us more in a positive attitude, when you know you're fixing your personal mistakes."* (A)

The coach also voiced some of her concerns. She expressed her displeasure with not being listened to and described how she felt not only disrespected but also afraid to give feedback at the prospect of facing more anger. She also described her frustration of not having an assistant anymore and how time away would help her cause.

*"It (**being respected**) **hasn't happened**. If I'm not working with someone, I feel like the rest are not doing anything. I had (**the assistant coach**) **to help me** though and I don't know what happened...but I got an email saying she didn't want to come anymore...Usually I count it (feedback) on my finger, a finger for each comment. But really **the reason I haven't given any is because I didn't want to get yelled at**."* (C)

"Oh we won't." (A)

*"You were in such a bad mood. **Everyone was so angry**."* (C)

*"People were angrier because you **weren't doing it**."* (A)

"I go home depressed because it's not working." (C)

"So what do you want to happen?" (I)

"I would like to take a month off." (C)

At the end of the session, I asked them how they felt now that they cleared the air of many of their issues. For the most part, the athletes felt relief. The coach, on the other hand, felt a little overwhelmed by the feedback she received. She felt the exercise was important but was not sure how to proceed. The athletes, meanwhile, were ready to move forward with the same positive energy they displayed in the pre-intervention interview.

"How do you feel right now?" (I)

"I feel better. I don't know how you all feel but..."

"I feel like I can turn things around now and be positive. The thing that bothers me most is that other people weren't here."

"I just feel bad because we do love you (coach)! I feel bad I let my own personal stuff come into this and I want to apologize to everyone for that and that I'm not motivated.

***But we can work on it."** (A)*

"I'm worried about how you (coach) feel." (I)

"I don't know. I feel okay about things right now." (C)

By the end of the session, it was agreed that the athletes would improve their attitude and listen to the coach for more feedback. In general, many were disappointed that the entire group was not there but felt that they could take it upon themselves to communicate what happened during the session. Several suggestions were made to improve the functioning of the team including meeting outside their arranged pool time to work on choreography, organizing themselves more efficiently during practice (e.g, splitting into pairs before discussing choreography in the larger group), and signing a contract to ensure everyone upheld their end of the bargain. The athletes seemed willing to take on more responsibility to alleviate the coach's stress of working with them alone and the coach seemed willing to make changes as well.

Doing the make-up work... Over the next few weeks, the athletes revisited how the group session went. There was a sense of relief about finally facing their coach and possibly strengthening their relationship with her.

"It was about time."

"And I think the feeling that our team has in this whole thing is that we're all on the same page. We all know what's going on now and it's not a secret. We can deal with it." (A)

Unfortunately, the athletes were not entirely mollified as they now had to acknowledge the repercussions of the unproductive first half of their season. Their routines were not completed yet, which was rare considering the time that had already passed. This was another undeniable cause of stress but the athletes admitted that they could take some of the blame.

"I mean we're totally at fault. We just did stuff behind (the coach's) back and said, 'This is what we're doing.' If I was a coach I would be pissed." (A)

Although many strategies were discussed in the session with their coach, the athletes had yet to put any of them into practice. Instead of actively working towards improving their experience and how they felt, no one was really doing anything.

"You talked about some of the strategies you wanted to put in place, such as an extra practice. Will you use them?" (I)

"It's the wrong moment...the end of the semester. I mean I'll try to be there but..."

"It's hard. I don't have the time. I'm on the other side of the city and I don't know how I'll get there."

"Even a half hour is enough."

"But we were talking about doing choreography a full session."

"And some people aren't good at choreographing out of the water."

"We won't do it." (A)

When asked if the coach was responding differently and acting on the feedback they gave her, the athletes professed they did not see a change. Furthermore, the athletes perceived this lack of change as a lack of leadership. They felt that other issues, such as poor attendance, were the direct result of the coach not being dominant enough.

"That's part of the challenge. She doesn't take a hard stance on anything."

"Every coach I've had has been really dominant but still leaving room to be creative. But she (the coach) can't pull it off, she's too quiet."

"I think it's now a point of change. We can either get a total turnaround for the positive or like just keep getting worse. We do have lots to do but..."

"Even here I'm like, 'Why is no one here right now?'"

"Yeah attendance is the worst."

"We just have no leadership." (A)

We were heading into the Christmas holidays, which meant that I would not see the team for at least a month. I wanted the athletes and coach to meet one last time before the break so that we could revisit what we discussed and put some of their plans into action. Unfortunately, no one could commit to further sessions before the holidays. The coach had been absent for several weeks due to a hectic and stressful schedule in her personal life. The athletes were heading into exams and wrapping up their course work for the semester. Although it was a tumultuous time for the team, I hoped they could work out some of their problems so that they could enjoy the time they had left. We talked about how they wanted the rest of the season to progress.

"Where do you want to go from here?" (I)

"I want it to be less stressful."

*"Like **start fresh after the break.**"*

"I want the routines to be done."

*"Right now **we're not making an effort.** If I don't see anything changing. I'm like, '**Why should I change?**'" (A)*

I managed to get in contact with the coach briefly before the break. She had started to keep a journal because she was frustrated with the way things were going. The journal allowed her to vent her feelings without coming to see me. I was concerned that we were leaving too much time between our sessions and that not enough work had been done by either the athletes or the coach to improve their relationship. Unfortunately I could not compel the team to do anything with which they were not comfortable or for which they did not have time.

Overall, the first half of the season was characterized by several significant events including the coaches splitting the teams, two athletes quitting, the assistant coach quitting, and having the first group intervention session with both the coach and athletes. This impacted both coach-athlete relationships as well as athlete-athlete relationships and the general course the season took. More specifically, the first few months could be typified by a major lack of effort to

get beyond the obstacles the team faced. Personal responses to events and decisions included feelings of anger and hurt, frustration, a lack of commitment and an unwillingness to move forward. Even when the entire team was forced to face issues during one of the group sessions, they did not follow through with any of their intended recuperative measures. Truly, the first half of the season could be characterized by inactivity as a result of fear and no one admitting fault for the many mistakes that were made.

"We need to get past this wall. We hit it and we can't get past it. All of a sudden everything stopped. We're not going anywhere." (A)

"What do you think made you hit that wall?" (I)

"I don't know everything just stopped."

"No one wanted to step up and say it. No one did it. We just talked amongst ourselves in groups."

"It's the stepping on toes thing. I don't want to get in her way." (A)

"What are you saying? You need an action plan but you don't want to step on anyone's toes?" (I)

"I'm afraid of her."

"She's the coach, I don't want to cross the line." (A)

Mutiny! Early into the new year and just over a month after my last session with the athletes, I was contacted by the assistant coach. My surprise over her contacting me was replaced by concern at what had developed during my absence. The assistant related that during the first practice back from the holidays, the coach arrived with a difficult workout for the team; she wanted to get them back in shape after their month off. The athletes, however, were confused as to why they were not working on their routines since they were still not completed. They had also changed some of the music without telling the coach. When they expressed their displeasure to the coach, claiming they would not complete the workout she gave them to do and explaining they had changed the music without her permission, she was understandably annoyed at their rebellion. She refused to cut the workout down and wanted to know why they had, so surreptitiously, changed the music. The athletes, in a final act of noncompliance, turned their

backs on her. When the angry coach left practice, no one followed her out of the building. At the thought of their irrevocably damaged relationship, the coach decided she was not coming back.

On the other hand, the assistant coach decided to rejoin the team to help the athletes at their request now that they had no coach. She was contacted by them and they had asked her for help. She was concerned about the workload and hoped that with my help, we could persuade the head coach to come back in at least some capacity. The coach accepted my invitation to attend a team meeting, and we arranged to have representative athletes from both the A and B team present, along with the assistant and myself. Because there were less people to worry about, I decided to let the session flow more naturally and rather acted as a mediator. The coach professed that she would not have considered returning on her own and she especially did not want to deal with the athletes as a group again. She was glad to have a mediator and another member of the coaching staff present.

Respect, trust, and honesty vs. blame and anger... I asked the coach to speak first and share her feelings about what had happened. Ultimately, she felt disrespected and was tired of wasting her time. Her relationship with the athletes was clearly not going anywhere.

"How do you feel about the respect issue?" (I)

"It's not happening. Somewhere I had written that I thought at first my mistake was to divide teams according to their strengths and....after that (one athlete) decided to quit. She asked for a personal meeting. We met with her and a discussion that should have been personal got public and repeated in the wrong way." (C)

"So you feel that what was said was misrepresented?" (I)

*"Misrepeated. Misunderstood from her and misrepeated... **You don't respect me, you waste the pool time, you waste my time, you don't give 100%. I don't want to pursue this.**" (C)*

"What does that mean?" (I)

*"**I don't think I'm meeting everyone's expectations. Everything is going wrong. You are expecting something else.**" (C)*

The coach was overwrought by what had happened with the team and her stress was amplified by her hectic personal day-to-day schedule. The athletes were willing to compromise

but when it appeared that the coach truly wanted no part of the team any longer, they became defensive. The coach was also self-protective; she wanted to know what role they wanted her to play as she felt she simply could not seem to please them.

"We're trying to change." (A)

"It's too late." (C)

"It's late but don't say it's too late" (A)

"Music has been changed without asking me, routines have been changed. What's my role? I'm just there to be there? If that's what you want then fine I won't prepare anything." (C)

"We don't want you to be there if you feel like you have to." (A)

"The problems have escalated. Nothing has changed. If I'm here or not it doesn't make a difference." (C)

"It's good to have a coach with us, we need that authority, or someone to watch it and say, 'This part needs work.' This is more personal but I feel like after the last meeting, we all tried to incorporate you more in the process but it wasn't reciprocated. I didn't feel like it was both ways." (A)

We attempted to come up with a compromise where the coach could rejoin the team in some capacity and everyone could feel better about the situation. Suggestions included having co-coaches, having the coach come back just to watch and give constructive feedback without organizing practice, and having her work solely with a handful of athletes who were also performing solos and duets.

"One way to go around it is if you were able to come back in the capacity of co-coaches and you could eliminate some preparation without the workout. What do you think about that?" (I)

"Whatever we do, it will never be an honest happy relationship because it's just like that." (C)

"Why can it never work out?" (I)

"That's the way it is. We have no trust." (C)

The coach was reluctant and did not believe their relationship could ever improve. The athletes proclaimed a lack of communication as the main issue, along with the coach demanding an extraneous workout and not listening to what they needed. The coach, meanwhile, also cited

poor communication as an issue, feeling that the athletes should have tried to speak to her about their anger.

*"This might sound bad but I don't think **bad attitudes come out of nowhere**. Obviously there's been head butting with communication and...I've talked with most people. I know how they feel." (A)*

*"That's my point. Every time someone has a problem you go and talk behind someone else and then it escalates. **If you have a problem with someone you go to that person and you tell that person.**" (C)*

"I think we tried to do that." (A)

*"**No one tried to talk to me or email me personally.** If someone really had a problem, it shouldn't have been today." (C)*

"It's not one specific thing. It's a bunch of things. The only major problem is the workout. We don't think that it's beneficial." (A)

At this point, the discussion started to stray from our original intent. For perhaps the first time all season, the athletes and coach were entirely honest with one another. Even during our first session with everyone present, most people had felt some trepidation about expressing their fear, anger, and other concerns. During this session, however, everyone seemed to be pursuing brutal truth, even at the expense of others' feelings. Finally, one of the athletes brought up an issue from which the team was still reeling: the division of the two teams. It was legitimately the first time the athletes broached the seemingly proscribed topic.

"Did you split the teams equally?" (A)

*"Equal strengths in both teams. **I tried to divide them so that people would be comfortable...**" (C)*

"A lot of people thought it was a punch."

"It was for me."

*"Just because in training camp, I didn't get to show my best ability. And I'm not saying the girls on my team are crap but now I think we see where people would fit better, which is impossible in September. **I mean to see (some athletes) on the better team was a punch in the stomach.**" (A)*

A decision is made... The coaches and athletes were starting to blame one another. As a mediator I had to step in to remind everyone of our purpose: making a decision about how to re-

integrate the head coach. Although the final decision was left up to the coach, the assistant offered encouragement, and the athletes appeared to be reluctant to yield to her whims.

"It would be so rewarding if we all worked together. We would appreciate anything you have to offer." (AC)

"We have been working on our routines just with (the assistant coach) and it's been fine. I know that the duets and solos haven't got much time, but I would rather not have a coach than have a coach who is not happy."

"It's not ideal but it can work. You put a lot of time into this but you need to do what's good for you I guess." (A)

"The main issue then is what are we doing about it? Is the option of you working with the solos and duets going to be okay for the team? It can't just be what's good for you though, it needs to be okay for the entire team as well." (I)

"I'm going to work with solos and one duet and I'm not leading things." (C)

The final decision was that the head coach would work with the solos and one duet. She would come to practice only when these athletes worked on their individual routines while the rest of the group worked on the team routine and she would never lead any of the practices. She would also never offer feedback on the larger routines and basically never have contact with any of the other athletes. The motion appeared to be acceptable for everyone involved; in general the team simply wanted to move on.

In the aftermath... In the waning weeks of the intervention, the athletes came to terms with the ramifications of not working with the head coach. While they were optimistic about how they would proceed without the head coach's presence, as a constant concern, there were still a few obstacles left with which they had to deal.

"How is it now between you (athletes) as a group?" (I)

"It's pretty split. It's pretty bad."

"Older swimmers and newer, yeah."

"On our team I think that those who could relate more to (the coach) were one group and then everyone else. Right from the beginning we were more willing to accept her and it."

"We don't hate each other. We have fun but for some things there's tension." (A)

We discussed how they were going to respond now that the coach was gone. The athletes were grateful to the assistant, who had stepped into a difficult role, but handled it well.

“(The assistant coach) has been amazing to whip us into gear. She sends us emails everyday and she’s motivating. She’ll help us a lot.”

“She’s dedicated herself to getting to practice.”

“Her personality fits more with us. She says GO. Do it now.”

“To mesh all the different clubs together you need a strong personality.” (A)

They finally finished choreographing their routines, which alleviated some of the athletes’ tension. Unfortunately, the teams now felt like they did not know their routines well enough and had a lot of work ahead of them in order to be ready for the next competition. In the face of these obstacles, they spoke of a togetherness that had been missing for the first three quarters of the season. The relationship between athletes seemed to be improving.

“Even when we’re on the bulkhead you can see that we’re a team. At (the first competition) we weren’t like that.”

“You feel the togetherness when something goes wrong. When it affects you, you know there’s a connection.” (A)

Another Bump in the Road... The team attended their second competition, seemingly encouraged and hopeful with the assistant coach acting as their leader. At the actual competition site, however, events did not transpire as everyone had hoped. The A team was in conflict the entire weekend and swam poorly. The B team, relieved from working with the head coach with whom they had clashed from the very beginning, seemed to rally around one another better than the A team. Although they did not finish strongly, they were ahead of the A team in the final standings. It thus appeared as though relationships were better between athletes on the B team and this could have potentially influenced their performance at the competition.

When the assistant coach confided that things did not go well at the competition and she, surprisingly enough, had a run in with some of the athletes at the competition site, I organized separate sessions for the A and B teams. In light of their superior results, some of the B team

members clearly felt on the one hand, vindicated for being placed on the 'lower' team, and on the other, good about how they had come together.

"I was happy that we did better than them."

"For me it felt good. We went in as a team. We weren't individuals anymore. And we have sharpness stuff to work on but it feels good."

"I'm proud of us for the way we rallied around each other." (A)

The athletes on the B team recognized that there were still elements of their routine on which they needed to work but on the whole, they felt that things had improved since the coach was gone. The A team, however, finally reached the point where they could feel no worse; they were beaten by the B team but there was also internal conflict. Fewer athletes showed up at this session and their lack of commitment was frustrating to the other athletes. They also alluded to the frustration caused by athletes not listening to the assistant at the competition site.

"I mean it's not going to get that much better."

"It shouldn't look like that, but I mean there's a lot of conflict."

"When we were warming up everyone was just doing whatever, not listening to (the assistant)." (A)

"Was that frustrating?" (I)

"Yeah."

"It made me not even care."

"And look at today. No one is even here." (A)

Similar to the first half of the season, the athletes continued to blame others for the mistakes that were made. They were clearly not enjoying the routine but those in attendance perceived to not be at fault. They continued to blame some issues on the head coach, such as her choice of music.

"I hate swimming this routine. I'm not going to lie. When you don't have music you want to swim to you just don't feel like it." (A)

Their final competition was looming and clearly no one was looking forward to finishing the season. The athletes appeared to be at a loss as to how they could improve their relationship and daily process of swimming but found that they could rally around improving their

performance and swimming a respectable routine. The assistant was also desperate to bring the athletes together. The athletes were unable to come up with any solutions for themselves and unfortunately this was the last session of the resonance-based intervention; I would only meet with them after their final competition to conduct a post-intervention interview to follow up on what happened over the course of the season.

A final run-through... I attended the last couple of practices and traveled to their final competition in order to immerse myself in their final few weeks. While some of the athletes were in conflict immediately after their second competition, they seemed to make a conscious effort to work together at practice for their final run-through of their routine. Although they did not feel the way they wanted and were rather dejected and tired, they were listening to one another and the assistant, and conducting practice the way they felt was most productive. The effort was obvious. What was unclear was whether this effort was based on feeling better and working for one another, whether the assistant was simply a better 'fit' as their coach, or if they simply did not want to embarrass themselves in their final swim.

At the final competition, both teams performed better than they had at the two previous meets. The B team finished in the lower half of the standings but managed to achieve their highest placing yet. The A team, meanwhile, finished in the top five, a result they had thought unreachable. The difference in the water and on deck for both teams was evident; their movements were more in unison than I had ever seen in practice and on deck, they appeared to be a unified team. In contrast to the vision the athletes had painted of their previous competitions, with athletes 'all over the place' and 'doing their own thing,' the entire group stayed together for the majority of the competition. The athletes had smiles on their faces and literally seemed relieved about everything having not only gone well but also being over.

Post-Intervention Interviews

The coach's final words... Following the intervention, I conducted follow-up interviews with the athletes and with the head coach. Although the coach was distant for the majority of the season, she agreed to meet with me for one final interview. Just before the athletes left for their final competition, the coach discussed her relief with me. Her final decision to quit was extremely challenging; she wanted to coach but felt so miserable with this team that she simply could not pursue the relationship with the team any further. Walking out on the athletes was hard but ultimately she felt that their relationship could not have improved to the point where they could collaborate.

"How did you feel about making your decision? What was it that finally allowed you to quit?" (I)

***"It was hard but then I had to think, 'Do I go back or not?' And I didn't want to go back and it's better for me not to work with them. I had said to (the assistant coach) before that I might quit, so it was in my head already."** (C)*

"Tell me about the process of you deciding that you didn't feel the way you wanted and that you needed to do something about it." (I)

***"It was the holidays. I took a break and then my first practice back was the one where I quit."** (C)*

The coach discussed the impact of the intervention on her relationship with the athletes. In general, she did not feel the group sessions with the entire team were very influential because the solutions they discussed were never implemented. She was more than happy to communicate her story but felt that it was not heard by the athletes.

"What did you think about the group sessions with the girls?" (I)

***"It seemed strange at first. There were so many and then when I faced them the second time, I'd never heard some of them say a single word to me or listen to me. I don't think those meetings changed much. The girls are just too strong in their opinions and don't listen. I was glad to tell them how I was feeling but again they don't listen. I just realized I needed to walk away."** (C)*

In the end, meeting with me alone made a greater impact on her during the season. Without an assistant or a support circle, I was an attentive ear for her to vent some of her

frustrations. Now, without the stress of working with the two teams and with some of the pressure from her personal life alleviated, she was satisfied and happy. Working with the duet and solos was more satisfying.

Finally, we discussed if she would pursue coaching in the future. It seemed significant that the coach was not put off from coaching entirely and looked forward to a time when she would coach again. She recognized that with this group of athletes, she had perhaps not been able to connect with them and develop a strong relationship as everyone had hoped. It was unclear if she would change any of her tactical approaches in the future, other than thinking very carefully about if and how to separate teams.

*"I would have liked to have stayed here and coached for a long time. Now **I would still like to coach** but not here. I won't go after it but if someone offers I will say yes."* (C)

The athletes face the music...Finally together. The post-intervention interview with the athletes was very different. The coach seemed to be able to cut her losses and walk away feeling as though she had done her best. The athletes, meanwhile, were still distressed by their season. Although they managed to have one positive experience (i.e., the final competition), many of the athletes were still feeling the effects of the tumultuous season; several of the girls doubted they would swim again. We talked about what went wrong and where they could have improved. Generally speaking, the team felt that the coach was their biggest issue; she did not communicate well and was not very personally compatible with the athletes.

*"The **coach needs to be a leader. She just isn't.**"* (A)

"Where do you think it went wrong?" (I)

*"Day one, **the split. Communication was terrible.**"* (A)

"For everyone is that the point? Splitting up the teams with no communication?" (I)

"I think that had an impact but I don't think it's just that."

*"If it were anyone else who would have done that it wouldn't have been the same. I think it had the most to do with **her personality and not meshing with the personality of everyone else.** The split of the teams was huge in pissing everyone off in the beginning*

but had it been anyone else coaching I think there would have been a different turnout. Even the same split would have been different with someone with a stronger personality.”
“She wasn’t motivating at all. Everyone was pissed and nothing was done about it.” (A)
“So communication and personality?” (I)
“Personality is the biggest.” (A)

With the perceived lack of leadership from the coach, the athletes felt they were left to fend for themselves. Their own relationships deteriorated as a result.

“How did the conflicts affect how you felt at practice?” (I)
*“They **made it awkward.**”*
*“Not so that I was uncomfortable with anyone but....like **I didn’t necessarily want to go hang out with them** but it’s just sometimes I’m like, ‘okay moving on.’” (A)*

They were afraid of perpetuating the problems by speaking out and taking charge. In the end, no one took responsibility and the relationships and situation simply got worse.

*“The problem was **we all wanted to tiptoe around everything.** We didn’t want to step on any toes.”*
*“It was just **all these things not being dealt with adequately.**”*
“I just wanted to swim. But we bottled it up and got so angry.” (A)

Because they were so reluctant to ‘rock the boat,’ they perceived the intervention to be critical in allowing them to share some of their feelings and learn that the other athletes felt the same.

“What did you get out of the team sessions?” (I)
“It made me realize that the girls have a similar feeling. We mostly just want to be confident in ourselves, our teammates, and have fun.”
“Everyone was thinking what I was thinking as well.”
*“And that it’s **important discuss issues before they get too heated. I never experienced anything like this before.**”*
“I don’t know what would have happened had we not been able to get together and talk about different issues.” (A)

The season was a constant struggle but the decision of the coach to quit had, in the end, a positive impact on the athletes’ experiences.

“...When (the coach) quit...it kept us from fighting with each other.”
*“We all decided to **bond together and really work as a team.**” (A)*

For the most part, the athletes were not able to feel the way they wanted while swimming and in their relationships with their coach and some of their teammates. As a result, their performances largely suffered, many of the athletes were considering retiring from the sport, and the team identified only one positive experience out of the entire season. If the first half of the season was characterized by inactivity, the second half could be characterized by constant change and decision making. The athletes' 'mutiny' had a domino-like effect, which ended in the difficult decision by the coach to quit but this left everyone more satisfied. In the end, the athletes found solace in a leader, the assistant coach, who was perceivably more compatible with them. The two teams also managed to have respectable performances at their final competition and by sticking together, salvage what was left of some of their relationships.

Discussion

Coach-athlete conflict is a frequently addressed topic in sport (Hatamleh, 1994) and yet there is an absence of intervention-based research showing coaches and athletes alike how to mediate and improve their interactions with one another. This story is a perfect example of how the relationship between a coach and her athletes can not only deteriorate but also have devastating effects on an entire season. While the intervention implemented in this study did not lead the coach and athletes to enrich their relationship, it did allow each team member to pay attention to how they felt and wanted to feel, reflect on what they wanted out of their team experiences, and ultimately make decisions that saved their season.

In general, research regarding coach-athlete relationships examined the effects of specific factors or variables, such as communication, leadership, and compatibility, on coach-athlete interactions without taking into consideration the social context (Iso-Ahola, 1995). Moreover, much of the research only involves one member of the dyad, that is, either the athlete or coach

(Wylleman, 2000). As a result, there is a predominant focus on coaching behaviours and the athletes' role in cultivating positive relationships with their coaches has been disregarded (Gardner, 1995; Wylleman, 2000). It is rare for researchers to have the opportunity to examine a relationship in its formative stages and follow the interacting members as their relationship evolves and changes over time. The results of this study indicate that truly, many variables and factors are integral to developing collusive and mutually supportive relationships between athletes and coaches. The complexity of the process in which relationships form and develop over time suggests that there are limitations to investigating discrete, separate variables. There is a need to research the process and context behind evolving relationships and to do so, one must examine how variables interact with the unique circumstances and personalities of those involved.

Various conceptual frameworks for studying coach-athlete relationships have been proposed (Jowett & Chaundy, 2004). For example, Wylleman developed a framework that emphasized the individual's own construction and understanding of the self and surrounding environment in the development of interpersonal relationships. Alternatively, Jowett and Meek (2000) suggested that both coaches and athletes' affective, cognitive, and behavioural interdependence must be considered. Resonance was used as the guiding conceptual framework in this study and while it had not been previously used with teams to specifically examine relationships, it allowed me to look at the process and context underlying the relationships in this team. All members (i.e., coaches and athletes) and perceived important issues and factors were considered in the multiple conversations we had over the season. In using the RPM to guide the client-centered intervention, I was accessing data that is often disregarded (Newburg et al., 2002). Throughout this intervention, the participants were encouraged to openly dialogue and

share how they felt, how they wanted to feel and how they did not want to feel. In doing so, the athletes and coach were able to express to one another what they needed to feel the way they wanted and recognize that several aspects of their relationship including communication, leadership, and respect were huge obstacles holding them back. According to Coppel (1995), it is critical that researchers in the counseling role help athletes and coaches alike to fully understand how their relationships impact other facets of their athletic experience such as performance and how they feel. I believe that this intervention truly allowed the athletes and coach to realize this.

The experiences of the athletes and coach who participated in this study cannot be compared to those of other athletes, coaches, and teams, as the intervention and resulting story can never be exactly recreated. This team faced an inordinate number of obstacles that were in direct opposition to how members wanted to feel and the ways they preferred to prepare to feel this way. For example, the team would have ideally preferred at least three to four practices a week, and in reality, they only had two. While we cannot generalize the results to other teams, this study does add to the growing literature on interpersonal relationships in sport by delving deeper into the actual process the team went through. I did not simply ask the team what variables were most important, I was there with them for four months as they experienced their season and saw first hand the interactive and dynamic nature of their interpersonal functioning. This leads me to suggest that using a constructivist, emergent design (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) combined with a narrative, story telling approach (Polkinghorne, 1995) can be instrumental in documenting such a process.

Different variables like communication, compatibility, and leadership were crucial at different times in the season when specific decisions (i.e., team division, coach quitting) were made. Research has shown that communication (Culver & Trudel, 2000), compatibility (Carron

& Chelladurai, 1978), and leadership (Chelladurai, 1984) largely influence relationships in sport. From a consultant/researcher's perspective, this also highlights the necessity for us to conduct our work in context-sensitive ways. Clearly, a standardized pre-determined approach to intervention-based research or the development of coach-athlete relationships has serious limitations if the unique social and environmental context of each team is not considered.

In hindsight, changing certain decisions that were made throughout the season could have potentially led to a different experience. For example, on my part, I believe I waited too long to involve the coach in a group session. My reasons for waiting were well-intended in that I did not want to force them to meet when they were telling me they were not ready. Unfortunately, emotionally charged situations are often uncomfortable to deal with and can require gentle prompting to actually face them (Ivey & Ivey, 2003). In the future, researchers should be aware of the potential discomfort caused by coach-athlete conflict during interventions and carefully reflect on the ethics of dealing with strong emotional responses (Poczwardowski et al., 2006; Vanden Auweele & Rzewnicki, 2000; Wylleman, 2000).

One of the most salient lessons from this study is that active listening and actively working towards creating a nurturing environment to develop healthy and effective relationships are crucial to the functioning of a team. These lessons are in line with scores of previous research on coach-athlete relationships and interpersonal relationships in general. For example, Culver and Trudel (2000) noted that while many coaches expect their athletes to initiate the communication process themselves, it is often difficult for athletes to do so. This was evidenced by these participants who avoided communicating with their coach. The coach also seemed surprised in the final session with the athletes that so many problems had not been brought up previously. However, had the athletes and coach really taken the time to listen to what the other

was saying in the first group session, an important skill in any relationship (Ivey & Ivey, 2003), and actively tried to implement identified strategies (Newburg et al., 2002), their problems might have been reduced or eliminated. For example, if the coach had tried to change some of her day-to-day behaviours at practice (i.e., feedback, change the workout), and the athletes had done the same (i.e., listen to coach, show up to practice) those issues would likely have not resurfaced months later.

Another important lesson we can derive from this study pertains to managing team conflict. Conflict is natural and integral to the relationship process (Sanford & Rowett, 2004); the ability to resolve conflict allows relationships to endure and evolve, while poor conflict resolution generally leads to a decrease in the quality of relationships (Bradbury, Cohan, & Karney, 1998; Gottman, 1994). For the swimmers and coach in this study, conflict was an almost everyday occurrence and unfortunately, they lacked the desire and ability to resolve it. By participating in team sessions with both the coach and athletes present, I had hoped that some of the conflict could be resolved. In this case, however, only more drastic measures, namely the coach quitting and the teams performing poorly at competitions, seemed to provoke the team to resolve their issues. When reflecting on what transpired during the sessions, I realized that perhaps the athletes and coach were not able to fully comprehend their roles in the resolution process and their lack of commitment to this process may have been a factor. According to Sessa (1996), expressing ourselves in team settings is often difficult when complex issues are being discussed; as we attempt to take perspectives and formulate arguments, it is often difficult to fully understand others and ourselves. While I believe this was fairly evident in that the athletes and coach were quite unforgiving of one another's mistakes and perspectives in general, something else was also happening. Neither the athletes nor the coach ever really took

responsibility or ownership for what was happening to them, which is a crucial step in the resonance process (Arcand et al., in press; Newburg, 2006). No one admitted they made a mistake, no one acknowledged that they might be able to play a role in turning things around. Truthfully, no one did much of anything except go through the motions.

The concept of ownership is integral to resonance; it is important in the sense that participants feel an increased sense of ownership in their lives as a result of developing and applying resonance (Arcand et al., in press; Faubert et al., 2005), but it is also critical to initiating and maintaining the process itself (Arcand et al., in press). Taking ownership for feeling the way we want allows us to actively and mindfully seek this (Newburg, 2006) but we have to be willing to work because it often does not happen without a conscious effort, particularly in the face of obstacles. Had the coach and athletes taken ownership for the process and experiences they lived, they might have resolved their issues before disconnecting permanently.

It is also important to discuss the roles and skills that the athletes and coach had in the resolution of their conflicts. There are many factors that potentially influenced the way this team interacted, and ultimately brought about the outcome of the coach quitting. Not only did the athletes and coach avoid confrontation, there appeared to be respect and leadership issues, including a struggle to accept a 'peer' as an authority figure. This coach was young and inexperienced, and the power differential was clearly not based on the notion of expertise, but rather by pure position (Galipeau & Trudel, 2006). The athletes had difficulty respecting their former teammate as a coach, and this likely had an effect on how they interacted. It has further been suggested that learning from experience plays a significant role in coaching development (Culver and Trudel, 2006). With more time and training, this coach may have been more prepared and skilled to deal with this challenging group of athletes.

Finally, the use of narratives needs to be addressed. Story telling has been used to describe relationships in other domains (see Buehlma, Gottman, & Katz, 1992 for example). The narrative format allows for new understandings of interaction patterns between members of a relationship (Fiese & Grotevant, 2001) and ultimately places the relationship into context. Although many researchers have campaigned for the inclusion of social context in the study of coach-athlete relationships, too few have done this. By delivering a narrative of this team's experience over a season, I have not only accounted for the social environment, this factor was of the utmost importance. Furthermore, my own contributions to the team's process are evident throughout this narrative; my voice, while not heard as often or as strongly as that of the coach or athletes, is critical in this story. My mere presence changed the course of the season and it is necessary to acknowledge this. This can also be seen as a limitation, however. Although I have attempted to narrate this story with the utmost credibility, believability, and fidelity (Polkinghorne, 1995; Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995), my biases must be recognized. Another consultant/researcher may certainly have approached issues differently than I and this would likely have led to a different outcome.

I believe this study adds to the literature on coach-athlete relationships. Not only was the methodology unique and thus complementary to the movement in our field towards diversification, the critical process and social context were evident throughout this paper. Furthermore, I employed a resonance based intervention to examine feel and the interpersonal functioning of coaches and athletes. In the future, researchers should consider the use of narratives as an effective means to analyze and communicate results and also build on this initial group intervention-based work. We must take the necessary steps to build on our knowledge of coach-athlete and athlete-athlete relationships in sport. I only hope that this story has shed light

on the process this team experienced, and also given some food for thought as to how relationships can change and evolve in the face of many complex and dynamic issues.

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Figure 1. The Resonance Performance Model (Newburg et al., 2002)

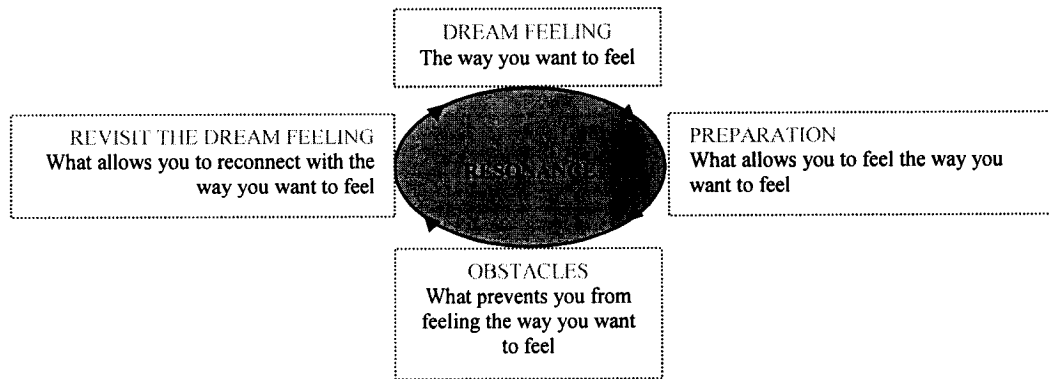
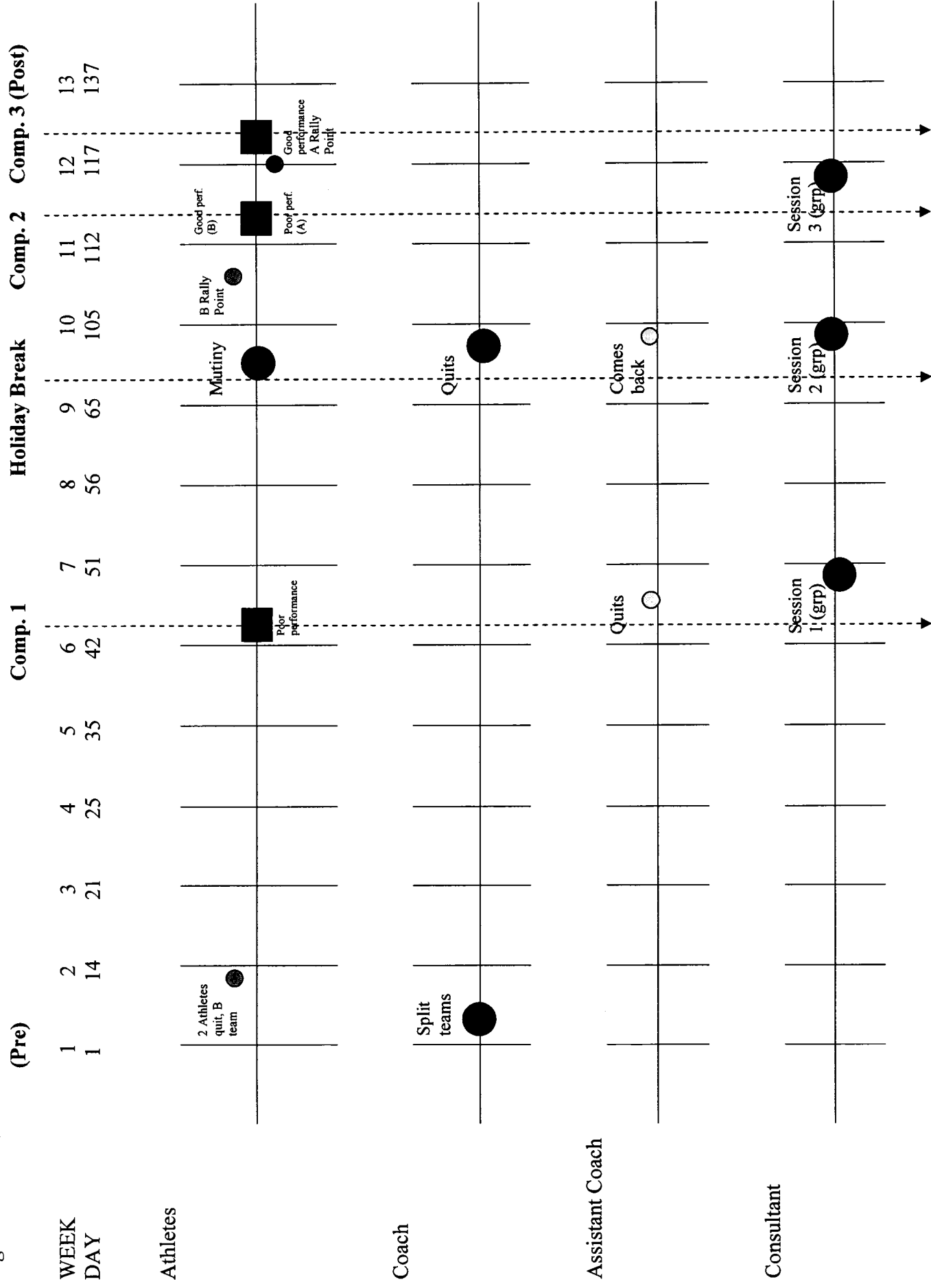


Figure 2. Intervention Timeline (Pre)



CHAPTER V

General Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to observe and explore one team's experience with a group resonance-based intervention, along with the interpersonal relationships within the team during this time. Previous resonance-based intervention research demonstrated that participants see improvements in many facets of their lives, including personal relationships (Arcand et al., 2006; Doell et al., 2006; Durand-Bush et al., 2004; Faubert et al., 2005). This was the first study, however, to look specifically at the interpersonal context and also to employ a group resonance-based approach. As such, there are many lessons and recommendations to be made for future research.

Throughout the process of this intervention, I was very conscious of the role I played as the consultant/researcher. Because this team was in a constant state of conflict and turmoil, I was often used as a mediator and/or 'counselor' to negotiate many delicate team issues. Instead of being seen as an outsider purely conducting my research, I became part of their team. When it came time to share the results of this study, I felt it was critical to include my voice in the story because my presence altered the course of their season. The use of a narrative approach was perfect to meet my desired transparency (Polkinghorne, 1995). In adopting a constructivist research practice and giving a narrative account, I accepted that there are no fixed rules or truths when giving meaning to behaviour (Emihovich, 1995; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Although I attempted to provide the utmost fidelity (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995) in telling the story, it is ultimately told from my point of view. My biases and experiences are now, here, acknowledged as both a weakness and strength as they shaped and influenced my reconstruction of what this team and I ultimately constructed together.

It became clear to me throughout this process that resonance is truly emerging as a consulting/counseling approach. Educating our participants to pay attention to how they feel and empowering them to ‘do the work,’ provides them with the opportunity to alter their decision making and coping – if and when they are ready (Durand-Bush et al., 2005; Newburg, 2006; Newburg et al., 2002). In this case, neither the athletes nor the coach were willing to make the effort to do the work until the very end of the intervention, but when they did, the result was truly powerful. As a result of using ‘feel’ to navigate her decisions, the head coach quit, forcing the athletes into action as well. However, it is not clear if the changes made by the coach and athletes, based on pursuing desired feelings and creating an environment where they are possibly experienced, will be sustainable. In the future, it seems necessary for other facilitators of a group resonance intervention to work with their teams over a longer period of time to see if lessons are truly implemented. Furthermore, facilitators will need to be aware of their own discomfort and that of their participants as they challenge their perceptions, beliefs, and fears. What I take away, as a young consultant/researcher, is the ability to trust my instincts; our role as facilitators or ‘helpers’ is inherently supportive and we cannot be afraid to give our participants a gentle push when they become stagnant in their learning and unable to face their fears on their own (Ivey & Ivey, 2003).

The results of this study also suggest that in a team setting, the facilitator of the resonance based intervention might have a larger role than in an one-on-one intervention. With so many more participants’ voices to be heard, more relationships to manage, and the added layer of learning in a public and shared context, I had a more active role in the team’s process. While previous facilitators of the resonance process have agreed that the participants are their own experts on how they want to feel (Arcand et al., 2006; Newburg et al., 2002), the outcome of this

intervention has allowed for new questions to be raised about how a client-centered intervention is carried out in a group context. The athletes and coach were empowered to be their own experts yet they were not necessarily experts about how to work as a team. Many of the skills required to be a productive and satisfied team, such as communication (Culver & Trudel, 2000) and leadership (Chelladurai, 1984) may not have been present for this team in particular. In the future, as part of a team's preparation to experience desired feelings, facilitators may wish to consider other skills that may be needed in a group context and work towards helping the participants to achieve these skills. For example, if the participants express that learning how to better communicate with their coach will help them feel the way they want to feel, facilitators may want to either conduct a workshop so they can learn this skill or bring in an expert who can help them do so.

The major lessons this team learned revolved around their obstacles. Truly, obstacles are inevitable in our lives. I hope that you, the reader, were able to feel through this story just how difficult it can be to pursue not only sport but also life in general when numerous and significant obstacles threaten our experiences. As I have mentioned numerous times, when we embrace our obstacles as part of the process, it becomes easier to respond to them efficiently (Newburg, 2006; Newburg et al., 2002). The challenge, then, is to become aware of how the obstacles are making us feel, reflect on how we want to feel and respond to the obstacles, and regulate our actions and responses to ensure we experience our desired 'feel' as best as possible in the process. It is a challenge because this process requires a great deal of individual work and it appears that in a group setting, the more members on board willing to do that work, the easier this process can be.

The major obstacle for this team was clearly the relationship between the coach and athletes. Coach-athlete conflict is well documented in the sport psychology literature but few

researchers have been afforded the experience of working with a team as they struggled over an entire season with this issue. Due to inherent differences in the roles of athletes and coaches, including power and the notion competing versus teaching, it is often difficult for them to share the same outlook and responsibilities in achieving performance goals (Galipeau & Trudel, 2006); conflict, then, is natural. This team's story has truly revealed the complex, dynamic nature of coach-athlete relationships, and as such it is no longer adequate to explain this relationship in terms of mere variables such as communication, leadership or compatibility. Interpersonal relationships are inherently social in nature and as such, the social context must be critically examined in our studies of this construct (Poczwadowski et al., 2006). This study will add to the growing literature on coach-athlete relationships and conflict because it is multidimensional. All points of view (i.e., athletes, coach, assistant, and my own) were accounted for, the social context and dialogue was pursued, and even crucial, and the theoretical and methodological frameworks were unique.

According to Hatfield, Cacioppo, and Rapson (1993), how a group member feels is inextricably tied to the team and is thus influenced by it. I can see no better example of this than the experiences we lived with this team. Throughout the intervention, the athletes spoke of a 'team feeling' that generally escaped them for the majority of the season. The athletes described this 'team feeling' as feeling unified and knowing that they were all experiencing the swim in the same way, which was generally successful. When one athlete felt good about the swim but realized the other team members were disappointed, her response became more similar to that of her team mates. Because team 'feel' has emerged as not only possible but important to being a member of a team, it will be important for future researchers to study the group resonance

process and attempt to build on team feel so that it is not fleeting but rather regularly experienced.

Although a team dream feeling was elucidated by the participants, there is one critical aspect of this construction that must be acknowledged: the subjective experience of feel (Damazio, 1994). My participants were in agreement, for example, that everyone wanted to feel that they were having fun. It is clear, though, that fun is different for each person; for some this involved external success and recognition while for others, fun was experienced when not worrying about being competitive. As such, I have concluded that while the language we use to describe how we want to feel may be similar or even the same as other team members, the actual lived experiences of this said feel are unavoidably different for each person. Future facilitators of the group resonance process will need to be aware of this when their participants are negotiating what the team dream feeling encompasses. Terminology aside, what truly matters is that members can identify and articulate how they feel and want to feel and work to help each other feel the way they want.

Although this team's experience was hardly ideal, we can learn a great deal from it. Previous studies have shown that ownership and responsibility are significant in the resonance process (Arcand et al., 2006; Doell et al., 2006; Durand-Bush et al., 2004; Faubert et al., 2005). This study has also shown that ownership is critical, only in this case, the lack of ownership and responsibility taken by the participants should guide our learning. To feel the way we want individually, we must own it and take responsibility for it to happen. In a group context, it appears that we must not only take ownership for our personal desired feel but work with our team members to create an environment where we can all feel the way we want as often as

possible. Personal responsibility, then, is not enough. For the entire team to feel the way we want, we must claim social responsibility as well.

Once again, my personal biases and potential oversights must be acknowledged as a limitation to this study. I cannot help but wonder what might have happened had I more strongly encouraged the athletes and coach to meet together earlier on in the season. Furthermore, I worked with two teams within one team, which may have impacted the sharing my participants were willing to do and also the RPM that was communicated. There was clearly a new dynamic introduced when the two teams, who were in truth competing against one another, were asked to work together as one to share how they wanted to feel and what would help them do so. For example, when I conducted sessions with the A and B team separately near the end of the intervention, there was an obvious undercurrent of rivalry. At the end of the day, each team wanted to be the best and may have struggled with this when working within the larger group.

I hope that in telling this story, I have aptly shared with you my participants' experiences and learning, and also my own. Resonance has emerged as a construct that encompasses unique and multifaceted aspects of our lives. In the future, researchers must continue to use resonance in different group contexts to examine its full potential in helping people feel the way they want in their social environment.

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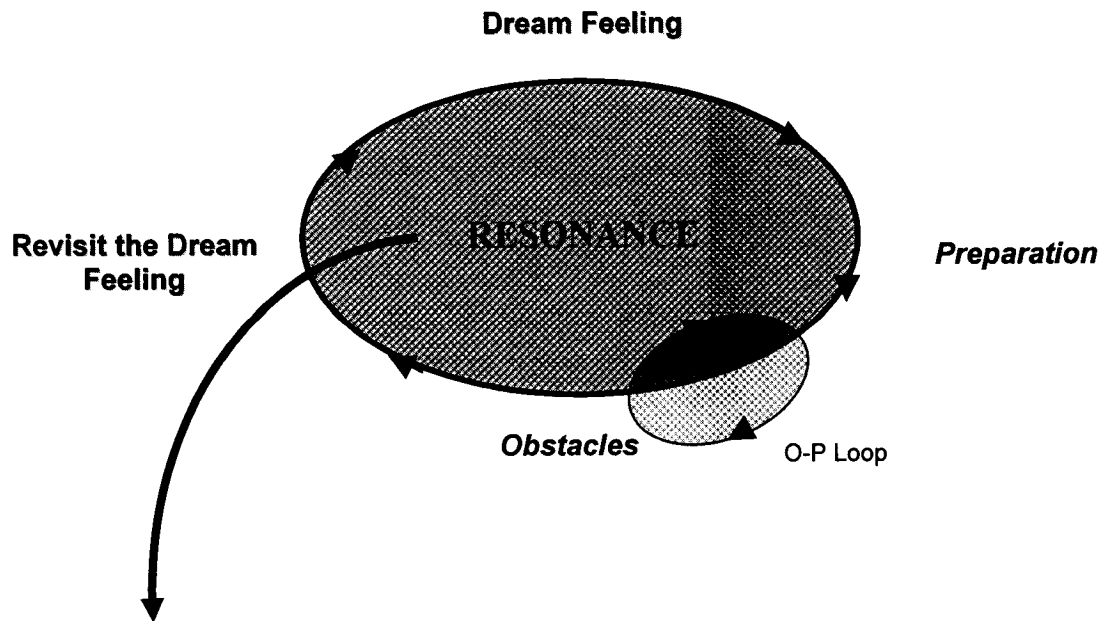
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Appendix A

The Resonance Performance Model (RPM; Newburg et al., 2002)

A process that allows people to feel the way they want to feel, prepare to experience desired feelings, recognize obstacles that prevent them from feeling the way they want to feel, and reconnect with desired feelings when they are not experiencing them. Engaging in the process of resonance typically allows people to fully engage in their endeavors, and experience enjoyment, satisfaction, and an overall sense of well-being in their daily life.

Appendix B

PRE-INTERVENTION INTERVIEW GUIDE

- How would you describe your relationship with your coach/athletes?
- How would you describe your/the coach's leadership style? (May need to give examples including visionary, coaching, facilitative, democratic, pacesetting, and commanding; Goleman, 2002)
- Do you feel compatible with your coach/athletes? Why or why not? How do you define compatibility (task vs. personal)?
- Describe the communication process in the team. How and why is this process effective/ineffective? Would you benefit from further communication with your coach/athletes?
- Do you feel cohesive (task vs. social) as a team and with your coach/athletes?
- How satisfied are you overall with your experience in this team? How much does this have to do with your coach/other athletes?
- What are the most critical variables that affect your relationship with the coach/athletes?
- Generally speaking, is your relationship with the coach/athletes positive or negative?

Appendix C

INTERVIEW GUIDE BASED ON RPM (NEWBURG ET AL., 2002)

FOR BOTH ATHLETES AND COACHES

*A) Session One (for athletes and coach(es) separately)**General opening questions*

- Tell me about your team and your sport/coaching.
- Why do you engage in your sport/coaching?
- Does how you feel affect how you perform? If so, how?
- Do you know how you want to feel as an individual, as a team on a daily basis?
- How many times have people asked you “How can I help you feel the way you want to feel?”
- Whose responsibility do you feel it is to make this happen (that is, feel the way you want)?

Main questions and probes

Dream feeling

- How do you like to feel when you engage in your sport/coaching? Describe this feeling to the best of your ability. If it helps, think of one of your performances in games or practices/behind the bench or working with players where you felt the way you wanted to feel. As you relive it in your mind, describe it to me.
- Is this feeling the same for all of you? What are the similarities/differences? Can you define collectively how you want to feel when you are competing/practicing/spending time together? Explain.
- Can you summarize this feeling in a few words or sentences?
- Think of a picture or image (i.e., of yourselves or something else) that represents how you want to feel as a team. Describe this mental picture or image or find one in the next week and we will revisit it.

Preparation

- What allows you to feel this way (i.e., personal thoughts/behaviors, environmental factors, strategies, goals, etc.)? What do you do individually and as a team to feel this way?
- Tell me more about those situations in your sport/coaching where you experience this team feeling (i.e., games, practice, when spending time together).
- How often do you experience this feeling?
- How often would you like to experience this feeling?
- What do you need to do to experience this feeling more often? (Individually and collectively)

Obstacles

- What prevents you from experiencing your desired team feeling on a daily basis?
- How often does this happen?
- Tell me about some of the obstacles that you have faced in the past, both individually and as a group.
- How do these obstacles affect (a) your preparation, (b) performance, and (c) well-being.
- Can you tell me about a negative experience you may have had together/when coaching?
 - What happened?
 - How did you feel?
 - What did you do to overcome it?
- Do negative feelings carry over in other aspects of your sport and life (i.e. your relationships with your coach/athletes)? If so, how?
 - What can you do to make things better in these kinds of situations?
 - What can you learn from experiencing these obstacles?

Revisiting the dream feeling

- When you face an obstacle, what is your first reaction to it as a team? Individually? What do you do after? Give me an example.
- Do you do anything to reconnect with the feeling you previously described? Explain.
- Did an obstacle ever get so big that you quit your team, dropped out of your sport/stopped coaching or at least considered it? Describe why and what you did or did not do.

Effect on coach-athlete relationship

- Does this individual/collective feeling that you seek in your sport affect your relationship with your coach/athletes?
- Tell me how else this feeling affects you as a team and in your relationships with your coach/athletes (well-being, enjoyment, satisfaction, cohesion, compatibility, leadership, communication).

Summary

- What is your feeling now that we are approaching the end of the interview/group session? Have you learned anything so far?
- Is there anything you would like to add?

B) Sessions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12 (athletes and coach(es) separately)

- Tell me about the last week. Have you been applying resonance as a team? As an individual? For example, have you been experiencing your dream feeling, preparing to do this, recognizing obstacles, and revisiting your dream feeling after an obstacle? Give me an example.
- What have you learned in the last week?
- Describe your most resonating experience and tell me why it was a high?
- Describe your least resonating experience and tell me why it was a low?

- Do you see this as an external or internal obstacle? Explain.
- Do you feel you had control over the situation?
- Did you do anything to reconnect with your dream feeling?
- Did you struggle with anything specific since we last talked?
- Tell me about the journaling process.
- Tell me about the status of your relationships among the team/with coach(es).

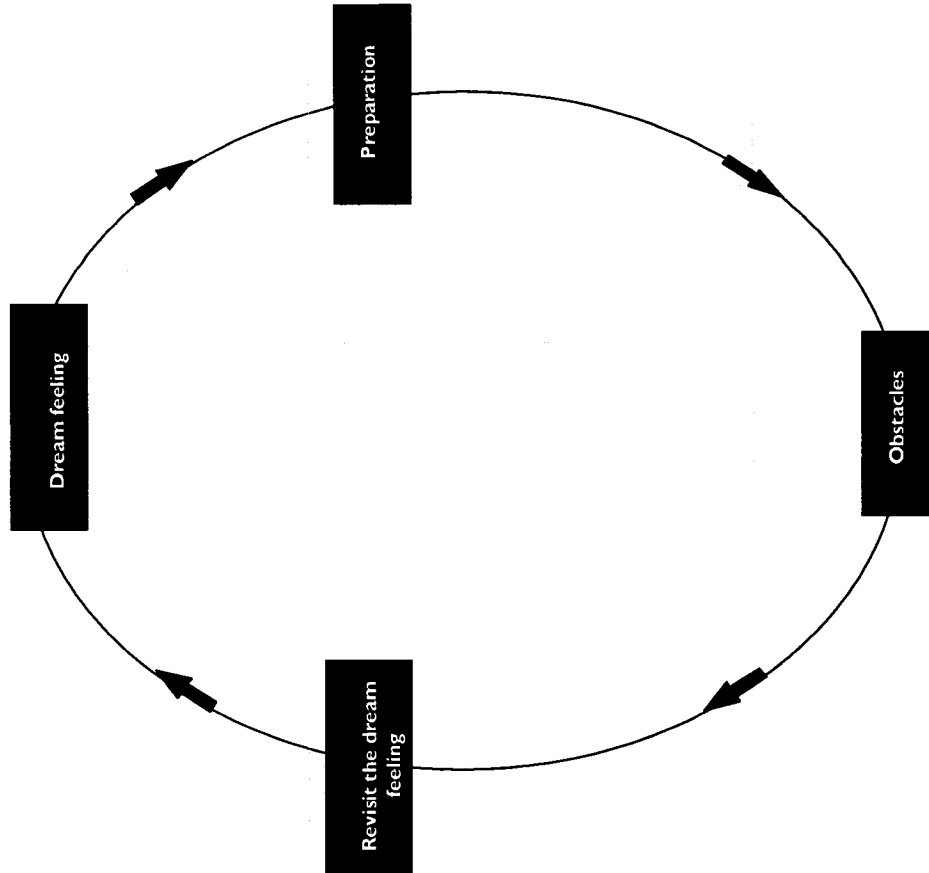
C) Sessions 7, 10 (athletes and coach(es) together)

- This is an opportunity to share your experiences with each other. What have you learned so far? Share your respective RPMs with each other (i.e., how you want to feel, if you have been able to help each other feel the way you want).
- What have you discovered about each other? Can you develop and apply resonance as a team? How?
- How do you feel having shared your experiences with each other?
- What do you feel about your relationships?

D) Post-Intervention Interview

- Tell me about your experience since the beginning of the study. Has focusing on how you want to feel been affecting the way you perform together/your coaching? Explain.
- Tell me about resonance in your sport (i.e., collective vs. individual RPM)
- Tell me about the journaling process. Have you continued it on your own?
- What are your overall impressions of the last 16 weeks? What are the biggest lessons you've learned?
- Tell me about your relationship with your coach/athletes. Has it changed over the course of the study? Were there any benefits in communicating your RPMs to each other? Have you been able to maintain these collective and individual feelings?
- (If I don't get the answers I'm looking for with these probes, may resort back to pre-intervention interview guide to get answers specifically related to the coach-athlete, athlete-athlete relationships.)
- Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix D

*RPM Journal Form***My Personal Resonance
Performance Model****Definitions****Resonance**

Occurs when there is a connection or harmony between you and your environment; it is a process that allows you to fully engage in your activities and experience enjoyment, satisfaction, and an overall sense of well-being.

Dream feeling

Your chosen feeling when you engage in a particular activity.

Preparation

Activities in which you engage to experience your dream feeling.

Obstacles

Obstacles or setbacks that prevent you from experiencing your dream feeling.

Revisit the dream feeling

Strategies or activities that allow you to reconnect with your dream feeling.

Subjective well-being

What you think or feel about your own life.

For more info, contact

Natalie Durand-Bush, Ph.D.

School of Human Kinetics

University of Ottawa

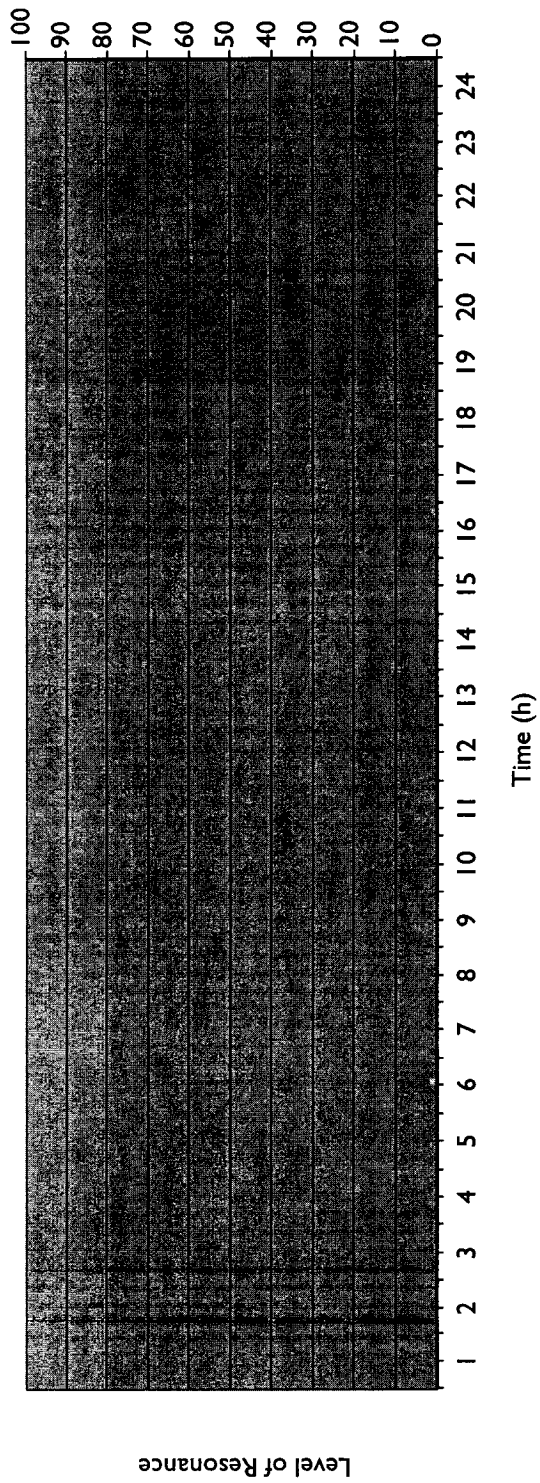
125 University St., Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5

Telephone: (613) 562-5800 ext. 4281

E-mail: ndbush@uottawa.ca

My Daily Resonance Profile

Date: _____



Reflections / Lessons Learned

[illegible]

Appendix E

*Letter of Information and Consent Form***LETTER OF INFORMATION**

***Recruitment of athletes for a 12-week study aimed at understanding resonance
and interpersonal relationships within a team***

Dear athlete,

As part of my M.A. thesis, I will be conducting a study under the supervision of Dr. Natalie Durand-Bush, a professor at the University of Ottawa who also works as a sport psychology consultant. The purpose of my study is to examine if and how a team of competing adult athletes experiences resonance in sport as a collective group and how this process facilitates the interpersonal relationships within the team. In this research, “resonance” occurs when there is a connection between you and your environment; it is a process that allows you to fully engage in your activities and experience enjoyment, satisfaction, and an overall sense of well-being.

If you are interested, you, as part of a team, will be asked to participate for a total period of 12 weeks. Your involvement will consist of:

- Attending 12 interviews conducted every week throughout the 12-week intervention period:
 - a. One initial team interview (approximately 1-2 hours)
 - b. Ten follow-up team interviews (approximately 1 hour)
 - c. One final team interview (approximately 1 hour)
- Completing a journal on a daily basis for a period of 12 weeks, which should take between 5-10 minutes for each daily entry. You will be asked to submit your journal entries at the end of each week. I will pick them up at a pre-arranged time and location convenient to you.
- Reading your interview transcripts to verify the information you provided and changing any information that you do not want included in the final report.

The interviews will be audio taped and scheduled at a time convenient to you, your team, and myself. The information you will share throughout the study will remain strictly confidential. Audiotapes and transcripts of the interviews will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the resonance laboratory, and only the research team will have access to the codes and data. While anonymity in the study will be assured by assigning a number to your file so that your name will not appear on or identify any transcript, complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed among the members of your team as you will be engaged in group interviews. If you choose to participate, the information that you share may be used for the purposes of publication in scientific journals, however, anonymity is guaranteed. You will be able to receive, by providing a mailing address below, a copy of the interview transcripts and a summary of the findings of this research, which will be available by June 2005. As a participant, you must be able to read and speak English as each interview will be conducted in English only.

Benefits of this study: Recently, several athletes benefited from participating in a study like this one because it provided an excellent opportunity for them to become aware of what they need to feel good on a daily basis and to perform at their optimal level. All of them reported positive effects in their sport and general life (i.e., increased well-being, motivation, and perceptions of athletic performance). Furthermore, the intervention involves multiple interviews that very much resemble sport psychology consultation. Participating in this study could be a valuable and rewarding learning experience for you!

Potential risks involved: The risks involved are very minimal. You are asked to participate in this study for a period of 12 weeks, however, you are free to withdraw at any time without any repercussion. Should you feel at any point in time during or at the completion of the intervention that additional support would be an asset, arrangements can be made for an appropriate referral. Please do not hesitate to make any concerns known to the researchers throughout the study.

CONSENT

By agreeing to participate in this study, I, _____, understand that my involvement will consist of sharing personal information about my athletic experience and that the research will not pose any serious risk. The purpose of this study is not to evaluate my abilities but to gain information on how a team of sport participants experiences resonance. I also understand that a long-term goal of this research is to use the information from many individuals participating in sport and physical activity to develop and validate an educational program that sport practitioners could use while working with athletes from different levels and sports. I am also aware that the results of this study will be presented at conferences and/or published in sport and physical activity journals but that my name will not be mentioned at any time.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, including before or during the interviews and journaling period. I can also refuse to participate in certain aspects of the study, decide to withdraw shared information from the interviews and journals, and refuse to answer verbal or written questions without any consequences or prejudice.

Any information requests or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project may be addressed to the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 159, Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5, tel.: 613-562-5841, e-mail: ethics@uottawa.ca. There are two copies of the consent form: one for the athlete and one for the researcher.

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Athlete's signature: _____ Date: _____

Should you have any questions regarding this research project, please contact

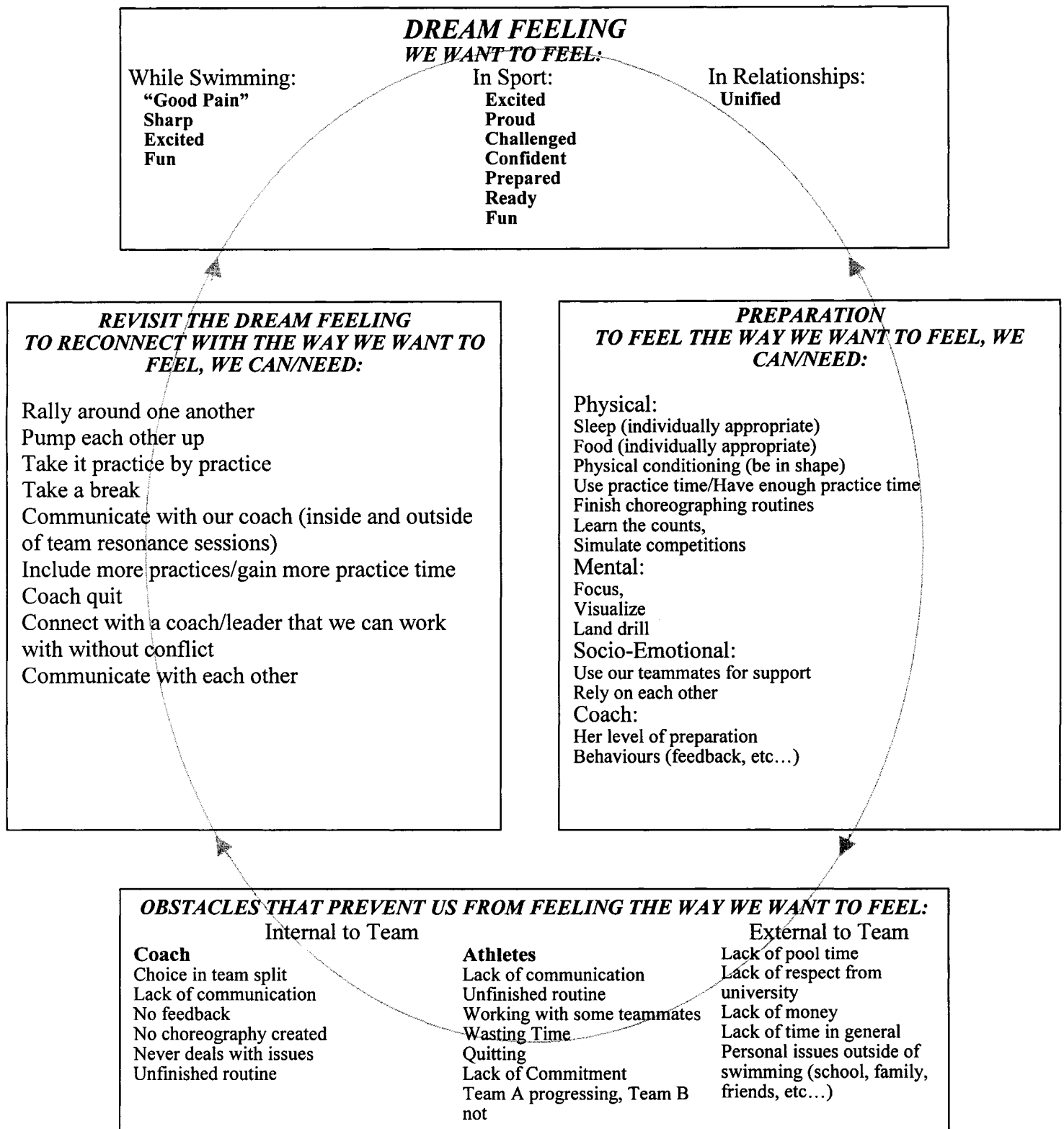
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Please mail a summary of the results to:

Appendix F

Athletes' Group RPM

Appendix G

Coach's RPM

