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Building Relationships in Sport Psychology

Consulting: Email and Other Factors

By Kelly Livesley

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Master of Science

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BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS IN SPORT PSYCHOLOGY CONSULTING:
EMAIL AND OTHER FACTORS

BY

Kelly Livesley

A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree
of
Master of Science

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Abstract

This study explored how the use of email influenced communication between the high-school athlete and their sport psychology consultant (SPC). An interpretive case study was conducted as a means to examine whether email could possibly enhance service delivery by strengthening the athlete-SPC relationship. The researcher took on an active role as a SPC with a high school varsity male volleyball team consisting of eleven players. Qualitative data was collected via focus groups, document analysis of emails, individual questionnaires, and a personal research journal. Findings from the three month study are discussed with respect to how email influenced the initiation, maintenance, and reparation of relationships with the players, the practicalities of using email as a means of communication, and the possible factors influencing the athletes' willingness to be open. The process of how the relationship developed between the SPC and athletes is also discussed. Furthermore, the study provided support for both the inclusion of applied experience and the use of reflective strategies to improve the education and the training of sport psychology graduate students. New questions are also identified that will hopefully promote further research in the area of the athlete-SPC relationship and the integration of email into sport psychology service delivery.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Table of Contents	ii
Chapter I: Introduction and Initial Literature Review	1
Introduction	1
Statement of Purpose	2
Rationale for Research	2
Concerned Engagement	4
Experience #1: Teaching a Tele-course	4
Experience #2: Gender and Communication Styles	6
Experience #3: Increasing Consulting Contact Time	9
Summary of the Research	10
Rationale for Qualitative Inquiry	11
Rationale for Interpretive Inquiry	12
Philosophical Background	12
Goals of Interpretive Inquiry	12
Differentiating Interpretation from other forms of Qualitative Inquiry	13
Case Study Research	14
Method	15
Intervention	15
Selection of Site and Participants	15
Obligation to Student Athletes: Ethical Issues Specifically	

Related to Online Consulting	17
Access	17
Confidentiality	18
Establishing the Online Consulting Relationship	18
Appropriateness of Online Consulting	18
Continuing Coverage	18
Addiction	19
Boundaries of Competence	19
Data Collection	19
Initial Focus Group	20
Document Analysis of Emails Sent During the Season	20
Individual Email Introductions	20
General Email Correspondence	21
End of Season Questionnaires: Athletes and Coaches	22
End of Season Focus Group	22
Personal Research Journal	23
Standards of Rigor	23
Data Analysis	24
Reporting of Results	27
Chapter II: Email and Implications for Team Communication	29
Realist Tales	29
Modifying Realist Tales	30
Analysis	31

Evaluating Reinvigorated Realist Ethnography	32
The Influence of Email	33
Email Communication: Concerns and Benefits	34
Reservations about Email	34
Communication Preferences: Online or In-person?	35
Time (or lack thereof)	36
Tell Me What I Need to Know	37
No Need for Email	38
Communication Breakdown	38
Future Suggestions	39
Using Email in Unexpected Situations	39
What Worked/What Didn't Work	41
Communication and Team Building	42
Gender, Communication, and Sport	43
In Person Openness from the Athletes	47
Enjoying Having Someone to Talk To	50
When Players Liked to Talk	50
The Importance of Open and Honest Communication with Respect to Performance	51
Possible Factors Influencing the Players' Willingness to Communicate Openly	52
Male Athletes Working with a Female SPC	53
The Coaches' Belief in Sport Psychology Training	55

The Players' Belief in Team Building	56
Final Thoughts and Implications	58
Chapter III: Reflections of a Neophyte Sport Psychology Consultant	62
Journal Notes: "The End"	62
Reflective Practice	64
Confessional Tale	65
Why I Believe in Sport Psychology Consulting	68
First Impressions: Meeting the Team	71
Email as a Communicative Tool	76
Not Quite What I Was Expecting	78
Connecting Moments: The Foundation of Relationship Building	82
When I Didn't Connect	87
If You Look like a SPC and Sound like a SPC then You Must be One...	90
An Error in Judgement	91
After the Team Cookie Crumbled	95
Final Reflections and Implications	100
The Meaning of Chaos	103
Chapter IV: Summary: Lessons Learned and Implications for Further Research	105
Introduction	105
Description of the Consulting Experience	105
Reflection	107

Consequences of Actions	108
Alternative Tactics	110
Learning	112
Research Question #1: How Does Email Positively and Negatively Influence Communication between the Athlete and the SPC?	112
Research Question #2: How Did the Use of Email Affect the Relationship between the Athlete and the SPC?	114
Interpretive Inquiry and Reflective Practice	116
Final Thoughts	118
References	119
Appendices	129
Appendix A: Letters Requesting Permission for Access and Informed Consent	129
Appendix B: Initial Focus Group Guide	145
Appendix C: Examples of Emails Sent by the SPC during the Season	148
Appendix D: End of Season Questionnaire: Athletes	149
Appendix E: End of Season Questionnaire: Coaches	154
Appendix F: End of Season Focus Group Guide	158
Appendix G: Sample Page from Personal Research Journal	161
Appendix H: Johns' Revised Nursing Model of Guided Reflection	162

Chapter I

Introduction and Initial Literature Review

Introduction

The athlete – sport psychology consultant relationship is at the heart of a successful sport psychology intervention (Petipas, Giges, & Danish, 1999). In the Consultant's Guide to Excellence, written by four performance enhancement consultants with over 85 years of experience between them, (Halliwell, Orlick, Ravizza, & Rotella, 1999), Halliwell speaks to the need for good communication and a good working relation with the athlete, "...I recognize and accept that I cannot impose a common, pre-packaged program on all athletes. I listen and keep my words simple and direct, as I assess the dynamics of the situation..." (p. 46).

In 1991, Partington and Orlick published a summary of the specific factors that 19 Olympic mental training consultants believed contributed to their best-ever consulting experiences. One of these factors was identifying the particular needs of the athletes and specific demands of the sport, rather than imposing a standard intervention program. Two anonymous quotes from this study capture this idea, "I start with their needs (not my package). I listen to what they need to perform or function better," and "The intervention was planned only after the athlete and myself, in collaboration, had agreed on what was important at this point in time" (p.186).

Even though athlete-centred approaches are thought to be more effective than problem-centred approaches, few studies have investigated specific factors in the process of service delivery that contribute to intervention success (Holt & Streat, 2001). In order to advance the field of sport psychology services, examinations of the

delivery of techniques is imperative (Simons & Andersen, 1995). The SPC - athlete relation, or the process of interactions, needs to be examined in order to understand the delivery of sport psychology services (Andersen, 2000). In this study, an interpretive case study was conducted in order to examine relationship building with a particular focus on email as a communication tool.

Statement of Purpose

My entry question for the research (Ellis, 1998) was, "How does the use of email influence communication between the high-school athlete and their SPC?" In essence, I was interested in discovering whether email could possibly enhance service delivery by strengthening the athlete-SPC relationship by exploring the following questions:

1. How email positively and negatively influenced communication.
 - Was it used? Why or why not?
 - How often was it used?
 - What concerns arose?
2. How did the use of email ultimately affect...
 - The relationship between the athlete and consultant.
 - The personal growth of the athlete.
 - The growth of the athlete as a performer.
 - The personal and professional growth of the consultant.
3. New questions that would promote further research in the area.

Rationale for Research

The Internet has become an integral part of many homes, schools and workplaces. It has already changed the way people find information, communicate and learn (Voisin, 2001). The productive potential of this technology is staggering; however potential downfalls must be addressed. The Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (2001) recently emailed its members a suggested amendment to the current AAASP Ethical Standards entitled, "Proposed Ethical Standards for the Provision of Sport Psychology Services On the Telephone and Over the Internet." The preface of the amendment brought attention to two important details: the first being that tele-services have ethical issues that are separate from non-tele-therapy services such as security, confidentiality and appropriateness of services over telecommunication lines. And second, due to the fact that significant new technology is constantly emerging it is imperative that the ethical standards be reviewed frequently.

Online sport psychology consulting is relatively new and research in the area is very limited. Zizzi and Perna (2002), having completed the only study to date, examined whether providing athletes with a consultant's email and web page address would increase the utilization of sport psychology services. Although results provided significant differences in the e-group contacting the consultant more often than the traditional group, no significant differences were found between the numbers of actual assessments completed. Zizzi and Perna did suggest at the end of the study that high-school and college athletes may prefer email and web page contact in comparison with traditional media (in-person, telephone) as well as suggesting that electronic methods can be combined with traditional methods to produce effective

interventions. Watson, Tenenbaum, Lidor, and Alfermann (2001) have also concluded that more studies are necessary to explore the effectiveness of the Internet in providing sport psychology services to athletes and coaches.

The method of online consulting could possibly satisfy a concern put forth by Rotella, a sport psychologist from the University of Virginia who stated that, “We don’t need any more techniques in sport psychology. We need more ways to get athletes to use the techniques we have” (Singer & Rotella, as cited in Leffingwell, Rider & Williams, 2001, p. 169). The problem still remains however, that no studies have been conducted on the method of service delivery (Zizzi & Perna, 2002). This study was completed with the purpose of addressing this gap in the literature.

Concerned Engagement

Concerned engagement is a term that describes the practical problems or questions that have driven one to engage in a research project (Ellis, 1998). Describing a personal story or experience will not only provide the reader access to the writer’s perspectives but it also encourages the writer to become self-conscious about their own preconceptions and beliefs before beginning their research (Ellis). The record and inclusion of this information will also help to increase researcher credibility (Patton, 1990). At this point, I would like to share three experiences that I believe drove me towards my study.

Experience #1: Teaching a Tele-course

The first experience occurred from January to April 2001 when helping teach a Tele-course at the University of Winnipeg entitled, “Psychological Skills for Sport and Life”, with Dr. Cal Botterill. It was a very personal course that encouraged both

professional and personal growth as students looked to explore their human potential. The course had been successfully taught in a traditional classroom setting by Botterill for years but this was the first time that it would be offered as a Tele-course with online components.

Botterill, Paul Davis, another teaching assistant, and I were concerned that students who viewed the course from home would have difficulty connecting with us and thus not experience the same amount of growth (in comparison to personal testimony from students who had previously taken the course) as our in-class students. At the end of the course we were delighted to have our concerns alleviated. Not only were we shocked by the volume of emails we received but by the openness and honesty about personal issues shared by the students. I began to think that if email could facilitate a relationship between students and teachers, perhaps it could also facilitate communication between athletes and their SPC.

I was aware however, after having participated as an instructor in this Tele-course, that although the idea of communicating via the internet has great potential, caution must be exercised. Even though email did not appear to hinder a student's chance at success, it did not guarantee it. Several at-home students did not become actively involved in the course and therefore did not achieve the same level of academic and personal growth that their counterparts did. I was of the opinion, that in order to be effective, involvement from both parties, the sender and the receiver, was necessary. In addition, through this experience, I found that students may have the best opportunity to learn when both technological and traditional face-to-face styles of communication are combined.

Experience #2: Gender and Communication Styles

The second experience that influenced my decision to look at email communication grew from the fact that I have been teaching and coaching high-school students for the last eight years. During these years I have enjoyed having the opportunity to informally counsel my students through some difficult personal times. During a recent period of reflection, I noticed some differences in communication with my students that appeared to be gender-dependent. I began to acknowledge some of my assumptions; female students generally came to see me when they had personal issues concerning significant others, family or friends and male students generally came to see me when they wanted to share highlights of a successful achievement.

These assumptions along with my desire to eventually study online communication influenced my choice of a topic for a small research project¹ that was included in the coursework of Qualitative Research Methods, 129.784, at the University of Manitoba. I used this opportunity to explore the perceptions of five high school teachers regarding the topic of gender and communication with their high school students.

I began the interviews by asking what differences, if any, the teachers had noticed between their male and female students when engaging in a conversation with them. Although many examples were given, a difference that I believed needed further examination was that of the way male and female students appear to favour different conversational styles.

¹ Ethics approval was received from the Faculty of Education Coursework Research Review Committee (EDCRRC) 01/29/02.

Tannen (1990) argues that generally a female style favours rapport-talk whereas a male style favours report-talk. An explanation for this differentiation is that men and women use different words because they grow up in different worlds (Tannen). Males are socialized as individuals in a hierarchical world where they are taught techniques that help them acquire the upper hand or higher status in a given situation. Women however, are socialized as individuals in a network of connections. They are taught to form community, preserve intimacy and avoid isolation. Even in the same house, girls and boys will grow up in different worlds because others will talk to them differently and have different expectations and acceptance of what they say, all based on their sex (Tannen). Researchers who follow this theory tend to see masculinity and femininity as monolithic constructs, and conversational styles, such as rapport/report talk as dichotomies (Cameron, 1998).

Although my experiences with my students appeared to echo Tannen's (1990) arguments of rapport/report-talk preferences, the more literature I read, the more convinced I became that masculinity and femininity were not two distinct categories of qualities possessed by an individual (Wodak, 1997), but instead effects produced by the things people do (Cameron, 1998). In chapter three I further explore this literature with regards to my pilot study, but in summary, I had gained a new perspective. I still believed that male and female students were socialized to behave in a particular manner at different times. But I also believed that given the appropriate circumstances, male students, along with female students were capable of engaging in rapport-talk. In other words, they were capable of speaking about feelings, emotions, and personal problems.

In my pilot study, one teacher used journals with her Senior 1 students in order to facilitate communication. Two uncorrected excerpts from male students demonstrates their willingness to share their feelings and personal concerns,

1. I take competitive swimming lessons with the St. James Seals I used to play soccer, curling, Air cadets, and once for about 10 minutes I took skating lessons but I fell cried and we went home and I never came back.

2. My mom is going to college and my dad is trucker in winter also a racer in summer. I'm basically the loner in the family because I'm not a sportsy kind of person and I don't like cars also my mom is not the kind of person I look up to.

After reading these excerpts, I began to wonder if the students felt more comfortable sharing their feelings because they were writing to their teacher instead of speaking to her face-to-face. This further fuelled my research question, as I then began to believe that perhaps email could be a form of communication in which male players might feel more comfortable speaking about performance and/or personal concerns with their sport psychology consultant.

One response that I encountered during one of my interviews did, however, raise possible doubts regarding my beliefs. Brian², a first-year Biology teacher, was the only participant to communicate with students online. Although it appeared to facilitate discussion between him and many of his students, Brian mentioned that the stereotypical patterns of in-person male and female styles of communication

² Pseudonyms were used for all participants.

(report/rapport) appeared to be repeated online. Perhaps I too, would find my previous in-person student conversation patterns repeated online.

Given the pilot study analysis, I looked forward to further investigating the possibilities of online communication between high-school male athletes, a population that has received limited research attention (Johnson, 2001), and me, a female SPC. I was interested in exploring how email communication fits in with the development of the athlete-SPC relationship, as well as contributing to the theory that female and male language and behaviours are not two distinct categories but rather form an overlapping continuum (Freed as cited in Bing & Bergvall, 1998).

Experience #3: Increasing Consulting Contact Time

The last experience that was a driving force behind my desire to engage in this research falls under the category of professional development. I was (and still am) a beginning SPC and I believed that any interactions with high-school athletes would provide me with an excellent opportunity to experience growth as a person, consultant and teacher.

During the last two years I had the opportunity of working as a SPC with a speed skating team. Monthly meetings were held and although the sessions were engaging and productive, each month when I returned and checked in on the team's progress, most athletes replied, "Oh yeah, I forgot about that." What I believed was missing was a more consistent reminder from me to each athlete to be working on their psych skills and to let them know I was available if they ran into trouble. Email, I thought, might be a medium in which I would be able to contact my athletes or vice

versa on a more regular basis. How to fit in the use of email was something I believed was worth investigating.

Finally, I hoped to identify different perspectives concerning the athlete-SPC relationship and the online delivery process and thus give other SPCs an opportunity to inform their own service delivery techniques.

Summary of the Research

Following an athlete-centred approach is a critical factor in achieving a best-ever consulting experience (Partington & Orlick, 1991). In order to accomplish this, a strong athlete-SPC relationship must be present (Petipas, Giges, & Danish, 1999). Research into the process of service delivery including the athlete-SPC relationship is necessary to continue to inform and advance practitioner services in the field of sport psychology (Andersen, 2000; Holt & Streat, 2001; Simons & Anderson, 1995).

The Internet has become a part of the daily life of students and accessibility to the World Wide Web is only going to increase (Canada's SchoolNet, 2001). With the proposed AAASP Tele-Services Ethics Amendment (AAASP Ethics Committee, 2001) and the study conducted by Zizzi and Perna (2002), the field of sport psychology has begun to recognize the fact that online consulting will play a role in the future of sport psychology services. Research in this area is needed to address both evolving ethical issues (Watson et al., 2001), as well as the effectiveness of integrating email into more traditional methods of service delivery (Watson et al.; Zizzi & Perna).

Researchers in the area of gender and discourse are being encouraged to abandon binary models, or the idea that males and females have different traits, and to

begin to ask new questions using a diversity model, implying then, that males and females perform gender in different ways (Bing & Bergvall, 1998). Finally, working with young adults not only provides the researcher with participants who are familiar with electronic technology, but also presents a wonderful possibility to explore a population that has received such limited research attention (Johnson, 2001).

Rationale for Qualitative Inquiry

After having studied the literature it became evident that qualitative inquiry would best answer the research question I was asking. Highlighted below, are three of Patton's (1990) themes of qualitative inquiry that supported my decision for pursuing a qualitative methodology.

1. Naturalistic. When collecting data I was in a naturally occurring, non-manipulative situation. In other words having a SPC work with a team was not unusual in the world of sports. Given the limited amount of investigation into the athlete-SPC relation and the effects of email, a naturalistic setting would encourage an exploratory study.
2. Holistic perspective. I believed that the athlete-consultant relationship and the effects that email may have had on it would be a continually changing process that could not be fully explored if only one specific outcome was studied.
3. Inductive analysis. Data collected was examined to construct themes rather than to test pre-conceived hypotheses.

In addition to my belief that qualitative methodologies would be most beneficial when trying to describe and discover the intricacies of email and

communication between an athlete and consultant, there has also been a growing realization over the last ten years of the potential benefits of qualitative research in the field of sport psychology (Strean, 1998). Qualitative methodologies not only provide detailed perspectives for sport psychologists but they also provide results and theories that athletes and coaches can relate to (Strean). It has been suggested that perhaps more athletes and coaches would be using sport psychology services more often if results and theories were more accessible and affected their everyday experiences (Strean).

Rational for Interpretive Inquiry

Philosophical Background

The philosophical foundation of interpretive inquiry lies in the field of hermeneutics. A central theme, which I believe in and have already begun to address by explaining my 'concerned engagement' is the idea that we, as researchers, construct 'reality' based on our perspectives (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 1990). Observations cannot be interpreted without being influenced by the interests, purposes, and values of the observer (Smith, 1992). Every person will 'see' something different based on his or her previous personal life experiences. When pursuing an interpretive inquiry, the idea that 'reality' is constructed (Smith, 1992), is accounted for and acknowledged throughout the entire research process.

Goals of Interpretive Inquiry

The goal of interpretive inquiry, and what I wish to accomplish in this study, is to expand human understanding of how people live and function through the examination of context, subjective experience and interpersonal dynamics (Swick,

1996). It is imperative that when interpreting the actions of both the participants and the researcher, the researcher provides the most descriptive social context possible in order to facilitate understanding (Smith, 1992). By providing a detailed description of the unfolding relationship between the SPC and the athlete, I hope to better understand both the process of using email and the value of it.

Differentiating Interpretation from other forms of Qualitative Inquiry

Several attributes differentiate interpretation from other forms of qualitative inquiry. First, self-inquiry, in the form of a diary and/or a self history (Smith, 1992), or the awareness of a personal and practical concern (Ellis, 1998), can be the starting point of the research. Based on prior experience, the researcher may want to try a new procedure, by asking, "How might this work?", or they may want to try and remedy a particular situation by asking, "How might this help?" (Ellis). Ellis suggests that the entry question should begin with openness, humility and genuine engagement.

Second, methodologies can vary from setting to setting and from researcher to researcher (Smith, 1992). They, along with questions can also evolve in an interactive manner as part of the inquiry process (Ellis, 1998). Ellis describes this process in terms of a spiral consisting of loops.

When a researcher first enters the study asking a particular question, they enter the first loop, or engage in an initial inquiry activity. While in the loop, they will inquire and interpret, and as a result generate findings. Often a drastic change in the understanding of the question will occur as findings, both expected and unexpected, are discovered. These findings may generate new problems with

different questions or they may generate different questions for the original problem. In either case, travelling forwards (e.g., to create new questions for inquiry), or backwards (e.g., to explore the original question differently), will take the researcher into a new loop and the process will then be repeated (Ellis, 1998). Stated otherwise, the new research questions emerge as the data collection evolves.

Third, the subjectivity of a participant observer cannot be dismissed, ignored or neutralized (Brown, 1992) and therefore procedural choices are not constrained by a desire for objectivity but instead they are choices of a moral nature (Smith, 1992). "The most important procedural issue for interpretive inquiry is how we behave, both as inquirers and toward our respondents and co-participants in the inquiry process" (Lincoln, as cited, in Smith, 1992, p. 103). This was significant with regards to my study because as a SPC, the needs of the athlete should always come first.

Case Study Research

A case is a specific, complex, functioning thing (Stake, 1995) and I believed that interpreting my interactions with a high school volleyball team throughout one season would be appropriate as the study of a single case. When conducting an interpretive case study of a person, program, or group of people, the purpose of the researcher is to provide clarifying descriptions and interpretations of the thinking and feeling behind people's actions or behaviours (Stake). If a researcher begins to understand why people do what they do, two important results can emerge. Both ideas for helpful action and ideas for more useful research can become clearer (Ellis, 1997). In my study, providing athletes and students with a more effective delivery of sport psychology service may maximize an opportunity for growth (helpful action).

and generate more useful research ideas with regards to the athlete-SPC relationship and online consulting.

Evidence supporting the need for case study research can be found in the field of sport psychology. Andersen (1997), suggested that the focus on the process of how to 'do' sport psychology would be an important feature of future articles published in the Sport Psychologist, which he edits. Andersen further commented on the fact that case studies can be used to illuminate athlete behaviours, explore how to deliver services and explore how the SPC-athlete relationship develops. He stressed that case studies are particularly beneficial when the athlete, the SPC and the delivery process are all involved.

Method

Intervention

Over the course of an 11-week season, I worked as a SPC with a high-school male volleyball team. I chose to offer an athlete-centred approach in order to maximize the potential for a best possible experience for the athletes (Halliwell et al., 1999). This meant that instead of imposing a standard intervention program, I first identified the particular needs of the athletes and specific demands of the sport (Partington & Orlick, 1991) and continued to ask for and listen to their input throughout the season. Weekly team meetings were held, as well as individual meetings and communication via email. I attended practices, regular season games, and five out of six weekend tournaments, including one that was held out of town.

Selection of Site and Participants

My sport psychology mentor, Dr. Cal Botterill, recommended a high school volleyball coach with previous experience in the area of sport psychology, who had expressed interest in obtaining a SPC to work with his male varsity team during the 2002 volleyball season. Having received ethics approval from the University of Manitoba ENREB, I contacted the superintendent of the school division, requested written permission to conduct my research study in the specific school site, and also requested further instructions regarding division protocol (e.g., following school division policy regarding any issues related to personal safety).

Once permission from the appropriate school division authorities was received, I contacted the school principal, explained the scope of the intended study, and again requested permission and written consent to conduct my research. With the principal's permission, I repeated the process with the specific teacher/volleyball coach.

Following the coach giving me permission to conduct this study and work with his team, I asked him to explain the scope of the study to his athletes. The middle class, suburban team consisted of ten Senior 3 students and one Senior 2 student whose ages ranged from fifteen to sixteen years old. After his initial team meeting, I met with the players to further explain the details of the study and answer any questions they may have had. It was made clear that all participants would have the choice to participate or not participate in any of the sport psychology consulting activities. At the same time, any participant that wanted to be involved in the sport psychology activities throughout the year could, if they so desired, not be included in

the data analysis. I also explained that confidentiality would be maintained throughout the study.

Finally, I arranged an evening parent presentation where I repeated the process of explaining the scope of the study and answered any questions. Each player had at least one parent attend the meeting and at their request, I agreed to include a follow-up meeting after the study was completed. After the parent presentation, I sought written consent from each of the eleven³ interested players and their parent(s).

Obligation to the Student-Athletes: Ethical Issues Specifically Related to Online

Consulting

Access

Canada is at the forefront of ensuring that Canadian students have access to the Internet (Canada's SchoolNet, 2001). In March of 1999, Canada became the first country in the world to connect its public schools, including First Nation Schools, along with public libraries to the World Wide Web. As of May 2000, there were an estimated half a million connected computers in Canadian schools (Canada's SchoolNet).

With this in mind, my assumption going into the study was that students would have regular access to the Internet either at school or at home. I checked this assumption initially when speaking to both the coach and the parents and found out that all students had internet access both at home and at school. The following subsections: Confidentiality, Establishing the Online Consulting Relationship, Appropriateness of Online Consulting, Continuing Coverage, Addiction, and

³ One parent attended the meeting whose son was the twelfth (practice) player on the team. Consent forms were signed to participate in the study but early in the season the player chose to pursue different interests.

Boundaries of Competence are part of the ISSP (International Society of Sport Psychology) Position Stand on the Use of Internet in Sport Psychology, (Watson et al., 2001).

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is one of the primary ethical concerns of any athlete-consultant relationship (Watson et al., 2001). Although I used my work email address which was located on a secure site at the University of Winnipeg, the participants were informed that there is always a risk that information over the Internet will be accessed by others (Hannon, as cited in Watson et al.). I met with our system administrator, Dr. Wilf Schlosser, who taught me how to create local backup (C and D Drives) and demonstrated that the data is saved as encrypted files. Hard copies of the transmissions were also created and were protected by lock and key in a filing cabinet in my school office. The hard copies were transferred to my home office desk after the completion of the study where they were also protected under lock and key. Participants involved were informed that all data collected would be destroyed no later than August 31st, 2003.

Establishing the Online Consulting Relationship

Appropriateness of Online Consulting

At the beginning of the study I informed the athletes that not all topics were appropriate for online consulting (e.g., eating disorders). I was prepared to terminate an online discussion and encourage a face-to-face meeting if at any time I felt the topic was inappropriate via the online medium (Watson et al., 2001).

Continuing Coverage

Athletes were informed of the approximate length of time it would take for me to respond to their messages.

Addiction

“Athletes and coaches who continually utilize psychological services offered via the Internet may develop an ‘addicted behaviour’” (Brenner, as cited in Watson et al., 2001), where they will often look for fast and easy solutions. Since children and youth may be prone to this (Watson et al.), they may not question the usefulness of the advice or the appropriateness of it in a particular situation. I monitored the athletes’ behaviours throughout the season looking for signs of addiction, but due to the limited number of consulting emails I received, evidence of addicted behaviour did not become a factor in service delivery.

Boundaries of Competence

Having informally counselled my own high-school students for the past eight years I felt very comfortable referring students to an appropriate service provider when I believed I did not have the expertise or experience to help them (e.g., eating disorders, depression, family issues). Dr. Cal Botterill mentored me throughout the study, and was someone that I was able to go to for guidance regarding any sport psychology or referral concerns that arose. As stated, if at anytime abuse was disclosed by an athlete, I was prepared to contact the school principal immediately and follow directives outlined by the school division. This, however, did not occur during the study.

Data Collection

Data was collected using a variety of qualitative techniques including focus groups, document analysis of emails sent during the season, questionnaires, and a personal research journal.

Initial Focus Group

Focus groups can be used for exploratory purposes at the beginning stages of a study (Bloor et al., 2001). The initial focus group was conducted in a manner suggested by Bloor et al., and was similar to an initial introductory consultant-team meeting. Its purpose was for me to gain an appreciation of the team's beliefs about mental training, psychological skills important to them, which methods they wanted to use to enhance their human potential, and the role they believed email could play when communicating with me during the season. Please see Appendix B for the specific ranking and brainstorming activities that were used.

The focus group meeting was audio-taped for later transcription and lasted one hour. Notes were collected from the coach as a secondary source if any parts of the taped dialogue were inaudible. Responses to the Psych Skills Checklist that is included in Appendix B were also collected.

Document Analysis: Emails Sent During the Season

Individual Email Introductions

Werthner (2001), a national team sport psychologist believes in the theory that males will have a tendency to look at asking questions as being in a 'one-down' or lower power position (Tannen, 1990). When addressing the issue of communication between female coaches and male athletes, Werthner emphasizes that even though all athletes are unique, she suggests that when coaching males, female coaches should

provide them with a safe environment where they will feel comfortable speaking out. Individual meetings, for example, could be provided as an alternative to group meetings in order to maximize the chance of successfully getting to know male athletes.

Using this rationale, an email was sent by me to each player inviting them to provide any additional comments they may have had (and might not have felt comfortable saying in a group setting), and if they desired, to provide a short biography in order to facilitate the beginning stages of the athlete-SPC relationship. This data was collected to evaluate whether the boys initially felt comfortable sharing their thoughts with the SPC using a written form of communication.

General Email Correspondence

During the season I sent out periodic emails with the hopes of maintaining regular correspondence with the athletes. Although the majority of my emails were individualized, an example of an email that I sent to all of the players during the season is as follows:

The agenda for the meeting will be team communication. After meeting with many of you individually, it has become apparent that many of the members of the team need different things when people are communicating with them. Try to reflect on what motivates you on the court (practice/game)...in other words, what do you need to hear from your teammates and your coaches?

We'll be sharing these ideas on Thursday if you feel comfortable.

For more examples, please see Appendix C.

End of Season Questionnaire: Athletes and Coaches

A questionnaire was sent via email to the athletes and the coaches at the conclusion of the season as a means to elicit feedback regarding different aspects of the SPC process. Athletes had the choice to either fill out the questionnaire online or in-person at our final focus group meeting. With this questionnaire I attempted to understand why or why not email was used, and when it was useful/not useful. I also elicited the players' and coaches' perspectives on communication in general, and the impact they believed being involved in a sport psychology training program had on their volleyball and personal lives. For specific questions, see Appendices D and E.

End of Season Focus Group

Focus groups may also be used in the closing period of a study to draw lessons and implement changes (Bloor et al., 2001). For this reason, I conducted a focus group, in a manner recommended by Bloor et al., which was similar to an end of season team meeting. Activities utilized in the beginning focus group session were repeated in the final session in order to discover: whether the beliefs of the athletes at the end of the season were any different to those held at the beginning, to seek input from the team regarding SPC activities and service delivery methods that worked and didn't work, to seek advice for changes in the future, and finally to provide closure. See Appendix F for specific activities.

The focus group meeting was audio-taped for later transcription and lasted 40 minutes. Notes were collected from the coach as a secondary source if any parts of the taped dialogue were inaudible. Responses to the Psych Skills Checklist that is

included in Appendix F were also collected. When the tape-recorded portion of the meeting was over, the players then filled out their end of season questionnaires.

Personal Research Journal

During the season I kept a reflective journal that documented descriptions of my feelings, what I was 'seeing', 'thinking', or interpreting. Every two to three days I summarized my recent experiences with the team. I included details from individual meetings, team meetings, games, and informal conversations with the players and coaches. I also used the journal as a means to explore my ever-changing interpretations regarding email, relationship building, and being a beginning SPC. It became my primary instrument as I wrote chapter three, a confessional tale that explores the evolution of my relationship with the players and the team. My personal research journal was invaluable as I engaged in the process of interpretive inquiry. For a sample page, please see Appendix G.

Standards of Rigor

To ensure that my research was trustworthy, or to help increase internal validity, credibility issues were addressed. Rigorous techniques in data collection helped to increase validity, one such technique being triangulation. Methods triangulation, using multiple methods for data collection (focus groups, emails, and questionnaire), and triangulation of sources, using multiple sources (athletes, coach, self) were utilized (Patton, 1990). A type of member check (Manning, 1997) was also conducted as I sent copies of chapters two and three (results) to the players and coaches to see if what I had written closely resonated with what they felt they had experienced during the season. All player responses (four) and coach responses

(three) were positive and as one player described, "It was great to go back in the season and re-visit those feelings, ... the way you put it just made me feel like it was volleyball season again..."

Credibility of the researcher was also an integral part of trustworthiness. Attempting to identify and question my preconceptions throughout the study and maintaining a reflexive journal helped clarify any personal or professional information that may have affected the data collection, analysis or interpretation in any way (Patton, 1990). Consistent with interpretive inquiry, my preconceptions and assumptions were used to inform the data analysis.

Because I had limited sport psychology consulting experience, the sport of volleyball was specifically chosen. Having played university volleyball for 3 years enabled me to have an in depth knowledge of the sport and therefore increased my credibility as a SPC/researcher.

Finally, Lindvall (1999) in a recent article entitled, "Developing a Personal Approach to Consulting", stated, "To live what I teach is important in establishing trustworthiness" (pg. 12). I believed (and still do) in this philosophy and on a daily basis tried my best to practice the sport psychology skills that I taught, both in my personal and professional life.

Data Analysis

The day after our first focus group meeting, I analyzed the players' responses to the Psych Skills Checklist to determine which psychological skills were most important to them. I transcribed the focus group meeting the following week and made some initial observations about the players' beliefs about sport psychology and

email, and determined which methods they wanted to follow to improve their human potential. During the study, hard copies of any email correspondence were collected as they occurred, and at that time informal initial observations were made. As previously mentioned, data analysis (interpretations and ideas) that occurred throughout the study was recorded in my self-reflective journal.

When the study was completed I began to more thoroughly analyze my collected data (focus group transcriptions, hard copies of any email correspondence, responses from the players and coaches to the end of season questionnaires, players' responses to the Psych Skills Checklist (filled out at both focus group meetings), and my personal research journal). Responses to the questionnaires were re-organized as I typed each question at the top of a page and then listed all responses underneath it. I then read and reread all of the collected data in order to familiarize myself with the content.

Consistent with interpretive inquiry, the focus of my attention (research question) shifted as the study progressed. Although I addressed the practicalities of email research question in my personal research journal, the more I read of it, the more strongly I felt about first further examining the building of relationships as a neophyte practitioner. As Streat (1998) states, "Inductive approaches or emergent designs, frequently connected with qualitative methodologies, provide opportunities to identify unanticipated phenomena and influences that were not considered by the researcher prior to the study" (p.341). I travelled backwards and began a new loop (Ellis, 1998) and continued to read and reread my journal as well as the emails sent to

me by the players during the season looking for experiences that I believed had impacted the athlete-SPC relationship research question the most.

This part of interpretive inquiry research led me to exploring different ways of writing and eventually to the decision of writing a confessional tale (Sparkes, 2002). Using primarily my fieldwork journal and emails written by the players', I embarked on a journey that allowed me to engage in longitudinal reflection, pulling together elements of my life history (Anderson, Knowles, & Gilbourne, in press) and then weaving them together with the data to create a story that represented my current experiences as a beginning SPC. My analysis was continual as I wrote and considered how the data would contribute to the building of my story and its' plot (Polkinghorne, 1991).

I then examined the data to construct themes and develop theoretical propositions related to the original research questions. While looking for commonalities throughout the data I also looked for negative cases. Not only did this provide a different perspective on a potential theme, but it also helped strengthen the credibility of the data by counterbalancing the tendency of the researcher to rely only on their first impressions or preconceptions (Gay & Airasian, 2000). I also made a conscious effort to 'listen' to what the players and coaches were telling me in their responses and include this in the results section.

Finally, I was cognizant of Packer and Addison's (1989), guidelines for evaluating interpretive accounts when I analyzed the data.

1. Ideas for helpful action are identified.
2. New questions or concerns come to the researcher's attention.

3. The researcher is changed by the research – that is, the researcher discovers inadequacies in his or her own initial pre-understandings.

Reporting of Results

Chapter two, “Implications for Team Communication”, focuses on my findings from the study with regards to the practicalities of using email. I address the reasons why or why not the athletes used email to communicate with me, when the email was useful/not useful, and any concerns that arose. I discuss the openness of the athletes (Were the boys more open online? When did they prefer to talk to me, if at all? What were their beliefs regarding communication after the season was finished? Etc.), and have included its connection with productive team building. Although I have written a modified realist tale (Sparkes, 2000) in the sense that I have included my voice and done away with conventional segmented headings (e.g., Participants, Method, etc.), the purpose of this chapter was to foreground the beliefs and perceptions of the players and coaches.

Chapter three, “Reflections of a Neophyte Sport Psychology Consultant”, is a confessional tale (Sparkes, 2002) that provides a personal account of my struggles as a beginning SPC. By including topics such as fitting in, building rapport with the team, email influence on relationships, and making and learning from mistakes, the hope is to provide a self-narrative that will help other beginning SPCs and their supervisors understand the intricacies of relationship building neophyte practitioners face when beginning applied sport psychology service delivery.

I have also used this chapter to address the call for the use of reflective strategies to improve the education and training of applied sport psychology graduate

students (Andersen, 2000; Anderson et al., in press; Holt & Streat, 2001; Simons & Andersen, 1995), and to provide further support for the inclusion of applied experience in sport psychology training programs (Petipas et al., 1999; Orlick & Partington, 1987).

Finally in chapter four, I provide a summary of lessons learned and implications for further research. Here I follow a model suggested by Anderson et al. (in press), consisting of 19 questions that will summarize chapters two and three and lead me towards both answering its core question, "What information do I need to access in order to learn through this consulting experience?" (Anderson et al., in press, p. 34), and discussing implications for further research.

Chapter II

Email and Implications for Team Communication

Over the course of a three-month period I worked as a sport psychology consultant (SPC) with a suburban middle class high school volleyball team comprised of eleven male, grade ten and eleven students. I used the experience to conduct an interpretive case study (Swick, 1996) as a means to explore the question, "How does email influence communication between the high-school athlete and their SPC?" Based on my prior experiences as a teacher, coach and SPC, and my pre-conceptions, I entered the study believing that email had the potential to strengthen the SPC-athlete relationship by providing a more comfortable setting for male athletes to share their feelings and seek help when dealing with personal and/or performance concerns. Furthermore, by providing the players' with increased access to me, through online communication, I believed that a more consistent dialogue might be encouraged.

Qualitative researchers need to make educated and informed decisions with regards to style based on their intentions and purposes (Biddle, Markland, Gilbourne, Chatzisarantis, & Sparkes, 2001). With this in mind, I chose to write a modified realist tale (Sparkes, 2002). Along with presenting my findings with regards to my original research questions, including the practicalities of email and the openness of the athletes, team building is also addressed.

Realist Tales

Although there appears to be no one set of rules for analyzing and interpreting qualitative data, and no fixed writing format/style for its presentation (Sparkes, 2002), Van Maanen (1988) has outlined several characteristics of a realist tale. The first and

most prominent characteristic of a realist tale is that it appears to be author evacuated. Other than perhaps a quick reference to credentials in the methods section, with the goal of enhancing authority, the researcher's voice is non-existent. As Van Maanen states, "The body of the ethnography reads as statements about the people studied rather than what the ethnographer saw or heard (or thought) about the people studied" (p. 48).

The second characteristic is the inclusion of extensive and closely edited quotes. Although they appear to tell the participant's story, Van Maanen (1988) reminds us that often they are orchestrated in such a way as to demonstrate or support a particular position of the researcher. Finally the third characteristic is that of interpretive omnipotence. The author has the final word on how the data is interpreted and eventually presented. Rarely will they raise the question of whether there was another useful way to study or understand the collected field data. Instead, 'facts' are put forth to support a particular interpretation (Van Maanen).

Modifying Realist Tales

Realist tales, although no longer innocent, still serve particular purposes in the world of research and are valuable in their own right (Sparkes, 1995; Sparkes, 2002). Sparkes (2002) suggests that instead of abandoning them altogether, they can be modified to include different narrative styles and conventions. In particular he states:

Those who feel increasingly uncomfortable about producing author-evacuated tales might consider writing more of themselves into the text when, for certain purposes they feel this to be appropriate.

Likewise, these authors might also consider acknowledging and

sharing with readers, in a reflexive manner, the rhetorical devices they have called on. Such inclusions would certainly not detract from the power and persuasiveness of realist tales and could act to enhance their ability to provide insights into the world of sport and physical activity.

(p. 54)

Since it is impossible to be an invisible and impersonal conduit of objective findings, I have chosen to include my voice (e.g., my beliefs about the practicalities of email, prior experiences that may have shaped my analysis) in this realist tale. In particular, I would find it unethical to simply vanish when presenting what was discovered, due to the fact that I played an active role as the SPC to the team in my study. As well, instead of the typical categories of literature review, method, results, etc., I have chosen to first discuss data analysis as it relates to my desire to represent the players' and coaches' voices in a fair and balanced manner. Second, I have intertwined the literature, stories of past experiences, and the description of data. My decision to present in this fashion stems from my belief that the literature, as well as my prior experiences, not only affected me before I began my study, but also shaped how I analyzed, interpreted and presented my findings. My perceptions and actions, in turn would also have ultimately affected the players' and coaches' perspectives.

Analysis

Although I have decided to include my voice in my realist tale, I have also attempted to answer Richardson's question (1992), "How can I write so that others' 'voices' are not only heard but listened to?" (p. 108). In my first section, Email Communication: Concerns and Benefits, I consciously present the players' concerns

and support for using email as a communication tool. Using their responses from both our initial and final focus group meetings, as well as their end of season questionnaires, I followed Wolcott's (1994) first two of three suggestions for transforming qualitative data: one, description, or "What is going on here?" and two, analysis, "What essential features need to be identified and how do they relate?" Due to our different roles in the study, my analysis expanded to include other issues. Although my personal thoughts are placed after the players' quotations, I felt that they too were important to include.

Before I entered the end of season data analysis stage (as I had been constantly analyzing throughout the duration of the study), there were two particular areas that I wanted to explore. The first being the practicalities of using email and second, the boys' willingness to be open when communicating with each other, me, and the coaches. After reading and re-reading the data, I felt an overwhelming amount of support from the players with regards to team building. This was something that was very important to them and I consciously made the decision to include this topic based on what I had 'heard' from the players. I must stress however, that eventually it was I, who interpreted its relationship to the other two themes, and decided how it would be presented. In other words I followed Wolcott's (1994) third suggestion of interpretation, and answered the question "What does it all mean?" As I did, I continued to keep in mind Coe's suggestion (as cited in Sparkes, 1995, p. 166), "In efforts not to exploit subjects, voices can be situated as central and positioned in ways that make them meaningful and productive."

Evaluating Reinvigorated Realist Ethnography

Sparkes believes that, "Well constructed, data-rich realist tales can provide compelling, detailed, and complex descriptions of a social world" (p. 55). Using arguments of Fine (1999), Sparkes continues to state that, "Ethnographers do not need to reach a precise, definitive, singular truth in order to have something useful and important to say about the contemporary human landscape" (p.55). Instead Fine suggests that the following three questions be answered in order to justify reinvigorated realist tales: (1) Although nothing is definitive, is the tale recognizable to the readers and to the participants?; (2) Does the tale provide a guide to scenarios and social worlds that the reader may not yet have encountered?; and (3) Is the tale useful? In other words, is an understanding of knowledge being encouraged and are new questions being raised?

The Influence of Email

The way people communicate, find information, and learn has been significantly altered as the Internet has gained increased access into many homes, schools and workplaces (Voisin, 2001). With this in mind, Zizzi and Perna (2002) recently suggested that if SPCs do not attempt to incorporate email and website based technology into their traditional methods of service delivery, they may not be effectively addressing the needs of today's high school and college athlete populations. After determining that on a short-term basis, athletes requesting services via electronic contact methods (e.g., web page and email addresses) were at least equal, and in some cases superior to traditional contact methods (e.g., in person, telephone), Zizzi and Perna proposed that the most effective future sport psychology

interventions may be the ones that combine both traditional and electronic methods of service delivery.

As research in this area is limited, Zizzi and Perna (2002) along with Watson, Tenenbaum, Lidor, and Alfermann (2001), have urged other applied researchers to explore the impact electronic media may have on sport psychology interventions. In my third chapter, I will explore the impact that I believe email had on my relationships with the athletes throughout the volleyball season. In this chapter, using data from the focus group transcripts, questionnaires, and emails, I have interpreted the perspectives of the athletes, the coaches, and myself, with regards to the perceived benefits and concerns encountered when using email as a means of communication. I have done this, as well as including future suggestions, in order to continue to address the need for further understanding of the impact of email (Zizzi & Perna; Watson et al.).

Email Communication: Concerns and Benefits

Reservations about Email

“When you’re talking to someone in-person, they can tell sort of what your feelings are. Just depending on the way you say something, ‘something’ can be totally different” (participant, Luke⁴).

From the beginning of the sport psychology intervention, many of the players had concerns regarding the potential ‘impersonality’ of email and lack of visual and auditory communication cues that convey meaning. While transcribing the initial focus group tape I could hear numerous other voices agreeing with Luke. After many

⁴ Pseudonyms were used for all participants and any identifying characteristics have been changed.

murmurings, John's voice on the tape became more vocal, "Because if you type something in a joking matter and then they read it and they're like, oh that was mean. Sometimes there are two ways you can take it, and they might take it the wrong way." Stated otherwise, an initial concern that some of the students expressed regarding email was how it might be interpreted. This concern remained throughout the study.

According to the end of the season questionnaire responses, nine of the eleven boys preferred to communicate with me in-person, rather than online. Luke continued to stress his same preseason concerns in his end of season questionnaire, "I liked in person because the feelings and emotions behind the words were interpreted the way I wanted them to be by the tone of my voice. I didn't want her to misinterpret what I was trying to tell her [online]." And Alex agreed when he responded to the question, "Did you find using email an effective way to communicate with a SPC?" "Not really," was his response, "I find that in person it is much more effective since you can see facial expressions and hear the tone of voice."

Communication Preferences: Online or In-person?

Other players supported their choice for in-person communication by describing their personalities. Matthew explained, "I preferred in-person because I like to talk to people face to face rather than email or other forms. I just feel I can be more real and up front." And Neil expressed his thoughts as follows:

I preferred the in-person communication because that is the type of person I am. I just find that email can be so impersonal plus when you are discussing in person, you have more opportunities to get answers

right away or may even lead into a discussion about a problem that you may need to talk about.

Two of the players stood apart from the rest. Jack preferred email because in his opinion, "it was fast and convenient." And Simon shared, "I enjoyed both of them because in person you can see what other people have to say about the subject, but online you aren't afraid to speak your mind (especially if you're someone who doesn't say much like me)." Simon's comment supports Zizzi and Perna's (2002) suggestion that contacting athletes via email following a team session may encourage particular athletes who might not 'normally' schedule a face-to-face meeting, to contact the SPC.

Mark, the head coach of the team, echoed some of his players' concerns but also added some perceived benefits to his response:

I always like talking with in-person, although it was very handy to be able to communicate by email when that wasn't an option. It also allowed me to forward "stuff" to Tyler and David [assistant coaches].

It helps make the sport psych skills program more efficient.

Time (or lack thereof)

For their follow-up data collection, Zizza and Perna (2002) provided a list of seven barriers, along with a space to provide other reasons, to the 145 athletes (out of 163) who did not contact the SPC during the one-month intervention that was included in the study. Eighty-seven percent of the athletes indicated that lack of time was a barrier to them using sport psychology services. Minimal spare time, as well as lack of motivation for some players, also contributed to the boys' not responding or

sending emails to me. As Alex described, "I really didn't like the email because I'm just kind of too lazy to go on my computer. And I just didn't have enough time."

Luke agreed:

I don't like email either, you could find the time to go on it but I just didn't want to. It was too much hassle, like even when you are on MSN and someone's talking to you, "Oh tell me about your week."

You're like, no that requires writing conversation, sentences, and it's just too time consuming.

Originally, I had given the boys the option of filling out the end of season questionnaire via email or in-person at our final focus group meeting. All preferred to hand write their responses. As Luke later said, "When you sent your questionnaire and stuff, there was no way I was answering all those questions (19 of them) online."

Tell Me What I Need to Know

I had learned at the beginning of the season that most of the boys were online almost every day or at least every other day. What I discovered however, at our final focus group meeting, was the displeasure the boys held for actually replying to emails. When I probed further and asked if that was the case just during the volleyball season, just volleyball emails, or just in general, Jack replied, "Oh just emails in general. I hate replying. Tell me what I need to know." Heads nodded and murmurs of consent occurred when Luke explained, "It was good for saying we have a practice here or we have a meeting there. It was good for information that we just had to read and say, "Oh, ok." One player even shared that email was an effective method of communication but that he found it hard to put all of his ideas on paper.

No Need for Email

Because we met regularly in-person, during the two to three times a week I held sport psych sessions and attended games or tournaments, a couple of the players felt they didn't need to write me. Austin explained, "I didn't [email Kelly] because we covered all I wanted to know in the meetings" and Neil concurred:

I think I used email maybe once a week only because I didn't feel I had anything to send. Had times been different I think I would have sent more. I didn't feel that I needed to contact Kelly that often or I felt that it could wait until the next time I saw her.

Communication Breakdown

At the beginning of the season I had explained that the boys could email me anytime they wanted to ask any kind of question. I received some emails during the season and I believed that everyone understood the purpose of the email. After hearing Matthew's comment at our final focus group however, I realized that perhaps not all players received my intended message,

I wish I would have used it a lot more. I didn't really know that we could, well I shouldn't say that I didn't know, but I never really thought that we could just email you if we were having problems. Not that I was having that many problems, but I know there were a few times I could have emailed you. If I was having trouble with something my first thought wasn't like, my first reaction wasn't email Kelly, it was like try and fix it yourself, read some stuff, or whatever, but I should have just emailed you.

Future Suggestions

When asked for future suggestions that might increase the effectiveness of email communication between an athlete and their sport psych consultant, many players suggested that somehow the email should be more constant. Neil explained in greater detail:

I think that if the team were to have to send a weekly little report it may aid in the players being more comfortable sending their thoughts or might help Kelly work out what she is going to work on that week. Also this way if players weren't sure if they should send their thoughts at times, they would have a way to do it without having to worry about it.

And Simon suggested that, "Maybe write by email and then at the next meeting we should also talk a bit about what we said in the email."

Although I had intended to incorporate this more fully prior to starting the study, I didn't receive enough of this type of email to enable me to follow through with the idea. I did however incorporate this technique once at the beginning of the season after having an online discussion with Neil about his pre-game routine. When we next met as a group he was ready to share his ideas about 'clearing his head' which then provided me with a nice segue into the topic of imagery.

Using Email in Unexpected Situations

Using an email communication as a catalyst to start a discussion also had a tremendous impact on the group when Neil was unable to attend our unexpected season ending loss-debriefing session because he was out of town. The team had

performed the classic choke in a game needed to make the playoffs. I believed that it was important for us to have a meeting where we could all share what we had been thinking, feeling and doing prior to the game, what we were presently feeling, and the lessons learned that we would take forward with us into future endeavours. When Neil told me that he couldn't be at the meeting I knew somehow I had to get his thoughts there because everyone needed to be heard. I asked him if he wouldn't mind writing an email to the team that I would then be able to read at the meeting.

When our session began I opened by asking who would like to start, any of the boys, me reading Neil's email or me? The consensus from the boys was that they would like to hear the email first:

After last Monday, on the ride home, I was a wreck. And it wasn't because we had lost to MTC or because the season was over, but it was because there wouldn't be a chance to improve as a team anymore until next year. And that was the hardest because we have come so far to improve to have to end it now. And I am coming out of this season not feeling like we have failed, by the standards we set for ourselves, but I am coming out of this season already looking forward to what we will be able to do next year with all the improvements that we accomplished this year. And this goes back to not looking at the outcome, but how you are to reach it, and we have to remember those steps rather than where we finished the year. I just want to thank everyone on the team, the coaches, Sam [team manager], and Kelly for all the support that you gave everybody, it was a great season.

I still get shivers when I read this email and after I finished reading it the night of the meeting it was so quiet you could hear a pin drop. I'm not quite sure whether Neil would have had the exact same effect if he had spoken in person. Writing an email gave him time to collect his thoughts and produce a very articulate and meaningful message for his teammates. After a few seconds one of the players broke the silence, "Wow, he is so deep." Neil's email had engaged us all, and the discussion that ensued was open and honest as each individual shared their particular thoughts and feelings about the experience.

I also found email to be useful when faced with other unexpected situations. After our end of season focus group the boys sat at the desks with their heads bent, filling out their questionnaire. Suddenly there was a knock and the door and there stood Andre's mom, "You're supposed to be refereeing the junior high game right now." Hand slapping his forehead, Andre replied, "I forgot." Running off to referee he promised me, and did send me, the completed questionnaire via email.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, several players also missed our final focus group session. Email not only allowed me to send the boys the psych skills checklist that I had wanted them to fill out, but it also provided me with an opportunity to say thank-you and tell them how much I appreciated their participation and willingness to learn throughout the season.

What Worked/What Didn't Work

In the end and as expected, using email as a form of communication with the players and coaches on the team worked in some instances and didn't work in others. One player, who was sometimes afraid to speak his mind in front of other teammates

enjoyed using email to communicate his thoughts with the SPC and another player enjoyed its' efficiency. Email also proved to be a beneficial tool when sending out read only information, when used as a catalyst for group discussions, and when catching up with absent students who were unable to attend meetings.

Many of the players found that communicating via email didn't work because they found it too impersonal, they didn't trust the medium, they found replying too time consuming, and because they saw me often in person, they didn't feel it was necessary to also write to me. In one case, a player didn't feel comfortable enough to express his thoughts using this particular written form of communication. And due to miscommunication, another wasn't sure about the purpose of the email.

At the beginning of the study I believed that providing the option of email as a form of communication might encourage a more consistent and open dialogue with the players on the team. Although I did not receive the number of emails I had originally anticipated from the players, I was extremely pleased to discover that the boys were willing to be open with each other, the coaches, and me when communicating in person. I will further explore this in the remainder of the chapter.

Communication and Team Building

When teammates feel appreciated, respected and accepted, team harmony and thus team performance are likely to be enhanced (Holt & Sparkes, 2001; Orlick, 2000). In order to achieve this environment with a team, open and honest communication processes are necessary (Botterill, 2000; Yukelson, 1997). To communicate openly and effectively, trust, honesty, mutual sharing, and mutual understanding must be present (Botterill, 2000; Yukelson, 1993). It has been

suggested that an effective way to foster communication and positively impact team building is to incorporate regular discussions that encourage honest and open discussion between players, coaches and the SPC (Bull, 1995; Orlick, 2000; Yukelson, 1997).

When employees of organizations and companies, or members of athletic teams, openly communicate with one another, potential problems may be prevented due to the opportunity that is provided to understand another's perspective or needs and feelings (Orlick, 2000; Patten as cited in Yukelson, 1997). Not only does learning how to communicate in this manner help prevent potential problems but it is also an important first step when resolving current problems (Yukelson, 1993). When athletes and coaches learn to express their feelings and thoughts respectfully about issues that affect them and learn to receive constructive suggestions more openly, conflicts have a chance to be resolved (Orlick, 2000; Yukelson, 1997). As Yukelson (1997) states, "Similar to processes that go on in a family, team building requires a group climate of openness and honesty where airing problems and matters of concern is not just appropriate but encouraged" (p. 94).

Understanding the need and importance of the expression of an athlete's feelings as it contributes to individual and team performance, as well as wanting to further explore gender and communication were the second major contributing factors that drove me to study email and its influence on sport psychology delivery.

Gender, Communication, and Sport

Gill (1994) suggests that the first step in feminist practice is acknowledging that gender makes a difference. She encourages SPCs to consider how gender affects

their expectations, reactions, and responses when working with athletes. As mentioned in my introduction chapter, I recently began to reflect on how I communicated with my female and male students. While enrolled in a graduate qualitative research methods course, I completed a small research project⁵⁵ investigating five teachers' beliefs about how gender influenced communication with their high school students. As a result of this pilot study, my previous perceptions regarding gender and communication altered drastically. I began the study looking for differences, and although many examples were given, it was the similarities that caught me by surprise and secured my attention.

Researchers who follow an ethnomethodological approach reject the idea that gender differences are a pool of qualities possessed by an individual (Wodak, 1997). Instead they believe that the words 'masculine' and 'feminine' represent the effects we produce by things we do (Cameron, 1998). Belonging to either gender group is therefore a performative act and not a fact (Wodak, 1997). Butler (1990) believes that men and women are conscious agents, aware of gendered meanings attached to specific ways of speaking and acting, who repeatedly perform to produce a wide range of effects. Often people use 'masculine' or 'feminine' speech and/or actions to portray themselves as the 'proper' male or female in accordance to culturally constructed norms. Yet at other times they may be known to use speech and actions that do not portray themselves in a stereotypical fashion (Cameron, 1998).

⁵ Ethics approval was received from the Faculty of Education Coursework Research Review Committee (EDCRRC) 01/29/02.

I found this to be the case in my study when Gail⁶, a guidance counsellor with 23 years of experience, stated that male students, although generally reluctant and often stereotypically seen as problem solvers, do indeed seek help when faced with personal problems. What I found most encouraging, was the fact that Gail then proceeded to share similarities she had noticed when counselling both male and female students. Prior to this I had believed males didn't speak about personal problems. Identical issues of freedom, parent relationships, and romantic relationships were concerns that all students discussed with her. And once male students felt comfortable talking to her about personal issues, there was very little difference, if any, as far as language was concerned. Heather, an English teacher with 28 years of experience, also added that her male students would often write about personal issues, "And even things like their autobiography. I have them write them at the beginning of the term. It's amazing what they will say and the boys will be very outgoing there."

I read the few excerpts that Heather emailed me and was stunned by the openness and honesty these Senior 1 (age 14) male students used when describing their lives. I too had not escaped being socialized into believing that males will not open up and share personal stories or problems. Reading these excerpts along with acknowledging that the field of sport psychology is moving in the direction of processing feelings and emotions (Botterill & Brown, 2002; Goleman, 1998; Hanin, 2000; Newburg, 1998), I began to believe that perhaps the use of email could provide a setting for male athletes in which they might feel comfortable enough sharing their feelings and seeking help when dealing with personal and/or performance concerns.

⁶ Pseudonyms were used for all participants in the pilot study.

Athletes, like any other person in society do not escape gendered socialization. Recent research indicates that gendered socialization is alive and well in sport (Gill, 1994; Manian, Curry, Sommers-Flannigan, & Walsh, 2001; Martin, Akers, Jackson, Wrisberg, Nelson, Leslie, & Leidig, 2001; Martin, Wrisberg, Beitel, & Lounsbury, 1997). According to Western sport cultural norms, boys are typically taught to be independent, successful, and problem solvers, whereas girls are taught to be sensitive, emotionally expressive, and to seek help when needed (Gill, 1994).

Messner and Sabo (1990) believe that sport plays a dominant role in socializing boys and men into narrowly defined masculine identities. Experience in sport has rarely taught men how to communicate openly with one another and instead has typically encouraged them to disconnect from their feelings and emotions (Kidd, 1990). Many boys and men may intentionally avoid any practice that might encourage others to label them as feminine (Messner, 1992). In particular, many male athletes might be less open and less willing to share their feelings and thoughts with a SPC or teammates in fear of being labelled weak or unmanly (Manian et al., 2001; Martin et al., 2001; Martin et al., 1997; Meyers, 1997; Yambor & Connelly, 1991).

Although Martin et al. (1997) determined that NCAA Division 1 male athletes were found to stigmatize a SPC more so than female athletes, and Manian et al. (2001) determined that males were less likely than females to seek help for a slump or to achieve an optimal performance, because of my prior research, I began my study believing that female and male behaviours were not two distinct categories but rather formed an overlapping continuum (Freed as cited in Bing & Bergvall, 1998). I was

also optimistic that in the appropriate circumstances (for example, providing an opportunity to email me as well taking steps to encourage the building of trusting relationships), the players would be open and willing to share their feelings and thoughts with myself, the coaches, and each other.

In Person Openness from the Athletes

In chapter three I will more fully explore email excerpts that demonstrate that many of the boys did provide me with rich, detailed writings that described what they were thinking and more importantly how they were feeling. Although I had anticipated a larger number, I was still encouraged by the role email played in building my relationships with some of the players and was even more encouraged by the openness and honesty about feelings and emotions I had witnessed from the boys during both individual and team meetings. One particular instance stands out for me.

Three weeks into the season I had begun meeting individually with each of the players. Using the T.A.I.S. Test (Nideffer, 1976) as a catalyst for conversation, I would typically explain the results of a category to the player and then allow him to expand on how he thought it 'fit' or didn't 'fit' into his life. Using their examples from volleyball and life, I would then weave mental training ideas into our discussion. One meeting however, took a direction all on its own. I had just started to explain a result to Kevin when all of a sudden he blurted out how confused he was feeling about his role on the team. A little taken aback, but comfortable with this type of comment, I asked him, "How come?"

The floodgates opened and his concerns rushed out:

“I really want to play volleyball, but I work, and I want to see my girlfriend and my friends and I’ve got school work to do. Practices are great, but I’m just not getting the ‘feeling’ in games that I get when I play other sports. Maybe I shouldn’t be playing anymore.”

I let him talk some more about his role on the team, the demands he was feeling, whether or not he thought he should continue playing, and his concerns about next season. After it appeared that he had gotten everything off of his chest I described the things that I believed, and also what I thought his teammates believed he brought to our team. I asked him what he loved most about being part of the team and encouraged him to talk to the coach about his role.

After speaking with Kevin I doubted that he was the only player having concerns about his role. As well, some of the players had mentioned to me that not everyone was reacting very well to the feedback given from coaches and other teammates; a common issue for all teams. A few days later, the boys joined me for a session on communication and team harmony. I began the meeting by asking the boys how a particular communication activity was going. Minutes later the conversation had veered and Matthew was asking his teammates if they felt as overwhelmed as he did. As they shared their common feelings of having a full plate, but not enough time to eat, I highlighted the importance of open and honest communication.

I continued and spoke to the conflict that was currently occurring with some players when receiving feedback from coaches and teammates. I explained that a lack of awareness of other people’s feelings and/or a misinterpretation of intentions

was often the cause of conflict (Orlick, 2000). "I'm curious," I told them, "How do you feel when the coach or other teammates give you feedback?" One by one the players described how they felt, "I hate when someone yells at me, I just shutdown," "When the coach tells me what I've done wrong I feel like I've let the team down," and "I'm Ok, I can hear what they're saying" were just a few of the examples.

What then became even more powerful was listening to each player describe what they needed to hear from their coaches and teammates when things weren't going well. Most of the boys preferred encouraging, positive statements, but I loved the look of shock that washed over the players' faces when Alex said, "I need you guys to yell at me. I need that kick in the butt." His comment once again reaffirmed the belief that everyone is different and has diverse perspectives and needs.

Even though team discussions were generally open and the sharing of feelings was encouraged, I do believe it is important to note that when asked what kinds of topics the players felt more comfortable talking to me online about, Darryl responded, "Probably feelings and emotions, so that not everyone would have to know what I was feeling." And Alex echoed his thoughts when he described when he preferred speaking to me, "Individuals [one-on-one meeting with the SPC] because you can talk to her about stuff without people knowing." Obviously not all topics of conversation were appropriate for team meetings.

When I entered the study I believed that male athletes were capable of sharing their feelings and emotions when they felt comfortable. I believed that providing email as a method of communication with me might be the way to accomplish this. Although one player enjoyed using email to communicate with me, unlike

suggestions from current research, (Manian et al., 2001; Martin et al., 2001; Martin et al., 1997; Meyers, 1997; Yambor & Connelly, 1991), I obtained the openness from the athletes when speaking to them in-person during both individual and team meetings.

Enjoying Having Someone to Talk To

Botteril and Brown (2002) argue that due to a lack of emotional education, many athletes and coaches are unaware of the value of emotions. When emotions are first accepted, feelings can then be processed, and thus management is possible (Botterill & Brown, 2002). As noted previously, denial and repression of feelings, as well as an inhibition to speak with a SPC, is often common in the world of male sports (Manian et al., 2001; Martin et al., 2001; Martin et al., 1997; Meyers, 1997; Yambor & Connelly, 1991). Although speaking with a SPC was new for all of the players on this high school team, by the end of the season all of the boys described how much they appreciated being able to do so.

When asked how they felt about the communication between them and me, Alex explained, "It was really cool to let someone know how you feel and to get your emotions out. It felt good." Peter said, "It was nice to have someone other than a coach or teammate to talk to." And Jack seconded him, "I thought it was good because it was easy to do, you always had something to fall back on if you needed to talk about it."

When Players Liked to Talk

As always, providing different situations for the team to talk to me appeared to work best. When asked when they felt most comfortable talking to me about sport

psychology topics or concerns, I received the following answers: “On the bench. It was a comfortable situation and there aren’t ever awkward moments because we could simply turn and watch the game”, “In individual meetings (online or in-person). I felt this way because I don’t like to speak my mind in front of other people”, “Always, just so you know, but mostly after games. I always feel like talking after a game because it’s all fresh in my mind”, and “As a group. Felt more comfortable with everyone there.”

The Importance of Open and Honest Communication with Respect to Performance

Aside from enjoying speaking with a SPC, the boys also recognized the importance open and honest communication had with respect to their performance as individuals and as a team. When asked how the sport psychology consulting ultimately affected their performance growth (e.g., including relations with teammates, coaches, performance), Neil first explained:

It made me recognize a lot more of how my teammates and I all may approach things differently, but I now know what to do to help them realize their goal which will help me in the long run. Also it helped me greatly by being able to better prepare for games and practices.

John expressed, “It was good because we learned how to give and receive constructive criticism and to take the tone out of people’s voices and take the message” and Simon believed that, “It has helped it [performance growth] positively because it helped me interact better with my teammates and coaches in the meetings.” Luke shared, “It allowed me to express how I felt which is very important to me. I

could perform better when I could get things off my chest.” And finally Andre described it as follows:

I think through our discussions at the meetings, our team learned more about each other and we became a closer group. Also on the court, our willingness to put the last play "on the shelf" and think about the next one improved a great deal.

The coaches also felt the impact from introducing communication skills and encouraging players to express their feelings. In a wrap-up meeting with parents, Mark shared that he noticed a tremendous difference this year in communication patterns as more players attempted to openly and honestly speak to him one-on-one. And David, one of the assistant coaches, described, “I believe that having Kelly around made the boys feel like more of a team. The relationship they had as teammates was fantastic and there was a mutual respect among each and every player on the team.”

Once again, the data from this study demonstrates that male athletes are capable of sharing their feelings with a SPC and their teammates, are capable of seeing the value in doing so, and can enjoy co-operative activities; all actions that are stereotypically associated with females. This significantly contributes to Wodak's theory (1997) that gender is a performative act and that both males and females are capable of using speech and actions that do not necessarily fall within their culturally constructed norms (Cameron, 1998).

Possible Factors Influencing the Players' Willingness to Communicate Openly

As with any type of qualitative research, particularly a case study, I hesitate to argue that what the team and I experienced is completely generalizable. I would argue however, that we did enjoy a season where open and honest communication was encouraged, nurtured, and was eventually realized and that lessons can be learned. There are three possible factors I wish to discuss that I believe may have influenced the boys' willingness to communicate with each other, the coaches, and me during the season. These include, male athletes working with a female SPC, the beliefs of the coaches, and the initial beliefs of the athletes.

Male Athletes Working with a Female SPC

Although limited research has been conducted with SPCs who work with individuals of the opposite sex (Henschen, 1991; Yambor & Connelly, 1991), going into the study, I was aware of the possibility that some male athletes may perceive women SPCs to be more sensitive, understanding, and better listeners than their male counterparts (Yambor & Connelly). In the end of season questionnaire, I took the opportunity to ask the players if my being female influenced their communication with me. Seven were adamant when they stated it wasn't an issue at all. Conversely, two believed that it did make a difference. Simon wrote, "I felt more comfortable because it's harder to talk to a male about personal issues." And two of the boys were not sure. Darryl used humour to get his point across, "Really... Kelly was female? Just kidding. No, it did not make a difference if Kelly was female, male, or anything else. Kelly being a girl almost made her more understanding" and Neil explained, "I think that it helped me to open up just because I felt comfortable around her from the

start, it could be just her or it could be the gender, that's not something I can be certain about."

When the coaches were asked the same questions about the players' communication with me, all three believed gender wasn't a major concern. David expressed:

I didn't find it to be an issue at all, and I don't think the boys found it to be an issue either. Kelly did a great job of integrating herself into the team without making any issue about gender. It had no bearing on the way we coached, approached or talked to the team.

And Tyler explained:

I think that it might be easy for young guys to talk to a female. Females can be more compassionate and understanding and Kelly seemed to relate her experience to the boys very well. However, I don't think that gender has as much difference as the experience and personality of the person.

The boys overwhelmingly shared Tyler's view that my former elite volleyball experience had an influence on them. In fact, ten of the eleven boys shared this perspective. Although Jack was the one player who believed that it was "not an issue," Andre explained:

I felt more comfortable with her because she could understand the way we were feeling on the court from prior experience. It also made me trust her theories and such more because I knew she had gone through the same things.

Darryl shared that, "It made me respect her more and listen to her experience" and Luke echoed Jack's thoughts when he described:

It was nice because I could ask her technical questions about the game and she could help me. Also, it was easier for her to relate to us and for us to relate to her because she was very familiar with the sport. She had been in the exact situations and that allowed her to help us get through those situations.

Although the players believed that my former volleyball experience made it easier for them to talk to me than my gender, the coaches were divided on this question. Tyler believed it had an influence and Mark and David respectively believed that other issues contributed more, "I think they respected that but that they were more influenced by your ability during the sessions" and "Once again I don't feel it was much of a factor. Kelly gained everyone's respect by being responsible and organized. The fact that she was an elite volleyball player never played a part in the way I viewed her contributions to the team."

The Coaches' Belief in Sport Psychology Training

The second factor that I believed played a significant role was the coaches' beliefs in sport psychology training. Martin et al. (2001) argue that current research suggests that not only does the attitude of the athlete play a role in whether they will seek out and engage in mental skills training but also the beliefs and opinions of significant others around them such as parents, siblings, peers and coaches. Orlick (1989) and Gordon (1990) both expressed that the quality of rapport that they had with the coach was critical to their success as a SPC and Orlick & Partington (1987) explained that a coach's style, either creating a negative or positive environment, as

well as their level of commitment was likely to influence the athlete-SPC relationship and thus ultimately affect the consultant's effectiveness.

Mark was also a former elite university volleyball player who was committed to sport psychology training. As a player he had engaged in and practiced many of the psych skills and had brought numerous lessons learned with him when he began coaching. In our initial team meeting he spoke about his expectations for the players,

“This is training, whether you are in the gym or not. In terms of work ethic, you guys work very hard in the gym and that expectation from a coaching stand point exists in terms of this [sport psychology training] too. So if you're dogging it in the class [where we held our weekly sport psych sessions], it's the same as if you don't go for a ball. You wouldn't accept it on the court, let's try and get better in here as well.”

I have no doubt that having a young male coach endorse the beliefs and values of a sport psychology training program, which included the encouragement of being open, honest, and acknowledging feelings, positively influenced our team's willingness to engage.

The Players' Belief in Team Building

Finally I believe that this particular group of boys valued team building from the beginning. At the initial focus group meeting I had the players fill out a questionnaire that asked them to rank their perceived skill and value of a number of different psychological skills. Team interaction skills was rated as their highest perceived skill with an average score of 7.5 out of a possible 10, and it was tied in second place with emotional management and behind confidence/self-talk with

regards to perceived value. When I initiated a conversation after they had completed the ranking activity, and asked them to describe what they thought was most important overall, John explained:

I think the one about the team, because if you're not as team [sic], you're not going to have confidence and you're not going to be emotionally in the game. Because if I'm saying, "You suck Luke, I should be on the court more than you and stuff like that" he's going to say, "Stupid John. No, I should be on the court." And that's not how you want it.

Luke agreed with John and described his reaction to participating in a different sport:

When I first came on this team I was super surprised because I'm used to hockey and in that game it's not so much like encouraging each other, as you know, at practice you just go. But I think it's awesome how after every drill, it's standard procedure that we all slap each others' hands and stuff like that. I think that's awesome.

By the end of the season the players' belief in team building had grown. The team interaction perceived skill was still ranked number one, but the average score had been raised to 9.1 from 7.5. Perceived value moved into a tie for first place with focus/pre-competition/competition plans/time management with an average score of 9.8, up from a 8.8. As Neil expressed, "I don't think there was anything else that our team needed more than this going into the season and I think that we made great strides in the area." Whether these are common to a majority of teams I cannot say. However, my experience reiterates Bull's (1995) when reflecting on his 5-year

consultancy program with the England Women's Cricket Team. He comments that throughout the duration of the program the players consistently reported that they most valued the work they did on team building.

The majority of amateur and professional sporting teams covet having a strong sense of team unity. Perhaps it was this strong belief in team building, a traditional 'female' value, that allowed the players to engage in co-operative behaviours such as sharing their feelings. I believe that this is an area in which future research could be conducted.

Final Thoughts and Implications

After using email as a communication tool during a three month sport psychology training program with eleven male high school volleyball players, our team found that there existed both drawbacks and benefits. As in many areas of life, different perspectives surfaced. Many of the players found email to be too impersonal and preferred to speak with me in-person. One player enjoyed using both online and in-person methods of communication. Another enjoyed the speed and efficiency of email and a few players found it easier to talk about personal issues and concerns online. As mentioned before, using email as a form of communication might encourage particular athletes who might not 'normally' schedule a face-to-face meeting, to contact the SPC (Zizzi & Perna, 2002).

The players did enjoy using the email as a 'read only' document to keep them informed of upcoming topics and sessions. Their desire to respond to emails in general was minimal due to both a lack of time and effort on their part. Because I saw the team in-person two to three times a week, some players did not feel the need

to email me. And finally one player shared that he was not completely clear with the purpose of the email.

Although I did not receive the quantity of emails I was expecting, I did however receive quality. Many of the emails sent to me included personal and detailed information about the players' thoughts and feelings. I also enjoyed the freedom email allowed me when faced with unexpected situations such as players being unable to attend meetings.

I agree with Zizzi and Perna (2002) who proposed that the most effective future sport psychology interventions may be the ones that combine both traditional and electronic methods of service delivery. Since my study dealt with only one particular group of athletes over a short period of time, I would encourage others to pursue studies that look at different age groups, different athletic levels, different team and individual sports, female athletes, and situations where distance separates the athlete and the SPC. Extending the time period of the study may also be necessary. As Mark explained:

Although I didn't use it as much as I had intended, I would certainly use it more had I the opportunity in the future. In particular in a longer season it would be much easier. I found that in the high school setting, things change so often and so quickly (things seem to come up) that direct communication was of greater necessity.

Because I only had three months to build new relationships with the team, I also wonder what role email could play in communication if a relationship between the athlete and the SPC is already well established. A deeper understanding of the

practical implications of these questions will only be accomplished when further research is completed, and I encourage others to consider conducting such research.

Current research suggests that when players express their feelings and thoughts respectfully about issues that affect them and learn to receive constructive suggestions more openly, team unity and team performance are likely enhanced, potential conflicts can be avoided, and current conflicts are more likely to be resolved (Botterill, 2000; Orlick, 2000; Yukelson, 1997). Although it has been documented that male athletes might be less open and less willing to share their feelings and thoughts with a SPC (Manian et al., 2001; Martin et al., 2001; Martin et al., 1997; Meyers, 1997; Yambor & Connelly, 1991), my experience with this particular team did not support these claims. Not only did the boys speak openly with me, each other, and the coaches, but they also enjoyed the process of having someone (other than teammates and coaches) to talk to. One possible factor that may have contributed to this could be the fact that male athletes were working with a female SPC. Yet the majority of the players and all of the coaches did not support this claim. Other factors that may have influenced them were the coaches' strong belief in sport psychology training, and the athletes' initial beliefs about the importance of team building.

Although I agree with Gill (1994) when she argued that gender does make a difference, I agree even more so with her claims that if we try to treat everyone the same we are only doing the athletes a disservice. I encourage other SPCs to recognize that gender socialization may play a factor in a particular athlete's life, but

that it is not guaranteed. Female and male behaviours are not two distinct categories but rather form an overlapping continuum.

Perhaps, more importantly, we must become more aware of the preconceptions we bring to the athlete-SPC relationship with regards to gender. As soon as my beliefs changed, I noticed a difference in my conversations with both my male students and the male athletes I work with. I strongly believe our preconceptions affect the direction our relationships take. We must also become better listeners when an athlete is sharing their perceptions and interpretations of their world (Gill, 1994; Martin et al., 1997). I believe that belonging to either gender group is a performative act and not a fact. We must continue to challenge gendered socialization and find ways that will encourage all athletes, including males, to communicate their feelings and emotions effectively.

Chapter III

Reflections of a Neophyte Sport Psychology Consultant

Journal Notes: "The End"

"Chaos" is the only word I can think of when trying to describe the final focus group meeting I had with eight of the eleven male high school volleyball players that I had been working with over the course of an 11-week season. Ok, maybe I could use 'goofy' as well as, 'chaotically goofy'. At the end of it all, the relationship I had envisioned, one with trust, honesty, and humour, seemed to have been realized with the boys. How we got there however, was not even close to what I, a novice sport psychology consultant (SPC), had imagined.

The athlete – sport psychology consultant relationship is a key component of a successful sport psychology intervention (Petipas, Giges & Danish, 1999; Poczwadowski, 2001). To establish and maintain this relationship, the building of trust and rapport with an athlete is crucial (Andersen, 2000; Gould, Murphy, Tammen, & May, 1991; Halliwell, 1990; Henschen, 1991; Martin, Akers, & Jackson, 1998; Ravizza, 2002; Yambor & Connelly, 1991). When trust is developed and a good working alliance is formed, athletes may be more willing to share their thoughts and feelings with their consultant (Halliwell, 1990; Orlick, 1987; Martin et al., 1998) and the likeliness of adherence to a program as well as intervention success is increased, (Gould et al., 1991; Henschen, 1991; Orlick & Partington, 1989; Petipas et al., 1999; Poczwadowski, 2001; Yambor & Connelly, 1991).

The purpose of my interpretive inquiry study (Swick, 1996) was to explore the question, "How does email influence communication between the high-school athlete and their sport psychology consultant (SPC)?" I acted as the SPC and in essence, I was interested in discovering whether email could possibly enhance service delivery by strengthening the athlete-SPC relationship. As mentioned in chapters one and two, I had been influenced by previous life experiences. I came into the study believing that perhaps the use of email could provide a more comfortable setting for male athletes to share their feelings and seek help when dealing with personal and/or performance concerns. And I also believed that by working with a technologically savvy age-group (the boys were online with email either every night or every other night) and by giving them increased access to me through email, a more regular dialogue might occur.

Although the previous chapter addresses my findings from the study with regards to the practicalities of using email (Did the athletes use email to communicate with me? When was email useful/not useful? Etc.), and the openness of the athletes (Were the boys more open online? When did they prefer to talk to me, if at all? What were their beliefs regarding communication after the season was finished? Etc.), the purpose of this particular chapter however, is to provide a personal account of my struggles as a beginning SPC. More specifically using this narrative, I intend to address the call for the use of reflective strategies to improve the education and training of applied sport psychology graduate students (Andersen, 2000; Anderson, Knowles, & Gilbourne, in press; Holt & Streat, 2001; Simons & Andersen, 1995), to provide further support for the inclusion of applied experience in sport psychology

training programs (Orlick & Partington, 1987; Petipas et al., 1999) and to pursue the opportunity to develop both professionally and personally (Andersen, 2000; Anderson et al., in press; Holt & Streaan, 2001). Topics such as fitting in, building rapport with the team, and making, and learning from mistakes will be included.

Reflective Practice

After interviewing eleven experienced SPCs, Simons & Andersen (1995) suggested that practitioners need to improve their self-awareness and understanding of what it is they bring to the athlete-SPC relationship. Unfortunately, this type of self-examination and self-evaluation that is necessary for the learning and development of consulting skills (Simons & Andersen) is rarely emphasized in training (Petipas et al., 1999). Not only does engaging in reflective practice increase the likeliness of improving one's service delivery by providing an opportunity to gain a different perspective or insight into an experience that is not always available while immersed (Poczwadowski, Sherman, & Henschen, 1998), but it also allows the consultant an opportunity to collect evaluative material that will in turn increase their professional accountability (Anderson & Miles, 1998; Anderson, Miles, Mahoney, & Robinson, 2002).

Orlick (1987) believes that as SPCs, our most valuable learning comes from experience; Anderson et al. (2002) agree with this and suggest that interpretive reflective practice allows the consultant the opportunity to examine this tacit knowledge gained through experience. As Holt and Streaan (2001) argue, "Admission of weakness and uncertainty should not be viewed as a threat but as opportunities for learning and development" (p. 202). Reflective practice then can provide relevant

information to the practitioner that will enable him/her to more effectively handle future situations (Anderson, 1999).

As a teacher I went through rigorous reflections during university student-teacher training and continue to do so at both an informal (discussing decisions made or to be made with colleagues) and formal (part of our yearly professional evaluation) level. Through these reflections I have challenged some of the choices I have made with hopes of ultimately improving my service delivery. I strongly believe that if as sport psychology professionals, we do not take the time to reflect on our experiences and the decisions we have made, not only will we lose a great number of opportunities for both personal and professional growth, but in the end it will be the athletes who will have been given a disservice.

Confessional Tale

Although Dale (1996) has suggested that qualitative inquiry is gaining credibility in the field of sport psychology, Biddle, Markland, Gilbourne, Chatzisarantis, and Sparkes (2001) and Culver, Gilbert and Trudel (2003) argue that change from traditional quantitative research has been slow, and in comparison to other fields such as education and sociology, diversity in qualitative methodologies has been both under-explored and under-published. They strongly believe that qualitative inquiry warrants further attention in the domain of sport and exercise psychology. Sparkes (2002), who has recently published "Telling Tales in Sport and Physical Activity: A Qualitative Journey"⁷, concurs with Biddle et al., when he challenges Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) belief that qualitative works such as poetry

⁷ First book addressing the use of alternative qualitative methods in sport and physical activity.

and fictional narratives are taken for granted in research fields. He states, “This is not the case in sport and physical activity. Indeed, if it were, there would be little point in my writing the book” (p.7).

The style in which research is presented is at least as important as the research itself (Sparkes, 2002). Although qualitative researchers are fortunate to have numerous approaches available to them, it is important that they make educated and informed decisions with regards to style based on their intentions and purposes (Biddle et al., 2001). As Richardson (2000) argues, “Although we usually think about writing as a mode of ‘telling’ about the social world, writing is not just a mopping-up activity at the end of the research project. Writing is also a way of ‘knowing’ – a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable” (p. 923).

Anderson et al. (in press) write, “One example of a form of representation that draws wholeheartedly from reflective processes is self-narrative (Gilbourne, 2002; Sparkes, 1996). This qualitative genre allows authors to pull together elements of their own life history (a process that requires longitudinal reflection) with the aim of formulating a dialogue that others will find interesting and relevant” (p. 21). With this in mind, I have chosen to write what Sparkes (2002) identifies as a confessional tale.

This particular genre of writing emphasizes the researcher’s point of view as they use their own personal fieldwork experience to explore methodological and or ethical issues that were encountered during the entire research process (Sparkes, 2002). Confessional tales do not replace realist tales, but instead exist in a symbiotic

relationship with them expanding on the tensions encountered rather than just focusing on the findings (Sparkes).

Like autoethnographies, well written confessional tales stress the journey of the researcher and call upon the reader to engage in the text by bringing their own personal feelings and thoughts pertaining to their past and or future experiences to the reading (Sparkes, 2002). As Ellis and Bochner suggest (2000), "Evocative stories activate subjectivity and compel emotional response. They long to be used rather than analyzed; to be told and retold rather than theorized and settled; to offer lessons for further conversation rather than undebatable conclusions; and to substitute the companionship of intimate detail for the loneliness of abstracted facts" (p. 744).

Inclusion of personal interpretations as well as the exposition of the private mistakes of the researcher set confessional tales apart from ethnographies with hopes that other researchers, particularly novices, will begin to understand the intricacies of the qualitative research process and the difficult choices often faced by the researcher (Sparkes, 2002). My intentions, using primarily my own fieldwork journal, a suggested tool for reflection by Petipas, Giges and Danish (1999) as well as Halliwell, Orlick, Ravizza and Rotella (1999), is to provide a self-narrative that will help other beginning SPCs and their supervisors understand the intricacies neophyte practitioners face when beginning applied sport psychology service delivery.

Sparkes (2002) refutes those critics who believe confessional tales to be self-indulgent and narcissistic by suggesting that many do not understand this specific type of genre and its specific purposes, and by suggesting that often these critics believe that the researcher can be neutralized in the writing process and or are

resistant to change. My own personal philosophy aligns with that of the postmodernist belief. First that the researcher or narrator is an active agent in both the research process and in the formal written presentation, and second that the voice of the researcher should then be included, instead of excluded.

As Sparkes (2002) says, it is impossible to produce a story of 'truth' and to expect a self-narrative to reflect a blanket experience for all. Yet, by following the criteria of verisimilitude, the story is believable, draws the reader in, and conforms to the convention of its genre (Schwandt as cited in Sparkes). The hope is that confessional tales will highlight fieldwork, (in my case, the process of trying to 'do sport psychology' well), as a hermeneutic process, raising new questions for both the reader and the researcher (Sparkes, 2002). As Van Maanen (1988) states, "The confessional becomes a self-reflective meditation on the nature of ethnographic understanding; the reader comes away with a deeper sense of the problems posed by the enterprise itself" (p. 92). In the remainder of this paper, I present an example of my own self-reflection as I struggle to understand the process of relationship-building with a group of senior high male volleyball players.

Why I Believe in Sport Psychology Consulting

In my third year of university, I took the course, "Psychological Skills in Sport and Life"; in hindsight it altered my self-perception. The timing was crucial, for at the age of twenty and struggling with independence, I needed to explore who I was, what I valued, and how I could apply these values to my life.

Dr. Cal Botterill taught the course. In first year he had immediately secured my attention when I had found out that he had been working with the Canada Cup

Hockey Team and Wayne Gretzky, my idol and role model. Gretzky's humility, integrity, commitment, and passion I still value and admire today. Now Botterill had earned my respect as a sport psychologist, teacher and person as he shared stories in class of working with athletes at the Olympics, at the grassroots level, in professional hockey, and those facing injury, illness, or retirement. For the first time I said, "Wow, this course actually affects how I am living right now."

During week two, we filled out the Test of Attentional and Interpersonal Style or T.A.I.S. Test (Nideffer, 1976). After receiving the results, we wrote a personal report on three of our perceived strengths and three areas that we felt could be improved upon. For the first time in my life, I saw on paper, some of my personal characteristics and tendencies that influenced the choices I made as a student, an athlete, a daughter, a sister, a granddaughter and a friend.

I realized that being able to integrate ideas and information from several different areas effectively enhanced my ability to be analytical when writing papers and enabled me to efficiently manage my time as a student-athlete. At the same time however, I was consciously made aware that I had the tendency to over analyze or 'get caught up in my head.' This rang 'true' for my passing skills on the volleyball court, the weakest part of my game.

During practices I would diligently work on moving my feet, focusing on the ball, and remaining in the 'perfect' passing position; but it didn't matter, as soon as I shanked a ball off my arms and into the bleachers, my confidence would shrink to nothing. In its place would appear the negative self-talk distracting me from the next

play as I began to analyze, over and over, what I did wrong and chastise myself for the mistake. I felt horribly frustrated and embarrassed.

My tendency to over-analyze coupled nicely with my desire to be perfect, which showed itself in more than one results category. The T.A.I.S. activity helped me recognize the importance of maintaining perspective. I worked diligently using techniques such as imagery, relaxation, positive cue words, parking and refocusing, to work on improving both my athletic performance and my perspective in life. I learned to recognize what was worth worrying about (things I could control), what I needed to let go of (things I could not control), and began practicing learning how to say, "No."

I began to understand that striving towards excellence is desirable; being perfect however, is unattainable. I still believe to this day that the most important lesson I learned that year was letting go of the ideal that I always had to be perfect in order to please both myself and others. It is something I have worked on since and even though I believe I have made great strides, sometimes when I am least expecting it, the desire to be perfect will jump up and bite me in the face.

Psychological Skills in Sport and Life guided me to becoming a holistic person. That is, instead of just sport, the lessons I learned could be applied to other aspects of my life. This, in my opinion, is the most potentially powerful aspect of sport psychology and it has become part of what I bring to the relationship when I am working with athletes as a SPC. I constantly stress that the skills that we practice will not only have the potential to positively influence their athletic performance, but more importantly their performance in school and work, and their ability to more

effectively manage relationships with family and friends. I strongly agree with a famous quote from the late Jack Donahue, "You can be a great person a lot longer than you can be a great basketball player." These beliefs are what I brought with me when I first met with the team.

First Impressions: Meeting the Team

As I entered my alma mater through the heavy glass automated doors, I was busy reciting players' names and trying to match them with faces. I had only met the players once and as soon as I turned to walk towards the gym I had my first test. A couple of players passed me and said, "Hi K-rock." I returned their hellos and names and breathed a sigh of relief. As a teacher with nine years of experience, I pride myself in memorizing students' names quickly, and believe that it is an important first step in building rapport.

I rounded the corner and stepped into the massive gymnasium. It was the first day of an annual high school pre-season tournament held at the local university, and three full court games were already in session. Immediately my ears were assaulted by the typical sounds of a volleyball tournament: the distinctive shrill of the whistle, the sudden outburst of cheers from the players and fans, yelled instructions from coaches to players, and the rhythmic ebb and flow of the competitive bodies as they served, passed, attacked, and dug the volleyball.

Whenever I enter this gym in the middle of a tournament I experience the immediate awe and wonder I felt as a high school player walking through the doors for the first time. I remember what it was like to live, breathe, and eat volleyball, immersed in a university student-athlete culture only to come up for air three years

later. And I see the seven seasons I sat on the bench as a coach with my high school girls' teams during their tournaments. Even though I had reluctantly given up coaching because of a lack of interest from the students at my current school, I was pleased to see that others still shared my passion for volleyball; a game I just love.

As I stood taking in the action, Mark, the head coach, appeared and introduced me to his two assistant coaches. Within minutes one of the games ended and we walked towards the far court to prepare for what would be the boys' first game of the season. The court opened up and the boys eagerly began warming up, running lines and working with the balls. I sat down on the hard wooden bench and watched their focused faces as they hit the ball at their partners. They threw their bodies without care on the floor, hoping to dig the ball back up as I patiently waited for an opportunity that would allow me to become 'part' of the team. I found my way 'in' moments later, when our team began hitting warm-up.

I quietly got up off the bench and made my way onto the court. Offering words of encouragement I chased the balls the boys hit, scooped them up and lobbed them back, which eased the amount of running the players would normally have to do. At first I wasn't sure if this was what I was supposed to be doing, some coaches like their players to run after their own balls after they hit, but it felt good to be doing something. Mark didn't object so throughout the season, this particular behaviour of shagging balls became part of our pre-game routine at tournaments and league games. I thoroughly enjoyed this activity because I liked the connection I felt being involved with players on the court.

My experience with the boys in the pre-game warm-up resonates with other work that investigates how physical activity contributes to a sense of belonging between participants (Halas, 2001). In her study with troubled youth at an adolescent treatment centre, Halas recalls how playing games with young people allowed her to establish relationships with students on the court that quite often continued once the game ended. In the following excerpt, she describes one particularly memorable interaction with a reluctant student:

I recall how receiving a series of volleys from one of my more difficult-to-get-know female students felt like a communication breakthrough. As the number of our successive volleys increased, we became complicit in a shared challenge: we had to work together to succeed, and when we did, we made eye contact afterward to acknowledge our own understanding of the accomplishment. When this particular exchange ended, we knew each other differently. The next time we met it was outside of class, and we quietly nodded to each other a “good game, eh?”

Halas, 2001, p. 8

Halas (2001) suggests that the social contacts made on the court, although brief, may have a lasting impression on the student. She believes that physical, verbal, and socio-emotional communications are very real and experiential. They can help establish connections between students, influence their participation and performance in the gym, and most importantly influence how they were made to feel. By shagging balls, I used physical actions to demonstrate to the team that “I would

like to be part of your team, I'm here to support you and I am committed to help you in any way that I can." In retrospect, I believe that the boys received this message and I learned that it didn't matter precisely what I did with the team, as long as I was functional, unpretentious, and learning about the players and coaches.

When the first game started, the boys struggled on the court. It was evident to me that their basic skills needed work; timing and communication between the players was off. The boys on the court immediately impressed me however, as they supported one another with encouraging words and hand slapping. And with the coach who set little goals (e.g., let's try to get to 7 points this match) for the players in time outs when it was evident they were not likely to win the game. Even though they may have not been the best team at the tournament, I felt fortunate to have the opportunity to be working with players and coaches who were committed to personal improvement and getting the most out of their volleyball experience. For me, it was an encouraging sign and I felt confident that I could build a professional relationship with these team players.

Just before the game started I had had to decide where I was going to sit. Should I sit with the coaches? With the boys? On the bleachers? Since I had never been in this particular situation before, I tried to remember where I saw Cal sit when he was consulting with the national team. I racked my brain for a past image and one popped up with Cal sitting at the end of the bench with the players. I made my decision and sat at the end of the bench with 'the boys.'

It was a new role for me and it felt a little weird after having been a player and coach for so many years. Even though I wasn't sure if this is where I was 'supposed'

to be either, it felt right because a few players got the chance to ask me more questions about myself and my life as a volleyball player. Then I was presented with a consulting moment when one of the players came off the bench after missing a serve and said, "I just can't do this." I tried to reassure him as I replied, "We'll be working on self talk so that you will be able to say 'I can'." Our dialogue lasted no more than ten seconds but after the brief exchange, I was already starting to think of things we could do together and how I could possibly help.

I was still adjusting to feeling like an outsider and a rookie after the game when the question of dinner came up. Do I follow the boys? Do I follow the coaches? I wasn't really hungry; should I even go out? I followed the coaches, all the while feeling like my arms and legs were the spokes of a third wheel throughout the dinner. The coaches had known each other for years and even though they did their best to include me in conversation, I still felt like an intruder. These are the growing pains of building new relationships and it had been a long while since I had felt them. I was glad when dinner was over and we got back to 'familiar' territory.

We played another match that night and one the following morning. Still looking for ways to connect, I was torn when we had a three hour break between games on the final day. What I really wanted to do was sit and start talking to the players about who they were and what they cared about. Call it intuition or experience, but years of teaching told me that I needed to remain patient and not thrust myself on either the players and/or the coaches. I decided to go home during the break and just wait, believing that an unforced opportunity would eventually present itself.

The day unfolded and my patience was rewarded sooner than I expected. Later in the afternoon I seized the moment to 'hang out' with the boys. We sat along the wall of one side of the gym and got to know each other better. I loved the introductory chit chat I had with three of the players sitting on either side of me. I learned many details about their lives. How long they had played volleyball, if they had siblings and if so, how many, and details of other activities they enjoyed. From my days as a university player, I could relate to one of the team members who expressed how it felt so different to be coming on to the court as a sub, when he was used to being the go-to person on his hockey team. As a star high school player it was quite a shock to be sitting on the bench when I started university.

I appreciated the irony that it is impossible to know which past life experience will help connect you with a person. When the other two players described their passion for the game of volleyball and other sports, my belief in the team was strengthened. I left the tournament feeling satisfied with how things had gone over the weekend. I chuckled to myself as I left the gym that day saying goodbye to a player and his mom. As I passed by she asked her son, "Who was that?" The player replied with a big grin on his face, "Our sport psych consultant."

It was an acknowledgement that I was part of the team and I looked forward to both the upcoming first team meeting and the season that was about to unfold. In particular, I was excited about starting to use email with the players. I could hardly wait to see what would develop online.

Email as a Communicative Tool

The way people find information, communicate, and learn has been heavily influenced by the increased presence of the Internet in many homes, schools and workplaces (Voisin, 2001). Although the counselling profession has witnessed tremendous growth in web counselling (Bloom, 2002), online sport psychology consulting is relatively new. Research in the area is very limited and only one study (Zizzi & Perna, 2002) has been published.

Zizzi and Perna (2002) examined whether providing athletes with a consultant's email and web page address would increase the utilization of sport psychology services. Although both groups (electronic and traditional) preferred to use email and web pages over phone and in-person methods of initiating contact with the SPC and gathering preliminary sport psychology information, those who completed an in-person assessment and feedback session were more likely to follow-up and book further appointments.

While short-term results appear to be encouraging, Zizzi and Perna (2002) recommend that further research be conducted in order to more thoroughly examine the long-term effects of alternative media on intervention methods. Due to the increase in Internet and email use by athletes, they also strongly urge applied sport psychology researchers to establish a sound literature base to help understand how electronic media can be effectively integrated into the more traditional models of service delivery. Watson, Tenenbaum, Lidor, and Alfermann (2001), executive members of the International Society of Sport Psychology, have also concluded that more studies are necessary to explore the effectiveness of the Internet in providing sport psychology services to athletes and coaches.

During the year prior to working with the boys' team, I had what was for me, a wonderful opportunity to help teach two university sport psychology Tele-courses with Dr. Cal Botterill, and another aspiring SPC, Paul Davis. Although email did not guarantee an at home student's success, our initial concern that these students would have difficulty connecting with us, and thus not experience the same amount of personal growth (in comparison to testimony from students who had previously taken the course), was alleviated by the end of the semester. We were stunned not only by the volume of emails we received but also by the openness and honesty shared by the students concerning personal issues. This experience heavily influenced my perception of the possibilities of email.

When I began my study I believed that: one, email would have the potential to strengthen my relationship with the athletes by providing an alternative medium by which I could build rapport and develop working alliances (Zizzi & Perna, 2002); and two, it would have the potential to facilitate the players' use of psychological skills and possibly satisfy a concern put forth by Rotella, a sport psychologist from the University of Virginia who stated that, "We don't need any more techniques in sport psychology. We need more ways to get athletes to use the techniques we have" (Singer & Rotella, as cited in Leffingwell, Rider & Williams, 2001, p. 169). As I began to consult I was excited, both from a practitioner perspective, and as a researcher to use email and see how it would impact my SPC delivery.

Not Quite What I Was Expecting

I finished Sunday dinner and bounded up two flights of stairs to once again get comfortable in front of my semi-circular pine finished desk. As I settled into the

plush grey office chair, the blank screen of my computer stared back at me, almost taunting me, as I checked my emails for what might have been the twelfth time that weekend. The hum of the computer began as I leaned over to press the start button. Several minutes later I had gained access into my email account. As the screen of my mailbox flashed before my eyes, I tried to calm myself with what I thought were rational reasons for why the boys hadn't responded to the email that I had sent out Thursday evening. Maybe they really didn't check their email messages as often as they said. Or maybe my email didn't go through; messages have been known to get lost in cyberspace. The end result however, was that my mailbox was still absolutely empty.

Prior to starting the study, I chose to engage in an athlete-centred approach in order to maximize the potential for a best possible experience for the athletes (Halliwell, Orlick, Ravizza, & Rotella, 1999). I held the initial team meeting/focus group a week after the first tournament. Using questionnaires and ranking activities, I gave the players an opportunity to share with me and each other their perceived needs and wants for the season. After having spent the previous weekend with the team however, I felt that it was important to end our first official meeting with a practical idea that the players could take with them to practice.

The teacher came out in me as I made up a 'worksheet' on The Service Routine. Within a border, I included the titles, "Why is it important?", "What does it consist of?", and the "Keys to successful self-talk." I even imported a picture of a young male player holding the volleyball in his outstretched hand getting ready to serve. The boys appeared to enjoy the activity as they bent their heads over their

papers and feverishly filled in the blanks; or maybe it was just that I was going too fast as I knew my time was slipping away and they needed to get to practice. In any case, I felt content as the team left the classroom with something tangible.

I had mentioned my intentions of contacting the boys by email the night of our meeting and the following evening I sent out my first email to the team. By asking them to send me a short autobiography I tried online to replicate what I had started to develop with three of the players on the gym floor. Learning about the athletes as people plays an important role in the development of a relationship and supports Bond's (2002) belief that successful sport psychology interventions need to incorporate a holistic view of the athlete.

I also asked the players to explain to me the details of their service routine via email. By getting the athletes to think about and write down their routines and by providing an opportunity for me to give specific individual feedback to each player, we were also working on the building of psych skills.

So what happened then to all the responses I was expecting? I had calmed the urge to email everyone again asking if they had got my first message because I didn't want to be bothersome. It wasn't easy but I decided to wait to talk to the boys at our next meeting that Tuesday. Monday night I did have mail, two replies to be exact, indicating that indeed my message did go through. So where then were the others?

Tuesday evening I arrived at the school with materials and water bottle in hand. As players trickled into the classroom, the informal dialogue about 'stuff' started. The boys seemed at ease in Mark's classroom and we often would discuss school subjects, classes, homework, work experiences, or other activities in which

they were involved. I enjoyed these times throughout the season, as they provided me a different opportunity to learn more about the players as people.

It wasn't easy, but as we chatted, I continued to patiently wait until the meeting started before asking my question about the email replies. When we did start I finally said, "So, what happened to your emails?" To my surprise, puzzled faces stared back at me and some replied, "We never got your email." Turns out, I had been trashed. Even though I thought I had anticipated the technological glitches we would encounter, I learned I was wrong. I had specifically asked the players to be very careful when writing down their email addresses and they were. Rather I had learned that I didn't understand the workings of a "hotmail" account. Because I wasn't in their address book, my emails were immediately sent to the garbage. We had a good laugh together. It always helps to laugh at yourself. And I was relieved to confirm that my initial intuition, that most of the boys would email me, wasn't completely off base. The boys who had not received my email agreed to email me first so that my message would then go through.

In the end, I never did receive email introductions or even an email, for that matter, from all of the players. As the season progressed, I continued to rely more heavily on in-person communication because it felt like the 'right' thing to do for the team. Even though I did try to maintain online contact with the boys, I ran into more technological glitches and in my opinion, rarely heard from them. A little disappointed, towards the end of the study, I mentioned to Mark that I had only received about 40 emails. "Wow," was his reply, "I wouldn't have expected that many. I can't even get them to bring back a signed form. That's a great amount for

them.” Gaining perspective of a situation is important and perhaps I had underestimated the impact email did have on the development of some of my relationships with the boys.

Connecting Moments: The Foundation of Relationship Building

“I want you to focus on taking a deep centring breath. Letting your stomach rise as you inhale, and then fall as you exhale.” Kenny G was playing softly in the back ground as I sat, cross legged, on a table at the front of the darkened classroom calmly guiding the boys through a progressive muscle relaxation exercise. Bodies were scattered all over the floor breathing deeply and alternating between tensing and relaxing various muscle parts. I had found out that only three out of the eleven players had ever done it before and it was a skill the boys had chosen to work on. It was also something I loved doing.

When we reached a state of complete relaxation I took them on an imagery adventure: first practising ‘seeing’ themselves ‘hitting’, ‘serving’ or ‘digging’ that perfect ball and then to their ‘special place’, an imaginary space where they could go to if they were having trouble falling asleep. After giving the boys a moment to think about the place where they would feel this calm, peaceful, warm and relaxed, they then followed as I led them through ‘hearing’ their place, ‘feeling’ their place, ‘smelling’ their place, and even ‘tasting’ their place. Calming colours eventually washed over them and with the blink of an eye their colours changed to those more energizing. In less than a minute, players began to stretch, sit up, and even wake up those neighbours who had fallen asleep.

A couple hours later, as we huddled around to cheer the end of practice, Mark instructed the boys to go home and think about one thing they had learned from practice and one thing they had learned from class. "Class" was the name given to our team sport psych sessions since they took place in the classroom. "Class was wicked," a player blurted out, as other heads nodded and "hmm hmmed" in agreement. Another player who had missed that evening's discussion groaned as he exclaimed, "I can't believe I had to miss class!"

As the boys collected their gear and I chatted to Mark about upcoming events, Alex, someone who I had really not spoken much with, came up and asked, "Are we going to do the relaxation thing again?" "The beauty of relaxation," I replied, "is that you can practice it at home any time you would like." Wanting to share more of his excitement about the activity, Alex continued to explain his feelings, "When you said feel your muscles sink into the floor, I was like 'Wow, that's what they are doing.' And when I was doing the breathing with my stomach it was all tingly and cool."

I left the gym that night with the memory of Alex running through my head. During the tournament on the weekend I had noticed him on the court with clenched fists and a scowl on his face after he had made a mistake. One turned into two, which turned into three, and then four, finally landing him a seat on the bench. Trying to reach out without just barging up to him, I sent Alex a personalized story about Tiger Woods when I got home that night. The idea was to help him understand that even star athletes get frustrated and angry while performing and that tensions could be released. Reflecting on our earlier exchange that day, I contemplated his coming up to speak to me: "Did he feel more comfortable with me because I had sent him the

story or did he really just love the activity? Would I notice more openness online now that we had talked in person?" These questions continued to fuel my research study.

As I typed my journal entry that evening at my office desk, I was thrilled to notice that Alex emailed me. I received his biography and learned that he loved sports, particularly basketball, rap music and being in the gym. After having worked hard on his vertical, he was enjoying volleyball even more this year, especially 'skyling' as he hit the ball. Reading his email also gave me perspective into why he got angry on the court. "It is sometimes hard for me to control my anger when I play sports. Things that bother me the most are not getting playing time, bad reffing and especially not playing well."

Letting go of things you cannot control and gaining perspective were two skills that Alex and I worked on together throughout the season. In the end, he became a more composed player on the court, which in turn improved his play. Whether it was the personalized story via email or the relaxation activity that prompted Alex's openness, the end result was that we continued speaking openly online and in-person. With his email we had achieved what I now call a 'connecting' moment.

Looking back, I realize that unconsciously this is what I was after the entire time, a 'connecting moment' – a shared interaction that would enable the player to drop some of their defences and take risks by engaging more fully, through two-way communication, in our relationship. Although I did not attain that connecting moment with every player on the team (which I explore in more detail at the end of

the section), I did feel that with most of the players, the connecting moment came when we met one-on-one.

For example, I had scheduled, prior to practice, three individual meetings for those players who had completed and handed in their T.A.I.S. Test (Nideffer, 1976) questionnaires. Although it has been suggested in the literature that psychological testing is not practical for athletes (Orlick, 1987; Bull, 1995), I found my experience to parallel Henschen's (1991) when he explained that psychometric tests can be used to facilitate the process of establishing rapport and trust.

Sitting in a school conference room just down the hall from our 'regular' classroom, the boys had the option of either sitting down at the corner of a table with me or choosing a more comfortable seat for us, the couches. Explaining the results of each category got the conversation rolling. Often it would twist and turn snaking from volleyball to other life events and back again.

Simon, a dominant player on the court, was conversely very quiet in team meetings. We discussed his tendencies to get down on himself and this particular night, alone with me, he took a risk and shared his feelings of having more fun this season as opposed to last when the coach yelled at him a lot. When I mentioned that he was high on the introverted scale he looked surprised at first but then he said, "No, that makes sense. Sometimes when I'm around people for too long I just snap."

I didn't expect it to happen so quickly, but the foundation of my relationship with the three players I had completed T.A.I.S. meetings with had been laid.

Immediately after their meetings, and then subsequently after my meetings with the

other players, I began to notice a difference in communication patterns. Our relationships had moved forward, and a deeper sense of trust was developed.

The boys initiated conversations about the things they were trying and how they were working when we were sitting in the bleachers, standing around after the game, or even at the end of the bench. In a follow-up email that Simon sent the same night of his individual meeting, he shared even more of his thoughts, "...As to what we talked about on the TAIS test, I'm investing in a Discman so I can have my 'alone time' before every game, and I'm really gonna' work on my self talk. At practice after we went through the test, I noticed that I do talk to myself negatively when I do something wrong, just like you said. I really am going to have to work on that part I guess..."

I now realize that the combination of the athlete's level of comfort and me 'hanging out', an often overlooked, but most integral part of the beginning stages of service delivery (Andersen, Van Raalte, & Brewer, 2001; Halliwell et al., 1999), contributed to the impromptu 'teachable moments' (Bond, 2002; Poczwardowski, 2001) that had begun to occur.

Yet, as I continued to work with the boys and form relationships, I constantly struggled to understand how email would play a part. I would feverishly type out journal entries trying to make sense of the thoughts that kept invading my mind, "Who had I spoken with in person first? Email first? Who was emailing me now? When did they email? Was there a pattern?"

After completing the study, I scoured the emails I received and the journal entries I wrote looking for a pattern that would shed some insight on building

relationships which used email as a means to enlighten the confusion I had felt during my experience. I couldn't find one but after reading a particular article by Simons & Andersen (1995), I began to think that I may have been asking the wrong question. Perhaps it was my personality as a part of the process of service delivery (Andersen, 2000) that had a stronger impact on the building of my relationships with the athletes rather than the specific techniques I had used.

I have realized as a teacher, that my personality affects my students and on more than one occasion, those whom have moved on, have said that they do not miss math but that they do miss math class. On the other hand, some students do not connect with my personality and it is conceivable then that in this study, some part of my personality prevented me from connecting with some athletes.

I learned that both personalized emails and personalized meetings had the potential to facilitate the 'connecting moment' that I sought with each of the players. Throughout the season however, there were two boys that never once emailed me or met with me one-on-one. I wanted to learn from my experience and take with me any lessons that could help me connect with athletes in future consultation situations. After the study was completed I explored why I didn't connect with the two specific athletes.

When I Didn't Connect

In 1995, Simons & Andersen revealed that several of their experienced SPCs in their study emphasized the importance of discovering with whom you work most effectively. Gloria Balague for example (as cited in Simons & Andersen) believes that she works best with "People who have very good knowledge of their

bodies...who can really discriminate between minute sensations in their body and their performance” (p. 458). As a teacher, I have recognized that I typically get along best with students who are committed, hard-working, friendly and have a sense of humour. I also believe that this transfers to the athletes I work with as well. Reflecting on this however, still did not help me understand why I did not make the connection with the two athletes, because in my opinion, both would fit into this category. I wondered, “Was there something else I could have done to ensure a connection with these players?”

Although I believe that my personality, as well as the type of interactions (online/in-person), I had with the team influenced my relationship with the players. I have now come to a better understanding, after having read the end of season questionnaires, of what happened in both instances or what didn't happen.

The first player who I felt I did not connect with during the season injured himself early on and thus missed many of our initial sport psych sessions, practices, and games. It was made crystal clear, after reading one of his responses from his end of season questionnaire, why we hadn't connected online: “I would prefer to have more in-person meetings than online because it is easier to communicate in person than online. Also my email never really worked – I never received any of the messages that kelly (sic) sent.”

I had seen Peter numerous times in person during classes, practices, games, and tournaments, and never once did we talk just one-on-one. Wanting to connect, but not wanting to seem too forward, I sent an email half way during the season saying, “Hi Peter. I know we haven't had a lot of opportunities to talk so I'm just

checking in. Let me know if there is anything I can do for you.” At our final team meeting we laughed at both ourselves and at each other. Why didn’t I go up to him in person and ask the same question? Why didn’t he tell me his email wasn’t working? As we chuckled at the absurdity of it, we promised that ‘next time’ we would do things differently and it was that moment that I felt we finally ‘connected’.

Halliwell et al. (1999) suggest that when a SPC works with a team, there will be varied levels of interest, commitment, and performance amongst the athletes. As a result, some will buy into and run with the program while others will choose to opt out. As I watched the second player with whom I felt I did not connect with, struggle on the court on different occasions throughout the season, I contemplated why we hadn’t spoken one-on-one. I felt that I could help him with his athletic performance, but my intuition told me that when he was ready, we would talk. Unfortunately, we never did. He revealed in his end of season questionnaire that it was a lack of his personal commitment, which inhibited him and I communicating more often throughout the season. He explained that, “I felt Kelly was very open communication wise and if I were to commit more time she would have as well.”

In the conclusion of his 1987 article, “Reflections on SportPsych Consulting With Individuals and Team Sport Athletes at Summer and Winter Olympic Games”, Orlick contemplates if and how we can reach an athlete before they fall and calls upon professionals to address this issue. After nine years of teaching experience, I unfortunately, accept that I can not reach every one. In helping professions such as education and sport psychology, it is often a difficult concept to accept; but even though we acknowledge the limits of our personal capabilities (Smith as cited in

Simons & Andersen, 1995) and realize that not every SPC can work with every athlete and help them with every kind of issue (Simons & Andersen), this does not mean we abandon our efforts to continually strive to improve our practice. Instead we continue to learn (Wenz as cited in Simons & Andersen), we adapt our methods of service delivery, and we continue to become more aware of how our words, actions, and personalities affect the athletes we are working with.

If You Look like a SPC and Sound like a SPC then You Must be One...

Out of the blue, one player turned around to look at his fellow teammates and asked, "Is anyone else feeling overwhelmed?" Surprise and excitement simultaneously surged through me. When I began the mid-season meeting I had planned to follow my discussion outline regarding communication and team harmony. Until that moment we had rarely ventured off the path during team meetings, but this time we were running off into a totally unplanned direction.

I was thrilled as the conversation concerning both mental and physical burnout and recovery ensued and because I felt confident about facilitating this kind of discussion. The boys first shared their 'overloaded' schedules with one another including school, work, family, dating, and other extra-curricular and athletic commitments. I jumped in after the boys acknowledged each others' feelings and challenged them to come up with recovery possibilities and potential benefits. We also worked on our perspective as we consciously decided to change our current self-talk from 'have to' to 'want to'.

Half an hour later we did come back to where we had left off, but even though I was following my 'outline,' the boys were still generating and directing most of the

conversation. At one point, as the players were responding to one another with comments like, “As long as you are focusing on the process and not the outcome,” and “Sometimes you just have to block out what is going on the bench and just focus on yourself on the court,” I wondered if they needed me to be there at all. It felt amazing to finally have reached a point in my sport psychology consulting where I could act as a facilitator rather than a lecturer.

I believe that we as a team were able to reach this important step, openly communicating and supporting one another because of the ‘connections’ I had made with many of the players. Being honest, accepting, sharing, and trusting are attributes that contribute to a successful ‘real’ team (Botterill, 2000) and the boys had arrived that night ready to do just that. Even those who I still felt I had not ‘connected’ with seemed at ease with their team members and me as they contributed their personal thoughts and feelings regarding the different topics of conversation. I was elated that night as I typed my journal entry. Little did I know that my major mistakes were waiting for me just around the corner and elation would quickly turn to anxiety.

An Error in Judgement...

I practiced my own self-talk as I washed my hair and showered for school, “Release the guilt. Things will be ok. You are allowed to make mistakes.” I felt sick to my stomach and I knew it was due to the guilt I was feeling. Part of me was upset with myself for making the mistake, but what was really bothering me was that I had hurt the feelings of someone who I cared about, the feelings of a player.

I was shocked at the time at how guilty I felt. I couldn’t remember the last time that these types of feelings had produced such physical tension. I had grown

into a person who could handle the common day circumstances I typically faced and through an evaluation of perspective and self-talk, I was able to release my feelings of guilt. They, however, had sneaked up on me and although my own tendency towards perfectionism has less severe outcomes, I did connect with the author who speaks to her own recurring demons:

“In the spring of 1986, at the age of 15, I invited bulimia to come live with me. She never moved out. Sometimes I tuck her deep in my closet, behind forgotten dresses and old shoes. Then one day, I’ll come across her – as if by accident – and experience genuine surprise that she remains with me...”

Tillman-Healy (as cited in Sparkes, 2002, p.75)

“Remember and forgive” are the words heart surgeon, Dr. Curt Tribble uses when releasing himself from mistakes made (Newburg, 1996). It took a few days, but by using my self-talk and looking at different perspectives of the situation, I did get through my feelings of guilt. In hindsight, I think what generated those feelings, was my belief that as an experienced teacher, I should have known better. Here is what happened...

Our team meeting was over and I circulated around the classroom handing out each player, coach, and team manager’s personalized list of what others thought they brought to the team. “Who wrote, ‘Wicked middle, crazy hit and good team leader?’” one player shouted out to the group. “How about, ‘Digs stuff up like a shovel’ yelled another.” Smiles and grins adorned each of the players’ faces as they read their list.

At the end of the season more than a few players chose this as their favourite activity of the year. And I spoke to a parent at the end of the season who relayed a message from another, "He came home and with a smile on his face, immediately grabbed this paper out of his gym bag. 'Look, Mom,' he said, 'look what they wrote about me.'"

When they all filed out to head to the gym, I caught up to John. I had tried all day to get a hold of him, but our paths never crossed. I emailed him in the morning but I found out he didn't have time to check his emails that day. I tried calling him at school in the afternoon, but Mark couldn't find him. And finally I thought I would just talk to him prior to our team meeting but in the end he came late from work and walked into the class just after we had started. "John," I said, getting his attention in the hallway just outside the door, "I couldn't find the list you sent me. I know you sent it by email but I just can't find it anywhere."

"Ah," he said, "that's why my comments weren't on some of the players sheets. I printed it out and gave it to you in Carmen." Of course, it hit me like a tonne of bricks; his sheet was in my purse. I felt horrible and it must have shown on my face because John was quick to add, "Don't worry about it." But I did, and I could tell by his facial expression that I had hurt his feelings. A sinking sensation was washing over me: I had messed up.

I apologized, but it felt rushed, as I knew he had to get to practice. I came home that night and emailed John, telling him again how sorry I was and offered a few options that I could try in order to 'correct' my mistake. He returned my email that night, "Once again that's ok, everyone's allowed to slip up once in awhile, it's not a big deal what so ever, don't worry about it! I'll attach the comments if you'd

like to add them, then that's cool, if you have time, and if not then that's completely cool too!! No Worries!!" After I read his response I felt a little better thinking, "Hmm, our roles seem to be reversed tonight, maybe I am teaching some psych skills through modeling a mistake." In the end I re-compiled all the lists so that everyone's comments were included and I handed them out the next time I was with the team.

Although I knew immediately after speaking to John that that I had not made the best decision possible, I did not at the time sit down and try to figure out why I did what I did. Reading, and re-reading my journal entry as well as taking the time to reflect as I now write about this, enhanced my understanding of the 'why' and leads me to believe that it was a matter of impatience on my behalf. With the best intentions in mind, I wanted the team to have their personal lists prior to their last tournament with hopes that their team cohesiveness would be solidified further, I put the team ahead of an individual. Instead of building team cohesiveness, I made one player feel left out, hurt his feelings, and in the end did not provide the team with the best possible service delivery (i.e., by distributing incomplete lists).

Even though I knew instantly that I should have waited and cleared up the miscommunication with John prior to handing out the sheets, I now believe it was caused by my narrow focus. Because I so strongly believed that I had to get the team their sheets before the tournament, I was unable to look at the big picture or the potential consequences of my actions. I believe that my greatest lesson learned from this particular situation and the one that I will remember and take with me when consulting in the future, is that instead of rushing and forcing the activity to fit into

my timeline, I may have to adjust my perspective, be patient and just wait for the opportunity to present itself.

Eventually I remembered and I forgave myself, but by using Johns' (1994) revised nursing model of guided reflection (please see Appendix H), as suggested by Anderson et al. (in press), I was able to understand why the situation unfolded as it did (Anderson as cited in Anderson, in press). In the following section I use the model again to explore another 'situation' that I encountered while consulting, and will also use it as a guide for my summary chapter.

After the Team Cookie Crumbled

Just when one thinks they're doing a pretty good job (yes, that would be me) – it's time to be humbled. I entered the school doors of our evening opponents and began walking down the long hallway that would lead me to the gym. As I approached I could hear sounds from the girls' game already in session. "Hi guys," I said to some of our players who were playing with the balls just outside the gym doors, "How did your tournament go this weekend?" "Not too great," was the reply from one player, "we didn't win a game." Although this had happened a couple of times at tournaments throughout the year, more recently the boys had been seeded with teams that were comparable in ability and had tasted some success in the win department.

We talked a little more and I then walked through the gym doors, doing a quick scan of the bleachers to find the other boys from our team. We did the usual hellos, how are you doing, and also discussed the weekend games with reference to what they would like to cover in the upcoming sport psych session scheduled for a

couple days later. I had spoken with Mark the week before to find out the importance of the upcoming game but it had been too early to tell. As I stood next to the boys I scanned their faces for signs of anxiousness or nervousness but couldn't seem to find any. We had been talking for at least ten minutes and they hadn't mentioned the significance of the game so I figured either it wasn't a must win situation or they didn't know it was a must win situation.

I saw Mark sitting with the assistant coaches on another set of bleachers and went up to inquire about the weekend games and the potential result of our match which was moments away from starting. "They've got to win tonight to make the playoffs," was Mark's response to my question. Not probing any further I assumed then that the boys didn't know. The final whistle was blown and the boys replaced the girls as they began to clear off the court. Our players had a fabulous warm-up with lots of energy, focus, and support, unfortunately in my opinion, reaffirming my assumption that they didn't realize the significance of the game. Oh, how quickly things can change.

The boys were pumped and they huddled in a pre-game circle, not unlike any other game. What was different tonight however, was the opening comment from one of the assistant coaches, "Ok boys – this is the ultimate game – if we don't win, the season's over." I felt my heart sink and the gym start to spin. Thoughts immediately raced through my head, "This is the first game that 'matters' that the boys are favoured to win. Oh my God we haven't even talked about it. They're likely going to come out flat. What do I say now?"

I honestly have no recollection of what I said in the team huddle but I can tell you that what I did say had little positive effect on the boys. Serves were missed, passes were shanked, and balls were either hit into the net or hit out of bounds. Our opponents played like they had nothing to lose, and they didn't – they weren't expected to win. The majority of our team however played as if you could see the heavy boulders of pressure weighing down their shoulders. Months of work quickly unravelled as some players reverted back to their previous and not so helpful habits on the court: becoming extremely intense and frustrated, not being able to focus on the play, getting angry, and just not being able to execute any of the technical skills. It didn't get better after game one and we ended up losing three straight. We had performed what is called the classic textbook choke.

After the game, the boys, with pained faces on their hung heads, listened to Mark speak, "Remember guys, it's important to acknowledge and accept how you are feeling and to take advantage of this opportunity to learn. If you do, you will have something positive to bring forward with you into your next volleyball endeavour." Even though it was exactly what I would have said, the words at the time seemed to just bounce off the boys and we all left the gym stunned, like a deer caught in the headlights of a car.

I wondered how I could have let this happen. I realized that if I had seen this situation in a textbook I would have undoubtedly known what to do and would have intervened prior to the game. Upon reflection I believe that I did not ask enough questions. Due in part to my lack of experience, I had been lulled into what appeared to me as 'things running smoothly'. Instead of waiting to ask Mark if it was a must

win situation and just assuming that the players didn't know, I should have just asked. And I should have done it as soon as I walked into the gym.

If I had asked the questions immediately I could have taken five minutes to meet with the players and the coaches. The players would have been given an opportunity to express how they were feeling. I found out later at our debriefing meeting that the players were indeed feeling a lot of different things: A couple had changed their routines by not doing their imagery or relaxation, others were thinking ahead to their next opponents in the playoffs, some felt so much pressure that that's all they could think about, others could only focus on the outcome, and finally a few said that perhaps they just tried too hard to ignore their feelings of pressure rather than acknowledging them. Meeting with them would have also given me an opportunity to review some important psych skills concepts like 'us, them, conditions' as well as emphasizing a focus on the process and things we can control. I can not guarantee that the team would have won, but I realize that I could have helped them increase their chances of playing their best.

Tammen (2000) believes negative situations can be enlightening and I strongly believe that I have learned an enormous amount from this particular situation. With mistakes comes learning as long as one has taken the time to recognize what it is we did wrong and what we will do differently the next time (Andersen, Raalte, & Brewer, 2000). I have done this and have learned three important lessons. First, clear communication between the coach, the players and myself is critical, particularly towards the end of a season. Second, as a result of the idea of clear communication, I have learned that I will need to ask more questions in

situations where I am unsure of exactly what is going on. And third, have a back-up plan ready in case things start to spin out of control. I unfortunately had not 'looked ahead' to possible events and as a result was poorly prepared when an unexpected one occurred. As a novice SPC, I was again reminded of the importance of the rehearsal of potential situations along with my reactions to them and possible courses of action. This is something we work on with athletes, isn't it? Perhaps these reminders occur to help us avoid complacency.

During the debriefing meeting the following week, each of us, including myself, shared our feeling about what we were thinking, what we learned, and what we would do differently next time. The boys were already anticipating what we could do together next season if I came back and reading the players and coaches' end of season questionnaires reaffirmed my belief that even with the end result, it had been a great season. Many players thanked me for my time and for helping the team grow as players on the court and as individuals in every day life and Mark described his experience as follows, "I really appreciated the time and effort you put into this team. In everyone's eyes you were as much of the team as the coaching staff and players. I try to teach a lot of the skills anyways but I can see how much more effective it is to have a consultant doing it. It relieves a lot of time and has a greater impact with the players." In hindsight, I was a part of the volleyball team and now as I reflect through writing I realize how the process of becoming a part of this team needed to be done in person; email was still important, it just played a smaller role than I had first anticipated.

Final Reflections and Implications

The quality of the athlete-SPC relationship has a tremendous effect on the outcome of sport psychology interventions (Petipas et al. 1999; Poczwardowski, 2001) yet gaining the experience necessary to acquire these interpersonal skills that contribute to building rapport is rarely emphasized in most sport psychology training programs (Orlick & Partington, 1987; Petipas et al., 1999). Although not part of my training program, I actively sought out a qualified supervisor and as many sport psychology consulting experiences I could find as a means to develop. I was fortunate to be able to combine my practical interests of gaining experience with my research interests of examining the influence of email on communication and the SPC-athlete relationship.

Tammen (2000) suggests that an ideal internship experience should first enable a student to discover their own boundaries of competence and then allow the student to be stretched even further while working with a qualified and supportive supervisor. Not only was I able to do this but I believe my journey allowed me to finally put into practice all the 'theory' I had read prior to starting. After completing the season and rereading the literature, everything seemed to make more sense to me. I believe that Anderson et al. (in press) capture the meaning of the comparison of theory versus integrated knowledge-in-action when they cite Argyris & Schön's (1974) example of riding a bike, "In order to successfully ride a bike individuals draw on more than just theoretical knowledge, they must engage in practice to develop and draw on tacit knowledge-in-action" (p. 7). I finally understood what it felt like to be 'hanging out', doing the time, and being part of a team in the role of a SPC. I must

stress however, that I believe the greatest legacy from experiencing the process of sport psychology delivery was that it enabled me to engage in reflective practice.

Reflective practice is about taking the time to learn from experience (Ghaye & Lillymann as cited in Anderson et al., in press) and is a suggested tool to monitor and assist a beginning SPC's practical development (Andersen, 2000; Anderson et al., in press; Holt & Streat, 2001; Simons & Andersen, 1995). By engaging in reflective practice I was able to "access, make sense of, and learn from the relevant knowledge-in-action that contributes to actually 'doing sport psychology'" (Anderson et al., in press, p. 8).

My reflective practice took on what Anderson et al. (in press) describe as a practical role. I consciously took the time to reflect on my actions throughout the season and how they possibly could have affected my relationships with the players. I have a better understanding of how important it is to spend time with the team, to listen to their concerns, and to maintain a broad focus incorporating the consequences of my potential actions. I am also more aware of how my personal characteristics (e.g., desire to be perfect) and values (e.g., liking those players who I believe are hard working) may affect my service delivery and the development and maintenance of the relationships I have with the players and coaches. Reflection encouraged me to ask, "Why did I do that?" in order to better understand the tensions I was feeling and to better the chances I would avoid unhelpful courses of action in the future (Anderson, as cited in Anderson et al., in press).

Although the email did not play as significant a role as I had anticipated, I believe that it indeed positively influenced my relationship with some of the players.

Immediately after the study I would have said that the email had little effect on my relationships. But after writing this chapter and taking the time to read and reflect, I believe now that it did. Rereading the descriptive emails, particularly the ones I have used in this chapter, made me realize that the boys' provided me with 'rich' information about themselves. It may not have been the quantity I was expecting, but in most cases, I received quality. I would support Zizzi and Perna's (2002) claim that perhaps the most effective method may be to integrate both traditional and electronic methods of service delivery and urge professionals to continue to conduct more research in order to find ways to integrate email as a form of communication. As it turned out, one player preferred to correspond with me via email and another reported in his end of season questionnaire, "It just gave me a sense of thinking that she was always there to discuss a topic if need be."

I strongly believe that reflective practice has improved my service delivery and that I have grown both professionally and personally. I would strongly agree with Andersen (2000), Anderson et al., (in press), Holt & Streaan (2001), and Simons & Andersen (1995) who recommend that reflective strategies can be used as a tool to improve both the education and training of applied sport psychology graduate students and the service delivery of those professionals already in practice. Just recently I attended a conference where a well known sport psychologist was presenting. During the question period I asked, "What mistake did you learn the most from and how did it influence your practice?"

After the initial look of surprise on his face, and then a grin, he replied, "I worked with one team earlier on and I never prepared them for what to expect if they

won.” This was something I hadn’t thought of before and I have now filed this piece of his ‘knowledge-in-action’ under my lessons to remember file. I strongly recommend that we, as a field, respond to Simons and Andersen’s (1995) call for practitioner knowledge, stemming from both positive and negative experiences, to be recorded and published for the benefit of both the neophyte and the experienced SPC.

Being a first time narrator, I struggled with descriptive writing and the depth of reflection a confessional tale (Sparkes, 2000) calls for. In the end I believe that it indeed was the style of writing that best suited my intentions and purposes and as Richardson (2000) suggested, writing did turn out to be “A way of ‘knowing’ – a method of discovery and analysis, instead of just a mopping up at the end activity” (p. 923). I believe I have grown immensely by engaging in this representational style of research and along with other researchers (Biddle et al., 2001; Culver, Gilbert & Trudel, 2003; Sparkes, 2002), I would encourage others to explore alternate methods of data collection and analysis in order to provide different ways to understand experiences and to generate multiple ways of knowing.

The Meaning of ‘Chaos’

The relationship I had envisioned, one with trust, honesty, and humour, seemed to have been realized with the boys by the end of the season. While interpretation is always flawed, I now believe that I have a deeper understanding of how we ‘got there’. Relationships are both complex and dynamic, with every kind of connection having an influence. For me a combination of hanging out, being involved physically in warm-up, sitting on the bench with the players, sending

personal emails, having one-on-one meetings, discussing TAIS test results, conducting team sessions, and travelling with the team all contributed to the development of my relationships with the players. As I continue to consult I will try to catch myself when being impatient, but not complacent, and ensure that I approach coaches and players directly about issues. I will also remind myself not only to rely on what has worked for me in the past, but also to search for and try new and different ways to connect with athletes.

Chapter IV

Summary: Lessons Learned and Implications for Further Research

Introduction

Self-examination and self-evaluation are necessary for the learning and development of consulting skills (Simons & Anderson, 1995). By following a relatively detailed model, practitioners, who are inexperienced with reflective practice, can increase the likelihood of learning from their consulting experience (Anderson, Knowles, & Gilbourne, in press). With this in mind, I have chosen to follow an adapted version of Johns' (1994) revised nursing model of guided reflection (Anderson et al.). By answering the suggested nineteen cue questions (please see Appendix H) I will in turn provide both a summary of my two previous chapters, answer the core question of the model, "What information do I need to access in order to learn through this consulting experience" (p. 34), and discuss implications for further research. The following sub sections: Description of the Consulting Experience, Reflection, Consequences of Actions, Alternative Tactics, and Learning are also part of the revised model.

Description of the Consulting Experience

Conducting my thesis study with a local high school male varsity volleyball team enabled me, for the first time, to engage as a 'full-time' consultant. Instead of monthly meetings, a single presentation on a given topic, or just speaking to a team when things weren't going well, I was involved from beginning to end, for the good, the bad and everything in-between. Over the season I became part of the team; and as

mentioned in chapter three, by the end, I had built what I had first envisioned, a trusting, honest and humorous relationship with most of the boys.

One of the essential factors that I believe contributed to the experience being so rewarding for me, in terms of both the individuals who I have come to know, as well as the lessons learned, was the level of commitment from all parties involved. The coach, who was also a former elite volleyball player, had engaged in sport psychology training in university and valued it still in his new role. This strong belief, combined with the support of parents, was what I believe originally facilitated the players' willingness to participate. Ultimately however, I believe that it was the characteristics of the players', their determination to be the best they could be and their commitment to the team that contributed to our final outcome.

Without all members of our team being on board with the idea that psychological skill training could improve performance both on and off the court, I believe that we would not have achieved what we did. At the end of the study each player and each coach believed that our sport psychology program had positively affected the team in some way. The experience wasn't perfect, but the numerous lessons that each of us learned can be taken with us into future endeavours.

I have identified three key issues from my consulting experience/study that I would like to further reflect on: the building of relationships, the role email played in the consulting experience and the importance of open communication between members of a team.

Reflection

Entering the study, my primary goal was to provide the best possible consulting experience I could. I integrated the use of email into more traditional methods of service delivery (face-to-face meetings) not only because research in the area was limited (Zizzi & Perna, 2002; Watson, Tenebaum, Lidor, and Alfermann, 2001), but more importantly, because I believed it would help me achieve my primary goal. Based on previous life experiences in Tele-course teaching, research on gender and communication, and other consulting experiences, I began the study believing that email could possibly enhance the SPC-athlete relationship and thus increase the likelihood of encountering a best possible consulting experience. I believed it could do this for two reasons.

First, I thought that male athletes might feel more comfortable expressing their thoughts, emotions, and feelings online rather than in-person. And second, because I was working with a technologically savvy age group (Zizzi and Perna, 2002), I believed that by expanding my availability, the players might contact me more frequently and thus an increase in the utilization of sport psychology skills might be realized.

In hindsight, I believe that the boys' limited level of experience with sport psychology training, as well as the condensed high school volleyball season, should also have influenced my original beliefs that email would contribute heavily to the building of our relationships.

Consequences of Actions

As a result of exploring how email affected communication between athletes and their SPC in my study, I learned above and beyond what I thought I would prior to starting. Along with providing insight into the practicalities of email (based on the perceptions of the players and the coaches, as well as my own), the study also provided me with an opportunity to more fully understand how I initiate, develop, maintain, and repair relationships with athletes. By utilizing multiple techniques, such as hanging out, being involved physically in warm-up (shagging balls) and games (sitting on the bench), conducting individual (online and in-person) and team meetings, and travelling with the team, I attempted to build a relationship with each and every player. Although a 'deep' connection was not made with every player, as often is the case in teaching, I was once again reminded of the importance of continually striving to find new and/or different ways to building relationships with young adults.

One's personality also has the potential to significantly affect the SPC-athlete relationship (Andersen, 2000). Using longitudinal reflection (Anderson et al., in press) in the stage of data analysis, I was able to consciously begin to self-examine the personal characteristics I bring to relationships. By exploring the two significant 'mistakes' that I believe I made during the consulting experience, I was able to better understand the tension I was feeling and increased the likeliness of avoiding the same course of action in future situations (Anderson, cited in Anderson et al.).

Although I had the feeling during the season that most of the boys preferred speaking to me in-person (either in team or one-on-one meetings), many of the

reasons for this did not surface until the end of the season when I read their questionnaire responses. A majority of the players found the email to be too impersonal, others didn't feel the need to use it because they saw me in-person often enough, one found it hard to express his ideas 'on paper', and one didn't use it because he didn't completely understand the purpose of the email. Others however, found it easier to talk about personal issues and concerns online, and one enjoyed the speed and efficiency of email.

During the season I felt that email did not play a factor in the development of the building of the relationships with the athletes. When writing my confessional tale (Sparkes, 2002) and exploring my data more thoroughly however, I began to understand that it did indeed affect some of my relationships. I may have not received the quantity of consulting question emails that I thought I would have, but I did receive the quality. In many of the emails that the boys sent, the content was both detailed and expressive with regards to feelings and emotions. And at the end of the study, I also learned that even though the boys were online frequently, they found replying to be a burden. They much preferred to receive 'read only' emails.

Due to the commitment of all members of the team, as well as the strong support for open and honest communication demonstrated by both the coaches and myself, I was also fortunate to witness productive team building in the process (Botterill, 2000; Orlick, 2000; Yukelson, 1997). Although prior research has suggested that male athletes may be less open and less willing to share their feelings and thoughts with a SPC (Manian et al., 2001; Martin et al., 2001; Martin et al., 1997; Meyers, 1997; Yambor & Connelly, 1991), my experience with these particular boys

was different. Not only did they express their feelings to me in one-on-one meetings, but also in team meetings and discussions with the coaches. During these interactions the boys openly shared with one another their perceived feelings and needs with other team members.

Although I had the impression throughout the season that the boys were enjoying our sessions (both team and individuals), I didn't fully realize the effect that I, a SPC, would have on them until we had finished. In their end of season questionnaires, many of the players shared how much they enjoyed having someone to talk to and asked if I would be coming back next year. What really caught my attention though, was their strong belief in team building. It was a skill they valued at the beginning of the season, but their belief and ability in it grew tremendously by the end of the season.

Alternative Tactics

With reflection I have recognized that in three specific situations I would now choose different courses of actions. The first concerns the 'connecting moments' that I was trying to achieve with each player on the team. Although one of the players admitted that it was his lack of effort that contributed to us not fully 'connecting', the same situation with a second player was due to miscommunication. Although I cannot guarantee that we would have connected, I should have spoken to him in person instead of emailing him to ask if there was any way I could help. That way I would have found out before the season ended that his email wasn't working and the potential for more regular one-on-one discussions might have been realized.

The second situation concerned John and the individual lists of what each member brought to our team, which I had planned as a team-building experience. I believed that for the benefit of the team, the lists had to be distributed prior to their upcoming tournament, even though John's comments were missing. Because I was so narrowly focused on this, I couldn't see one of the potential outcomes, which was hurting John's feelings. Instead of bringing the team closer together, which was the purpose of the activity; I inadvertently made one of the players feel left out. Upon reflection, I believe delaying the activity would not have had the same detrimental effects that rushing it did.

Finally, the third situation revolves around the team's choke in the final league game. This was a game where winning was necessary to make the playoffs. I had, unfortunately been lulled into what I thought was 'things are going well.' I also made the mistake of making too many assumptions about the team's performance and not asking enough questions to be fully informed. In hindsight, I realize that by asking a few simple questions, and determining whether or not the players' knew they 'had' to win, I could have had a quick five-minute meeting to bring the team together. This would have allowed the players to share any feelings they may have been experiencing and would have allowed me to review some simple sport psychology principles prior to starting the game. Although I can't guarantee that we would have won that night, I do believe that their chances of playing better would have been enhanced.

Learning

Overall, I was extremely pleased with how the season unfolded. The lessons I learned from this experience have affected me not only as a SPC, but as a person and teacher as well. In addition, I believe that my participants, based on their comments, also benefited from the experience. In the following sections through reflection and interpretation, I will share what I have learned with regards to my entry level research questions (Ellis, 1998) and my service delivery practices as a SPC. My hope is that other members in the field of sport psychology will be informed and that a contribution to the literature will be made.

Research Question #1: How Does Email Positively and Negatively Influence Communication between the Athlete and the SPC?

Throughout the season the majority of players spoke to me in person rather than using email. Some did not enjoy using email as a means to communicate with me because they found it too impersonal. Others felt there wasn't a need because they saw me often enough in person. One player didn't feel comfortable expressing his thoughts through writing and another wasn't sure of the exact purpose of the email. Through responses at the end of season focus group and in the end of season questionnaires, I learned that both a lack of time and effort on behalf of many of the players significantly contributed to their decision to not respond to general team emails.

Other players however, enjoyed using email as a means to communicate with me due the fact that they often found it hard to express some of their feelings and emotions in front of others or in individual meetings. This finding supports Zizzi and

Perna's (2002) suggestion that some athletes, who are typically not likely to contact a SPC, may do so if a follow-up email is sent to them after a team meeting. And one player believed it was nice to have because they knew they could always get a hold of me if they needed to.

Email was a useful communicative tool when sending players 'read only' information (e.g., upcoming topics of discussion and schedules for individual meetings), when used as a catalyst for team discussions, and when catching up with players who had missed team meetings. One player also enjoyed its speed and efficiency.

Based on these findings from the study, I believe that email can be an effective tool when delivering a sport psychology program with an individual or team. I would support Zizzi and Perna (2002) when they suggest that to maximize the potential for a best possible service delivery, electronic methods should be integrated with traditional in-person methods. I believe the results of this study have begun to contribute to the literature but that further research in this area is necessary.

One limitation of the study was that only one specific team was involved. This team had a limited amount of experience with sport psychology training and throughout the season expressed a preference for in person consulting. I would suggest that other researchers explore email as part of sport psychology service delivery with athletes who have more experience with sport psychology skills, are competing at an elite level, are of different ages, are female, and are those who are involved in different team and individual sports.

Research Question #2: How Did the Use of Email Ultimately Affect the Relationship between the Athlete and the SPC?

Immediately following the study I believed that using email as a communicative tool did not affect my relationships with the players based on my preconceptions going into the study. After reflecting and writing chapter three however, I began to realize that it did. Re-reading emails from the players and writing about those experiences allowed me to understand how they did affect the initiation, development, maintenance, and reparation of my relationships with each of the boys on varying levels.

I was once again reminded that by including numerous techniques that help develop rapport (e.g., physically warming up with the team, travelling with the team, conducting individual and team meetings, sending out personalized emails, and sitting on the bench with the players) the more likely I was to connect with each player. I was also reminded of the complexity of communication (e.g., verbal, physical, non-verbal, written, omission – what isn't said) and that each player may respond differently to each of its distinct components at any given time. I believe that as consultants and as researchers, it is important that we take the time to reflect on the potential consequences our actions may have on our athletes and our participants. We as SPCs must also continue to challenge our practices and decisions to help ensure that we provide an experience where the needs of the athletes are put first.

A second limitation of the study was the short amount of time I had to develop relationships with the players. That combined with the tightly squeezed schedule of a high school volleyball season may have had an influence on the type of role email

played when consulting. I would suggest that further research concerning the integration of email into sport psychology delivery be conducted with a team or with athletes who have already developed a relationship with their SPC, or with a team or individual whose season may be longer and would include separation between themselves and the SPC (e.g., travel).

Prior to the study I believed that by providing email as a means to communicate with me, male athletes might feel more comfortable doing so. Current research suggests that male athletes are less likely to share their feelings or speak about performance concerns with a SPC for fear of being labelled unmanly or weak (Manian et al., 2001; Martin et al., 2001; Martin et al., 1997; Meyers, 1997; Yambor & Connelly, 1991). Two athletes specifically stated that they did feel more comfortable sharing their feelings about personal concerns with me online, and many of the emails I received from players did include these kinds of messages.

Contrary to the aforementioned research however, the male athletes I worked with communicated openly with me in person, with their teammates in meetings, and with their coaches. What I believe is even more important is that in their end of season questionnaires the majority of players expressed that they enjoyed doing so and could see benefits from it in their performance on the court. This finding supports the current literature that suggests when athletes engage in open communication (e.g., expressing their concerns and listening to teammates), real team building, team unity, and improved performance can be realized (Botterill, 2000; Orlick, 2000; Yukelson, 1997).

I believe this is a significant finding that supports the idea that both male and female athletes are capable of performing actions that are typically associated with the other 'gender' (Wodak, 1997), if they feel comfortable enough to do so. I suggest that further research be conducted in exploring whether male athletes are willing to engage in stereotypically constructed female actions (e.g., sharing feelings, communicating openly with others) due to the necessary cooperative component of a successful team. I also believe that this demonstration of the players' openness and willingness to share feelings and thoughts with the SPC, each other, and their coaches, which contradicts current research, is why we in the field of sport and physical activity need to challenge gendered socialization, challenge our own pre-conceptions, and listen to each individual athlete.

Interpretive Inquiry and Reflective Practice

Richardson (2000) suggests that writing should not be thought of as a quick clean up 'telling' activity completed at the end of a study. Instead she suggests that writing can be used as a method for analysis and discovery or a way to generate 'understanding.' I learned a lot about myself as a writer as I embarked on creating a confessional tale (Sparkes, 2002) about the development of my relationships with the players.

As is the purpose of interpretive research and writing, as I wrote I discovered aspects of the study I had not yet recognized let alone begun to understand. I believe that I would have completely missed these paths of understanding if I had written up my results using my typical 'scientific' style of writing. Because I wanted to reach athletes, coaches, and other SPCs with my experience, I followed current researchers

(Biddle et al., 2001; Culver, Gilbert & Trudel, 2003; Sparkes, 2002), who suggest that by producing this style of writing (e.g., narrative) the reader will be able to engage by bringing their past experiences to the story and therefore generate multiple ways of knowing.

Throughout the study I generated new ways to look at my entry research questions (Ellis, 1998) and formulate new questions to different problems. Although it had originally not been my intention to explore the intricacies of sport psychology consulting as a neophyte practitioner, during and following the completion of the study I felt that it was important that I do so. Following a self-reflection guide suggested by Anderson, Knowles, and Gilbourne (in press), I discovered lessons that support the belief that engaging in reflective practice can be an effective way to improve one's service delivery (Andersen, 2000; Anderson, Knowles, & Gilbourne, in press; Holt & Streat, 2001; Simons & Andersen, 1995).

I learned that I need to maintain a broad focus when consulting, to remain patient, and to take the time to reflect on the consequences of my potential actions, that my perceptions and beliefs have the potential to heavily influence the individual or team that I am working with, that an athlete-centred style of service delivery has the best chance of meeting the needs and demands of the athlete, and that I must continue to be aware of how my personality might affect the athlete-SPC relationship. Without having engaged in applied experience I do not believe I would have experienced this same amount of professional and personal growth that I did during my Masters program. I would strongly encourage the field of sport psychology to

ensure that applied experience be an integral part of any training program (Orlick & Partington, 1987; Petipas et al., 1999).

Final Thoughts

Although interpretation is always flawed and learning is never complete, I believe I began to understand the three month experience I shared with this particular high school volleyball team. Through exploring the intricacies of email as a communicative tool and the development of my relationships with the players I believe I achieved what I sought out to do. By following guidelines for analyzing interpretive accounts as suggested by Packer and Addison (1989), I identified ideas for helpful action such as identifying when the email was an effective communicative tool and what techniques enabled me to develop rapport with the players. I raised new ideas for more useful research including, "What might the effects be when email is integrated into a sport psychology program with athletes of different age, sex, athletic level, sport or when a relationship has already been formed with the SPC?" and "What circumstances might encourage male athletes to talk to a SPC about personal concerns?" And finally I was changed by the research; that is I discovered inadequacies in my own initial pre-understandings. For example, I did not realize that young male athletes would enjoy openly communicating in person as much as they did nor had I realized that my personality might play a larger part in the development of my relationships rather than the specific techniques I used. I look forward to future endeavours where I will be able to further explore some of the new questions I have raised.

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Appendix A

Letters Requesting Permission for Access and Informed Consent

Following are the two letters requesting permission for access from: (a) The school division; and (b) Principal of the school, and the three letters requesting informed consent from: (c) Teacher/coach participant(s); (d) Parent/legal guardian of the student-athlete participant; (e) Student-athlete participants.

(a) The school division

Date

Dear [School division administrator responsible for approving research studies in the division],

My name is Kelly Livesley and I am a Mathematics and Physical Education Instructor at The Collegiate at the University of Winnipeg. I have been teaching for the last seven years and I am currently pursuing a Masters Degree in the area of Sport Psychology at the University of Manitoba. The purpose of this letter is to invite your school division to participate in my thesis research project entitled "The potential of online consulting". My purpose will be to explore how the use of email influences communication between the high-school athlete and their sport psychology consultant.

In particular, (Name of teacher), a teacher and the varsity boys' volleyball coach at (School Name), has expressed an interest in participating. If you agree to involve your school division in this study, prior to contacting (Name of teacher), I will contact the principal and invite him to become involved.

For my study, I will take on an active role as a sport psychology consultant with the varsity boys' volleyball team throughout the 2002 season. At the beginning of the season there will be a fair amount of in-person contact, (practices, games, tournaments), in order to facilitate the building of a relationship with the team (players and coach(es)). Once I feel a relationship has started to develop I will then reduce my in-person contact and rely more heavily on email as the method of communication between the athletes and myself. Athletes at any time however, may arrange for a face-to-face meeting with me. Weekly or biweekly team meetings are likely to be held throughout the season but will be dependent on the desires of the players and/or coach(es).

Prior to starting the study I will meet with the team, explain the nature of the study and answer any questions they may have. I will repeat this process during an evening parent meeting that I will conduct prior to requesting written consent from the parents and student-athletes. During these meetings, it will be made clear to all participants that they will have the choice whether to participate or not participate in any of the activities. At the same time, any participant may be involved in the activities throughout the year and if they so desire not

be included in the data analysis. Although I do not believe that there will be any risk to the participants, they will always have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants will also be informed that pseudonyms will be used to help protect confidentiality and that no citations that could possibly identify the individual or the school will be used in my final thesis report.

Participants will be asked to participate in an initial and end of season focus group that will last between 45 and 60 minutes. I will be asking the participants for permission to tape record the focus group discussions. Highlight comments from these focus groups will be transcribed. A follow-up email will be sent by me to each player inviting them to provide any additional comments they may have (and might not have felt comfortable saying in a group setting), and if they desire, to provide a short biography in order to facilitate the beginning stages of the athlete-sport psychology consultant relationship.

During the season I will send out periodic emails with the hopes of maintaining regular correspondence with the athletes. I will start off with weekly emails but this may change dependent on the athlete's communications with me. Any email correspondence with the student-athletes or coach(es) will be part of the data collection. Prior to discussing aspects of a player's performance with the coach(es), I will seek written consent from both the parents and the student-athletes.

Participants will also be asked to fill out a year-end summary questionnaire that will be sent via email. The athletes and coach(es) will have the option of returning their typed answers via email or their hand written answers via an in-person delivery. Any participant (athletes/coach(es)) will also have the opportunity, if they prefer, to answer the questionnaire in a face-to-face interview, which will be tape-recorded. Highlight comments from these interviews also will be transcribed.

The focus group and questionnaire schedules, along with possible email questions I may send out to the student-athletes during the season have been appended to this letter as information.

Although I will be using my work email address that is located on a secure site at the University of Winnipeg to increase the likelihood of confidentiality, the participants will be informed that there is always a risk that information communicated over the Internet will be accessed by others. Data will be saved as encrypted files on local backup drives. Hard copies of the transmissions also will be created and will be protected by lock and key in a filing cabinet in my school office. The hard copies eventually will be transferred to my home office desk where they will be kept with the tape recordings and transcripts of the focus groups, all which will be protected under lock and key. At both locations the data will only be made available to me or my thesis committee. Participants involved will be informed that all data collected will be destroyed no later than August 31st, 2003.

Due to the collaborative nature of the study (i.e., the sport-psych consultant works with the athletes and coach(es) to develop an athlete-centred program), feedback/debriefing will be conducted on a consistent basis during the season. At the conclusion of the study, a 3-page summary will be distributed to all participants, the school principal and the superintendent of the school division. Results of the study will also be provided to the school board.

Please note that this study has been approved by the University of Manitoba Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you are willing to involve your school division

in this study and grant me permission to contact (Name of school principal), I would ask that you please email me at k.livesley@uwinnipeg.ca.

Should you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact either myself at 786-9084/k.livesley@uwinnipeg.ca or one of my co-advisors, Dr. Joannie Halas at 474-6061/halasjm@ms.umanitoba.ca or Dr. Sheryle Drewe-Dixon at 474-6421/

Sincerely,

Kelly Livesley
Mathematics/Phys. Ed Instructor
The Collegiate at The University of Winnipeg
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada
R3B 2E9

(b) Principal of the school

Date

Dear [Principal giving written permission for access to teacher/coach],

My name is Kelly Livesley and I am a Mathematics and Physical Education Instructor at The Collegiate at the University of Winnipeg. I have been teaching for the last seven years and I am currently pursuing a Masters Degree in the area of Sport Psychology at the University of Manitoba. Your school division has given written permission for me to invite you and your school to participate in my thesis research project entitled "The potential of online consulting". My purpose will be to explore how the use of email influences communication between the high-school athlete and their sport psychology consultant.

In particular, (Name of teacher), a teacher and the varsity boys' volleyball coach at your school, has expressed an interest in participating. If you agree to involve your school in this study, I will contact (Name of teacher) and invite him to become involved.

For my study, I will take on an active role as a sport psychology consultant with the varsity boys' volleyball team throughout the 2002 season. At the beginning of the season there will be a fair amount of in-person contact, (practices, games, tournaments), in order to facilitate the building of a relationship with the team (players and coach(es)). Once I feel a relationship has started to develop I will then reduce my in-person contact and rely more heavily on email as the method of communication between the athletes and myself. Athletes at any time however, may arrange for a face-to-face meeting with me. Weekly or biweekly team meetings are likely to be held throughout the season but will be dependent on the desires of the players and/or coach(es).

Prior to starting the study I will meet with the team, explain the nature of the study and answer any questions they may have. I will repeat this process during an evening parent meeting that I will conduct prior to requesting written consent from the parents and student-athletes. Invitations for this meeting will be distributed to the parents through the student-athletes. A copy of this invitation has been appended to this letter for your information. During these meetings, it will be made clear to all participants that they will have the choice whether to participate or not participate in any of the activities. At the same time, any participant may be involved in the activities throughout the year and if they so desire not be included in the data analysis. Although I do not believe that there will be any risk to the participants, they will always have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants will also be informed that pseudonyms will be used to help protect confidentiality and that no citations that could possibly identify the individual or the school will be used in my final thesis report.

Participants will be asked to participate in an initial and end of season focus group that will last between 45 and 60 minutes. I will be asking the participants for permission to tape record the focus group discussions. Highlight comments from these focus groups will be transcribed. A follow-up email will be sent by me to each player inviting them to provide

any additional comments they may have (and might not have felt comfortable saying in a group setting), and if they desire, to provide a short biography in order to facilitate the beginning stages of the athlete-sport psychology consultant relationship.

During the season I will send out periodic emails with the hopes of maintaining regular correspondence with the athletes. I will start off with weekly emails but this may change dependent on the athlete's communications with me. Any email correspondence with the student-athletes or coach(es) will be part of the data collection. Prior to discussing aspects of a player's performance with the coach(es), I will seek written consent from both the parents and the student-athletes.

Participants will also be asked to fill out a year-end summary questionnaire that will be sent via email. The athletes and coach(es) will have the option of returning their typed answers via email or their hand written answers via an in-person delivery. Any participant (athletes/coach(es)) will also have the opportunity, if they prefer, to answer the questionnaire in a face-to-face interview, which will be tape-recorded. Highlight comments from these interviews also will be transcribed.

The focus group and questionnaire schedules, along with possible email questions I may send out to the student-athletes during the season have been appended to this letter as information.

Although I will be using my work email address that is located on a secure site at the University of Winnipeg to increase the likelihood of confidentiality, the participants will be informed that there is always a risk that information communicated over the Internet will be accessed by others. Data will be saved as encrypted files on local backup drives. Hard copies of the transmissions also will be created and will be protected by lock and key in a filing cabinet in my school office. The hard copies eventually will be transferred to my home office desk where they will be kept with the tape recordings and transcripts of the focus groups, all which will be protected under lock and key. At both locations the data will only be made available to me or my thesis committee. Participants involved will be informed that all data collected will be destroyed no later than August 31st, 2003.

Due to the collaborative nature of the study (i.e., the sport-psych consultant works with the athletes and coach(es) to develop an athlete-centred program), feedback/debriefing will be conducted on a consistent basis during the season. At the conclusion of the study, a 3-page summary will be distributed to all participants, the school principal and the superintendent of the school division.

Please note that this study has been approved by the University of Manitoba Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you are willing to involve your school in this study and grant permission for me to contact (Name of teacher), I would ask that you please email me at k.livesley@uwinnipeg.ca.

Should you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact either myself at 786-9084/k.livesley@uwinnipeg.ca or one of my co-advisors, Dr. Joannie Halas at 474-6061/halasjm@ms.umanitoba.ca or Dr. Sheryle Drewe-Dixon at 474-6421/

Sincerely,

Kelly Livesley
Mathematics/Phys. Ed Instructor
The Collegiate at The University of Winnipeg
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada
R3B 2E9

(c) Teacher/coach participant

Date

Dear [Teacher/coach participant],

My name is Kelly Livesley and I am a Mathematics and Physical Education Instructor at The Collegiate at the University of Winnipeg. I have been teaching for the last seven years and I am currently pursuing a Masters Degree in the area of Sport Psychology at the University of Manitoba. Your school division and principal have given written permission for me to invite you and your volleyball team to participate in my thesis research project entitled "The potential of online consulting". My purpose will be to explore how the use of email influences communication between the high-school athlete and their sport psychology consultant.

If you agree to become involved in this study, please complete the consent form that is attached to this letter. This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

For my study, I will take on an active role as a sport psychology consultant with your varsity boys' volleyball team throughout the 2002 season. At the beginning of the season there will be a fair amount of in-person contact, (practices, games, tournaments), in order to facilitate the building of a relationship with the team (players and coach(es)). Once I feel a relationship has started to develop I will then reduce my in-person contact and rely more heavily on email as the method of communication between the athletes and myself. Athletes at any time however, may arrange for a face-to-face meeting with me. Weekly or biweekly team meetings are likely to be held throughout the season but will be dependent on the desires of you and your players.

Prior to starting the study I will meet with you and your team, explain the nature of the study and answer any questions you may have. I will repeat this process during an evening parent meeting that I will conduct prior to requesting written consent from the parents and student-athletes. During these meetings, it will be made clear to you and the student-athlete participants that you will have the choice whether to participate or not participate in any of the activities. At the same time, any participant may be involved in the activities throughout the year and if they so desire not be included in the data analysis. Although I do not believe that there will be any risk to you or the student-athlete participants, you will always have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. You and the student-athlete participants will also be informed that pseudonyms will be used to help protect confidentiality and that no citations that could possibly identify the individual or the school will be used in my final

thesis report. I also will inform participants that any knowledge gained regarding possible child abuse will be reported immediately to the school principal.

You and the student-athlete participants will be asked to participate in an initial and end of season focus group that will last between 45 and 60 minutes. I will be asking you and the student-athlete participants for your permission to tape record the focus group discussions. Highlight comments from these focus groups will be transcribed. I also will be asking all focus group participants to maintain confidentiality of the focus group discussions. A follow-up email will be sent by me to each player inviting them to provide any additional comments they may have (and might not have felt comfortable saying in a group setting), and if they desire, to provide a short biography in order to facilitate the beginning stages of the athlete-sport psychology consultant relationship.

During the season I will send out periodic emails with the hopes of maintaining regular correspondence with the athletes. I will start off with weekly emails but this may change dependent on the athlete's communications with me. Any email correspondence with the student-athletes or you will be part of the data collection. Prior to discussing aspects of a player's performance with you, I will seek written consent from both the parents and the student-athletes.

I also will ask you and the student-athlete participants to fill out a year-end summary questionnaire that will be sent via email. You will have the option of returning your typed answers via email or your hand written answers via an in-person delivery. Any participant (athletes/coach(es)) will also have the opportunity, if they prefer, to answer the questionnaire in a face-to-face interview, which will be tape-recorded. Highlight comments from these interviews also will be transcribed.

Although I will be using my work email address that is located on a secure site at the University of Winnipeg to increase the likelihood of confidentiality, you and the student-athlete participants should know that there is always a risk that information communicated over the Internet will be accessed by others. Data will be saved as encrypted files on local backup drives. Hard copies of the transmissions also will be created and will be protected by lock and key in a filing cabinet in my school office. The hard copies eventually will be transferred to my home office desk where they will be kept with the tape recordings and transcripts of the focus groups, all which will be protected under lock and key. At both locations the data will only be made available to me or my thesis committee. All data collected will be destroyed no later than August 31st, 2003.

Due to the collaborative nature of the study (i.e., the sport-psych consultant works with the athletes and coach(es) to develop an athlete-centred program), feedback/debriefing will be conducted on a consistent basis during the season. At the conclusion of the study, a 3-page summary will be distributed to all participants.

If you are willing to accept this information and would like to participate in this study, I would ask that you please read and sign the attached Consent Form and return it to me in the stamped self-addressed envelope.

Should you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact either myself at 786-9084/k.livesley@uwinnipeg.ca or one of my co-advisors, Dr. Joannie Halas at 474-6061/halasjm@ms.umanitoba.ca or Dr. Sheryle Drewe-Dixon at 474-6421/

Sincerely,

Kelly Livesley
Mathematics/Phys. Ed Instructor
The Collegiate at The University of Winnipeg
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada
R3B 2E9

Written Consent Form – Teacher/Coach Participant

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Principal Researcher: Kelly Livesley
 (204)786-9084; email: k.livesley@uwinnipeg.ca
 Supervisors: Dr. Joannie Halas
 (204)474-6061; email: halasjm@ms.umanitoba.ca
 Dr. Sheryle Drewe-Dixon
 (204)474-6421; email:

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Please check if you would like to receive a summary of my final thesis report findings at the end of the study. Please add your name and contact address so that information can be mailed to you:

Yes No

(d) Parent/legal guardian

Date

Dear [Parent/legal guardian],

My name is Kelly Livesley and I am a Mathematics and Physical Education Instructor at The Collegiate at the University of Winnipeg. I have been teaching for the last seven years and I am currently pursuing a Masters Degree in the area of Sport Psychology at the University of Manitoba. Your son is invited to participate in my thesis research project entitled "The potential of online consulting". My purpose will be to explore how the use of email influences communication between the high-school athlete and their sport psychology consultant.

If you agree to give permission for your son to be involved in this study, please complete the consent form that is attached to this letter. This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

For my study, I will take on an active role as a sport psychology consultant with the (School Name) varsity boys' volleyball team throughout the 2002 season. Weekly or biweekly team meetings are likely to be held throughout the season but will be dependent on the desires of the players and/or coach(es). Although I will rely more heavily on email as the method of communication between the athletes and myself, athletes may, at any time however, arrange for a face-to-face meeting with me.

Prior to starting the study I will meet with the team, explain the nature of the study and answer any questions they may have. I will repeat this process during an evening parent meeting that I will conduct prior to requesting written consent from you and your son. During these meetings, it will be made clear to all participants that they will have the choice whether to participate or not participate in any of the activities. At the same time, any participant may be involved in the activities throughout the year and if they so desire not be included in the data analysis. Although I do not believe that there will be any risk to the participants, they will always have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants will also be informed that pseudonyms will be used to help protect confidentiality and that no citations that could possibly identify the individual or the school will be used in my final thesis report. I also will inform participants that any knowledge gained regarding possible child abuse will be reported immediately to the school principal.

Participants will be asked to participate in an initial and end of season focus group that will last between 45 and 60 minutes. I will be asking the participants for permission to tape record the focus group discussions. Highlight comments from these focus groups will be transcribed. A follow-up email will be sent by me to each player inviting them to provide any additional comments they may have (and might not have felt comfortable saying in a group setting), and if they desire, to provide a short biography in order to facilitate the beginning stages of the athlete-sport psychology consultant relationship.

During the season I will send out periodic emails with the hopes of maintaining regular correspondence with the athletes. I will start off with weekly emails but this may change dependent on the athlete's communications with me. Any email correspondence with the student-athletes or coach(es) will be part of the data collection. If you provide your consent, I would also like to discuss aspects of your son's performance with the coach during the season. If you grant permission, this information will be used in the data analysis. If you prefer that I do not discuss aspects of your son's performance with the coach, please indicate this on the consent form.

Participants will also be asked to fill out a year-end summary questionnaire that will be sent via email. The athletes and coach(es) will have the option of returning their typed answers via email or their hand written answers via an in-person delivery. Any participant (athletes/coach(es)) will also have the opportunity, if they prefer, to answer the questionnaire in a face-to-face interview, which will be tape-recorded. Highlight comments from these interviews also will be transcribed.

Although I will be using my work email address that is located on a secure site at the University of Winnipeg to increase the likelihood of confidentiality, the participants will be informed that there is always a risk that information communicated over the Internet will be accessed by others. Data will be saved as encrypted files on local backup drives. Hard copies of the transmissions also will be created and will be protected by lock and key in a filing cabinet in my school office. The hard copies eventually will be transferred to my home office desk where they will be kept with the tape recordings and transcripts of the focus groups, all which will be protected under lock and key. At both locations the data will only be made available to me or my thesis committee. Participants involved will be informed that all data collected will be destroyed no later than August 31st, 2003.

Due to the collaborative nature of the study (i.e., the sport-psych consultant works with the athletes and coach(es) to develop an athlete-centred program), feedback/debriefing will be conducted on a consistent basis during the season. At the conclusion of the study, a 3-page summary will be distributed to all participants.

If you are willing to accept this information and give permission for your son to participate in this study, I would ask that you please read and sign the attached Consent Form.

Should you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact either myself at 786-9084/k.livesley@uwinnipeg.ca or one of my co-advisors, Dr. Joannie Halas at 474-6061/halasjm@ms.umanitoba.ca or Dr. Sheryle Drewe-Dixon at 474-6421/

Sincerely,

Kelly Livesley
Mathematics/Phys. Ed Instructor
The Collegiate at The University of Winnipeg
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada
R3B 2E9

Written Consent Form – Parent/Legal Guardian

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to give permission for your son to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

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This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

I grant permission for my son to participate in the sport consultation activities.

Yes No

I grant permission for the researcher to discuss aspects of my son's performance with the coach(es) during the volleyball season.

Yes No

Son's Name: _____

Parent/Legal Guardian's Signature:

_____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please check if you would like to receive a summary of my final thesis report findings at the end of the study. Please add your name and contact address so that information can be mailed to you:

Yes No

(e) Student-athlete participant

Date

Dear [Student-athlete participant],

My name is Kelly Livesley and I am a Mathematics and Physical Education Instructor at The Collegiate at the University of Winnipeg. I have been teaching for the last seven years and I am currently pursuing a Masters Degree in the area of Sport Psychology at the University of Manitoba. Your school division, principal, coach and parent/legal guardian have given written permission for me to invite you to participate in my thesis research project entitled "The potential of online consulting". My purpose will be to explore how the use of email influences communication between the high-school athlete and their sport psychology consultant.

If you agree to become involved in this study, please complete the consent form that is attached to this letter. This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

For my study, I will take on an active role as a sport psychology consultant with your varsity boys' volleyball team throughout the 2002 season. Weekly or biweekly team meetings are likely to be held throughout the season but will be dependent on the desires of you and your coaches. Although I will rely more heavily on email as the method of communication between you and me, you may, at any time however, arrange for a face-to-face meeting with me.

Prior to starting the study I will meet with you and your team, explain the nature of the study and answer any questions you may have. I will repeat this process during an evening parent meeting that I will conduct prior to requesting written consent from you and the other student-athlete participants. During these meetings, it will be made clear to you and the other student-athlete participants that you will have the choice whether to participate or not participate in any of the activities. At the same time, any participant may be involved in the activities throughout the year and if they so desire not be included in the data analysis. Although I do not believe that there will be any risk to you or the other student-athlete participants, you will always have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. You and the other student-athlete participants will also be informed that pseudonyms will be used to help protect confidentiality and that no citations that could possibly identify the individual or the school will be used in my final thesis report. I also will inform participants that any knowledge gained regarding possible child abuse will be reported immediately to the school principal.

You and the other student-athlete participants will be asked to participate in an initial and end of season focus group that will last between 45 and 60 minutes. I will be asking you and the other student-athlete participants for your permission to tape record the focus group discussions. Highlight comments from these focus groups will be transcribed. I also will be

asking all focus group participants to maintain confidentiality of the focus group discussions. A follow-up email will be sent by me inviting you to provide any additional comments and if you desire, a short biography.

During the season I will send out periodic emails with the hopes of maintaining regular correspondence with you and your teammates. Any email correspondence with the you, the other student-athletes or your coach(es) will be part of the data collection. If you provide your consent, I would also like to discuss aspects of your performance with your coach during the season. If you grant permission, this information will be used in the data analysis. If you prefer that I do not discuss aspects of your performance with your coach, please indicate this on the consent form.

I also will ask you and the other student-athlete participants to fill out a year-end summary questionnaire that will be sent via email. You will have the option of returning your typed answers via email or your hand written answers via an in-person delivery. Any participant (athletes/coach(es)) will also have the opportunity, if they prefer, to answer the questionnaire in a face-to-face interview, which will be tape-recorded. Highlight comments from these interviews also will be transcribed.

Although I will be using my work email address that is located on a secure site at the University of Winnipeg to increase the likelihood of confidentiality, you and the other student-athlete participants should know that there is always a risk that information communicated over the Internet will be accessed by others. Data will be saved as encrypted files on local backup drives. Hard copies of the transmissions also will be created and will be protected by lock and key in a filing cabinet in my school office. The hard copies eventually will be transferred to my home office desk where they will be kept with the tape recordings and transcripts of the focus groups, all which will be protected under lock and key. At both locations the data will only be made available to me or my thesis committee. All data collected will be destroyed no later than August 31st, 2003.

Due to the collaborative nature of the study (i.e., the sport-psych consultant works with the athletes and coach(es) to develop an athlete-centred program), feedback/debriefing will be conducted on a consistent basis during the season. At the conclusion of the study, a 3-page summary will be distributed to all participants.

If you are willing to accept this information and would like to participate in this study, I would ask that you please read and sign the attached Consent Form.

Should you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact either myself at 786-9084/k.livesley@uwinnipeg.ca or one of my co-advisors, Dr. Joannie Halas at 474-6061/halasjm@ms.umanitoba.ca or Dr. Sheryle Drewe-Dixon at 474-6421/

Sincerely,

Kelly Livesley
Mathematics/Phys. Ed Instructor
The Collegiate at The University of Winnipeg
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada
R3B 2E9

Written Consent Form – Student-Athlete Participant

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Principal Researcher: Kelly Livesley
 (204)786-9084; email: k.livesley@uwinnipeg.ca
 Supervisors: Dr. Joannie Halas
 (204)474-6061; email: halasjm@ms.umanitoba.ca
 Dr. Sheryle Drewe-Dixon
 (204)474-6421; email:

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

I agree to participate in the sport consultation activities.

Yes No

I grant permission for the researcher to discuss aspects of my performance with the coach(es) during the volleyball season.

Yes No

Participant's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Please check if you would like to receive a summary of my final thesis report findings at the end of the study. Please add your name and contact address so that information can be mailed to you:

Yes No

Appendix B Initial Focus Group Guide

Part A: Performance Indicators

Activities in this section will be used to begin to build rapport between the sport psychology consultant and the team (athletes and coach(es)).

1. A focus group discussion will be held to **rank** the 4 types of preparation (physical, technical, psychological, tactical) in order for me to determine how important the psychological aspect of training is to the team.
2. The tape recorder will then be turned off while the athletes and coach(es) participate in the next **ranking** activity. Participants will fill out a questionnaire ranking the different topics of sport psychology (concentration, self-talk, refocusing, relaxation, imagery, perspective, pre-competition/competition plans, goal setting, time management, confidence, motivation, team skills) in order for me to determine what is deemed important to the athletes. Please see A1.1 on page 7 for a copy of this questionnaire.
3. A **group brainstorm** will be facilitated in order to answer the question, "What interferes with practicing/using psychological skills?"
4. A discussion will be held to **rank** the methods (mini-presentations, video, books [Resonance (Newburg, 1996), Human Potential (Botterill & Patrick, 1996), Perspective (Botterill et al., 2002)], role model interviews, handouts, worksheets, email) I could use to facilitate the process of their personal growth.

Part B: Contributions of the Email

5. A **group brainstorm** will be facilitated in order to answer the following questions:
 1. What role does email play in your life right now?
 2. Could email be useful for us to maintain contact on a regular basis throughout the season?
 3. What might get in the way of using email?
 4. Could email be detrimental in any way?

B1.1. A Psych Skills Checklist...How good are you? ☺

Before beginning the season it is important for you to familiarize yourself with the different kinds of psychological skills, and it is important for me to get an idea how competent you feel with them and which ones you believe are most valuable to you as a player. By becoming informed we, together, will be able to make better decisions concerning our course of action during the season. Take a few minutes to circle the number that most closely corresponds to your feelings.



1. Confidence/Self-Talk

	Need Work	Excellent
Skill level	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
	Not valuable	Very Valuable
Value	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Comments:

2. Perspective/Goal Setting

	Need Work	Excellent
Skill level	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
	Not valuable	Very Valuable
Value	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Comments:

3. Emotional Management

	Need Work	Excellent
Skill level	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
	Not valuable	Very Valuable
Value	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Comments:

4. Relaxation/Imagery

	Need Work	Excellent
Skill level	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

	Not valuable	Very Valuable
Value	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Comments:

5. Team/Interaction Skills

	Need Work	Excellent
Skill level	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

	Not valuable	Very Valuable
Value	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Comments:

6. Focusing/Pre-competition and Competition Plans/Time Management

	Need Work	Excellent
Skill level	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

	Not valuable	Very Valuable
Value	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Comments:



Appendix C

Examples of Emails Sent by the SPC during the Season

- Could you please email me your service routine and let me know how often you used it (during Wednesday's game) and explain what was working/not working with it.
- Just thought I would drop you guys a quick note to find out how the game went on Wednesday and to see if anyone had tried the relaxation at home yet. If you have any thoughts/comments about Wednesday's session just let me know.
- I also want to remind you to work on your service routine EVERY single time you serve...remember this is something we can control ☺ If you are having issues let me know! ☺ That goes for the 3 r's as well (relax, refocus, regroup) after an error.
- I want to give you an opportunity to let me know how things are going (we're half-way through the season)...What are you enjoying? What would you change (add/delete what we do, how often we meet, how we're using email, etc.) to make it better?

Appendix D
Athletes' End of Season Questionnaire ☺

The season is complete, and with completion comes reflection. This questionnaire gives you an opportunity to reflect on the past few months and provide me with any feedback you feel is important. Feel free to leave out any question you do not wish to answer.

1. a) How do you feel about the communication between you and Kelly this season?

b) What worked for you? What didn't work for you?

c) What changes for the future would you suggest?

2. Explain which method of communication, in-person or online, you preferred to use during the season and explain why.

3. a) Kelly was available to talk with you in many different situations during the volleyball season, (e.g., classe, games, practices, online, individual meetings, team meetings), when did you feel most comfortable talking to her about sport psychology topics or concerns?

b) Please explain why you felt this way.

4. Explain why or why not you enjoyed having team meetings without coaches.

5. Describe an activity, an event or a moment (e.g., from our sport psychology repertoire: classes, individual meetings, email communication, etc.) that had the most impact on you during the season.

6. How often did you use email to contact Kelly? Try to give a number value per week if you can.

7. Why or why not did you use email as a way to contact Kelly?

8. What kinds of topics did you discuss online?
9. What kinds of topics did you feel more comfortable talking to Kelly about online?
10. What kinds of topics did you feel more comfortable talking to Kelly in person?
11. What concerns, if any, did you run into while communicating with Kelly online?
12. Did you find using email an effective way to communicate with a sport psych consultant?
Why or why not?

13. What changes would you suggest for the future that might increase the effectiveness of email communication between an athlete and their sport psych consultant?

14. How did using email affect your relationship with Kelly?

15. How did Kelly being female influence your communications with her? (e.g., did you feel more or less comfortable because of the gender difference? Was it an issue at all?).

16. How did Kelly being a former elite volleyball player influence your communications with her? (e.g., did you feel more or less comfortable because of her past experience? Was it an issue at all?).

17. a) What do you think Kelly's best attributes are as a consultant?

b) What things could she improve on?

18. Has your experience with sport psychology consulting had any impact on your life beyond volleyball (e.g., family, school, work, etc.)? Please explain.

19. How did sport psychology consulting ultimately affect your performance growth? (e.g., relations with teammates, coach, performance)

20. Please use this space to add any additional comments you feel are important.

Appendix E
Coaches' End of Season Questionnaire ☺

The season is complete, and with completion comes reflection. This questionnaire gives you an opportunity to reflect on the past few months and provide me with any feedback you feel is important. Feel free to leave out any question you do not wish to answer.

1.
 - a) How do you feel about the communication between you and Kelly this season?
 - b) What worked for you? What didn't work for you?
 - c) What changes for the future would you suggest?

2. Explain which method of communication, in-person, telephone or online, you preferred to use during the season and explain why.

3. Describe an activity, an event or a moment (e.g., from our sport psychology repertoire: classes, individual meetings, email communication, etc.) that you believe had the most impact on your team during the season.

4. How often did you use email to contact Kelly? Try to give a number value per week if you can.

5. Why or why not did you use email as a way to contact Kelly?

6. What kinds of topics did you discuss online?

7. What kinds of topics did you feel more comfortable talking to Kelly about online?

8. What kinds of topics did you feel more comfortable talking to Kelly in person?

9. What concerns, if any, did you run into while communicating with Kelly online?

10. Did you find using email an effective way to communicate with a sport psych consultant? Why or why not?

11. What changes would you suggest for the future that might increase the effectiveness of email communication between a coach and the team sport psych consultant?

12. How did using email affect your relationship with Kelly?

13. How do you believe that Kelly being female influenced the communication between her and the athletes? (e.g., did they feel more or less comfortable because of the gender difference? Was it an issue at all?).

14. How do you believe that Kelly being a former elite volleyball player influenced the communication between her and the athletes? (e.g., did they feel more or less comfortable because of her past experience? Was it a factor at all?).

15. a) What do you think Kelly's best attributes are as a consultant?

b) What things could she improve on?

16. How would you describe your experience with sport psychology consulting?

17. How do you believe having your athletes participate in sport psychology consulting ultimately affected their performance growth? (e.g., relations with teammates, coach, performance)

18. Please use this space to add any additional comments you feel are important.

Appendix F End of Season Focus Group Guide

Part A: Performance Indicators

Activities in this section will be used to begin to build rapport between the sport psychology consultant and the team (athletes and coach(es)).

1. A focus group discussion will be held to **rank** the 4 types of preparation (physical, technical, psychological, tactical) in order for me to determine how important the psychological aspect of training now is to the team.
2. The tape recorder will then be turned off while the athletes and coach(es) participate in the next **ranking** activity. Participants will fill out a questionnaire ranking the different topics of sport psychology (concentration, self-talk, refocusing, relaxation, imagery, perspective, pre-competition/competition plans, goal setting, time management, confidence, motivation, team skills) in order for me to determine what is now deemed important to the athletes. Please see A4.1 on page 13 for a copy of this questionnaire.
3. A **group brainstorm** will be facilitated in order to answer the question, "What interfered with practicing/using psychological skills?"
4. A discussion will be held to **rank** the methods (mini-presentations, video, books [Resonance (Newburg, 1996), Human Potential (Botterill & Patrick, 1996), Perspective (Botterill et al., 2002)], role model interviews, handouts, worksheets, email) I used to facilitate the process of their personal growth.

Part B: Contributions of the Email

5. A **group brainstorm** will be facilitated in order to answer the following questions:
 1. What role does email play in your life right now?
 2. Was email useful for maintaining contact on a regular basis throughout the season?
 3. What got in the way of using email?
 4. Was email detrimental in any way?

F1.1. Checking back in on a Psych Skills Checklist...How good are you now? ☺

At the beginning of the season you rated your different psychological skill levels and how valuable you thought they were to you as a player. Now that we're finished the season, it's time to redo the questions and see what we've learned. When thinking about each skill level question ask yourself, "How much have I improved?"



1. Confidence/Self-Talk

	Need Work	Excellent
Skill level	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

	Not valuable	Very Valuable
Value	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Comments:

2. Perspective/Goal Setting

	Need Work	Excellent
Skill level	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

	Not valuable	Very Valuable
Value	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Comments:

3. Emotional Management

	Need Work	Excellent
Skill level	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

	Not valuable	Very Valuable
Value	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Comments:

4. Relaxation/Imagery

	Need Work	Excellent
Skill level	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

	Not valuable	Very Valuable
Value	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Comments:

5. Team/Interaction Skills

	Need Work	Excellent
Skill level	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

	Not valuable	Very Valuable
Value	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Comments:

6. Focusing/Pre-competition and Competition Plans/Time Management

	Need Work	Excellent
Skill level	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

	Not valuable	Very Valuable
Value	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Comments:



Appendix G

Sample Page from Personal Research Journal

I met with the team on Tuesday night (oct. 1). I was tired but I think I managed to fake it. We started out the session discussing the game they had played the night before (and won). I really enjoyed Jack's comment when he said that even though they were close games he felt like the team was in control of the game (their side of the court). We also highlighted some of the changes I had been suggesting to the players re: their self-talk during serves. (i.e. changing 'good' to a more specific target word). Neil (who had read his email) was ready to share his ideas about 'clearing his head' which led us into a discussion on imagery.

Imagery went well (although I wish I had brought the video – didn't think there would be enough time. I'll show it in an upcoming session). We discussed most of the ideas and I added a few stories (tiger woods and the golfer (pow)). Mark also added some ideas about imagining their best performances.

We then did a relaxation session (only 3 out of the 11 had done one before) and talked a little bit about it after. I decided that next tues. would be a bunch of individual meetings so we could go over their tais results. I told them I didn't feel comfortable doing it online. 5 players have handed it in and I told the rest they could mail it to me by Monday if they want to meet.

I stuck around for practice (8:30 – 10:00) shagging balls. I do like the fact that I'm with guys – learning some of the subtleties of the sport with men. I think if I had been with girls it would have been extremely difficult not to constantly coach in my mind. I did have the urge to play (dig some balls!). Mark was great as when the boys went back to serve he reminded them to use their routine.

Chris g. came late to practice (was working) and displayed his disappointment (Ah – I can't believe I had to miss class) when he arrived. He asked what he missed and what was next. During the team huddle at the end cam asked the boys to go home and think of one thing they learned from practice and one from class. Julien said, 'class was wicked' and chris g moaned again that he missed it.

A neat thing happened at the end of practice – I was talking to cam about upcoming events and c came up to me and asked if we were going to do the relaxation thing again. I said we could but that the beauty of it was that he could practice at home any time he wanted. He then went on to describe how much he liked it, "when you said feel your muscles sink into the floor – I was like wow that's what they are doing. And when I was doing the breathing with my stomach it was all tingly and cool."

I wonder if he felt more comfortable with me because I had sent him a personalized story via email or whether he just really loved the activity. Typically he is not extremely extroverted (speaking his mind). I wonder if I'll notice more openness online...

Appendix H

Johns' (1994) Revised Nursing Model of Guided Reflection

The following is a revised version of Johns' (1994) nursing model of guided reflection completed by Anderson (as cited in Anderson, Knowles, & Gilbourne, in press, p. 34) and suggested for use by sport psychology consultants (Anderson et al.).

Core question – What information do I need access to in order to learn through this consulting experience?

Cue Questions

1.0 Description of the consulting experience

- 1.1 Phenomenon – Describe the 'here and now' of the experience (*where, when, what*)
- 1.2 Causal – What essential factors contributed to this experience (*why*)
- 1.3 Context – Who are the significant background actors in this experience (*who*)
- 1.4 Clarifying – Put it back together and establish what the key issues are in this experience that I need to pay attention to

2.0 Reflection

- 2.1 What was I trying to achieve
- 2.2 Why did I intervene as I did
- 2.3 What internal factors influenced my actions (*thoughts, feelings, previous experience*)
- 2.4 What external factors influenced my actions (*other people, organizational factors, time*)
- 2.5 What sources of knowledge did/should have influenced my decision making

3.0 Consequences of actions

- 3.1 What were the consequences of my actions for (*what did I learn/realize – cognitive component*):
 - myself
 - the athlete
 - the people I work with
- 3.2 How did I feel about this experience when it was happening (*affective*)
- 3.3 How did the athlete feel
- 3.4 How did I know what the athlete felt like

4.0 Alternative tactics

- 4.1 Could I have dealt with the situation better
- 4.2 What other choices did I have
- 4.3 What would the consequences of these choices

5.0 Learning

- 5.1 How do I feel now feel about this experience
- 5.2 How have I made sense of this experience in light of past experiences and future practice
- 5.3 Action: Write down the key lessons in your notebook