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The process of performance of four track athletes: A resonance-based intervention

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the process of resonance in specializing (Côté & Hay, 2002) athletes and to examine the perceived effects of a resonance-based intervention on both training and performance quality and subjective well-being. Four female middle distance track athletes ($M = 16.5$ years) participated in in-depth, semi-structured interviews/ consultations and reflective journaling over a period of 10 weeks using the Resonance Performance Model (RPM; Newburg, Kimiecik, Durand-Bush & Doell, 2002) as a structural framework. Results showed that the athletes followed a process of performance similar to expert performers but were challenged in articulating how they wanted to feel in their training and performances. However, over the intervention period, they became more conscious of how they felt during training and daily living. An awareness of how they wanted to feel was perceived to positively influence overall well-being and quality of track performance. Decision making behavior was also identified as being influenced by a heightened awareness of how each athlete wanted to feel.

Introduction

Recent developments in the field of positive psychology are leading researchers to further examine the meaningfulness and positive aspects of experience in several performance domains. Sport and exercise provide excellent opportunities to examine positive experience. These experiences are important in potentially enhancing both physical and psychological health (Biddle, 2000; Rejeski, Brawley, & Shumaker, 1996; Salovey, Rothman, Detweiler, & Steward, 2000).

Newburg, Kimiecik, Durand-Bush, and Doell (2002) discussed the process of performance of high-level performers in various domains including sport, music, medicine, and the performing arts. This process centered around how performing felt to these individuals. Newburg et al. (2002) discussed that how these performers felt everyday and in their performances was central to their skill development and sustained participation in their chosen discipline and in their life. Research in sport has looked closely at optimal performance experiences such as flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), ideal performance states (Unestahl, 1986) and the individual zone of optimal functioning (Hanin, 2000) in similar ways but very little research in sport and exercise psychology has focused on concepts related to ideal experiences as a broader whole or, more importantly, as a process. Newburg et al.'s grounded theory research yielded a heuristic model that describes the process in how people want to feel while performing in a domain and in life in general. This model was termed the Resonance Performance Model (RPM, Newburg et al., 2002).

Newburg et al. (2002) defined resonance as a seamless fit between how people want to feel and the environment in which they are situated. It is a process or a way of living that allows them to identify how they want to feel in their daily activities, prepare to experience how they want to feel, identify obstacles that prevent them from feeling the way they want, and revisit how they want to feel when they lose sight of it. According to Lazarus (2000), "resonances" are processes underlying the generation of emotions and are "an ineffable sense of compatibility or incompatibility between our personal identity and the outer world" (p.49). These outer worlds or environments might include performance areas such as playing sports or music, directing a business meeting, or even performing open-heart surgery. In general, the RPM represents the process people follow to feel the way they want.

The Components of the RPM

The central component of the RPM is the "Dream feeling," a unique element that distinguishes resonance from other concepts. It represents the feeling that individuals *mindfully* seek when they participate in a particular activity (i.e., how they want to feel). It is uniquely derived from a decision to feel and live a certain way and is a product of a captivating idea of living that is put into action (Newburg et al., 2002). Kasser and Ryan (1996) write that the popular contemporary understanding of the "American Dream" is oriented around material success, perceived self-image and goals that are extrinsic. These extrinsic values of wealth and materials have been found to be harmful to well-being whereas having intrinsic goals such as achieving autonomy and having satisfying relationships has been reported as positively related to well-being and negatively associated with distress (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). The Dream feeling in the process of resonance is rooted in the original idea of the American Dream. This dream favors an intrinsic-centered lifestyle rather than outcomes or extrinsic goals. How people feel plays a substantial role in the human experience and is essential for our understanding of various phenomena, including athletic excellence, life engagement, and subjective well-being and their interrelationship (Davidson & Cacioppo, 1992).

There is no doubt that there are numerous links between key ideas in this area and performance-related phenomenon. However, it is worth highlighting a few key concepts that contribute to the understanding of the process of resonance that hopefully will not stand alone in

their relationship to it. An open debate exists on the definition of terms related to enjoyment, satisfaction, and positive affect (Kimiecik & Harris, 1996). While this academic dialogue is crucial in understanding sport and exercise experiences, the focus of this paper is not to specify distinctions between and within this rich discussion per se but to make links to related ideas that are relevant to the early dialogue on the subject of resonance (see Hanin (2000) and Newburg et al. (2002) for more elaborate overviews). However, there is room to consider a few additions to this discussion.

Each component of the RPM can be linked to fractions of the literature that have not been explicitly identified as preparatory elements or obstacles to how an athlete wants to feel nor discussed from a performance process perspective. Engagement, however, might be the transcending concept that significantly pertains to the understanding this process in greater depth. The *Oxford English Dictionary* characterizes engagement as being involved, attentive, and entangled but is also defined as a motive for action and has also been described as providing a form of motivation for, and enjoyment of activities (Brown, Cairns, & Botterill, 2001; Newburg et al., 2002). According to Maddux (1997), engagement is effortful and mindful and it can also be considered a gateway to how a person feels as a general whole. Interestingly, this may include experiences such as sadness and loneliness in addition to a positive emotion such as joy. A certain film, for example, may yield fright or sadness if you are fully engaged in it. This holds value in the current investigation since there is a possibility that the Dream feeling may not be linked to positive affect, as academia identifies it, but also could describe an ideal situation that is engaging yet objectively negative in nature (e.g., pain). Most importantly, this experience is sought after in that environment.

It would seem that mindfulness and engagement has a role in how a person feels or wants to feel. As a result, the Dream feeling *could be* discussed in reference to, for example, enjoyment (Kimiecik & Harris, 1996; Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1989), flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997), felt authenticity (Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997) individuation (Jung, 1983), individual zones of optimal functioning (Hanin, 2000) or intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). These labels can serve to maintain the academic discussion but the Dream feeling is simply how an athlete wants to feel in their performance context. It is the process of feeling the way one wants to which is important to this current investigation and not whether it can be distinctly related to other phenomena. In fact, no other intervention-based research has investigated performance and well-being from this perspective.

Therefore, it is a formidable task to foresee which preparatory strategies, obstacles, and revisiting approaches are relevant to how each person wants to feel. Based on this philosophical underpinning of the resonance-based approach, these details should be very unique to the individual. An appraisal of the literature might suggest that, for example, a coach (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002), a parent (Côté, 1999), or a peer (Weiss & Barber, 1995) might be a part of the preparation of how their athlete wants to feel. Other preparatory elements could be linked to having a process-goal orientation (Nicholls, 1984; Rudisill, 1989) or to using mental skills/mental preparation (Jackson, 1992; Orlick, 1986, 2000; Orlick & Partington, 1988). Similarly, Obstacles could include coaches (Salmela, 1996; Wankel & Sefton, 1989) or anxiety (Puca & Schmalt, 1999). Puca and Schmalt (1999), for example, suggest that a fear of failure, “disrupts concentration and may give way to the intrusion of self-related or task-irrelevant cognition while

performing” (p. 17) to the detriment of performance. However, this might not be a factor for every athlete. Finally, Revisiting approaches could include emotion and problem-focused coping strategies (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) or a reevaluation of values (Brown et al., 2001). Essentially, there could be a very long list for each component. However, heuristically, the experience of this process is best understood through the experiences of the values of the individual.

By no means is this an exhaustive list but it is worthwhile to recognize these conceptual relationships. It is important to note that we make the assumption that the Dream is *constructed* and *understood* uniquely by each individual regardless if descriptions share qualities with the above concepts. The Dream feeling can share many or none of the characteristics of enjoyment, flow, or the zone and certainly is not restricted by one in particular. That is, the Dream is not “enjoyment” or “the zone” although it could be. From a practitioner’s perspective, labeling has little relevance and is only an exercise in classification. How the performer constructs (i.e., reflects and describes) and relates to how they want to feel is more pertinent. It bares saying that the concept of resonance rejects positivist or post-positivist approaches to understanding, and facilitating, the feel of performance. Imposing these concepts upon the idea of the Dream feeling can only limit our understanding of its place in an athlete’s performance. In turn, conceptually describing the model is difficult without being slightly arbitrary in the inclusion of “key” concepts.

Although an attempt has been made to link resonance to existing research, very few studies have focused on describing and understanding performance as a process of engagement or the experiencing of ideal feelings. There is a still lack of concrete or practical approaches for helping individuals achieve ideal feelings in sport and in particular using the RPM. In essence, the RPM, as a potential intervention aid, is oriented toward making ideal experiences more available to people. Potentially, the RPM framework can be a tool that practitioners can use to facilitate self-awareness and help people feel the way they want and engage in tasks or their environment on a regular basis. Newburg et al. (2002) did not present qualitative data for each component of the process of resonance and reflected more of the experiences of elite, high performing individuals. Jackson (2000) noted that, “. . .we need to be more eclectic in our approaches in order to maximize opportunities for progress” (p. 135) and it would thus appear important to, primarily, further qualitative research in this area to understand these processes in greater depth and, secondly, gather reflections on this process to enhance the richness of the data, perhaps with non-expert performers. Therefore, it is important to extend this research to performers at a more developmental level where expertise has not yet been reached. It is also possible that developmental athletes experience this process differently than experts who have strongly invested in their performance domain. Specializing athletes (Côté & Hay, 2002) have narrowed their focus on one or two sports, often making their selection based on the intrinsic values of competence and enjoyment.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify the process of resonance of competitive developmental track athletes and to evaluate how a resonance-based intervention was perceived to affect training and competitions, as well as subjective well-being. Specific research questions included: (a) How do track athletes want to feel when they engage in their sport? (b) What enables them to experience these feelings regularly? (c) What inhibits them from experiencing

these feelings? (d) What strategies do they use to re-connect with these feelings when they face obstacles? (e) How are these feelings perceived to affect their performances as well as their overall well-being? and (f) what impact can a 10-week resonance-based intervention have on an athlete's sport experience?

Method

This study was rooted in the social constructivist paradigm, which fundamentally assumes that the participants construct their own reality and that meaning within this construction is individually and personally defined (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In addition, the aim of the inquiry is "...understanding and reconstruction of the construction that people initially hold, aiming toward consensus but still open to new interpretation..." (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.113). The methods used represent those of the phenomenological tradition that, according to Creswell (1998), "...attempt to describe the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or phenomenon" (p. 51).

Participants

The 4 female participants middle distance track athletes ($M = 16.5$ years of age) were from a developmental program of the same track and field club. They were recruited using purposive sampling (Patton, 1990) after a list of available and interested athletes was compiled after an orientation visit to a training session. A brief telephone intake interview was conducted in order to identify "specializing" athletes that had recently chosen to narrow their participatory focus on only one or two sport activities (Côté & Hay, 2002). Two of these athletes ran cross-country in addition to track & field and, due to the fact that they chose to invest in running over other sports, they were allowed to participate in this study.

Procedure

Four semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with each athlete by one researcher-consultant (Jackson, 1996). The interviews were conducted every three weeks for a period of 10 weeks. The first interview lasted approximately 90 minutes while the follow-up interviews were approximately 45 minutes long. All participants dictated the time and location for each interview.

The interview guide included questions based on the four components of Newburg et al.'s (2002) RPM. Probing questions were also asked in order to help the interviewee expand on or clarify certain points if needed. The open-ended questions were posed to the participants in an attempt to identify and examine what their Dream feeling was, how they experienced their Dream feeling within their process of performance, and how this affected their performance and well-being. The main interviews included (a) How do you want to feel in your track performances? (b) What helps you feel the way you want to feel? (c) What disrupts or prevents this feeling from happening? (d) How do you get the feeling back when it is lost? Terms related to the RPM (i.e., The Dream feeling, Preparation, Obstacles, and Revisiting the Dream feeling) were explicitly discussed at the end of the first interview that served as a common discourse for the follow-up

interviews in the intervention period.

The intervention component of this study included, (a) daily self-reflection in a semi-structured journal and, (b) consultation every 3 weeks using two main questions which were, (1) What have you learned about your process of performance in the last 3 weeks and, (2) What do you need to do to feel the way you want in the next 3 weeks? Lastly, the final interview focused on a more global reflection of their experience with the consultations.

Jackson (2000) identified that qualitative approaches to understanding an athlete's experience were limited in that they relied too heavily on retrospection. The current investigation used an alternative approach to gathering data on experiences and eliminated the long retrospective delay by facilitating daily reflection with how they wanted to feel using journaling. After the first interview, the participants were given a journal to assess and monitor their process of performance. In particular, they were given a journal that included a line-graph used to identify the level of resonance they experienced as their day progressed, questions regarding their most and least resonating situation or event for their day, as well as reflective questions for their overall satisfaction with their training and their competitions (also rated on a scale) if they trained or competed on that particular day. The journal entries served as method for triangulation to support the in-depth interviews as well as a manipulation check for the self-reflection component of the intervention.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data from the transcribed interviews were analyzed deductively using the RPM (Newburg et al., 2002) as a guideline to categorize responses. The analytical steps included: a) preparing the data, b) importing the data into the software program Nvivo (Richards, 1999), c) creating meaning units from the data and tagging them, d) creating categories, and (e) categorizing the meaning units under appropriate categories (Côté, Salmela, Baria, Russell, & Storm, 1993). However, an inductive approach was also taken as new themes or sub-categories emerged within the broader categories of data from the clusters of meaning units. This process was used in light of the known categories from previous grounded theory research (Dream Feeling, Preparation, Obstacles and Revisiting the Dream Feeling).

Several steps were taken in order to establish an optimal level of trustworthiness for this study, which included internal and external validity as well as reliability. Internal validity was established by (a) doing member checking, whereby the transcribed interviews were authenticated by each participant, (b) using the journal entries to guide questioning during follow-up interviews and getting the participants to validate the researcher's interpretations of the entries, (c) conducting bi-weekly debriefing sessions with three peer researchers to formulate follow-up questions from either the transcripts produced from the previous interviews or the journal data submitted prior to the upcoming follow-up interview and, (d) the development of rapport through conducting multiple interviews over the 10 week period.

External validity was increased by providing "thick descriptions" of the results to allow readers to assess the generalizability of the results to their own contexts and to compare the results with findings in the literature (Maxwell, 1992). Reliability was established by ensuring

that the chosen research paradigm corresponded to clear interview questions and research procedures and that information provided in the interviews corresponded to information given in the daily journal entries (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Results

Table 1 presents an overview of the categories and sub-categories that were identified based on the components of the RPM for these 4 athletes (i.e., Dream feeling, Preparation, Obstacles, and Revisit the Dream feeling). Citations from the participants have been included to illustrate the content of these categories.

Overall, the 4 athletes completed the 10-week intervention in which they were able to identify with each component of the RPM. As previously mentioned, the Dream feeling is a feeling that guides performance in any type of setting. At the end of the initial interview, the 4 athletes summarized their Dream feeling with words or a phrase that they felt was the best representation of how they wanted to feel on a regular basis in track. In order to show the impact that self-reflection had on the articulation of the Dream feeling, data from the first interviews will be presented first in an attempt to keep this aspect separate from the semi-structured intervention data. The interview guide for the final interview included some reflective questions not included in the guide for the first interview and, thus, this data will be shared nearer to the end of the results section.

The Dream feeling

Pre-intervention description. One key aspect of the initial interview process is that the athletes experienced somewhat of a challenge in articulating how they wanted to feel in their sport. Amongst much deliberation and non-verbal contemplation, the following reflection is an example of one athlete's challenge to identify exactly how she wanted to feel while she performed.

I remember a race when I felt good! I didn't place well but I felt really good. I think it was because I had a good stride... I was pretty focused... I'm trying to think about that race because I felt really good. Hmmm...it's hard. (A4)

As A4 deliberated with her descriptions in her first interview, A1 was able to distinguish that she wanted to feel a certain way before a race and something different during it. Her reflections centered around her optimal state of nervousness before she performed.

Before the race I like to get nervous. I don't like to get really nervous though. I usually have better races when I am nervous. Nervous to an extent that it makes me feel confident that I'm ready to race (...) I like to feel edgy but I don't like to feel nervous when the gun goes off. I like to just sort of forget about it. I still like to know what's going on (in the race) and still be able to react if somebody moves. It is not necessarily wanting to catch someone but wanting to improve - I like to feel determined. (A1)

A1 finally summed her Dream feeling when racing as being “Hungry” at the end of the interview, an identifier used for the intervention period, and alluded to her pre-race experiences as sometimes not enjoyable but necessary to run the race she wanted. Overall, each athlete was able to describe the feelings sought when they run in varying levels of detail in the first interview.

Post-intervention description. All of the athletes described their dream feeling based on past positive experiences in which they felt good during a performance and were able to identify how they wanted to feel. However, substantial data collection and reflection occurred throughout the remainder of the 10-week period during which they had an opportunity to learn more about, and reflect on, how they liked to feel partially through the act of journaling. This allowed them to become more aware of their personal process and to articulate the details of their Dream feeling. This is exemplified by A3's more vivid account of her Dream feeling from the final interview after the 10 weeks were complete of note. The other participants sought a higher intense experience in their running but A3 seemed to want to experience a lower energy level.

I feel like I'm floating a bit. I feel so strong. I feel I can finish the race...I feel myself smiling a bit. I'm just enjoying it more. It's not really a thought but a feeling of enjoying what I'm doing. (A3)

A3's descriptions focused on an element of freedom and authenticity she experiences when feeling way she wants to feel when she runs, “I am free and relaxed. Just having fun and not worrying about anything. It's being myself and not letting anything distract me”. Her comments went beyond a simple description of how she felt but she connected this to her larger complex sense of self.

In contrast, A4 summed her Dream feeling when she races with a stronger level of intensity,

When I go out there, I want to feel it. I want to be in the lead and feel really strong and powerful, like nothing can stop me from finishing well. It's like this big push and something just makes me go...It's like this huge competitiveness inside of me that I reach down to get. I feel alive. I have this energy that won't stop (pause). I feel on fire. (A4)

Each athlete shared specific and meaningful words to describe their Dream feeling. Due to the personalized nature of the Dream feeling, preparation strategies also varied among the athletes. Although each athlete varied in the vividness in their description of how they wanted to feel in the first interview, they were able to discuss what contributed to their Dream feeling both at this point as well as in the intervention period.

Preparation

In the first interview, each athlete was able to identify what was important in making their Dream feeling happen. The difference between their accounts then and the follow-up interviews was the quantity of strategies they drew upon or identified as pertinent which was

most likely from a low level of self-awareness with which to begin. The 3 week period between consultations allowed for more reflection, which naturally led to identifying more strategies that worked for them.

Four preparation sub-categories emerged from the analysis: physical, psychological, emotional and social. Physical types of strategies included those that were oriented toward preparing their body for performing. Many examples emerged from the initial interview and the follow-up interviews, including appropriate nutrition and rest. The following descriptions represent each theme from this category and also show several sub-themes that emerged.

Physical; nutrition. Nutrition was the most common preparation strategy and was discussed by all 4 athletes. “I pay attention to what I eat. If I’m racing I’m not going to put down 5 donuts 3 days beforehand” (A3).

Physical; training. Naturally, being physically prepared was also important for experiencing the Dream Feeling. One athlete described the importance of training as it helped to increase her strength, allowing her to feel the way she wanted.

I think that getting stronger in the past two months has helped. I have been weight training, and doing more running, and have had more gym time. It just makes me feel stronger, and I feel good about myself. (A3)

Psychological strategies were directed at preparing the mind to help each athlete feel the way they wanted to feel. The athletes reported that visualization, self-talk, goal-setting, relaxation, a positive attitude, race planning, having a balanced life, and time management were strategies that helped them to feel the way they wanted to feel although there were not necessarily a part of their training. Each athlete placed importance on psychological preparation and it is of little surprise that they use different types of strategies to elicit the feelings they sought in their sport.

Psychological; self-talk. A2 reported that self-talk was the most significant preparation method. “Before a race I kind of have a mantra. I just tell myself, “Have fun, run strong, and run free” (A3) whereas imagery was cited as more key for A4 to feel “on fire.” She felt that this served to recreate this feeling, especially when she was feeling unmotivated. “I really try to visualize past races that I’ve had that I thought were awesome or I visualize running the race and maybe getting a best time”.

Emotional; expressing feelings to others. Emotional preparation includes processes that allow people to connect with and express how they feel. They differ from psychological preparation as they operate at a greater depth of engagement and center more on feel than cognition. For example, A3 felt that expressing how she felt to someone helped her release from her daily frustrations.

It's good to have someone to talk to about anything. You don't have to keep anything bottled up inside. You know you can put how you feel in perspective and know what it is and know that you can express it. Then you can focus on other things... it's a cycle. (A3)

Social involvement; teammates. Social preparation refers to other people who helped the athletes prepare to feel the way they want to feel. In the following citation, A1 describes that having fun with teammates contributed to her running freely. She used them to create how she wanted to feel (i.e., Hungry).

Practices are fun with my team because it's all about the people there. If I don't have any friends there then I'm not going to have fun...we push each other. It's comfortable. (A1)

Social; coaches. A4 emphasized how her coach contributes to her feeling of being “on fire.” The coach’s support during races enhances it.

I like it when I'm in the race and I know I'm doing well and my coach is yelling at me. He is not just saying normal stuff, like “Keep your shoulders low!” or “Stay relaxed!” but I can hear him being excited. I know that I'm doing well, and I know I can do it. (A4)

In sum, the athletes identified a variety of preparation strategies that helped them to experience their Dream feeling. It was clear that for them to best prepare to experience how they wanted to feel, they needed to be aware of their dream feeling to begin. Over the course of the intervention, each athlete included preparation strategies more mindfully.

Obstacles

All of the athletes discussed obstacles that they faced in their sport with internal obstacles generally seemed to be more prevalent than external ones. Based on the lack of deliberation, the interviews strongly suggested that identifying obstacles was easier for these athletes to discuss than how they wanted to feel or how to prepare for feeling the way they want. The obstacles they identified appeared to disrupt the Dream feeling or prevent the athletes from experiencing them altogether. It is crucial to note that an obstacle was identified as an obstacle if it elicited an unwanted feeling or broke up if they were feeling the way they wanted.

Internal; self-doubt. Self-doubt was the most formidable internal obstacles described. However, more physical types of internal obstacles including injury, pain, and fatigue were also identified. The following citations illustrate these types of obstacles and, in both cases, the obstacle (e.g., negative self-talk and poor nutrition) yielded an undesired feeling.

It feels really bad when I get all these negative thoughts like I always do. For example, thinking I can't do it or I shouldn't have started. All I have to do is step off the track and my race will be over. Then I won't have to worry about it. (A1) I went for breakfast recently that was really greasy. It was gross. I ate it and felt sick for the rest of the day... I felt bad about myself and this really affects my “control”. (A3)

External; teammate. The athletes identified several external obstacles including people and equipment, for example, not wearing my normal shoes. Overall, external obstacles were depicted as being beyond the athletes’ momentary control. “I don’t want to be around

negative people who are saying negative things. If there is a competitor or a teammate who is saying, “Woah, I’m nervous,” it affects me.” (A2)

As part of the process of their performance, obstacles were either dealt with by reconnecting with the Dream feeling or, in some cases, reverting back to preparation mindlessly without consideration how they wanted to feel to begin. This reverse (and sometimes cyclical) pathway in the model is called the Obstacle-Preparation Loop.

Obstacle-Preparation Loop. Every athlete discussed instances of getting trapped in the Obstacle-Preparation Loop, whereby they went back to preparation immediately after experiencing an obstacle and avoided revisiting. This caused them to distance themselves from their dream feeling. Here is one response from A2 when asked how a performance setback is addressed:

I try and look at my training to see if I'm doing anything wrong. I also look at the individual races to see what I did and what I didn't do to see if I can find a pattern or something I should be doing. I look for something that might not have been helping me. I'll just keep training hard. (A2)

In the analysis of the first interviews, the obstacle-preparation loop undertook a prominent role with all 4 participants describing that they had headed back to preparation when they hit certain obstacles. It appeared to occur as a natural part of their performance process. In the follow-up interviews during the intervention, this loop was still experienced but less often as if their awareness of revisiting activities helped them avoid it. It is also important to consider that there was more combined interview time during the intervention interviews than the first interview. This is not to assume that the participants were not experiencing it outside of the interview context but their awareness of the loop seemed to prevent them from just “training harder”, for example, and opened them up to consider how they wanted to feel more vigorously. In the final interview, here is how one athlete reflected on how she addresses obstacles in the form of competitors from the final interview

If the competition is super good and I know I can't win the race, I focus on pushing myself and having my race. Then it doesn't matter. (A4)

Her re-connection with how she wanted to feel when she races helped her re-engage or revisit her Dream feeling. This perspective also led her to positively adjust her goals in accordance with how she wants to feel.

Revisiting the Dream feeling

As they increased their awareness and tried to connect with their Dream feeling more often during training and races during the 10 -week intervention, they learned to avoid the loop by identifying more specific strategies for Revisiting the Dream feeling. They described many revisiting strategies that allowed them to do this and these could be categorized as either performance or non-performance-related (contextual dimension). In essence, these strategies helped the athletes to get in touch with how they wanted too feel again.

Revisiting (contextual); Non-performance vs. performance related. The following are examples of non-performance-related (e.g., grounding oneself) and performance-related strategies (e.g., contrasting), respectively.

(After a bad race) I think that I don't want to feel this way, like I don't deserve to feel this way, like it's not worth it. I try to do stuff that makes me feel good like calling a friend or just having a normal conversation so that I know I don't have to feel (badly) anymore. Things like that take my mind off of the race and bring me back. (A4)

I think that biking really helps. I know running is what I like to do, but I need other things that make me think, "I'd rather be running." So I look forward to my next day of running. (A2)

Revisiting (temporal); Momentary vs. delayed. In addition, revisiting strategies were categorized in a temporal manner in terms of their timing of implementation, that is, concurrently while an obstacle occurred or immediately after (i.e., momentary) or later (i.e., delayed). The following is an example of how one athlete used self-talk immediately after a setback, which helped her to reconnect with her dream feeling.

I tell myself how much I want it (the Dream feeling). I don't let something like losing my spikes ruin my race. I just think "It's just a pair of shoes!" and it's not worth forgetting the hours that I've trained. It's not that important. (A2)

In one follow-up interview, A4 was asked how she re-engages with how she wanted to feel after an obstacle (missing a night out with friends) and she responded,

I think it kind of comes to you. I'll be running (in training) and I'll think that this is better for me than partying... running helps me put things into perspective.

In addition to the temporal (momentary vs. delayed) and contextual (performance vs. non-performance related) themes in strategies, it was clear that revisiting took place through reflective thought (e.g. How do I want to feel?) or through action (e.g. What can I do to feel the way I want?). The commonality between the two is that they both focused on feel rather than something external.

Role of resonance- based intervention

The post-intervention interviews focused on the impact that the journaling experience and the regular consultations (i.e., every 3 weeks) had on their track experience and their daily lives. The interview revealed that explicitly identifying the process of performance, self-reflecting through daily journals, and discussing their experiences regularly had a positive impact on both their performance in training and competition as well as their overall well-being.

Influence on performance. The athletes unanimously shared that the resonance intervention helped them to not only feel a certain way during races and in their training but also gain confidence that they can feel good about themselves in other areas of their life.

I think it isn't always the easiest thing to get hungry for a race if you're not feeling good or if your training isn't going well. If I can manage to get hungry during the race and I don't give it up, I definitely think it is worth it. Once I do that, I say to myself that I did this so then I feel that I can do anything. (A1)

Well, I think that when I feel in control I feel like I can run on forever... (A2)

Influence on well-being. An additional research question explored the perceptions the athletes had on resonance intervention had on general well-being. A1 noted below that her well-being was positively influenced while A3 treated the experience as a personal breakthrough.

I feel better about myself. In school I have more confidence. I think I just believe I can do other things well. My self-esteem is higher. (A1) I have reached a breakthrough in the past month. It helped me to realize a lot of things about running but also in everyday life... It helped me realize that I can control the way I feel when I am having a low. I learned a lot about my highs and lows and how "running free" can affect my mood and how I feel. It has a bigger impact on my life than it does on my running. (A3)

Of note, A3's insight came in the third consultation (week 6) when she was openly asked how the previous three weeks had gone. This gives added support for the impact of the intervention when such as response is openly volunteered.

Influence on decision-making behavior. One potential mechanism for the positive experiences the athletes' experienced in the intervention was how an awareness of how they wanted to feel led to change in how they made decisions in their lives that influenced how they prepared for running and daily living. In the final interview of the intervention, A1 shared the following insight:

I think I have been more conscious about my decisions than before. I will pull myself out of situation that I knew beforehand I wouldn't really want to be in. It's the little things like, for example, someone will call me up and want to meet me somewhere and I really wouldn't be in the mood. I would (normally) just go and drag myself along, but, I guess since I've been conscious about the fact that I want to feel a certain way most of the time, I would say, "I'm not going to do that. I'm just going to stay home and rest for a bit" and then I'd go out later. It's little things like that. (A1)

It is evident from the collective experiences of these four track athletes that the resonance intervention facilitated positive changes in various capacities. A3 reflected on her experiences early during the intervention period in the first follow-up interview in the intervention period by saying, "I am now starting to think more about the things I need to do to get the feeling I want...". Overall, the data showed that the intervention positively impacted both performance and well-being for all four athletes.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify the process of resonance experienced by 4 track athletes and to examine the influence a resonance-based intervention had on their sport experience and their well-being. After exploring the components of the RPM, several points of interest emerged both from the initial exploration of the process and the 10-week intervention that followed.

Firstly, it is evident that each athlete followed Newburg et al.'s (2002) process of performance in their sport. The first interviews were insightful for four reasons. To begin, each athlete had some difficulty describing the feeling they sought in track. It is easy to assume that these individuals then did not have a Dream feeling or pursue how they wanted to feel as a result. However, this may be a challenge of articulating something that is tacit or organic in nature (e.g., How does one ride a bike?). In fact, all 4 athletes showed interesting non-verbal behavior during the exploration of their Dream feeling for running. Although, at times, it was difficult for them to outright articulate how they wanted to feel, when they were able to do so for the first time, their posture tended to straighten up, their countenance was more alight, and there was an element of an increase in intensity or conviction in their explanation. This data is important to consider in working with the RPM as a consulting framework. It is relevant to note that these descriptions and the accompanying non-verbal data were congruent with Kasser and Ryan's (1996) intrinsic depiction of the American dream.

Secondly, it was evident from A1's description of her Dream feeling that how she wants to feel changes in her performance environment. This supports Newburg et al.'s (2002) point that an individual may have a differing Dream feeling depending on the context and reinforces limitations in any assumption that flow is the ideal experience for every performer. In fact, how one wants to feel may be sensitive to changes or circumstances within one's external performance environment. This is an important consideration in exploring resonance in other applications. This notion also provides support that the Dream feeling or an individual's understanding of it might evolve over time. Be prepared for a variety of descriptions, which may include different feelings within one performance episode (e.g. at the beginning of an 800 meter race vs. the final 50 meters). This could be useful, for example, in developing performance plans for competition which has been a part of the culture of sport psychology practice for the past two decades (Orlick, 1986, 2000; Orlick & Partington, 1988). This research posits that a commonality between these feelings is that engagement in the environment they are situated must be present.

A third insight from the first set of exploratory interviews (and supported in the follow-up interviews) was that various phenomena could be linked to the Dream feeling that each athlete described. It was clear that flow-like sensations (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) were desired in places but A3 shared a Dream that was less intense and more related to enjoyment. This confirms that flow may be a heightened performance experience but it may not be someone's Dream feeling. It cannot be assumed that the process of resonance is a process of preparing for flow in this way. The fact that A1 identified that she wanted to feel a rather unenjoyable nervousness suggests this to be the case. According to Jackson (2000), both

enjoyment and flow require a level of engagement, which is perhaps the key contributor to living the Dream feeling. Other concepts that became relevant included the sense of freedom experienced when living the Dream and that this experience was a product of being authentic or natural (Sheldon et al., 1997). Most importantly, the RPM and this intervention allowed for each athlete to create meaning in this process based on their own performance reality. What makes the Dream feeling the Dream feeling is the choice one makes in how they want to feel and not the “branding” of it by the intervener.

Finally, it was clear that each athlete experienced the process of resonance in their running and, as a part of this process, they also encountered obstacles that caused them to feel a way they did not want to feel. At some point, they responded by reverting back to preparation and thus getting caught in the obstacle-preparation loop. According to Maddux (1997) habitual behavior is mindless and disengaging and that this disengagement prevents individuals from exacting the most enjoyment from the activities in which they participate. In this sense, revisiting as a mindful process is re-engaging and serves to break the loop but also allows for the Dream feeling to be experienced again. This looping seemed to have a lesser role during the intervention period as the follow-up interviews themselves may have served as a revisiting activity but it is interesting to note that this was an issue. Perhaps this might yield further comparison between expert performers and performers at other levels to see if this is less common as a performer progresses through the stages of participation (Côté & Hay, 2002). As such, experts may become experts because they are able to avoid the loop or strategically revisit their Dream more so than those who dropout of their performance domain. Perhaps these high-level performers have a stronger self-awareness in this regard or have a differing set of values (i.e., how they feel is important) than those who do not reach this level. Regardless, this looping behavior was influenced by the 10-week intervention.

There are several points for reflection from the intervention process of this study. To begin, the journals and the follow-up interviews facilitated self-awareness about how they wanted to feel in their sport, but also in their life in general. This increase in self-awareness may be accountable for the lessened role of the obstacle-preparation loop in their process of resonance. It could be argued that their data collection allowed them to develop or incorporate more strategies for Preparation or revisiting their Dream feeling, for example. The evolution of each participant’s process of resonance showed a greater vividness of how they wanted to feel in track. A4's deliberation in the first interview changed to a more insightful and clear depiction of how she wanted to feel (i.e., “on fire”). This combination of less looping and increased clarity in ideal feelings shows efficacy for this type of intervention structure. It is important to add that the role of the researcher (or consultant) was to allow for self-exploration of each component of the RPM and, as a result, the research certainly became a mode for revisitation in the process. Each interview helped each athlete consider or reconsider how they wanted to feel and most definitely played a key role in facilitating the evolution of awareness and clarity. This element is fundamentally in line with Jackson's (2000) emphasis on the participant's constructed meaning of ideal feelings and, thus, developing ownership over their process of performance.

The emerging themes within the categories formed by each component of the model were of no great surprise. The Psychological, Physical, Emotional and Social preparation

strategies used by these participants are not revolutionary in any way. However, it should be noted that what separates the use of imagery, for example, in the process of resonance from its use as a rather standard set of psychological skills to be taught is that the imagery is considered more on helping the athlete *feel* a certain way. The lesson from these participants, especially throughout the intervention, is that they did not implement these strategies just for their own sake in a disconnected fashion but because it was key to feeling the way they wanted. It begs the question whether this approach can reduce the haphazardness of such states as flow.

Another important finding emerged under the Revisiting the Dream component. The revisiting experience could be described as being either more philosophical in the form of thinking about how one wants to feel or more practical in nature through the participation in activities that bring ideal feelings back. This behavior could be time-categorized as happening in the face of an obstacle (momentary) or at a later time when it was more practical to address it (delayed) or it could be viewed on a contextual dimension within their performance domain (performance-related) or in another fashion away from their performance domain (non-performance related). This has potential implications in introducing means for coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) or reflection (Brown et al., 2001) if the performer shows patterns of obstacles that may demand a certain manner of revisiting on a regular basis. Critically speaking, the brevity of this study does not address how an obstacle may be encountered and experienced over a long period of time (i.e. longer than 10 weeks). For example, a relationship may be an obstacle to the Dream feeling in that context for years.

Finally, one athlete shared that one way an awareness of the process of resonance had an impact was in her decision-making processes. This insight exposed another area for further research as an awareness of the process of resonance may have an influence on decision-making behavior. How are decisions approached when considering how one wants to feel as part of the outcomes of those decisions? How might this decision-making behavior change in a resonance-based intervention? It seems probable that decision making is a key mechanism in living and protecting how one wants to feel on a regular basis, in sport and beyond.

These observations emerged from evaluating the set of research questions this study sought to answer. The entire process including the interview process, the journaling, and the follow-up interviews has also provided lessons for using the RPM in applied settings. Based on Newburg et al.'s (2002) overview of high-level performer's process of performance, it is fair to say that considerations in consultation must be made for this level of athlete. Younger athletes are still maturing and may have a more difficult time in articulating how they want to feel and generally being as reflective as adults. The applied practitioner must be open to various ways of facilitating reflection so that they can express their ideas in different styles (e.g. How does how you want to feel look like? How might you describe it to a 5 year old?). Patience in the exploration of the Dream feeling is a virtue during this process as this reflective part of an interview may take a significant amount of time.

In delivering a resonance-based intervention, the journals could be a useful tool to keep the athlete engaged in their daily process outside of the interview consultations. In the current

study, journals were used as a talking point in the follow-up interviews if any key lessons or insights were acquired in observation by the researcher. In essence, this was a somewhat structured way for the participant to collect data in their self-research. This self-research, via journals or other supplements, is valuable in applied resonance work but certainly depends on their engagement in, and subsequent enjoyment of, writing. This should never be imposed if it is an “obstacle” to how they want to feel if they identify it as such or even if you sense it this way. Other potential tools for resonance intervention might be the use of audio-recording devices and perhaps the inclusion of more advanced handheld personal electronic devices. Regardless, in this educational element of the intervention, means for reflection is very important for self-understanding but also keep note that people learn and reflect in different ways.

Overall, these results suggest that specializing athletes do experience the process of resonance in their sport but that their awareness and ability to articulate explicitly how they want to feel may be not as well developed as high-level athletes. However, through a 10 week intervention period, both awareness and articulation were seen to improve to the point each athlete identified the positive impact of trying more consciously to feel the way they want in their sport and beyond.

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