

Lean on me:
Building and maintaining successful coach/athlete relationships

By

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An inquiry project in the Master of Art in Communication Program
Submitted to the faculty of the James L. Knight School of Communication
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at
Queens University of Charlotte

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Date of graduation: 05/09/2015

Abstract

This study explores the process of building and maintaining a successful and personally fulfilling coach-athlete relationship through an autoethnographic study of one specific instance of this relationship. Previously, many researchers have focused on the coach/athlete relationship to understand what traits are necessary to be a good coach. However, instead of focusing on one side of the relationship, this research aims to describe not only how a coach coaches well, but also how an athlete enacts coachability from a communication standpoint. The study features a autoethnography co-constructed by a runner at Queens University of Charlotte in NCAA Division 2, and his coach, a female of 30 years old, who have had some of their best achievements as soon as they started to work together. They discovered that many interpersonal qualities that can be found in other relationships, such as trust, respect, social support, rule-setting, cooperation, self-disclosure, confidentiality, fairness, agreeability, cheerfulness, control, conscientiousness, honesty, responsibility or leadership, require mutuality, and thus have to be displayed by the athlete and the coach to make the relationship successful.

Keywords: Coach/athlete relationship, autoethnography, sport communication, interpersonal qualities, trust.

August 2013

Félix: Here we are. Finally, I have landed in Charlotte again. It has been 15 months since I left the States. I am really excited to come back to Queens, get my graduate degree, and work harder than ever to get better at running. It's another beautiful day. The sun is shining, the wind is absent, the temperature is in the 90s... I do remember why I wanted to come back here for my training. The weather is going to be amazing to put in great outdoor workouts. No treadmill, no running around the 200m indoor track by December. Just enjoying being outside. That's why I like running and cycling so much. You get to "visit" the surrounding while training. This year, though, will be full of changes running-wise. Coach Simmons left. Working with him brought me to a higher level of running in less than two years. His method seemed to work for me. I was looking forward to training with him, but he decided to move to Colorado to train athletes in an Elite Program. I can't blame him; it was a good opportunity.

Tsehaye: Although we never want to compare ourselves to others, we do. So - compared to Coach Simmons - how do I relate and connect to Felix on another level to get him to trust me? I know that trust is not something that I just get, but I have to earn it from my athletes. So over time and in training, I hope to gain trust from him and build a unique relationship.

Félix: My new coach will be Tsehaye Baney. I have looked at her pictures and read about her accomplishments online a few times. Her appearance and her results as an athlete make me respect her. However, despite my good opinion of her abilities, I am still skeptical. I have never been coached by a woman. Not that I think women are bad - not at all. Western State Colorado's coach Jennifer Michel has been very successful, and I always hear athletes saying good stuff about her.

Tsehaye: I wonder what Felix thinks of me? Not that I care on a personal level, but more so on a Professional level, because I wonder how what he thinks of me will affect his ability to trust me. I wonder if he won't feel comfortable being coach by me. I have always wondered if being

coached by a woman bothers men, in general. Some of my insecurity may come from knowing that Felix's former coach was very bright. He has written articles and books and has even taught some classes on coaching the sport.

Félix: I am entering a new phase in my running career. What will happen? I don't know yet, but I definitely will give it my best shot. We want the same, the coach and I. We want to win. So why would it not work? My former coach had a lot of credibility in the world of athletics, but my new coach will earn credibility eventually - I am sure. She is courageous. She was a great athlete. And now she manages to coach, raise a five-month-old old baby, and study toward her master's degree at the same time. She must know a lot about time management, commitment, determination, and being supportive and understanding.

Triathlon and cross-country running have impacted my life in many ways. They are the reason I am in the United States right now. They have allowed me to travel to almost 40 countries in the world. I have been able to meet amazing coaches and athletes. And most importantly, triathlon and cross-country running have taught me values that I can apply in everyday-life situations.

When I started to think about a topic for my master's thesis, I knew I wanted to do something related to sports. This academic year is my fourth and final one as a student-athlete at Queens University of Charlotte. At the beginning of my third year, fall 2013, the Queens cross-country running and track coaching staff changed. The change raised a lot of questions in my mind, and I did not know whether I wanted to stay at Queens or transfer. I took what I thought at the time was a very risky bet to stay and be coached by a woman only a few years older than me who was starting her first real job as a collegiate coach after a successful career as an athlete at UNC Charlotte. I was betting my athletic career on the newly hired and inexperienced Coach Tsehaye Baney.

September 2013

Félix: I have been back at Queens for a month now, and everything looks good for my ability to perform. I chose to live on campus this time, making getting to classes, dining places, friends and the training facility very easy. While I was home in France, Queens built the Levine Center for athletics on campus, and the building is a great new asset, with its 33m pool and huge gym. On the running side, Baney takes us to new parks for training, and I love going to different places. It's not so boring. The best way for me to make a long run mentally easy is to get lost and have to find my way back. It works every time. So the first few runs in the new parks were very enjoyable. Baney also asked us for our input as to when during the day we want to practice. The Schedule is going to include a couple of mornings and a couple of afternoons, so we do not fall into a routine. I like that idea. Then I talked to Baney personally to ask her to let me miss practices once or twice or week to run around campus, save time, and thus be able to swim and sometimes catch up on homework. And she is ok with that. The training environment is set and looks perfect for my requirements.

Tsehaye: Felix's training is going well, although it's only been a couple months. I'm excited for the season. He reminds me of myself as an athlete - his commitment level and desire to run is already there, so I don't have to draw it out of him, necessarily. I wish all of my athletes were like that. So if anything, I hope he can be a role model for the other athletes on the team. I know he does not like seeing himself as a Role Model or "Team Captain," but I hope he will step up in a big way. What some runners don't seem to understand, especially men, is that sometimes your teammates need tough love from you to fully understand what's expected of them. Coaching a young team is hard because the learning process for members of a track team is they learn slowly, most by making their own mistakes. The only way to speed up the learning process is to rely on senior members of a team who have been through it already to share what they know. Having been an athlete, I know that hearing something from a coach is not the same as hearing the same thing from a teammate. Your coach is like your parent--sometimes you don't care what they say. But when a peer tells you the same thing, it catches your attention, and you just care more. We have a really young team that

lacks leadership. I'm not sure if Felix is up to it, but I need him to be vocal, because his peers respect him probably more than any other athlete on the team. He earns their respect from his dedication and success in the sport. I hope to see him grow into the leadership role before the end of the year.

Félix: My relationship with Baney has been good. She has not deceived me so far and has already shown me a lot of respect, understanding and support. This is a pretty big difference compared to many coaches I have had. She asks how I am doing almost every single day. If something is wrong, she adapts practice.

It is nice to know really wanted me back to Queens - I know, because Queens gave me a "full-ride." And I am proud that she appreciates my dedication: I practice several times a day, never find excuses to miss a practice, and center my life around my training. She has impressed me by the way she treats me and the way she understands my path to my goals, and I fully trust her. I think that trusting her will make great things happen. She might not be experienced with regard to time on the job, but she seems to know what I need to be a happy camper and she provides it: a great training environment, support, and flexibility. I think she is beginning to understand how I have achieved my level of practice success.

Choosing a cross-country program is not easy. First impressions are typically seen as the most important factor, but a first impression is not always an accurate impression. At best student-athletes can visit campuses for a few days and meet members of their potential teams. So figuring out what college would fit them best is hard and risky. Student-athletes have to make a decision that will affect their athletic careers for the rest of their lives with a finite amount of information and their gut feelings. Sometimes, they are already well into their college careers before they realize that they do not get along with their coaches and teammates. If they are lucky, this happens quickly. Other times, they take a chance, hoping that their experiences will be worth the risk. When a risk like that pays off, it results in an experience they will never forget.

October 2013

Félix: My first two races of the season are done! Baney took us to big meets, and I really enjoyed the experience. The first meet was hosted by Furman University. A competitive field met us: all the best runners from the Carolinas, including Duke, UNC, Furman, South Carolina, Wake Forest, and Mount Olive.

Baney tells me to be careful. It is early in the season. Other teams may already be getting sharp, but we are not. Unfortunately, "careful" does not describe my racing style. I like to be aggressive and run with the lead pack, no matter what. During a race I always want to think that I have a chance to win. I stay in the lead group for four kilometers before starting to die. Baney is right. I am not ready to fight with those guys today. I end up disappointed, finishing seventeenth. But I quickly get a smile back on my face when I see my time: 24'41. Only 12 seconds slower than my Personal Record (PR)! And after just two weeks of training! It's all good.

Tsehaye: I could see early on that Felix was trying to compare workout times to his previous years with Simmons workouts. Although coaches like to compare practice times from one season to the next to judge how athletes might be doing, it makes me nervous as well, because I don't want the athletes to always make that connection between times from the past and now. What happens is that they start to doubt themselves if they aren't where they feel they should be.

Our sport is unique because we need to prepare mentally just as much as we do physically. It's important for me as a coach to balance applying pressure on Felix for him to succeed gaining Felix's trust. Maybe gaining his trust even more than urging him to succeed. I use to think that it was easy for a school like Oregon, for example, to have a great team because so many good athletes choose to attend Oregon. But a very talented athlete has chosen to attend Queens. Will it be easy to coach him so that he achieves greater success than he's ever had before? Well I knew that the first thing I needed to instill in him was the right mindset. If he was going to achieve success, he needed to trust. I don't think he trusts me 100%, but I believe he trusts me enough for now, and I will earn

his complete trust after he sees his results in some races.

Félix: The second race is up in Pennsylvania, at LeHigh University, another big meet with some of the best teams in the nation. This time, I follow Baney's advice of staying relaxed and running at the back of the front group. Holding back is even more important today, because it is 90°F. I can see runners collapsing on the course. Eight hundred meters to go, and I am still hanging with the front runners, maybe ten of us in the lead group. One Kenyan tries to break away, and everyone gets excited. We finished really fast. I finish fifth, only a few seconds behind the winner! I can tell I did not have that leg speed today. But wow! Another good race early in the season! Baney's training seems to be working.

Tsehaye: Felix has asked to switch up the workouts been a couple of times. My initial reaction was to just say no, so I hesitated, but I agreed to the changes.

One thing I learned early in my coaching career is how important to running an athlete's mindset is. The more comfortable I can make athletes feel, that is, the more I can assure them that what they are doing is right, then the more confidence they feel in their running. I knew if switching up the workouts would give him confidence in what he was doing, that it was worth so much more than my power-to-say-no. So I just tweaked the workout to make sure he was getting what I thought he needed out of it.

I caught myself making workout changes a handful of times during the semester. I felt he needed confidence in what we were doing, and if switching up workouts provide that confidence, I'm fine with it.

Félix: I really like the way Coach Baney gives me flexibility. The way I have been working with Coach Baney is quite simple. Tuesdays and Fridays are "workout days." I just need to go to practice and follow her workout. Sometimes, I do not really like going to the track to do a tempo run. It would be more fun to go a park instead of running around on a mondo surface. We have talked about it a couple of times. I just do not enjoy running in circles when the workout is very long, and I do not think anyone does. If I wanted to run in circles, I could have stayed in France. It

feels easier mentally to run in a park. I am glad she has agreed to let me run in the park sometimes for practice. On the other hand, on hard days it is also nice not to think and simply follow what Baney says.

Sundays are “long runs.” They are exactly as they sound. Pretty straightforward. I usually run 15 to 18 miles, depending on how I feel and the time of the year.

Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays are supposed to be “easy days,” and that is where the flexibility comes in. I know my mileage for a week--usually around 90 miles. I build up little more than half of my mileage on these easy days. Then, I can complete the rest of the 90 miles on the other four days any way I want. This approach is convenient, because I can adjust to the way my body feels and to my swimming practices. If I feel good, I'll probably run twice. If I feel tired, I will go for a short run only. I think this flexibility has helped me to not overtrain, and to stay motivated and injury-free. I have never seen running—or sports in general—as a burden. Flexibility in my training program helps me maintain this feeling.

That being said, it's not that I like flexibility for flexibility's sake. I like flexibility when there is a purpose. So one thing I do not like about Coach Baney is when she changes the workout for no apparent reason. I do not have many of bad things to say about her at all. Her coaching style has been effective on me, and my results tell that story. Still, I remember one day during fall 2014 when we were supposed to do 400m repeats on the track. One of the athletes on the team suggested that he wanted to do 600m repeats instead. Intrinsically, 400m and 600m have an impact on the same aspect of training: increasing your oxygen volume (VO₂). But I have it stuck in my head that each workout has a purpose. So if we had to do 400m repeats, then Coach Baney has a reason. So why switch to 600m repeats? Although I did not complain out loud, Baney lost a bit of credibility with me for agreeing to the change so quickly. Athletes should not decide the routing on the most important training day of the week; coaches should dictate such elements of the training program. If another athlete can influence a coach so easily, what's the point of following that coach's advice? You might as well be following the whims of the other athletes. Oh well, while I complained to

myself, my trust did not disappear on this day. Baney has other strings in her bow.

Tsehaye: We have had our conference meet, and Felix continues to look good. He knows where he needs to be mileage-wise and always makes sure he is getting the mileage in with no excuses. This is what dedication is! Getting in what you need to get in, regardless of where everyone is, even if it's running before and after everyone is completing their run. Most of the time, it means he's running a couple of times a day. These are the days that I appreciate Felix's commitment of coming back to Queen's versus going somewhere else. He took a chance coming back to Queen's to pursue his goal to be successful. He took a chance both on the program and on me. He did not really know who I was or even have the chance to talk to me much before committing, but he came back to Queens anyways. I am happy that I can see his excitement for Regionals and what's to come.

Félix: Championship season started with a win at the conference meet. Confidence booster! The cross-country course was made for me: woods, very hilly, with some mud--on a cold day! It reminded me of home. I really enjoyed racing today, and I felt great. I am getting very sharp.

My team did not look good, though. We placed second to Mars Hill, but our conference is weak. We will have to step up big time at Regionals to get one of the three team tickets for Nationals. I am really trying to motivate my teammates. Even though I really do not feel comfortable when people look up to me - I am just another human being, after all - I am trying to get over that discomfort to help my teammates understand what it takes to get better. They are young and making mistakes. I can see that they are getting better, but they are distracted. Their focus is not on running, and I cannot change that by myself. We have organized a few team meetings without Baney to try to motivate ourselves. I feel like the meetings help, but only in the short-term. The younger runners follow our advice and the meeting resolutions for a week, and then they stop. As much as I want to go to Nationals with them, I am preparing myself to be in the Top Five at Regionals to qualify as an individual for the National meet.

U.S. college sports offer many benefits. Student-athletes get scholarships that cover tuition and often housing; they find friends quickly in their teammates, stay healthy, travel around the country, and graduate prepared with values they can apply to life in the “real world.” They share the college athletic experience with their coaches, with whom they will develop important relationships. Coaches and athletes see each other almost every day, and the interaction has a huge impact on defining the quality of experience of both coach and athlete. This study aims to describe the qualities of the coach-athlete relationship makes the college sports experience pleasant and productive for both coach and athlete.

Trust

According to Ted McLean, a sprinting coach who has taken athletes all the way to world championships, a trusting relationship is critical. First, athletes should have full faith in their coaches' abilities to set a training program that will allow them to achieve their season goals; second, coaches should have full faith in the athletes' abilities to execute all they are supposed to do in order to be successful (quoted in Brennan, 2013, p. 2). Faith and trust establish a safe environment in which athletes can push their limits, where even failure, although unwelcome, is at least tolerable (Riker-Fox, 2010, p. 88). Athletes demonstrate their trust in their coaches when they are willing to accept their vulnerability in following coaching instructions in risky situations. Moreover, trust fosters cooperative behavior and strengthens the relationship in terms of communication and knowledge exchanged (Nikbin, Hyun, Iranmanesh, & Foroughi, 2014, p. 113).

Trust fosters an athletes' cooperation with that coach, and this cooperation likely will improve that athlete's performance. In addition, the more information athletes know about the coach's vision, goals and decisions, the more likely they are to accept and work hard to achieve them (Nikbin et al., 2014). Trust plays a role in almost all healthy human relationships (Fehr, 2009). Traditional social science research methods make studying trust difficult. It follows, then, that few scholars have studied trust in sports.

Trust has many definitions across the world. According to Bhattacharya, Devinney and Pillutla (1998), one way to define trust is the "willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other party will perform a particular action important to the trusting person, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control the party" (p. 460). Another way to define trust is as an expectation about the behavior of others in transactions, focusing on the contextual factors that enhance or inhibit the ways people develop or maintain it.

Trust emerges characterized by uncertainty, as one person's expectation of positive or non-negative outcomes in an interaction based on the way he or she expects the other person to act. The uncertain and risky environment plays an important role. As an expectation, trust might provide an aspect of predictability in an unpredictable situation (Bhattacharya et al., 1998). This uncertain hope of predictability makes trust a special case of risk-taking, and the fear that hopes will be dashed creates the key element of vulnerability (Fehr, 2009). The hope and fear of trust occur an environment of mutuality (Bhattacharya et al., 1998), that is, neither partner in an exchange expects that the other will exploit his or her vulnerabilities. This fearful hope of both parties builds and maintains trust (Wicks, Berman & Jones, 1999). The focus on vulnerability - fear and hope - might suggest a specific reason that trust is difficult to study: People do not want to admit this kind of weakness.

Another reason trust is difficult to study is that it occurs out of the realm of the relational and within the realm of the emotional. Trust takes place because two people create an emotional bond between each other, a bond that enables them to move beyond rational prediction (Wicks et al., 1999). Believing in the moral character or goodwill of the trustee in a relationship seems necessary. However, trust remains a dynamic and continuous variable. One can trust and mistrust at the same time. Trust is also seen as the perception of the credibility and benevolence of one's partner and is an essential element in relationship-building. Coaches need to be credible to gain trust from their athletes. Gronbeck, German, Enhinger and Monroe (1992) instruct that, to be credible, it is important to refer to the self and one's own experience, use highly credible authorities to

substantiate claims, and be prepared and sincere. Since trust is one of the most important aspects of any relationship, coach and athletes need to elaborate strategies to increase it in their relationships. Trust is mutual and depends on the willingness of both parties to collaborate. A number of behaviors help athletes to believe in their coaches, while other techniques allow coaches to boost their level of trust in athletes.

November 2013

Tsehaye: Going into Regionals, Felix was feeling good but really nervous at the same time. He really wanted to win. The meet did not go as planned, and the team really fell apart with the 10k race. But even worse, on the biggest race of the season thus far, Felix had his first really off-day, in my eyes. He had some okay races earlier in the year, but this was the first race I saw him in complete defeat. I can remember standing at mile four and waiting for him to come by and seconds later there he was--he had fallen back to fourth place. He looked disappointed and in pain. I saw it as an off-day, and that's all it really was, whereas I think at the time he just felt like his whole world crumbled. I know the feeling: anger, disappointment, disgust, and frustration, knowing you put so much effort and hard work into planning and training for a race, only to fail. As runners, we want results now! It's hard to look ahead. What we cannot grasp at the moment of defeat is what we can learn. What could I have done differently? Did I change up my routine when I shouldn't have? Did I get enough rest and hydrate properly this week? Was I so stressed out from schoolwork that I was physically exhausted? Or was it just a bad day?

Félix: I arrived at the Regional meet quite confident. I was a favorite. I knew I had the second-fastest time in the region. I had beaten Dylan Lafond, the guy ranked #1, a few weeks before at our home meet. I went to the Regionals thinking of winning. That was it. I knew I could get second, but nothing else was possible in my mind. Maybe I was too cocky... Whatever the reason, this race was a huge slap in the face. I started head-to-head with Dylan Lafond. We were together for more than half of the race. But at the 6k mark, I just fell off. I had no energy. I do not know what

happened. Dylan broke away from me. At the 8k mark, two other guys caught me. That was the end. I felt defenseless. Why did I feel so good for 3 months, only to perform “that bad” challenging first goal? Was I ready too soon? I have no idea. But it hurt. I stayed with those two guys, but did not even try to outsprint them.

More than my lamenting placing my fourth, I worried I was not as aggressive and competitive than I used to be. I crossed the finish line and immediately punished myself: I ran one mile fast. Twice. It was grueling. But next time, I promised myself, I would not run a bad race.

Tsehaye: I wasn't worried that he placed fourth. What I was worried about was how his finish would affect his mindset going into Nationals. I really wanted us to go into Nationals excited and ready, but we ended up taking a couple of steps back. He started suffering a little bit of hip flexor problems and worse, mentally, he lost the confidence that had taken a few months to build. So I needed to somehow remind him that this was just one race--not the whole season. What defines us as athletes is how we bounce back from bad workouts and races. It's easy to be confident and mentally tough when you win everything and when you're faster than everyone - you compete until the competition runs the same speed as you do - that's your “level of competition”. What makes us tough as athletes is our ability to put our body through excruciating pain and then tell ourselves we can handle it. There was still more to come, and a second chance was still waiting for Felix. But I wondered how I was going to rebuild that confidence he seemed to have lost at the race right before the biggest meet of the year.

Félix: I surprised myself getting over the disappointment of the Regionals quite quickly, somehow. I was very disappointed, but saw that Baney seemed to be disappointed, too. I remember telling her one thing: “Baney, don't worry. I will be there to race in two weeks.”

Tsehaye: As we continue to train and prepare for the National meet, I'm trying to reassure Felix that he's *already* put in all the hard work. Sometimes, as coaches, it's just as hard to get athletes prepared for a race *mentally* as it is *physically*. I am working on having my athlete *mentally believing* he is ready. Getting an athlete to believe what they did throughout the season is *enough* is

not easy. For runners, it is normal to have doubt - it's called "nerves" - but how do we suppress it so it doesn't get the better of us?

Félix: It's November 2013. I feel like I am in the best shape of my life. But one week before the cross-country Nationals, I get really sick. I can hardly get out of my bed. On Tuesday, four days before the race, I have a talk with Baney. She says everything she can to make me stay motivated. But I feel really low. Still, I have to go to the meet thinking that I can do well. We have just finished an easy run. I am stretching outside of the bus, sad face on, while everyone else just jumps into the bus and waits for me. Baney gets out of the bus:

"What's up? Are you almost done stretching?"

"Coach, I don't feel it. Today's run was awful, I feel tired. I feel like I have lost everything."

"Five days of not running is NOT going to affect four months of training!"

"But the race is in four days, and I feel bad."

"Well, as you say, you have four whole days. Hydrate. Eat well. Get some sleep. And remember where you were few days ago. You are in shape. This break just makes you taper and rest. You are going to be even stronger on the day of the meet."

"I don't know..."

"I DO know."

I will always remember that conversation. I finally understood the heart of coaching: supporting your athletes, finding the right words, and always believing in them. We flew to Spokane, Washington, the next day. I tried to remember her message. I was the only Queens athlete at the meet, so it made it easier to sleep and eat well. I did not waste energy.

Tsehay: I've learned to always give athletes realistic goals, so they feel accomplished when they reach those goals, as opposed to aspiring to a lofty goal you can never reach and always feeling a failure. I consider a realistic goal a "short term" goal compared to a long term goal, that might be realistic for a particular athlete, but one that will take longer to reach - if a great race day makes it possible. Before Nationals, I had told Felix that I thought we would be able to finish in the Top 25. I

remember him looking at me as if I was crazy. I think he thought that if he had an *amazing* race, he might finish in the Top 40 to become an “All American.”

Félix: On November 23, 2013, I toe up on the starting line. My mind is clear. I have nothing to lose. I am in shape and fresh. I can always blame a bad race on being sick.

Instead, I have the best cross-country race of my life. I would have been very happy if anyone told me before the race that I would finish in the Top 40. I start out at around twenty-fifth and tell myself to stay there as long as possible. I am surprised that I am still running about twenty-fifth with just two kilometers to go. I give it my best. And I end up twenty-fourth!. What a feeling! Cross-country running All-American for the first time! I raced a PR on the 8k cross-country (24'07), and a PR on the 10km cross-country (31'02).

I go straight to Baney, and we hug. I know she was a big part of this result. The best part is that she told me a few weeks ago that I could be Top 25! I thank her several times. She has helped me realize what only two Queens athletes have done in the past: being in All-American, or in the top 40. More importantly, she has helped me feel strong and confident! I cannot wait for the track season. After a week off exploring Washington DC with my friends for American Thanksgiving, I will be back to serious training.

Tsehay: It wasn't until the moment he crossed that finish line in twenty-fourth place that I actually believed he trusted me. I could be wrong--it could have been purely my happiness for both him and me. Nevertheless, I had my first All-American! And he was an All-American for the first time. It was the first day he thanked me for the season, and although I felt I gained a lot of trust, there was much more to come.

The study explores the process of building and maintaining a successful and personally fulfilling coach-athlete relationship. Ideally, we hope our work will help coaches and athletes at every level, from amateurs to professionals, to improve their relationships, resulting in improving their coaching and athletic performances. The objective for this project is to analyze the nature of

communication in the coach-athlete relationship through an autoethnographic study of one specific instance of this relationship: the relationship between my cross-country running coach and me, according to our separate records of our memories and the communication exchanges that occurred in texts, e-mail messages and face-to-face during our successful year.

January 2014

Félix: I had a lot of fun during Christmas Break. I went to Arizona for a week and visited the Grand Canyon, before heading back to France for the holidays. I was great to see my family and friends back home. I enjoyed running in the mountains, which is probably what I miss the most when I am training in Charlotte. Nevertheless, the cross-country practices in Charlotte have built up my strength, and I am excited for track season. I have trained a lot--maybe even too much. I am learning that when I feel confident and everything is going well, I tend to do too much, too soon. I am impatient, so I guess I need someone to calm me down sometimes. While I love being home, I want to go back to Charlotte and qualify right away for Nationals, so I do not have to worry about the qualification process, and so I can and plan my training to peak at a single meet: the NCAAs. (I do not think that my teammates are training a lot during the break. They still don't get it.)

Tsehaye: The indoor track season is looking horrible. The entire team is coming back from the Christmas Break looking awful. On a good note, Felix is looking amazing and borderline too good! I really believe that after the cross-country season, Felix is going into the indoor season more confident than any running season before. Our first season together was a learning experience for the both of us. I know that he has had some amazing coaches, and for me it was hard to think that I could ever match up. I knew that I might never be Coach Simmons, but I had hoped that Felix and I could build a coach-athlete relationship based on trust.

Félix: Baney gives me a different training plan than the rest of the team, so I can progress following my physical investment during the break. Individualizing training, even when people train together, is very important, because every athlete is different. Baney knows that. We start to

really get along. We start understanding the expectations and thoughts of each other. My first race is supposed to be in Winston-Salem on January 31. I hope to be able to compete in the “professional race,” surrounded by 11 guys faster than me. That is going to push me to surpass my limits and run fast. I am ready. We both are ready.

Research questions

Although previous studies have identified the kinds of behaviors that make an effective coach, none have described what it takes to be a coachable athlete who thrives under the guidance of a competent coach. This study explores both sides of the relationship, not only how a coach coaches well, but also how an athlete enacts “coachability.” Every interpersonal quality that makes the coach-athlete relationship healthy and successful—from trust to authority—requires mutuality. My project, an autoethnographic narrative co-constructed by both athlete and coach, fulfils the challenge of acknowledging and characterizing this mutuality by answering four research questions:

RQ 1: How do coaches and athletes build and maintain professional relationships?

RQ 2: What influence does the nature of the coach-athlete relationship have on coaching effectiveness?

RQ 3: What effect does the nature of the coach-athlete relationship have on athletic effectiveness?

RQ 4: What aspect(s) of the coach-athlete relationship emerge as central to the effectiveness of the partnership?

The study is a co-constructed narrative based on the methodology of autoethnography, an ethnographic exploration of my own behaviors, and meaning-making/interpretation as an athlete of messages to and from my coach as collected in written documents, written messages and memories. I relied on collecting existing data (e-mails and other electronic and physical messages), participant observation and informal conversations. To co-construct the narrative, I relied on my trust in my relationship with my coach. Tseyahé Baney agreed to participate as a co-subject and co-composer of

the final narrative in the project. I compared my autoethnographic data to autoethnographic materials concerning the same events she collected in her own journal, and she compared hers to mine, with a view to co-constructing a narrative that reveals the interpretive tensions and harmonies in our particular athlete-coach relationship. I competed in NCAA athletics at Queens University of Charlotte while completing a Bachelor's degree 2009 to 2011. The relationship between Ms. Baney and me started in September 2013, when I came to Queens for my Master's degree after spending one year at home in France. I had one and a half years of NCAA eligibility left.

February 2014

Félix: When the Winston-Salem meet's Heat Sheet comes out, I am frustrated to be the first one not to be accepted in the professional Elite 3k race. I had the best seeded time in the second heat. But that was not good enough. I do not want to be in a race in which no one can make me go harder. I am ready. Mentally and physically. I immediately email Baney and Coach Jim Vahrenkamp, the track and field head coach, to beg them to *do something*. I want them to call the meet director and explain that I should be in the Elite race. Still, I know a lot of athletes will call, and the meet director will probably deny all their requests.

I am thrilled and relieved the next day when Baney emails me to say that I *am* in the Elite race. I am so pumped! Running in the same race as Olympians and other equally great athletes... This is a first for me.

I get to the track determined. Everyone else at Queens runs the day before in the collegiate meet. I drive there with Baney. The timing is perfect. As soon as we arrive, I go to get my bib number and start to warm-up. My legs are responsive. I finish it up with aggressive strides. They call us one by one to the starting line. I try to stay focused. I have learned focus by competing in big triathlon races such as the World and European championships. On my stride to the starting line, I notice that a dozen of my teammates are there to support me. Great! So it is time to show off!

The race goes perfectly. I go out fast and stay in the chase group--behind the leader runners--

for two-thirds of the race, before kicking as hard as I can. I finish fifth, with a new PR: 8:11! That's a full 16 seconds faster than my best-ever time! I had hoped to run an 8:16 if everything went perfectly, but I really surprised myself with this performance! More than that, I am the #1 runner in the United States in NCAA Division 2! Baney had told me to go for it and have fun! I executed her plan. It worked!

Tsehaye: The first real race of the indoor season was amazing! I could not have asked for a better opener with Felix running the 3k. Felix and I talked about there being great competition in the field and his opportunities to qualify for Nationals so early on. We talked about different possible times that would define a *good* race for him and a *great* race--and that particular race just so happened to be a *GREAT* race for Felix. That day he qualified for Nationals and ended up having the third fastest time in the country going into Indoor Nationals in the 3k. I remember being so excited when Felix raced... I was grinning ear-to-ear and was in complete shock with his amazing finish. As runners, we have high hopes and dreams, and although we may set high goals, it's still extremely shocking to accomplish those goals. I could not be any more proud of Felix's accomplishments thus far, and I am more excited to know that we still have another year to come.

Félix: Running is so much fun on day like this! And when you believe in yourself and your coach, and your coach believes in you, great stuff happens! This day definitely strengthened my relationship with Baney!

Even though deep down I still doubted my choice when I recommitted to Queens, Coach Baney proved to me that I made the right choice. One year later, I can say I had the best fall season of my entire life, earning my first All-American award in cross-country running. Track season started out exceptionally well, too, with me ranked #1 nationally in the NCAA 3000m for one month (before two runners from Colorado ran a little faster.) I improved my personal best by 15 seconds at this distance. Unfortunately, I injured myself in March. I had no choice but to stop running for more than two months to let my body recover. I could not defend my position at the

NCAA national outdoor track meet. Nonetheless, I consider my season successful.

What was the secret to my success? My successful 2013-2014 season was the first during which I was coached by someone I thought of as a friend as much as a coach, and with whom I could communicate extremely well.

March 2014

Félix: I knew it was just too good to last! A week has gone by, and I still feel pain in my hip flexor. I was not alarmed at the beginning. Honestly, I rarely run without some pain. But most of the time, I'm simply sore from a workout and resolve it by stretching and foam-rolling. The pain lasts no longer than two or three days. After all, if I took a day off every time my body hurt, I would have way more days "off" than "on." I really feel guilty when I do not train, because I know that others are training hard. At the same time, I know that rest is probably as much, if not more, important than training right now. It still is hard for me to stay at home and do nothing. But I guess I should give myself this time.

The pain stays the same for a few days, but then gets worse. After five days, I cannot run longer than 40 minutes without having to stop. And I have the bright idea to keep training anyway, and get on the track for a workout. I actually finish my workout. But a few hours later, I cannot walk. So frustrating! I try to stay calm. But even after a couple days, the pain will not go away. Now it's too late. I take ibuprofen, rest my legs and swim and aquajog - the most boring sport ever - see doctors, use bandages, stretch, ice, but nothing is effective.

Tsehay: About a month after Felix's spectacular 3k race, everything has started to turn for the worse. Felix started having injury issues leading up to flying to Colorado to race at altitude. I didn't think much of it, because like any stubborn runner Felix didn't emphasize needing to take any time off. I always allow Felix to make the big decisions of when to stop and start running on his own. I felt he was mature and old enough to really know his body. This is where I think I failed him. I should have insisted that he stop running for a few days. What the heck! One week, just to allow

the body to fully recover. His injury finally escalated to the point at which he didn't have much of a choice but to take time off. This led to three weeks of pool training leading into Nationals. This affected both Felix and me greatly. You might wonder how this would affect the coach. Well, I had just spent the past six or seven months building the level of trust I needed to help an athlete excel. Now I felt I basically deserved to lose it all by not being able to help him find out what was wrong, how to keep fit while cross-training, so he could still be ready to race. The easiest way to put it is that I felt that I let Felix down!

Félix: I end up having the longest break from running I have ever taken: 11 weeks. I don't know if I feel sad, frustrated, angry, or all of those things. I only know that it's tough. I cannot race at Nationals, when only a month ago, I was more than a contender for the win. I cannot blame Coach Baney for my injury. She has always left it up to me to judge if I needed a break or not. And I am grateful for that, that we both trust each other so much.

But can you have too much trust in someone? Should she have told me to stop? She is not in my body, so it was hard for her to tell the degree of my injury. I also really appreciated her support until the indoor national meet, in which I competed – injured. I finished fifteenth, obviously not where I wanted to be.

We sit down right after my race and are silent. Then we laugh. She tells me that we lost together today--but we have won and will win together again. I smile and tell her I hope that will happen.

I see her less the next five months due to my injury and the summer break that I spend in France, but it is not like before. I feel like I get less support from her. I am less important. I do not communicate to her that much, either. We probably needed a break from each other anyway, as is true in many relationships. Healing up quickly and coming back after a fun summer are my priorities so I can return to Charlotte to start things over right.

Autoethnography

Autoethnography - “collaborative autoethnography” specifically - is not a common approach to researching the relationship between athlete and coach. Nevertheless, the quality of self-disclosure necessarily characterizes both the methodology and the athlete-coach relationship, so the approach and the subject effectively correspond. Zibricky (2014) defines autoethnography as "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)" (p. 40). Although social scientists usually have been trained to guard against subjectivity (self-driven perspectives) and to separate self from research activities, such separation is an impossible task. Scholarship is inextricably connected to self-personal interest, experience, and familiarity (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Heewon, 2010).

Autoethnography moves beyond objective voices and passionlessness. Autoethnographers welcome subjectivity and see it as a resource (Grand, Turner, & Short, 2013). As Kodama, Doherty, and Popovic (2013) explain, "rather than excluding personal insights and information, autoethnography embraces the researcher's subjective experience, putting the researcher back into the research" (p. 77). The insider's perspective generated through autoethnography contributes to a fuller and, importantly, more balanced understanding of a particular phenomenon in the realm of human behavior than allowed by traditional positivist social science research methods.

August 2014

Tsehaye: We left off last season with a broken athlete and a frustrated Felix, as well as a frustrated coach. I think the most frustrating part for me was seeing how Felix got home, went to see his doctor, and figured out the problem right away.

Félix: Last semester was hard, but one capacity I have, I think, is the capacity to quickly forget the bad things and to motivate myself by remembering the feeling of racing fast and winning. I came back home to France and knew it would all get better. My family never lets me down. My good friends, either. I am happy to say that I also have the best physical therapist in the world. He

knows my body by heart, and he fixed in one week what no one could fix in eleven weeks in America. I admit had mixed feelings. It was frustrating to see him fixing me in no time, and I wish I had him overseas so I would not worried about getting injured. I could have run Nationals and, who knows, maybe would have won a national title in a sport other than triathlon. But on the bright side, I have arrived in Charlotte ready to train hard again.

Tsehaye: The good news is that Felix is feeling good, and he just needs a few weeks of solid training to get right back into it. I'm not quite sure if Felix blames me for his injury--not so much that he got injured, but more that we couldn't find him a doctor here to figure out the root of the problem. The reason I worry about whether or not he blames me is because it obviously all comes back to trust.

Félix: I had a successful summer building back up my base training, and I ended with my best two results at the international level in triathlon, with a win and a fourth-place in the European Cup circuit. The injury is behind me. I have turned the page. In fact, I want to tear up that page and burn it. I do not want that to happen again. Ever. I am ready for the best, and I have come back to Queens physically and mentally healthy for my last semester of eligibility.

The focus on the researcher's self does not mean that researchers have to focus only on themselves. A variety of others--those with similar values and experiences to self, others of difference, those with different values and experiences from self, and others of opposition, those with values and experiences seemingly irreconcilable to self--are almost always present in stories about self (Ngunjiri et al., 2010). What is important here is the context surrounding the self: how the context has influenced and shaped the self, and how the self has responded and reacted. Individuals act according to their environment. In order to understand an individual's behavior, researchers need to study his or her environment, as well. To refer to the methodology of autoethnography is to refer to research, writing, story and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political (Hernandez, Sancho, Creus, & Montané, 2010).

For example, a unique event might happen on a particular day at a specific time in the presence of a certain number of people. Despite witnessing the same event, individuals locate themselves in their own positions that dictate they will interpret the event according to their personal influences, usually different from the positions and interpretations of others (Hernandez et al., 2010). Autoethnography, as a form of personal narrative, places the self within a social context. Autoethnography as a methodology is concerned with producing creatively written, detailed, local, and evocative first-person accounts of the relationship between personal autobiography and culture (Grant et al., 2013). Writers seek to acknowledge and bring out multiple ways to experience life's events. Different people will interpret the same event differently. There is no rule stating how people are supposed to see things happening, so the assumption of a single or "correct" description of an event should not be taken for granted.

Narratives of lived experience offer glimpses into the values, meanings, relationships, beliefs, and practices in a particular culture, allowing readers to witness an embodied, detailed and subjective interpretation that touches them (Popovic, 2013). Researchers using autoethnography as their method of research and data delivery and interpretation want the reader to care, to feel, to empathize, and to do something. Because of the self-disclosure required of autoethnographers, they become intimate and vulnerable (Butryn, 2009). Their voices and the voices of other participants authentically and directly correspond to their narrative identities (Grand et al., 2013).

By definition the researcher and at least one of the subjects are the same person, yet autoethnography is not an easy method. It is not for the fainthearted, even though it has a lot of benefits and advantages. As Grant et al. (2013) warn:

The accrual of highly reflexive, culturally-related self-knowledge can result in a process that is disconcerting and disturbing for the autoethnographer. This relates to the fact that undertaking and publishing autoethnography necessitates a high level of risk taking in relation to personal disclosure and reader reception. Evocative writing by no means guarantees consistent public sympathy or support, and sometimes thick skins, or their

speedy growth, are helpful (p. 11).

Autoethnographers have to dig deep inside themselves to write interesting and useful autoethnographies. The subjectivity of the method offers researchers the possibility to observe and correctly interpret more details than traditional objective social science research, because participants in objective studies either may not dare to self-disclose experiences or observations that make them uncomfortable, or they may try to give answers that they think will please the researchers. However, certain aspects of researchers' lives or topics they approach can be very sensitive and disliked by their readers.

Autoethnography offers the researcher a lot of freedom. The researcher can choose to follow the subject's experiences of one day, one week, one semester, or an undefined period of time. The research report can be written in a style of an academic paper or in the more creative style of an autoethnographic narrative (Kahl, 2011). Stories in an autoethnography do not have to occur in chronological order. The text might twist and turn, and it can jump from one feeling to another, from one theme to another (Grand et al., 2013). Such aesthetic choices and components go a long way to create meanings. Autoethnography is the result of hard work, not a magical spontaneous process (Rand, 2013).

September 2014

Tsehaye: The season has officially kicked off, and I'm thrilled with both the men's and women's cross-country teams. I feel confident that with this group of men and women, we'll have a solid chance to make it to Nationals. I'm also excited for Felix. With this being his last year, it would be exciting to have a men's team go with him to Nationals. I feel much better about my relationship with Felix than I did a year ago, and I hope to help him achieve his ultimate goals before he finishes his collegiate career.

Félix: This year, Nationals are a bit later than usual, three weeks to be accurate. I want to take my time in September and October to build a good base and focus on what matters: Regionals

at the end of November, a race that I have never won, and Nationals in the middle of December in Louisville, Kentucky. Ironically, that is where I started my collegiate career. It feels good to be back in Charlotte. I know the environment, I know and trust Baney, training-wise. I know that she was not always been there when I was injured, but I'm over it, and I want to move forward with the good side of our relationship that we made at cross-country Nationals last year, my 3k in Winston-Salem... that's the relationship I want to build on. She is still a young coach, and the team is growing impressively fast. Maybe I was asking for too much attention.

Anyway, I am back, injury-free, and ready to roll. I talk with Baney a few times, and we have the same goals in mind. They are high: winning Regionals and a top 15 at Nationals. But I trust than by repeating what we did last year, and with our relationship being at the next level, it is going to work out.

Tsehaye: I know last year I allowed him to speak his mind about training, in an effort to gain that trust we needed between athlete and coach. Felix is a smart and driven athlete, and although I don't trust many athletes to help guide their own training, I trusted Felix. What I wonder is if allowing him to have a voice in his training might have appeared as not caring or not knowing what I'm doing. I never saw Felix as the average college athlete; he is an elite athlete who truly understands what it takes to perform at the highest level. This reason alone earns him the responsibility of guiding parts of his own training, such as swimming instead of weight lifting, or alternating a couple of workouts.

Félix: September and October went by very quickly, but successfully. I have been doing alright at the meets. I am training very hard. I feel really good. The conference meet seemed like a formality to me. It seemed just like a workout with a bunch of other people. I am in great shape already... But isn't it too soon?

“Collaborative autoethnography” sounds like an oxymoron. Collaborative autoethnography is the study of the self, collaboratively. It is a process and a product of shared behavior or

performance, not a solo act (Chang, Hernandez, & Ngunjiri, 2012).

Chang et al. (2012) define collaborative autoethnography as a qualitative research method in which "researchers work in community to collect their autobiographical materials and to analyze and interpret their data collectively to gain a meaningful understanding of sociocultural phenomena reflected in their autobiographical data" (p. 17). Moreover, alternating between group and solo work adds richness to the research.

Chang et al. (2012) identify five benefits of collaborative autoethnography:

1. It allows a collective exploration of researcher subjectivity. In collaborative autoethnographies, researchers are also participants and can study their own inevitable ways of seeing the world.
2. Power is shared between or among researcher-participants. In traditional research, researchers have more power than their subjects. Researchers ask questions, then analyze, interpret and represent the answers. In collaborative autoethnographies, subjects and researchers share the interpretive power.
3. The research process gains efficiency and enrichment. The sample of participants is ready-made, and researchers do not have to look further than their own experiences and lives.
4. Researchers can achieve deeper learning about their own selves and about others. Collaborative ethnographers can interrogate each other intimately and deeply because their shared power is built on shared trust and shared vulnerability.
5. It builds the community it studies. Indeed, collaborative autoethnographies typically study topics that have been under-researched or are sensitive about practices that might be difficult for individual practitioners to share.

Collaborative autoethnographers may offer the above advantages to enrich their conversations by bringing different perspectives and sharing power. However, Chang et al. (2012) also notes six challenges to collaborative ethnography:

1. It can make researchers vulnerable, and trust has to be established. The quality of the data

- deteriorates if participants do not share with each other or are not transparent.
2. It can cause logistical challenges. Researchers have to arrange their schedules to meet and discuss about their projects. Contact should be frequent.
 3. Research efforts are interdependent. A researcher needs others at some point to make the project move forward. Schedule changes and life challenges are not welcome.
 4. It requires a team effort. Even though team effort remains a great tool to get a better understanding of a topic, multi-dimensional consideration of interpretative possibilities and negotiation can slow down the process considerably. Moreover, certain voices have to be chosen over others, and some researchers might feel that their voices are not heard enough.
 5. Multivocality should not favor one researcher over another. All researchers involved in a project should have approximately the same amount of time given and space used in the writing process.
 6. Researcher-participants have to make agreements about ethics and confidentiality. Agreements must protect the privacy or involuntary participants, as well as that of the co-researchers and autoethnographers themselves.

Trust, confidentiality, privacy, logistics, time management, and interdependency require researchers to be cautious and team-oriented. Despite such challenges, adding voices to create a multivocal text brings a unique experience and harmony. Ngunjiri et al. (2010) compare co-constructing an ethnographic narrative to performing music: "While the combination of instruments creates a unique musical piece, the success of the composition is dependent on the authentic and unique contribution of each instrument" (p. 194). The analogy with collaborative autoethnography appears clearly: the participation of several researchers creates a unique and successful project only if they all disclose themselves and tell the truth.

November 2014

Félix: We leave Queens to go to Alabama for the regional meet. Coach Baney has made a

package for each of us, with running socks, food, drinks, and two separate messages. One is a running quotation to motivate us. We all have a different one. The second one is a personal word from her. On mine, she has written, “Felix, thanks for taking a chance on us and coming back to Queens. I hope you have enjoyed being back. This weekend is just another indicator of how important your decision is to me as a coach, but more importantly, to us as a program. Coach Baney”. I really appreciated those words. It definitely clarifies our relationship. And yes, I am happy to be back, even though the next two months are going to be tough.

Tsehaye: It’s the heart of the season, and everyone is looking good. Felix is starting to have some hip/groin issues that are making me nervous. I worry about repeating last year’s indoor season. But I know Felix understands his body more than anyone else does, and I trust that he knows when he should push through the pain or should not. I still look back and wonder if I was wrong. Should I have cut him off from runs or running workouts earlier in the season, knowing his pain was not going away? I remember so vividly after Felix won the conference meet with ease that he wanted to go on to do a workout. I understood his desire to get in more of a workout when you win a race with ease. But I still think to this very day that I should have told him no. I should have told him to take a few days off of training to rest, since he was still having pain. From that day forward, the pain got worse to the point that at Regionals, Felix was in so much pain that he was able to keep racing only from pure toughness. I remember the agony on his face, just trying to get to the finish line. He had lost the race. He was well down from the position he was hoping for. But he did not quit.

Félix: It has taken me a while to recover, mentally and physically, from the regional race. As much as I was in shape entering the race, it did not go well. My hip started to bother me right after the conference meet. I took a few days off, but I was far from thinking that the pain was from an injury that would impact my physical fitness. Or maybe my mental fitness - my consistent ability to be confident on a starting line, no matter what competition I am facing.

The Queens team ranks #4 in the region. Only the Top Three will qualify for Nationals. We know that we all need a good race to qualify. I go out with the lead group composed of four guys

and me. I know all of them from other meets and know I can stay with them and beat them. For the first 5k, everything goes as planned. Then, the pain in my hip gets strong and sharp. One kilometer more, and it hurts really bad. I have to let the four other guys go and slowly start to go through hell. A bunch of guys pass me. I cannot respond. My hip pain is like a 9/10. I am panicking. I have never experienced anything like this before. Runners usually a minute behind me are passing me now, and I cannot do anything. With 500 meters to go, I find myself with the guys from King College and one guy from Mars Hill College. Even though I think my team cannot possibly qualify for Nationals because of me, I still give everything I have and outsprint them. I collapse at the finish line because of the pain. I lie on my back for a few minutes, starting to realize that this is probably my last meet for Queens. What a bummer! I have qualified for every single national meet during my four years here, and this year, when I am performing better than ever, I won't qualify. Even worse, I have destroyed my teammates' chances to go! I am really disappointed.

Tsehaye: Seeing him at the end of the race is heart-breaking. I am lost for words, knowing this is possibly his last collegiate cross-country race. I've been here before as an athlete myself, and I know the sacrifices someone like Felix gives up to compete at the highest level. To fail is heart-breaking. There are no words of comfort you want to hear when you've failed when it counts most. I can tell he left it out there... He is barely able to walk after the race, and he knows the only hope of running his one more race depends on his teammates.

Félix: The first thing I say to Coach Baney when I see her is "I'm sorry". She answers that she knows I was in pain, and that I gave my best even though I finished fourteenth instead of my usual Top 5 at Regionals. We spend a few minutes together, but there are no words. Coach V tells Baney to come see him. She goes. They look at his phone, and she starts shedding a few tears. Then, she goes over to watch the women start their race. I am too impatient. I want to know what has happened. While Coach V is walking away, I limp after him and as "What's up?". He shows me his phone. Unofficially, Queens is in third place, three points ahead of #4, and five points ahead of #5.

Tsehaye: Not even an hour later, the news is out: the men's team has made it to Nationals! If only I could have captured Felix's expression on camera! The look of pure happiness and excitement of having another chance to race in a uniform. That look, that excitement on his face--as well as the looks on the faces of the rest of the team, of course - was one of my best moments at Queen's. To know that all the guys came together as a team to accomplish what they did was absolutely amazing! I couldn't be happier for Felix, to know that he has carried this team to many high finishes in his career, and that that his teammates were here for him when he needed them most. So it's back to another couple of weeks of hard training.

Félix: Hell, yeah! I'm not done with my college career and can still fulfill my goals at Nationals. I start to cry. I tell Coach V, "I'm so grateful to part of this program." He says, "Thank you for coming back. All that happened today happened because of you and your leadership." I have gone from extreme sadness and disappointment to tears of joy. My hip still hurts really bad. But we're going to Nationals! Coach Baney and I will do everything possible to manage the pain.

If autoethnography allows the researcher to dig deeper and find more details about the focus of study than objective research, collaborative autoethnography requires even more effort and agreement to get everyone on the same page. Consequently, eventually the different perspectives that emerge through collaborative autoethnography make a rich project even richer.

Collaborative ethnographic practice combines the insightful observation of the professional researcher with the high level of trust found between individuals with a common goal. Objective relationship studies conducted by interview and/or survey allow participants to give researchers common-sense and prudent answers, but the audience for such research must understand that participants typically contribute only observable behavioral information, or answers that they think the researchers want to hear, or inauthentic answers that will not make them appear vulnerable. Lemay and Melville (2014) found that people who highly valued a partner report high levels of self-disclosure in their relationships. Participants need to take risks and self-disclose for studies that

aspire to get an authentic understanding of relationships.

Autoethnography seems to be the right way, and probably the only way, to perform this inquiry project. Indeed, I have been able to dig deeper than traditional research studies and find information inside myself that other people might not want to share about themselves to avoid revealing personal and private information that could make them vulnerable. Autoethnography allows me to share my own experience as an athlete through the use of stories and personal narratives to make meaning of my lived experience and uncover new knowledge about the culture of the relationship between coaches and athletes in individual sports. It also encourages me to write in my own style and to draw upon my own experience.

I chose this topic and method for several reasons. Answering these questions may provide strategies for athletes and coaches for building and maintaining trust in their relationships. The topic transcends cross-country and track; every athlete or coach in the sports area can find value in the project. From a personal perspective, after I complete my project, I will be able to reflect on my last two years as an athlete for Queens University of Charlotte and find out what has worked and what has not worked with regard to my training, and why. I hope it will improve both my capacity as an athlete to be coached and my coach's capacity to perform her job effectively. It follows, then, that the voices of both participants in the coach-athlete relationships be included. For that reason, I asked my coach to share this journey with me and help co-construct a narrative. She agreed. As the result of this project, I am learning enough about the way I respond to my coach to be able to return to France and continue my training with a coach who demonstrates the characteristics or methods I have identified as effective for my success.

December 2014

Félix: It is so exciting to travel as a team to a big race! I have missed this experience! Last year, I went to Nationals on my own. It was not as fun an event, even though I still had a great race. I do think that having a great team environment such as the one we all create helps us perform

better in races.

The bus ride lasts 10 hours, but it doesn't seem even half that long! It also helps not to think too much about the race. I usually do not feel too much pressure before a race, but I know a lot of other people do unless they can think of something else. My hip is getting better. Baney sent me to a massage therapist three or four times, and it has relieved the pain. I have been able to train almost normally for the last two weeks, even though the three previous weeks were not my best.

I take stock. Yes, Regionals sucked. But today I do not expect that pain. I have a little bit more rest than usual and a little more determination because it is my last race, so I think I can still achieve the goal Baney and I set at the beginning of the year. We line up at the starting line. I am reading.

The gun goes off, and I immediately place myself among the top 20 runners, and I tell myself to stay there as long as possible. However, after one-third of the race, I am breathing really fast. My legs are frozen by the 20°F weather and the cold water puddles we splash through along the route. With half the race done, I am back in fortieth place. This race is over. I am not present. I see guys passing me without responding. Inside my head, it is even worse. I am so negative. I suck. I have been training so hard just to achieve nothing. What is the point? The second half of the race is just awful.

Years ago, I told myself that I would never drop out of the race unless I came up against a something big. It has happened to me twice, in triathlons, once after a bike crash and once because of hyperthermia. Both times, I woke up in the hospital. As hard as it is, bad days happen. This is one of those bad days.

I pass the finish line. I don't even know how placed. I don't want to know. I only know that I sucked. I am actually even sadder for the team, because I feel as if I did not do my part. I was supposed to leave on a positive note. This was the way a great leader would support his teammates for the last time. I failed.

We meet with Baney right after the race. We do not really have anything to say. It happens.

Something was wrong, but we don't know what. I was probably ready too early. I tend to do too much, but still want to do great at races.

Tsehay: Felix had one last opportunity and as much as the last race sucked, he was keeping his head high and wasn't leaving anything behind. Regardless of the outcome, I truly believe the opportunity to make it to Nationals as a team kept his hopes up. If anything, I believe his teammates made his final collegiate cross-country race the best ever, despite the final outcome. Felix is truly a talented athlete, and I'm glad I've had the opportunity to work with him over the past 18 months.

Félix: I am thankful for having worked with Baney and the relationship we've built. I did not feel like I, as the athlete, was any less important in our relationship. I have always put myself in a position to trust Baney, as I think it is critical for the well-being of the relationship. I do not know a lot of "risky" situations in running. I have never encountered a life-threatening event, for example. However, I describe injuries as risky, and potentially career-threatening situations. As long as my body is not completely destroyed and I can still run, so I cannot stop training. . Unfortunately, this perseverance has led me to getting injured a few times. I am an ultra-motivated person. I love training. I hate losing, and know what it takes to win. Still, running delivers lot of impact to your bones, articulation, tendons and muscles. As hard as it is to rest, I need to learn to appreciate the benefits of rest.

When the doctor told me to rest for a week, I might have taken only three or four days. It only takes three or four days' rest to feel better. Maybe I should not have convinced myself that I was fine when I was not. Then, I can feel the injury again when I try to run. When Baney would suggest me to rest more, that is when I would not fully "listen" to her. I don't think I was not not trusting her. I was actually lying to myself. I wanted to be fine. I thought I was fine. I would tell her that I was fine, so she would tell me that I could keep running. My ego, motivation and dedication got into the way of our relationship, in the way of giving myself to your coach. Should I be more honest with myself? What is for sure is that I should have stopped for a few more days. We wanted exactly the same thing: no more pain. Maybe she should have insisted, been more strict, asked me

for more information about the pain, kicked me out of practice. But she trusted me. Can there be too much trust between an athlete in a coach? Maybe that is the moral of our story. I thought I knew better and I thought I was fine. My body hurts every day. This time, more than usual. But when I realized it, it was too late. Anyways, I am taking two weeks off to clear my mind. Then, I am going back to business.

Emerging themes

Self-disclosure, confidentiality, gender, degree of control, fairness, social support, setting rules, giving positive feedback, agreeability, athletes' experiences, coaches' experiences, initiating communication and giving motivational speeches all appear to be variables that had an impact on our relationship. Previously, several authors have identified those themes to be crucial to the coach/athlete relationship. Our story confirmed their critical importance. However, we did not always agree with the review of literature on how they were supposed to be "handled" to make coach/athlete relationships fulfilling and successful.

Self-disclosure

Coaches and athletes share a multidimensional relationship. Certain interpersonal qualities appear to be crucial to building and maintaining the coach-athlete relationship, qualities such as trust, respect, social support, rule-setting, cooperating, keeping confidentiality, being fair, agreeability and conscientiousness. Different coaches and athletes will act and interact with each other differently, but one definite characteristic of every relationship is that a coach's role is never static. It evolves over the course of a session, a week, a semester, or over the duration of an athlete's career (Riker-Fox, 2010). Klarica (2013) showed that positive relationships across sport, nationality and culture shared certain characteristics: feelings of closeness, such as trust and respect; thinking that suggested co-orientation, such as common goals; and the ability to work effectively together on complimentary tasks. A mastery-oriented communication climate positively related to reported

enjoyment and belief that effort leads to achievement. According to Jackson and Beauchamp (2010), successful athletic performance heavily depends upon effective instruction and guidance from the coach, although the study did not provide examples. According to Brennan (2013), flexibility, determination, goal-setting, support and monitoring are important parameters; however, the study did not link these parameters with their impact on the athlete's performance.

According to Sánchez, Borrás, Leite, Battaglia and Lorenzo (2009), closeness and self-disclosure are the most important components for developing a relationship. Officer and Rosenfeld (1985) confirmed by saying that self-disclosure is fundamental to establishing and maintaining good relationships. The ability of the coach and athlete to communicate effectively within their varied relationship is critical to the coach and athlete's success and development.

Self-disclosure is one practice that helps partners develop their relationship, but not the only practice. Pennington (2008) explained that psychologists Irwin Altman and Damlas Taylor formulated Social Penetration Theory to describe and predict how two individuals get closer. Altman and Taylor compare people to onions in that their personalities are composed of several layers of information pressed tightly together. Penetrating the layers requires one partner to disclose it to the other. The outer layers are visible from the outside and consist of the kind of information you would get when meeting people: names, ages and where they are from, for example. Deeper layers contain less and less public information that makes the individual more and more vulnerable, information from religious and political views to their core concept of their own self. As Tang and Wang (2012) explain, "The deeper the characteristics, the more they reflect the total personality of the individual" (p. 246). Social penetration is enhanced if both parties feel positive about the relationship. If they do, they demonstrate a greater willingness to share intimate information. In fact, according to Baack, Fogliasso and Harris (2000), "The theory matches self-disclosure patterns with reinforcement dynamics. Thus, when a person receives positive reinforcement from interaction with another individual, over time he or she will disclose more about himself/herself" (p. 39).

Tsehaye: The disclosure of personal information with my athletes and Félix has always been

an issue. I don't want to cross the line. I am a female, young, close in age to some of my athletes, so I want them to understand where the line is. I don't want any of them to think that I "like" them. Once I feel the trust is built, they understand where I stand, and where they stand, I can be more personal. The more time spent together, the more we can talk about personal stuff. I see myself also as a coach-model and help for any aspect in life. Everything impacts running: parents, relationships, alcohol... but again, there is a fair line. I can talk, and I love to have conversations about a lot of things, from academics to relationships, but I would never hang out. No, we won't go to a movie together.

According to Social Penetration Theory, self-disclosure occurs as a result of a cost-benefit analysis. According to Tang and Wang (2012), "People assess interpersonal rewards and costs, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, gained from interaction with others ... the advancement of the relationship is heavily dependent on the amount and nature of the rewards and costs" (p. 245). The cost-benefit calculation is unique to each individual, because different people associate different meanings and values to responses and behaviors. According to Baack et al. (2000), "Rewards and cost are assessed based on current or immediate interaction, expectations concerning future interactions, and cumulative valuations of past involvements" (p. 41). Social Penetration Theory establishes that breadth and depth in relationships are equally important. Returning to the onion model, as a partner penetrates the layers of the onion, the degree of intimacy (depth) and the range of areas in an individual's life that an individual chooses to share (breadth) increases. Through time, trust, and self-disclosure, partners can achieve both breadth and depth in a rewarding relationship (Pennington, 2008).

Félix: A great aspect of my coach-athlete relationship with Baney was that we know quite a lot about each other (even though we only are a coach and an athlete, rather than lovers or friends). I do not hesitate to share with her everything that I feel necessary, even if sometimes, the information is very personal. As the theory explains, I have been doing that because she has self-disclosed, too. This aspect of the relationship got better over time. I really enjoyed learning about

her own experience as an athlete and her training when she was in college. Once, she told me something of a secret, how some people did not like her that much in college because she did not want to party. She knew what she wanted: to run fast. You cannot party and run fast. I agree. They are not compatible. Sometimes, my friends tell me that I should go out more. I actually think I go out more than I should if I really want to be the best I can be. Still, I found our mindset as athletes pretty similar, and it has helped me to build trust. This is directly related to confidentiality.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a critical part of the coach-athlete relationship. Janet (2012) defines confidentiality as a way to “ensure that information is accessible only to those authorized to have access” (p. 12). Confidentiality makes both the coach and the athlete feel at ease, confident and comfortable. Moreover, “it grows and maintains the stature and reputation of the coach as a professional of integrity” (p. 12). Understanding what is confidential and what is not appears to be critical for the well-being of the relationship.

Félix: Confidentiality remains important in any relationship. Baney and I both understand that. She has told me a few things that I was not supposed to share with anyone, such as the value of other athletes' scholarships or weight loss or gain. I also disclosed a lot to her. Last year, I told her the way I felt about my ex-girlfriend. I was actually really sad. I think self-disclosing can help the relationship because it helps explain the mental environment within which you're working. Feeling good or bad about things both inside and outside of running can greatly impact your success, considering it may impact your sleep, your diet, or how much - and what - you drink. There are things you cannot and should not tell, of course - the relationship needs to stay professional. But the more information your coach has about you, the better he or she can adapt your training plan.

Gender

Gender seems to play a number of interesting roles in coach-athlete dynamics. Male athletes

hold attitudes towards female coaches that are more negative than the attitudes they hold towards male coaches. Officer and Rosenfeld (1985) detailed a few studies, now relatively inaccessible, but worthy of discussion, on this topic. First, Reveles and Jackson (1984) conclude that male athletes find it easier to tell things to male coaches than female coaches. On the other hand, Jourard (1961) and Cash (1975) found that both male and female athletes disclose more to female coaches. Finally, Rosenfeld, Civikly and Herron (1985), who considered the influences of attractiveness, status, age, and gender identification on how close athlete and coach become, found that gender by itself could not determine preferences for one coach or athlete over another. A more recent study concluded that athletes coached by someone of the opposite sex perceived the coach as less effective in motivation and character-building than athletes coached by a coach of the same sex (Kavussanu, Boardley, Jutkiewicz, Vincent & Ring, 2008). As far as issues related specifically to cross-country running, Officer and Rosenfeld (1985) found that cross-country athletes of both genders self-disclosed at a higher rate than athletes participating in other sports, such as gymnastics, volleyball and basketball.

Félix: I have to admit that, when I committed back to Queens in the fall 2013, I was not sure how being coached by a woman would work. I could not predict that the 2013/2014 season would be my best ever! With regard to working with a female coach, at least Baney specifically, I found comfortable being more open to discussion and sharing my emotions and my feelings with her than I had before. I do not know if my comfort has anything to do with her gender for certain, but I think it does. I see men as more task-oriented, while women are more emotional. For a coach to give a well-structured training plan, communication need to occur. Feelings have to be shared. I have come to understand that running training is not like running a play in football, that the coach decides and then instructs the athletes how execute. Instead, training for cross-country running requires a continual two-way exchange of information to adapt it to the needs of the athlete in his/her specific environment. I know some male coaches encourage two-way communication.

Tsehaye: I initially preferred to coach men, but there are actually not that many differences coaching athletes from different genders. I might have “preferred” to coach men because I thought

they would complain less, be here for the right reasons, and know what to do. On the other hand, I thought cross-country running seemed to appeal to women athletes because of the social aspect. But now I think the difference comes more from how talented and mature athletes are.

Coaching international student-athletes is also good and different, because they bring different expectations and diversity on many levels to training. For Félix, the biggest thing was to make him believe that the training plan I designed could fit him, to make him confident in it. International athletes usually have trained under other coaches and experienced difference coaching practices. But the goal of any coach is to see an athlete improve on his or her watch. If you give a full ride to athletes and they don't improve, no matter where they are from or what kinds of experience they have had, it does not feel good. Someone who does not plan or cannot improve is not a good addition to the program.

Degree of control

Félix: Of course Coach Baney makes the final decisions overall, but most of the time, we discuss choices and agree before making final decisions, making us more “equals” working toward the same goal rather than a kind of hierarchical supervisor/worker relationship in which I had less power. Together we have decided which meets I will run, which events I will run at the meet, whether or not to change workouts, when to take days off. I am the athlete: I know my body. She is the coach: she knows that to perform best, the athlete has to feel good not only physically but also mentally. So she is open to criticism and change if she thinks new directions will help, rather than being stubborn and insisting her way is the only way. Her flexibility really helped me. I have had stubborn coaches who were completely sure about what their decision who actually made training more difficult. Why insist on a tough workout when the athlete is exhausted? Why running long, mentally demanding events when the athlete is not ready?

In coach-athlete interactions, the athlete is the low-power partner. The more powerful and less dependent partner, the coach, is more likely to exert greater control on the interaction (Jackson

& Beauchamp, 2010). Coaches' capabilities to lead and manage the relationship strongly predict an athlete's commitment to, and satisfaction with, the relationship. Certainly, coaches adopt different leadership styles, but the hardest part of their leadership role is to adapt their style to their athletes' personalities and training needs to make relationships work.

Tsehay: I know examples of programs in which athletes had no say at all about their training. The coaches had all the power. These programs produced results that were not good, and I think part of it is because the athletes felt as if their voices did not matter. So, I try to listen to the athletes and incorporate suggestions when they make sense. That's because the athletes *do* matter, and they have to feel that way. Some athletes feel that way more than others. Félix does to an extent. But all our athletes need to see that the coach cares, and so to feel empowered to succeed.

Fairness

Fairness impacts the athlete-coach relationship. Athletes weigh the coach's post-performance feedback according to levels of punishment and reward. When athletes judge feedback levels as fair, they are more likely to develop trust in their coaches, even when actual outcomes do not match expected outcomes. It follows, then, that a coach who treats all team members with dignity and respect, as well as showing concern for each athlete's well-being, is likely to create positive perceptions of fairness and trust (Nikbin et al., 2014). Fairness requires mutuality. The coach must feel that the athlete is being fair as much as the other way around.

Félix: In my experience, Coach Baney was always fair in the way she treated me and my teammates. I do not think that she privileged any one athlete over another. Of course, she would send only the athletes with the best times to the biggest meets, but that is how her job works. She has limited spots or plane tickets available. Fairness is an important part of coaching, and I would not feel confident with a coach who has conversations with or rewards certain athletes only. I can illustrate her fairness with this story. One day we had a blood test this day. Distance runners need to check their iron levels frequently, because iron in the blood is what brings oxygen to muscles. So,

without oxygen, you do not function well. Coach Baney told us to come to the Levine Center at 2 p.m. I show up on time with three of my teammates; however, the rest of the team is late. Coach Baney makes us wait for everyone to arrive, because she has information to share and wants to announce it to entire team together. I feel trapped. Four of us are on time, but we have wait for the others who ae not. I feel that she is punishing us, although we did nothing wrong. So, I decide that next time, I will just be late too.

When the whole team is present, she delivers her message: we all are «volunteering» on Saturday morning to handle water at different checkpoints of a marathon. We have been scheduled to help at different times between 6 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. She designates team members to work the checkpoints according to what time we arrived for the blood test, with those of us who arrived earliest assigned to the 8:30 slot. She assigns team members to work earlier and earlier slots until the people who arrived for the blood test last are assigned to the 6 a.m. slot. So in the end, it felt like a reward to be assigned to the latest slot, and a fair reward for the half-hour we wasted waiting for all the team members to trickle in for their blood test.

On the other hand, as much as I think that she has been fair, I have always been her best runner and perhaps I see only what I want to see. As I review my journal I wonder if actually she has treated me differently, and I am “blind” to the special treatment.

Tsehaye: I used to think that a coach should be fair to every athlete. But every athlete is so different that there is really no such thing as “fair.” I will always treat Félix in a different way than I treat the other athletes, because of what he has brought to the program and the team. He has earned my respect, and I trust him more than other athletes. I am not trying to be *unfair*, but you have to gain my trust to be treated in a certain way.

There is always a reason to treat people in a different way. If Félix has had more attention, respect or “fairness,” it is not because others do not matter, but because he has given more to the program than the others. It is a harsh reality, but it is the reality of the business. However, the amount of trust that student-athletes can earn from me (according to their attitude, attendance,

punctuality, work ethic) does not correlate necessarily to their success level... If an athlete works hard, has a good attitude, is there on time every day, and does all the things that I think he or she needs to be successful, I will treat him or her differently.

Setting rules

Tsehaye: Setting rules... is probably part of what I do wrong. I have many little rules. They are unspoken, because they are assumptions I make, but they all of my student-athletes may not be aware of them. So I should share my “unwritten rules” on Day 1, instead of requiring the athletes figure them out in the middle of the semester... I need to make sure to tell my athletes what I expect, and I need to make sure that everyone understands what I mean. Sharing my rules is especially important here at Queens. Athletes have to be on the same page as their coaches. We’re a small group. If just three or four team members do not follow the rules, for whatever reason, that is 20 percent of the group, and eventually that 20 percent will impact everybody.

Coaches must set rules. Setting rules generates an environment of safety and comfort within the relationship (Rutledge, 2005). Coaches and athletes need to interact and build good relationships regardless of sport, level of sport, age, or gender (Jowett, 2009). Good relationships provide a key component of effective coaching, because the “dyadic relationship provides the means by which coaches and their athletes fulfill basic practical (e.g., training-related tasks), emotional (e.g., caring, loving), social (e.g., belongingness, togetherness), and psychological (e.g., confidence, competence) needs” (p. 163). Coach-athlete partnerships that are stable and harmonious positively influence performance success. Familiarity with coaches’ expectations provides athletes a high comfort level and an empathetic outlet for their concerns.

Félix: Baney did not really set obvious rules. I think that is the coaching practice that she should improve. Some of my teammates definitely needed more rules to follow and sanctions to suffer to encourage them to listen to her better. She has to balance her open-mindedness with her authority. Following rules applies to me too. I am usually late. I always feel like I have a lot going

on in my life, so I cannot “waste time” waiting for others. It may sound selfish, but I would rather be a minute late (which is often the case) than a minute early. Coach Baney told me that I should leave for my appointments a little earlier. I even changed my watch so it runs two minutes fast. It worked, but only worked for a while. Nevertheless, Baney never sanctioned me for that. It’s not the worst thing you can do, of course, but still, I should be on time. If she had left me behind a few times or “punished” me in some way, I might have learned my lesson. But she never did. While remaining open and friendly, coaches should set firm rules. Discipline and respect emerge from rules. I was missing those traits sometimes, because of the lack of rules. Coaches should try, adjust and eventually find the right balance between open/friendly and authoritarian/decisive.

Social support

Félix: Social support might actually be the most important thing a coach can provide for his or her athletes. The level of social support Baney has given me has been effective. For example, I will always remember what she told me after the 2014 indoor track and field Nationals. After a great start that season, I got injured finished fifteenth in the nation, when I had been one of the favorites to come first. To add to my disappointment, the race took place in Winston-Salem, less than two hours way from Queens, so all of my teammates were there to see me fail. It was the end of my last NCAA indoor season, and I was really sad. Right after my race, Baney and I sat down on benches, and she said "Alright, you have been great so far, and I have enjoyed going through your success with you. Today we lost. But hey - we win together, we lose together. You're not alone right now. I'm here. And we are going to get better soon". These are theh words of a coach who excels at supporting her athletes. Another example of the way she provided the support I needed occurred right before the national cross-country meet in 2013, when I got sick.

Almost every day, she asks how I feel. According to the answer, she individualizes my training. If I feel good, I can do what she has planned for me, and sometimes even more. If I don't, we can making the next workout easier by shortening it or my running slower. She even has sent me

to a massage therapist or a chiropractor when I needed. Both of us share the same goal: to help me stay consistent, and not overtrain, overtire, or injure me.

After every run, she asks how it was. On easy days, she does not mind changing the location of our practice so we don't get bored. She has also driven me to doctors or the sports complex or the locations I needed to visit when I needed to go.

She also asks how school is going. She knows academic progress can impact a student-athlete's running. Plus, if a student-athlete earns bad grades, he/she risks becoming ineligible to compete in collegiate sports the next semester. And she does not want such a thing to happen. By caring that much, she has made my life, including my running abilities, better. Caring for his or her athletes might be the Number One rule a coach set for him or herself.

Stewart and Owens (2011) found that social support was the most important aspect of the athlete-coach relationship. Social support describes a number of behaviors: it can mean how a coach shows concern for the welfare of the individual athlete, provides a positive group atmosphere for a team, or provides warm personal relationships with individuals. While Stewart and Owens stress its importance, they do not prescribe techniques for how to show such concern successfully.

Tsehaye: It is very important for me to provide my athletes with a lot of social support and to give them positive feedback. That is something I work on every day. But what is even more important is that the athlete know what I say and understand what I mean. If athletes don't understand what I say in the way I intend, I will not see a positive result. I am trying to apply the psychological concept of *positive reinforcement*. Even when Félix is not doing great, he needs to know that he is still moving in the right direction, and that it is all going to work out eventually. Even on bad days, athletes need to feel empowered. But that does not mean that when we meet one-on-one, everything I say is always positive. Athletes should be open to negative as well as positive feedback, as long as it's constructive. Félix has been really good with that, being able to know when he needs to change something and when he needs to keep going in the same direction. He scares me a little, because he is quite tough on himself. Athletes that are hard on themselves are usually

harder to influence, because they remain stubborn and do not trust what coach says, no matter if it is positive or negative. Still, *positive reinforcement* is important. You cannot succeed if you beat yourself or your athletes up.

Félix: Coach Baney also shows us how much she cares about the team members through text messages and e-mail. She almost always responds my texts or e-mails within one hour. Online, in the asynchronous world, minutes seems to be hours when you need someone to give you information. She understands that. I also try to answer her as soon as I get her e-mails or text messages, because I know how frustrating it is to wait for a response.

I am happy with how sincere, supportive and responsible we have been to each other regarding computer-mediated interactions. It is remarkable and healthy for the relationship to have quantitative, qualitative and timely interactions online. Moreover, she has shown her team members her concern and support by informing us through group text messages or e-mail in ways that we can understand: "Due to the heat, we will practice at 5:45 a.m. tomorrow. We will go to Myers Park for mile repeats: guys have 6, girls have 4."; "Don't forget to put your (shoe) order in."; "Guys, we fall back one hour tonight. If you DON'T have a phone, then it's like we are meeting at 7:45 instead of 6:45 a.m. tomorrow. If you have a phone, it should change time automatically. Please talk with a teammate to make sure you understand the time-change tonight."

Tsehaye: The communication process is important part of coaching. Another important part is the individualization of training. For example, I have had the experience of coaching an athlete who runs well if he knows that I am watching him, but does not run well if I am doing something else. Some athletes just need a lot of attention. That is not necessarily the case for Félix, who is very internally driven. He also knows he can have bad race or workout on any given day, and that he should forget about it quickly. It is hard to come back from a bad day, but that's part of the coach's job, to support my athletes and bring them positivity and good memories. Moreover, I have always been on the conservative side, being rather pessimistic than optimistic, so they know that I was not saying anything unrealistic.

Positive feedback

While a coach's knowledge is important, the coach needs to deliver it to the athlete accompanied by teaching skills. Positive feedback, autocratic, and democratic behaviors offered by the coach are also important. Several studies confirm these findings (Baric & Bucik, 2009; Vucik & Bucik, 2009). Coaches who are more athlete-oriented and less ego-oriented coaches are most supportive and open. Sari, Soyer and Yigiter (2012)-discovered that a coach who provides positive feedback, social support, and training and instruction improves an athlete's communication skills. From an athlete's perspective, the athlete's need for competence, relatedness, and autonomy all negatively affect his or her communication skills.

Félix: Baney always tells us when we do a good job. Whenever we pass in front of her during a workout, she does not hesitate to yell, "Good job!", "Looking good!", or "Keep up the hard work!" Her enthusiastic support makes me want to run fast. When we meet to discuss my performance, especially after a workout or race we both know was not our best, she always finds the positive take-aways: "You did not give up"; "You tried to go with the lead"; "You were mentally tough"; "You have another couple of weeks of training before the more important races"; "You have put in a lot of training time, and you are tired. It's normal." These are the kind of things that I would hear from her. Saying such things does not change the outcome of a race, but it is a lot better to go back to training with those words in the back of my mind than "You sucked!" or "You looked terrible!" Trust me, as hard as it might be to believe, I have heard some coaches react this way!

Agreeability

Tsehaye: In general, being agreeable, cheerful and smiling is necessary night and day. Demonstrating a positive attitude can makes the primary difference between a good season and a bad season. Good results don't just *arrive* on race day. They are the result of months, if not years, of training. An athlete has to come to practice with a good attitude, and Félix does that. If you come

with a good attitude, your workout is halfway done. Our sport is hard enough without athletes bringing negativity to a race to make it harder. I will always remember a workout the guys did last fall. It was miles-repeat in McAlpine Park. It is a tough workout in itself, but that particular day the weather made it worse. It was pouring rain, windy and very cold. But the guys came to practice with a good attitude, even with those tough conditions. It ended up being their best overall workout of the whole semester.

While both athletes and coaches report favorable outcomes when their partner is highly conscientious and agreeable (Jackson, Dimmock, Gucciardi & Grove, 2011), they see their relationship differently, one to the other. For their part, athletes tend to emphasize feelings and closeness to their coaches, while coaches usually emphasize commitment (Jowett, 2009). It may not be surprising that athletes and coaches whose personalities differed with regard to extraversion and openness suffered from reduced commitment and relatedness in their relationships (Jackson et al., 2011). Nevertheless, if coaches and athletes define success the same way, if they agree on what is required to achieve it, and if they pursue the training program together, the training process progresses beyond simply being together executing workouts (Riker-Fox, 2010).

Félix: Coach Baney is always happy and smiling. It feels so much better working with people who are agreeable, warm and friendly – or as we say, sympathetic. I would not have liked going to practice every day seeing a coach who always felt sad and frustrated. Having a positive attitude in your “work environment” greatly affects the way you work. I really enjoy going to practice every day, and it has never been hard for me to talk to Baney. I know I can be myself, I can joke sometimes, and I can be serious when I need to be. An agreeable coach is, in my opinion, the foundation for a lot of other aspects of a successful coach-athletes relationship. Would you trust someone who you did not like? Would you disclose to him or her? I probably would not.

Tsehaye: I could describe Félix as a silent leader. He is very positive. His teammates have talked to me a lot about him. What always comes out of these discussions is how Félix has helped his teammates to understand training, to understand what’s going right and what’s going wrong. He

has also shared his knowledge coming from his injuries, for example. And he has made them dream by telling them about running fast in big meets, such as Nationals. Also, he has always given them positive personal feedback after a bad workout or race. Hearing feedback from Felix better for them than hearing it from me, because since I am the coach, they think I *have* to say those things. But Felix does not have to give them positive feedback. What he says is «the reality».

Communication initiator

Macquet (2013) found that communication is typically initiated by the coach, but accurate feedback from athletes might help to improve coaches' understanding. Coaches seem to find it hard to know what their athletes feel or think. Athletes know coaches' thoughts and feelings better than coaches understand athletes' thoughts and feelings.

Félix: I do not think that communication always has to be initiated by the coach. I really associate our success to the fact that our relationship has allowed us to be a “we” instead of a “her and I.” I have always felt comfortable telling, asking, and discussing anything with Coach Baney. She is very accessible and open. No matter the topic, no matter the answer she was about to give me, I felt I could open a conversation as easily as she could. That appears to be really important in a coach-athlete relationship. If the athlete is not comfortable enough to initiate conversation with his or her coach, success is tougher to achieve. Coaches have knowledge that can help an athlete, but they need information about the athlete’s situation to be able to apply that knowledge. It is not always easy for a coach to see when an athlete is about to get overtrained or injured. And when the athlete is overtrained or injured, the two partners in the relationship can interpret it as a waste of the next few weeks of training.

Tsehaye: Communication is definitely a two-way street. My athletes need to let me know every single feeling. Well, the good feelings are not *always* necessary, even though they reinforce positivity. However, when an athlete is feeling low, he or she needs to talk to the coach--every time. When you can explain to me how you feel, I can help, but I cannot help you consistently if I can

only *guess* how you feel.

Some athletes cannot deal with a lot of pain during their workout, and I can't really help that. However, There is a difference between hurting from a tough workout and hurting from an injury. When the pain may be due to injury, the sooner the athlete communicates with the coach, the better. Félix was the opposite of the athlete who complains during a normal workout. He would never complain, and he would stay positive most of the time. He would always try to push his limits, and any gap in training made him feel guilty. So when he was afraid he might be injured, he would not say anything until he couldn't stand it. Then he would finally say something to me, and by then it was too late.

Motivational speeches

Félix: Coach Baney improved the way she approaches her motivational talks a lot. Last year, she would leave the team members alone with each other before the race to give each other the last few words of encouragement. This year, she joined our traditional three-minute pre-race circle to give us a short speech, then she let us add whatever we wanted to say to each other. As the unofficial co-captain of the team, I usually felt I had to say something at that point. I think giving us the last-minute motivation was a great thing. But she was giving us an extra push, and she showed that she cared a lot. I really felt like she was racing with us. Having those few minutes of focused support from someone who is officially above you in the hierarchy feels awesome. Now I'd like her to work on coming up with some different things to say.

Tsehay: I heard athletes saying that they wanted to hear something positive before their races. So I decided to give short speeches before meets, to try to motivate and inspire them. I had not inserted myself into their pre-race because I have always been internally motivated, and so at the beginning, I just felt like it was not my place. But I eventually realized it might be helpful. Knowing all the work that we put in, I understand how they feel. I needed to be present in body as much as possible to help as much as I can. If my athletes thought I didn't care about them, then that

would be the completely wrong way to coach. I care more than they can ever imagine. I am by their side all the time in spirit, even if not running on the track.

But I also think that the majority of the tone for a race is set by the athletes themselves. It may start with me, but they have to carry it. I may start off the discussion, but then it's all up to them. It's the same whether it's a race or a season, I guess. I help them all season, but on race day, it all comes down to them. Félix helped me motivate the team, because he would always speak after me. His teammates have a lot of respect for him, and again, since giving a motivational speech is not his "job", the others trust what he says even more.

Usually, coaches make a speech to their athletes before meets. If well delivered, such speeches are useful tools to influence the performances of both teams and individuals (Lorenzo, Navarro, Rivilla & Lorenzo, 2013). Although such speeches differ in quality and meaning according to the individual coach's ability, their purpose is the same: to focus the athletes' emotions, motivation, and determination.

Félix: Despite looking like an individual sport, cross-country is a team sport in the context of the NCAA. Each athlete scores points for his team. Every year, the team that wins Nationals may not have the best athletes (even though they must be very good), but the team members truly display a great team spirit. It is easy to see that the team members on champion teams are friends before they are teammates. Coach Baney tries to make us feel like a team. In the fall of 2014, I remain convinced that the cohesion she built among us is the reason we qualified as a team to Nationals. We ran for each other, not for ourselves.

Baney found several ways to make us believe in each other and work as a team. First, we always practiced at the same time. That means that even though all my classes started at 6 p.m., I had to practice at 6 a.m. a few times a week because some of my teammates had class during the day. She organized "fun workouts," such as a 24 x 400 relay in teams of two, who are dressed the same way. She paired the slowest runner with the fastest, the second slowest runner with the second fastest and so on. This workout flew by and was very enjoyable, despite heavy rain and wind. When

we had team meetings, she waited for everyone, to make us hold each other accountable. At the beginning of last fall, she asked all of us for \$75 to organize team-bonding activities. We went out to eat at a restaurant a couple of times, we spent a day at the Whitewater Center, we went to a Louisville Cardinals basketball game, and we hiked up to the top of Crowders Mountain. Always together. Having fun together and creating affinities drew us closer. After we qualified for Nationals, she did not hesitate to send us this text message: "I'm really proud of you. I know I don't say it often, but you guys truly displayed good teamwork this weekend. Keep up the hard work!"

Athlete's experience

Interestingly, previous authors have said that the more experienced the athlete, the less effective the coach (Kavussanu, Boardley, Jutkiewicz, Vincent, & Ring, 2008). Sport experience negatively predicted athletes' perceptions of all dimensions of coaching effectiveness. More experienced athletes have been exposed to a variety of coaches and developed standards that can affect their coach's perceptions.

Félix: I would like to re-phrase the results that studies seemed to find. I would rather say, "The better the athlete, the more picky and specific the coach can be." Better athletes seem to be intrinsically motivated. This is definitely my case. I do not need anyone to make me run every day. I know what it takes to succeed, and I enjoy training, racing and winning so much that I find it easy to go for a jog. I cannot recall a time when Baney had to make me run. And neither can she, I know. She does not have to waste her time and energy teaching me the basics. So instead, she can focus on details that can make me more successful, such as logistics, new drills, new workouts, new recovery processes. I actually think that the better the athlete, *the more important the coach*. Anyone can tell you to go for a run. But only a good coach can understand and mitigate the specific technical qualities apparent or missing in a certain running event to make athletes faster.

Tsehaye: My biggest fear was screwing it up with Félix. It is definitely not easy to coach good athletes. I cannot take all of the credit for his successes, of course - Félix does most of the

work, but as the coach, I think I helped him to get there. Student-athletes have to be driven, they have to see success ahead, not defeat or regression. Granted, I think I could have been a better coach with him a few times. I could have been a better coach if I had been able to find ways to make him feel more confident. I also blame myself a little bit for his injuries. He bears part of the blame for not saying anything sooner. However, since I have been allowing him to do more and trusting him to do what he needed to do, such as a lot of swimming and biking, I should have monitored his feelings more often. It is part of my job to define and detect what's "too much" for an athlete, but maybe a few times I trusted Félix too much to find his limits before it was too late. I should have told him to stop when I thought he needed to stop. I should have been stricter.

Coaching experience

It seems important to address the issue of coaching experience. Young coaches, changing roles from athlete to coach, are more likely to upset team chemistry and have non-professional, overly friendly relationships with the athletes they coach (Roach & Dixon, 2006). Athletes sometimes feel the need to explain to new coaches how the system works and may not see new coaches as authority figures.

Tsehaye: Ironically, I used to be not friendly at all. I was young, so I thought I needed to be strict to gain respect. I thought you had to be either strict or friendly, no in between. I have been told that I was tougher than most of the other coaches, and that athletes did not like to be coached by me. But I quickly understood that being strict was not the best way to motivate my athletes and make them faster. So I have tried to change, to be more open, and that is how Félix knows me.

Félix: Coach Baney is only 30 years old, and her age definitely had an impact on our relationship. In my opinion, age difference determines the way you talk to someone. I am a "mature" student, being 25; most of members of the cross-country team are undergraduates between 18 and 22. Nonetheless, the direct consequence of our smaller age difference was that we found it easier to talk. The maturity we shared helped me to see my relationship with Baney as more than

manager-employee. Obviously, I have a lot of respect for her and never forget that she is the coach and I am the athlete. But it seemed easier to self-disclose to her rather than to older (over-50) coaches I have trained with. She probably understands college-life better than older coaches. She has a better feel for when college-life is stressful and when athletes have problems with their romantic partners, roommates, and friends. In fact, just finished her Master's degree in Business last semester. The down-side of her young age is may be that certain athletes might not respect her as much as I do. But our relationship has been productive and the outcomes positive. Being friendly, while still knowing where to draw the line, sounds pretty good to me.

Conclusion

Through this project, with the help of Coach Baney, I have tried to find out how to build and maintain successful coach-athlete relationships and identify what aspects of technique and personal characteristics can make the relationship successful. The fact that my coach embarked on this journey with me was crucial, not only to understand how a coach coaches well, but how an athlete enacts "coachability." Previous studies have not treated the coach and the athlete equally. Researchers tended to choose either the coach's perspective or the athlete's perspective. However, in my understanding of a healthy and successful relationship, every interpersonal quality displayed by the actors requires mutuality. By co-constructing this project with my coach, I was able to comprehend and acknowledge how our coach/athlete relationship was successfully built and maintained, and what aspects have helped it to be that way.

Autoethnography definitely added to the research. My coach and I had to dig deep inside ourselves to find and write interesting and useful notes. The subjectivity of the research and our engagement in it allowed us to observe and interpret more details than traditional objective social science research. Indeed, participants in objective studies either may not dare to self-disclose experiences or observations that make them uncomfortable, or they may try to give answers that they think will please the researchers. My coach and I did not mind sharing our experiences. The

freedom of the method also allowed us to self-pace our findings and go back to our story to make it more accurate or detailed if needed.

Trust appears to be central and probably the main interpersonal quality to have a successful coach/athlete relationship. Without trust, it seems hard for all the other ones to function efficiently. However, as we saw in our case study, trust should be high but limited. In our case, too much trust actually led to a misunderstanding. The coach passively saw her athlete getting injured, while the athlete thought that the coach would stop him before it was too late. The coach's gender, despite some concerns before the research, did not have any negative influence. Instead, it allowed a male athlete to disclose more easily to a female coach, at least this female coach, as she seemed more concerned about our emotions rather than tasks. Emotion is a critical component of successful racing.

Coach Banet's experiences in this study resulted in some suggestions for coaches in the coach-athlete relationship. Coaches should disclose information about themselves to their athletes so they can humanize themselves. It helps an athlete to understand that a coach has been through the same things as the athlete is experiencing and understands what is going on in an athlete's life. Moreover, coaches should empower the athlete to use his or her voice. Athletes like to see that coaches care about them. Athletes also like to see their coaches being fair. Even though not setting rules allows more freedom for the athlete, a better environment seem to be created when the coach shows authority regarding time, schedules or workouts choices for example. By being agreeable, pleasant, giving positive feedback and offering social support, coaches enhance their ability to build a great atmosphere in a sport that is already hard enough. Negativity from the coach impacts the athletes negatively. Furthermore, coach should be inspiring and motivating athletes through their attitudes. Speeches before meets are especially useful, because perceive it as demonstrating that that coaches are always with them. If an athlete is more experienced, a coach is actually even more important and should focus on the small details that make a big difference on race day instead of the basics.

Moreover, this study suggests that coaches need to empower their athletes to make them feel that they matter. Even though being fair seems important, coaches must make choices according to how hard an athlete works. Setting rules, which was not very well applied in our case, appears to be critical to build authority as well as a good team spirit. Furthermore, coaches tend to be more accurate and spend more time with experienced athletes as they fear to see them not improve or, worse, regress. Finally, by looking at e-mails and texts messages and remembering their value, the researchers established that it is important for coaches to be pro-active through computer-mediated communication and have qualitative, quantitative and timely interactions with his/her athletes.

By conducting this research, several characteristics emerged that athletes should possess to enact coachability. Athletes should be driven and come to practice ready to push themselves and being happy and grateful to be able to run. Agreeing with the coach's direction, as an athlete, and being positive and cheerful with yourself and your teammates is likely to help you improve. Moreover, with the guidance of the coach, athletes should be able to motivate and inspire each other. Athletes should self-disclose to coaches frequently. Everything outside running has an impact on running: academics, relationships, parents, or friends. Athletes need to initiate conversations when important activities or situations may influence their performance, especially about how their bodies feel. They know their bodies best. A coach cannot guess the degree of an injury, or the depth of feeling cause by a breakup or a class failed. By the time they do guess, it is usually too late to save the athlete's performance. Hardworking athletes want to be rewarded. If they feel like they do not get attention from the coach by doing the right thing, the success of the relationship might suffer.

A difference in gender between this coach and athlete did not seem to affect training. However, characteristics usually displayed by men, such as fewer complaints or goal-orientation towards performances, seem to be more interesting for performance than running to fulfill the need to socialize, which is usually more shown by female athletes. Nonetheless, both genders can be coached the same way. The difference appeared to depend on the maturity, talent, and culture of the

runner. More mature and talented athletes are easier to coach. Moreover, it is important to know that athletes tend to trust peers more than coaches, because they perceive peers as telling “the truth” more often, unlike coaches who have to say things for the well-being of the athletes or the program.

This study also suggests that successful athletes usually appear coachable, agreeable, and pleasant. They do not hesitate to give positive feedback and support their teammates. They are able to lead by nature and are credible. They also care enough about their sport, coaches, teammates and training environment that they usually help to build great atmosphere. Like coaches, they also have to show their engagement in their relationships with their coaches by answering coach inquiries honestly and in a timely manner by text-messages, e-mails, or any other computer-mediated platform in addition to face-to-face meetings. In addition to their engagement, respectful and responsible communication enhances their honesty, sincerity and responsibility towards their coaches.

Limitations & Directions for future inquiries

Although studying our coach-athlete relationship has allowed us better understand it, and we hope will benefit other coaches, athletes, and people trying to understand relationships in other contexts, our findings do not apply to everyone. The project has its own limitations. We, coach and athlete, are two specific individuals, and it is probably not possible to find exactly the same characteristics in other individual athletes and coaches. Moreover, the research involves a female coach and a male athlete. Future researches could feature same-sex coach-athlete relationships (a male coach with a male athlete, or a female coach with a female athlete), or a male coach with a female athlete. In addition, even though there is a team aspect in collegiate cross-country running, it remains an individual sport. Coach-athlete relationships seem to be different in collective sports. Future inquiries could focus on relationships in an NCAA team sport such as basketball, football, lacrosse, volleyball or soccer. Furthermore, the fact that the studied relationship developed at the collegiate level might also have an impact. Future studies could investigate coaches and athletes in

professional teams or amateur clubs to add different perspectives to the study of the nature of the coach-athlete relationship. Finally, in this study, the coach is 30, while the athlete is 25. Subjects studied at different ages could also reveal different results. Future inquiries could involve several coach/athlete relationships and try to draw conclusions according to the age, sport, and kind of sport of the participants.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Methodology

The autoethnographic methodology to collect the data and compose a co-constructed narrative required that I:

1. Keep an ethnographic journal. I started a journal (September 2014) with facts, thoughts, reflections and feelings.
2. Ask and train Tseyahé Baney to keep an ethnographic journal, as well.
3. Review e-mail record. I reviewed the e-mails we sent each other.
4. Review Text-message record. I reviewed all the text messages we sent each other.
5. Share e-mails, texts and journal entries with Tseyahé Baney for her comments and memories.
6. Share my journal and review her journal for insights into the relationship.
7. Draw on personal memories. I used my memory to remember other facts, thoughts and feelings and encouraged Tseyahé Baney to use hers.

My project was organized in 4 phases:

Phase 1 – Collecting my data, composed of journals, e-mails, text messages and Memories. During this time I wrote down as much information as I could, and I asked Tseyahé Baney to do the same thing.

Phase 2 – Writing story of our relationship. I reviewed my journal/emails/text messages/memories to try to identify patterns and asked her to do the same thing. We wrote separate stories of our relationship.

Phase 3 – Comparing stories. Tseyahé Baney and I met to share and discuss our stories. We discussed differences and similarities and reviewed themes.

Phase 4 -- Writing our narrative of the experience. I asked Tseyahé Baney to identify places in my narrative where she wants to put her voice. We constructed a narrative of the relationship together.

Appendix B

Consent form

Purpose of the project:

The objective for the project is to analyze the relationship between me, a collegiate athlete in an individual sport, and my cross-country running coach at Queens University of Charlotte. I want to answer these questions: How have my cross-country/track coach and I built and maintained trust in our professional relationship? What influence does that trust have on coaching effectiveness? What other aspect of my professional relationship with my coach might contribute to coaching effectiveness?

By performing an autoethnography and encouraging my coach to participate by keeping an ethnographic journal, discussing records of shared communications, and co-constructing the ultimate narrative of the relationship, I will be able to examine the deep fabric of the relationships. I might find information inside myself about my role as a coached athlete that other athletes might not want to share about themselves because it is personal and could make them vulnerable. By inviting my coach to share this exploration, with the opportunity to insert and/or withdraw her voice in her own words as we co-construct our narrative, we should be able to compose a research document that authentically reveals our professional relationship in a way impossible through other research methods.

Data used for the project:

- Journal entries
- E-mails
- Text messages

– Memories

I will discuss all the data with my coach and encourage her to insert and/or withdraw her voice where she chooses. This way, my voice as researcher does not dominate her voice, so we will have a more authentic account of our relationship.

Timeline

- Oct 15, 2014: Share consent form, IRB document and project proposal with Ms. Baney, discuss her responsibilities, including journaling and analysis techniques, and answer her questions
- Jan. 1, 2015: Finish collecting data.
Arrange meeting to share and discuss electronic messages and other data.
- Jan. 15: Deadline for meeting Ms. Baney. Move to analysis stage. Prompt Ms. Baney to move to analysis stage. Review analysis and narrative procedures.
- Feb. 1: Complete preliminary analysis: M. Duchamp & Ms. Baney.
Arrange meeting to share and discuss electronic messages and other data.
- Feb. 15: Deadline for meeting Ms. Baney to share and discuss electronic messages and other data. Review analysis and narrative procedures.
- Feb. 28: Deadline for completed narratives/first draft. Meet and share with each other. Compare stories.
- Mar. 20: Complete first draft of co-constructed narrative according to meeting discussion. Meet to discuss and correct.
- Apr. 1: Complete the narrative in two voices. E-mail to Ms. Baney to correct.

Volunteer Statement

You are a volunteer. The decision to participate in this study is completely up to you. If you decide to be in the study, you may stop at any time. You may skip any item you do not wish to answer. You will not be treated any differently if you decide not to participate or if you stop once you have started.

Confidentiality:

All information you provide will be kept confidential if you wish. Our names and the name of the university will be changed to an alias if you request it. If you would prefer to publish this project with me, both of us have the option to use an alias.

Fair Treatment and Respect:

Queens University of Charlotte wants to make sure that you are treated in a fair and respectful manner. Contact the University's Institutional review Board (Dr. Laree Schoolmeesters, irb@queens.edu) if you have any questions about how you are treated as a study participant. If you have any questions about the project, please contact Dr. Pupchek at 704-337-2240.

I, TSEHAYE BANEY, consent to allow Felix Duchamp, one of the collegiate athletes I coach, to use journal entries, e-mails and text messages written since August 2013 as research for his Capstone project in the Fall of 2014 and Spring of 2015. I also agree to participate actively in journaling, meeting, discussing, writing and co-writing according to the Timeline above.

SUBJECT:
SIGNED _____ **DATED** _____

RESEARCHER:
SIGNED _____ **DATED** _____

Appendix C

Timeline

Here is the timeline with deadlines that I followed:

- Aug 1, 2013: First contact between Ms. Baney and Félix Duchamp. Data starts.
- Oct 15, 2014: Share consent form, IRB document and project proposal with Ms. Baney, discuss her responsibilities, including journaling and analysis techniques, and answer her questions
- Dec. 31: Last day of Felix Duchamp's NCAA eligibility to compete for Queens University of Charlotte. Finish collecting data.
 Arrange meeting to share and discuss electronic messages and other data.
- Jan. 15, 2015: Deadline for meeting Ms. Baney. Move to analysis stage. Prompt Ms. Baney to move to analysis stage. Review analysis and narrative procedures.
- Feb. 1: Complete preliminary analysis: M. Duchamp & Ms. Baney.
 Arrange meeting to share and discuss electronic messages and other data.
- Feb. 15: Deadline for meeting Ms. Baney to share and discuss electronic messages and other data. Review analysis and narrative procedures.
- Feb. 28: Deadline for completed narratives/first draft. Meet and share with each other.
 Compare stories.
- Mar. 20: Complete first draft of co-constructed narrative according to meeting discussion.
 Meet to discuss and correct.
- Apr. 1: Complete the narrative in two voices. E-mail to Ms. Baney to correct.

Despite these shared reference aspects, each of us had total liberty in the construction of our narratives. No narrative styles or way of articulating the content of the stories were established or agreed on. I wanted for us to favor creativity, explore and look deeper into our experiences, learn from each other, and help other people.

Appendix D

IRB approval



October 24, 2014

Félix Duchampt
Knight School of Communication

RESEARCH PROTOCOL APPROVAL, IRB FILE # 10-14-ksoc-00105

The Institutional Review Board reviewed your research request:

Lean on me: Building and maintaining trust in the coach-athlete relationship

Your protocol (10/8/2014); Informed consent form, Focus group questions, Questionnaire; and Recruitment materials were approved for use within the facilities of Queens University of Charlotte. The Board determined your study poses minimal risk to subjects and meets the criteria for an exempt application. If you plan to use the protocol outside of Queens University of Charlotte, you may need to submit it to the IRB at that institution for approval.

This approval expires one year minus one day from date above. Before your study expires, you must submit a notice of completion or a request for extension. You are required to report any changes to the research study to the IRB for approval prior to implementation. This form can be found on the IRB site on MyQueens and should be sent to irb@queens.edu.

If we can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us. Please use the IRB file number when referencing your case.

Sincerely,

Laree Schoolmeesters

Laree Schoolmeesters, PhD, RN, CNL
Chair, IRB