

PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE PORTFOLIO

NICHOLAS JOHN WADSWORTH

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Liverpool John Moores
University for the degree of PhD

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Abstract

This portfolio provides an insight into the development of a trainee sport psychology practitioner's journey through the Professional Doctorate in Sport and Exercise Psychology at Liverpool John Moores University.

The portfolio provides evidence, through a combination of consultancy, research, and reflective practice, of how the trainee sport psychology practitioner successfully meets the competencies (professional standards, consultancy, research, and dissemination) of the British Psychological Society's (BPS) Stage Two training pathway. The three applied case studies and one applied teaching case study provide a critical and reflective insight into the work conducted with elite athletes and coaches from a variety of sports. These applied consultancy experiences allowed the trainee practitioner to develop a coherent and congruent philosophy of practice, which can now be confidently delivered across contexts and cultures. Throughout these applied experiences, the trainee practitioner was able to demonstrate diversity in their training by working with multiple sports (gymnastics, triathlon, wrestling, rugby-league, football, and golf). The reflective log highlights the critical moments experienced by the author throughout this journey, which support the development of a coherent personal and professional identity.

The two empirical papers and systematic review attempt to bridge the gap between theory and practice by exploring topics such as; use of psychology within the coaching context, importance of reflective practice for optimal practitioner development, and the impact critical moments have on the practitioner individuation journey of applied sport psychology practitioners. The research, combined with the opportunities to disseminate at conferences and as a Lecturer of Sport Psychology, allowed the author to understand how his values and beliefs transferred across his consultancy, teaching, and research.

Declaration

I wish to confirm that there are no known conflicts of interest associated with the publication of this professional doctorate.

I can confirm that no portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Acknowledgements

This journey over the last three years has been rewarding and challenging in equal measures and would not have been possible without the following people:

Anne-Marie and Alan Wadsworth for your constant support and guidance throughout my life and for making sure I always looked after myself during the difficult moments.

Gemma Lancashire for being by my side throughout this entire process, through the ups and the downs, and for always encouraging me to be the best that I can be.

Sheridan Maria Thomas for always believing in my dreams and challenging me to grow both personally and professionally.

This portfolio belongs to you, just as much as it belongs to me and you will never understand just how grateful I am to have you all in my life.

I would also like to express my appreciation for my supervisors Dr. Martin Eubank and Dr. David Tod. Your patience and guidance over the last three years has helped me grow. I am very grateful for the challenging, yet supportive environment you have created for me throughout this journey. I would also like to thank Dr. Rob Morris for supporting me at critical points throughout this process.

Conferences and Research Publications

- Wadsworth, N., Charnock, L., Russell, J., & Littlewood, M. (2018). Use of video-analysis feedback within a six-month coach education program at a professional football club. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, 1-19.
- Wadsworth, N. (2019). Pressure to provide a solution: one-to-one support with an elite junior gymnast. *Case Studies in Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 3(1), 41-49.
- Wadsworth, N., Paszkowec, B., & Eubank, M. (2020). One-to-One Support with a Professional Rugby League Player: A Case for Referral? *Case Studies in Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 4(S1), S1-1.
- Tod, D., Wadsworth, N., Dam, S., Anderson, R., & Eubank, M. (2018). The evidence underpinning sport psychologist training and development: A realist synthesis. *Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology Annual Conference 2018*. Belfast.
- Eubank, M., Wadsworth, N., Dam, S., Anderson, R., & Tod, D. (2018). Key considerations underpinning sport psychologist training and development. *Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology Annual Conference 2018*. Belfast.
- Wadsworth, N. & Anderson, R. (2019). Sport and Exercise Psychologist Training: The Professional Development and Training Network. *Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology Annual Conference 2019*. Solihull.
- Wadsworth, N., Ransom, D., Nesti, M., Littlewood, M., & Morris, R. (in review). Exploring the dual-career experiences of professional academy players at a Premier League football club. *The Sport Psychologist*.
- Wadsworth, N., McEwan, H., Lafferty, M., Eubank, M., Anderson, R., Chandler, C., Smith, M. & Tod, D. (in review). A systematic review exploring the reflective accounts of applied sport psychology practitioners. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*.
- Mulvenna, C., Moran, M., Leslie, A. & Wadsworth, N. (in review). Understanding the coach's role in identifying and meeting the motivations of soccer players. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*
- Wadsworth, N., McEwan, H., Lafferty, M., Eubank, M. & Tod, D. (in review). The person behind the practitioner: Stories of critical moments contributing to the development of applied sport psychology practitioners. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*.

Professional Doctorate in Sport and Exercise Psychology



Practice Logbook

Professional Standards (incl. CPD)					
Client details	Location	Date(s)	Nature of the activity	Contact Hours	Placement Host details (if applicable)
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	01/06/17	Overview of the programme Plan of training	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	02/06/17	Reading literature and planning a lecture on 'Athletic Burnout'	10 hours	N/A

NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	08/06/17	'Being a Sport Psychologist'	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	09/06/17	Reading 'Being a Sport Psychologist' (Keegan, 2016)	1 hour	N/A
NW	Home	10/06/17	Reading literature on how to conduct a systematic review (Tod & Eubank, 2017; Tamminen & Holt, 2010)	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	13/06/17	Reading 'Being a Sport Psychologist' (Keegan, 2016) Planning 'Being a Sport Psychologist' Lecture	3 hours	N/A

NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	15/06/17	Reflective Practice & Ethical Standards	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	19/06/17	Read: Chandler et al. (2016)	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	19/06/17	Read: Roderick and Gibbons: "to thine own self be true"	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	21/06/17	Read: Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews (Shamseer et al., 2015)	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	29/06/17	Read: Carless and Douglass (2008)	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	07/07/17	Read Treadgold (1999) Transcendent Vocations...	1 hour	N/A

NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	19/07/17	Read: Ronnestad & Stovholt (2003)	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	20/07/17	Read: How to Conduct a Systematic Review (Bolland, Cherry & Dickson, 2014)	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	20/07/17	Read: Tod, Anderson and Marchant (2009)	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	20/07/17	Read: Foltz et al., (2015)	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	20/07/17	Read: Fitzpatrick, Monda & Wooding (2016)	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	20/07/17	Read: McEwan & Tod (2015)	1 hour	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	03/08/17	Read: The Developing Practitioner (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2013)	2 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	04/08/17	Read 7 journals on Coach development literature (technology)	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	09/08/17	Read 5 journals: Player-Parent-Coach relationship literature	5 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moores University		Read: The Developing Practitioner (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2013)	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	21/08/17	Reading 'Being a Sport Psychologist' (Keegan, 2016) Planning 'Being a Sport Psychologist' Lecture	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	21/08/17	Read: Research methods for sport studies	2 hours	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	23 & 24/08/17	Read: 10 journal articles on visual attention	8 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	18/09/17	Read: Friesen & Orlick (2010)	30 minutes	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	25/09/17-15/01/18	PgCert	45 hours	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	21/10/17	Read: 3 articles related to fear, anxiety and stress in elite gymnastics	3 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	26/10/17	Read: Case Study on working with a 9-year-old Gymnast	1 hour	N/A

NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	27/10/17	Athlete/Coach Presentations delivered by Prof Doc students	5 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	12/11/17	Practitioner Growth & Assessment Overview	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	08/11/17	Read: Brady vs Maynard	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	14/11/17	Read 5 articles on mental toughness	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	20/11/17	Read 2 articles on mental toughness	2 hours	N/A

NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	23/11/17	Performance and Well-Being	5 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	23/11/17	Read: Devaney et al. (2017)	1 hour	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	07/12/17	Read: Moira Lafferty x2	2 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	07/12/17	Use of videos and music within applied sport psychology practice	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	11/01/18	Read: Experiences of parents and athletes in gymnastics	3 hours	N/A

NW	Liverpool John Moores University	25/01/18	Read: Case Study 6: Integrated Sport/Clinical Psychology	30 minutes	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	29/01/18 – 18/06/18	PgCert	45 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	25/01/18	Meeting with Martin Eubank	30 minutes	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	25/01/18	Read: Blurred Lines (Roberts, Faull & Tod, 2016)	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	01/02/18	Read: David Tod's Chapter 1 (Systematic Review)	30 minutes	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	28/02/18	Conference: Challenges faced by academics	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	28/02/18	READ: Four reflective articles of practitioner development	3 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	09/03/18	Meeting with Ben Paszowec: sharing consultancy experiences	2 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	09/03/18	Read: Handbook of qualitative research in sport exercise and health (chapters 4 and 20)	1 hour	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	22/03/18	Read 4 articles on transitions and dual careers	2 hours	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	01/05/18 – 17/05/18	Read 15 articles of developing employability skills in students (graduate attributes)	20 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	08/06/18	Read research on transference and countertransference in sport psychology service delivery	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	13/07/18	Read 'more than meets the (Rationalistic) Eye (neophyte reflections)	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	13/07/18	Read Messina et al., (2018) – therapist characteristics	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	17/09/18	Read 3 Coach Education/Analysis papers	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	28/09/18	Read 4 journals in relation to mental health and transitions	3 hours	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	24/10/18	Read Tod's Chapter 4 and ENTREQ	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	01/10/18	Read Tod's Chapter 3	30 minutes	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	05/11/18	Read research related to Dual-Careers	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	31/01/19	Read research related to Personality in Elite Athletes	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	31/01/19	Reflection: Charging Private Clients	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	07/02/19	Read research related to Confidence in Elite Athletes	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	14/02/19	Read research related to Anxiety in Elite Athletes	5 hours	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	21/02/19	Read research related countertransference and dependency	3 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	28/02/19	Writing Consultancy Case Studies	6 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	20/05/19	Read '7 Basic Plots'	4 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	03/06/19	Read: McEwan, Tod & Eubank (2019) Professional Individuation	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	23/07/19	Reflection: countertransference and dependency	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	20/08/19	Read research on Practitioner Development and Self-Care	6 hours	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	02/09/19	Read: The boy behind the bravado	1 hour	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	23/09/19	LJMU football exchange conference	8 hours	N/A
NW	Burnley F.C.	07/10/19-02/03/20	Engaged in supervisor, peer, and individual reflection surrounding challenges to confidentiality, storing confidential information, and working as part of an MDT at a professional football club	25 hours	Burnley F.C.

NW	Burnley F.C.	07/10/19- 02/03/20	Liaise with Sport Psychiatrist and club doctor(s) to discuss players that potentially require referral/further additional (specialist) support – also reviewed past and present case studies from each discipline to improve understanding of ethical decisions to be made and how each discipline can contribute towards overall development (well-being and performance)	20 hours	Burnley F.C.
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NW	Burnley F.C.	07/10/19- 02/03/20	Engaged in peer reflection (with the sport psychology practitioner at Aston Villa F.C.) about the challenges of delivering sport psychology in a football context (lack of time with players, lack of understanding from support staff/coaches, lack of ‘buy-in from players’ and working as part of a MDT)	50 hours	Burnley F.C.
NW	Burnley F.C.	07/10/19- 02/03/20	Liaised with practitioners from Manchester United, Blackburn, Nottingham Forest, Everton, and Aston Villa about ‘best practice’ in relation to implementing a philosophy of practice in professional football and how best to meet the demands of the EPPP (performance profiling)	20 hours	Burnley F.C.

NW	University of Bolton	27/02/20	Read about the philosophical roots of CBT	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	27/02/20-01/03/20	Engaged in meta-reflection in relation to practice log (amount of reading I've engaged in, lack of formal CPD, reliance on peer reflection vs supervisor reflection, anxiety surrounding consultancy hours, challenges of the systematic review, teaching at the University)	20 hours	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	27/02/20-01/03/20	<p>Engaged in meta-reflection in relation to the reflective log (re-read each reflective entry and asked myself further questions (layering my reflections) to best prepare for the viva and evidence how my approach to practice has changed throughout the length of the course)</p> <p>specific questions raised: What type of relationships do/should I create with my clients? How does my sense of comfort in the consultancy process impact the relationship?</p>	30 hours	N/A
				TOTAL = 365	

Consultancy

Client details	Location	Date(s)	Nature of the activity	Contact Hours	Placement Host details (if applicable)
NW	Hotel Football (Manchester)	09/06/17	Placement goals agreed 'Fees discussed' Role clarity established	2 hours	Salford City F.C.
NW	University of Bolton	13/06/17	Reflection: Agreed Goals (From full-time to part-time)	2 hours	Salford City F.C.
NW	Salford City F.C.	28/06/17	Meeting with 1 st team staff and technical director	3 hours	Salford City F.C.
NW	University of Bolton	29/06/17	Reflection: Practitioner identity	1 hour	Salford City F.C.

NW	Liverpool John Moores University	05/07/17	Philosophical Assumptions and Consultancy	5 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	06/07/17	Philosophical Assumptions and Consultancy	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	07/07/17	Reflection: Practitioner Identity continued...	1 hour	Salford City F.C.
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	19/07/17	Reflection: Philosophical Assumptions	2 hours	N/A
NW	Ewen Fields	01/08/17	Attended Salford City F.C. vs Rochdale F.C.	2 hours	Salford City F.C.

NW	Moor Lane	05/08/17	Attended Salford City F.C. vs Darlington F.C.	2 hours	Salford City F.C.
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	10/08/17	'Intake in consultancy' & 'needs analysis and case formulation in consultancy'	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	05/10/17	Meeting with SH (Triathlete)	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	12/10/17	Meeting with SH (Triathlete)	1 hour	N/A
NW	Salford City F.C.	12/10/17	Meeting with ZO	30 minutes	Salford City F.C.
NW	Salford City F.C.	12/10/17	Meeting with JM	30 minutes	Salford City F.C.

NW	Salford City F.C.	12/10/17	Meeting with MF	30 minutes	Salford City F.C.
NW	N/A	15/10/17	Phone call with AS: Discussing working with his daughter (fees discussed etc)	20 minutes	CS
NW	N/A	26/10/17	Met with CS (gymnast) (Session 1)	1 hour	CS
NW	University of Bolton	31/10/17	Wrote up consultancy report for CS (1)	1 hour	CS
NW	N/A	31/10/17	Spoke with Mark Nesti about CS case	30 minutes	CS
NW	N/A	02/11/17	Met with CS (gymnast) (Session 2)	1 hour	CS

NW	University of Bolton	31/10/17	Wrote up consultancy report for CS (2)	1 hour	CS
NW	University of Bolton	07/11/17	Reflection: Pressure to provide a solution	1 hour	N/A
NW	Moor Lane	07/11/17	Attended Salford vs F.C. Manchester	2 hours	Salford City F.C.
NW	Boothstown F.C.	09/11/17	Observed Training at Salford City F.C.	5 hours	Salford City F.C.
NW	N/A	16/11/17	Met with CS (gymnast) (Session 3)	1 hour	CS
NW	N/A	17/11/17	Reflection (gymnast) (Session 3)	1 hour	CS
NW	University of Bolton	24/11/17	Meeting with SH (Triathlete)	1 hour	N/A

NW	N/A	30/11/17	Started writing case study (elite gymnast)	5 hours	CS
NW	University of Bolton	11/01/18	Continued with case study (elite gymnast)	5 hours	CS
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	25/01/18	'Reviewing the Case Study Process'	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	01/02/18	Spoke with JR regarding role at Salford City F.C. moving forwards	30 minutes	Salford City F.C.
NW	University of Bolton	27/02/18	Meeting with CR regarding new role as head of Sport Psychology at the ADC	1 hour	University of Bolton

NW	Liverpool John Moores University	22/03/18	Met with JR to discuss Sport Psychology service delivery	2 hours	Salford City F.C.
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	22/03/18	Talk with Martin Littlewood: Organisational Sport Psychology	2 hours	N/A
NW	Hotel Football	05/04/18	Delivered to all stakeholders at Salford City F.C: Introduction to Sport Psychology	2 hours	Salford City F.C.
NW	University of Bolton	24/04/18	1-1 meeting with TC (+ report write-up)	2 hours	Widnes Rugby
NW	University of Bolton	03/05/18	1-1 meeting with TC (+ report write-up)	2 hours	Widnes Rugby

NW	Liverpool John Moores University	17/05/18	Meeting with Martin Eubank regarding consultancy	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	05/06/18	Wrote Case Study 1	4 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	08/06/18	Wrote Case Study 1	2 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	08/05/18	1-1 meeting with TC (+ report write-up)	2 hours	Widnes Rugby
NW	Partington Sports Village	16/07/18	Call with JL regarding consultancy at Burnley F.C.	30 minutes	Salford City F.C.
NW	Partington Sports Village	17/07/18	Meeting with JR to discuss role at Salford City F.C. in the upcoming season	4 hours	Salford City F.C.

NW	Burnley F.C.	17/07/18	Meeting with Ian Jones at Burnley F.C. to discuss consultancy opportunity	1 hour	Burnley F.C.
NW	University of Bolton	18/07/18	1-1 meeting with CP (+ report write-up)	2 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	18/07/18	Call with Martin Littlewood for advice regarding cost of consultancy	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	18/07/18	Created a three tiered 'package' for Burnley F.C. to outline consultancy options	1 hour	Burnley F.C.
NW	University of Bolton	10/08/18	1-1 meeting with TC (+ report write-up)	2 hours	Widnes Rugby

NW	University of Bolton	23/08/18	Meeting at Salford City F.C. to discuss coach education and life skills programme	2 hours	Salford City F.C.
NW	Warrington	07/09/18	Meeting with TC (and report write up)	2 hours	Widnes Rugby
NW	University of Bolton	08/07/18	1-1 meeting with CP (+ report write-up)	2 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	28/09/18	Meeting with the Head Coach of GB Wrestling to discuss psychological support	2 hours	GB Wrestling
NW	University of Bolton	26/10/18	Meeting with SH (triathlon) and report write up	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	01/11/18	Meeting with AH (golf) and report write up	3 hours	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	05/11/18	Meeting with LL (wrestling) and report write up	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	05/10/18-05/11/18	Case Study 2	15 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	09/11/18	Meeting with SH and Write Up	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	22/11/18	Meeting with AH (golf) and report write up	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	29/01/19	Meeting with LL (wrestling) and report write up	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	30/01/19	Meeting with TC (and report write up)	2 hours	Widnes Rugby
NW	N/A	10/02/19	Set up 'Nick Wadsworth Sport Psychology Limited'	2 hours	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	21/02/19	Meeting with LL (wrestling) and report write up	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	21/02/19	Meeting with TC (and report write up)	2 hours	Widnes Rugby
NW	University of Bolton	25/02/19	Meeting with A (marathon runner) (and report write up)	3 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	28/02/19	Meeting with Martin Eubank	1 hour	N/A
NW	GB Wrestling Academy	2&3/03/19	Attending GB wrestling training camp	8 hours	GB Wrestling
NW	University of Bolton	05/03/19	Case Study 2	6 hours	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	08/03/19	Case Study 3	6 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	09/03/19	1-1 meeting with CP (+ report write-up)	2 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	17/03/19	1-1 meeting with LM (+ report write-up)	2 hours	GB Wrestling
NW	University of Bolton	18/03/19	1-1 meeting with TC (+ report write-up)	2 hours	Widnes Rugby
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	23/05/19	LJMU: Mental Health and Sport	6 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	03/06/19	1-1 meeting with BB (+ report write-up)	2 hours	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	10/06/19-28/06/19	Changes to Case Study 2	20 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	10/06/19-28/06/19	3x 1-1 meeting with BC (+ report write-up)	6 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	26&27/06/19	Peer Supervision (Case Study Discussion)	10 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	22/07/19	1-1 meeting with BB (+ report write-up)	2 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	22/07/19	1-1 meeting with Academy Manager (Premier League Club) to discuss a potential role	2 hours	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	05/08/19	Wrote job description for role at professional football club	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	06/08/19	1-1 meeting with BB (+ report write-up)	2 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	12/08/19	Meeting at Burnley F.C. to discuss role and contract	4 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	02/09/19	Meeting at Burnley F.C. to establish role clarity	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	06/06/17-02/03/20	Engaged in formal (through the reflective log) and informal (peer supervision etc.) in relation to the challenges of consultancy as a sport psychology practitioner	100 hours	N/A

NW	Burnley F.C.	07/10/19- 02/03/20	Consultancy at Burnley F.C. (including one-to-one meetings with players, observation of training and games, meetings with academy staff, meetings with 1 st team staff, meeting with premier league representatives, delivery of workshops, staff CPD sessions and additional training (Kick It Out etc.)	375 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	27/02/20- 01/03/20	Engaged in meta-reflection in relation to the reflective log (re-read each reflective entry	30 hours	N/A

			<p>and asked myself further questions (layering my reflections) to best prepare for the viva and evidence how my approach to practice has changed throughout the length of the course) – specific questions raised: how does working full-time vs part-time influence my approach to practice (how have I changed between Salford and Burnley)? What has influenced my practitioner</p>		
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			individuation journey the most?		
				TOTAL = 744	

Research

Client details	Location	Date(s)	Nature of the activity	Contact Hours	Placement Host details (if applicable)
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	22/06/17	Systematic Reviews and Scientific writing	5 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	19/07/17	Meeting with David Tod regarding the systematic review	30 minutes	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	04/08/17	Use of technology in applied sport psychology (Wrote 2 pages)	2 hours	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	09/08/17	Use of technology in applied sport psychology (Wrote 2 pages)	2 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	16/08/17	Conducted interview with JR	2 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	17/08/17	Transcribed interview	8 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	25/08/17	Use of technology in applied sport psychology (Wrote 8 pages)	4 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	27/09/17	Rob Morris: Transitions	2 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	26/10/17	Wrote Research Proposal for Special Edition of Sport in Society (Transitions)	4 hours	N/A

NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	02/11/17	Meeting with BPS Research team (systematic review)	1 hour	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	24/11/17	Meeting with BPS Research team (systematic review)	1 hour	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	07/12/17	Began scoping review	1 hour	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	14/12/17	Scoping review	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	18/01/18	Updated 'Coaching & Technology' research in line with editor's feedback	6 hours	N/A

NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	25/01/18	Meeting with BPS Research team (systematic review)	1 hour	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	08/02/18	Table of Content Search	8 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	08/02/18	Skype with David Tod	30 minutes	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	16/02/18	Table of Content Search	8 hours	N/A

NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	16/02/18	Skype with David Tod	30 minutes	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	17/02/18	Forward and Backwards Searches	8 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	17/02/18	Forward and Backwards Searches	8 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	22/02/18	Meeting with David Tod	30 minutes	N/A

NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	22/02/18	Coaching Research	3 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	27/02/18	Coaching Research	3 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	27/02/18	Forward and Backwards Searches	8 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	27/02/18	Skype call with Martin Littlewood regarding coaching research	30 minutes	N/A

NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	08/03/18	Meeting with David Tod (systematic review)	30 minutes	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	08/03/18	Meeting with Jan (librarian) (database search)	30 minutes	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	08/03/18	Database search	8 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	09/03/18	BPS progress meeting	2 hours	N/A

NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	09/03/18	Narrative Analysis research and quality criteria created	6 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	22/03/18	Met with David Tod regarding systematic mapping	30 minutes	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	22/03/18	Met with BPS research team	30 minutes	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	22/03/18	Met with Martin Littlewood regarding coaching research	30 minutes	N/A

NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	24/03/18	Created spreadsheet for Systematic Mapping and Quality	30 minutes	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	27/03/18	Conducted Systematic Mapping and Quality (3)	2 hours	N/A
NW	Manchester United F.C.	31/03/18	Met with Daniel Ransom to edit MSc Research	4 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	27/03/18	Skype Call with David for Systematic Review	30 minutes	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	10-26/04/18	Conducted systematic mapping, quality checks and thematic analysis on 22 journal articles in contribution towards the systematic review	20 hours	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	26/04/18	Completed re-writing MSc research	4 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	17/05/18	Written action research project for PgCert	20 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	29/05/18	Attended meeting and presented findings of the systematic review to the BPS research team	4 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	09/07/18	Read feedback from the Journal of Applied Sport Psychology	30 minutes	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	09/07/18	Edited 'Technology in applied sport psychology delivery'	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	10/07/18	Edited 'Technology in applied sport psychology delivery'	3 hours	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	11/07/18	Edited 'Technology in applied sport psychology delivery'	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	13/07/18	Edited 'Technology in applied sport psychology delivery'	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	18/07/18	Edited 'Technology in applied sport psychology delivery'	8 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	06/08/18	Read 6 journals for the systematic review	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	10/08/18 – 22/08/18	Read 18 journals for the systematic review	12 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	23/08/18	Read Chapter 11 (Disseminating Results) (Tod)	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	28/08/18	Read Wong et al. (2013)	1 hour	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	28/08/18	Started Meta-Narrative Review Plan	4 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	29/08/18	Thematic Analysis	10 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	29/08/18	Change Meta-Narrative Review Plan based on David's Feedback	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	30/08/18	Peer Supervision Discussion with Robbie Anderson	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	05/09/18 + 06/09/18	Written Method section of Systematic Review	6 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	07/09/18	Read Ronnestand and Skovholt's work on counsellor development (introduction planning)	4 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	14/09/18	Supervisor Meeting (David Tod)	1 hour	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	14/09/18	Research Meeting (Rob Morris)	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	28/09/18	Developing the 'Transition' paper	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	24/10/18	Method Section (Systematic Review)	4 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	25/10/18	Skype Call with David Tod	1 hour	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	25/10/18	Introduction (Systematic Review)	8 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	05/11/18	Developing the 'Transition' paper	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	26/10/18	Introduction and Method (draft 3) Systematic Review	8 hours	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	26/10/18	Introduction and Method (draft 4) Systematic Review	4 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	26/11/18	Re-wrote Transition results/discussion	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	26/01/19	Reflection: Theory to Practice	2 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	18/02/19	Results (draft 4/5) Systematic Review	8 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	21/02/19	Planned Discussion Systematic Review	3 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	25/02/19	Finished Results/Planned Discussion Systematic Review	8 hours	N/A

NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	28/02/19	Meeting with David Tod	1 hour	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	28/02/19	Systematic Review: Discussion	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	19/04/19	Revised Case Study 1 and 2 for publication in Case Studies in Sport and Exercise Psychology	10 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	13/05/19	Ethics Application (Study 2)	4 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	16/05/19	Meeting with David Tod	1 hour	N/A

NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	16/05/19	Reading on Narrative Analysis	4 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	16/05/19	Changed to ethics application	1 hour	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moore's University	23/05/19	Reading on Narrative Analysis and Seven Basic Plots	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	23/05/19 – 03/06/19	4 interviews and transcriptions	20 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	23/05/19	Changed Case Study 1 for publication	2 hours	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	04/06/19	Read research on practitioner development to inform the Introduction of Study 2	4 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	05/06/19-10/06/19	3 interviews and transcriptions	15 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	16/06/19 – 24/06/19	4 interviews and transcriptions	20 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	18/07/19	BPS Research Group Meeting + Consensus Statement	7 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	25/06/19 – 01/07/19	4 interviews and transcriptions	20 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	16/07/19	Thematic Analysis	8 hours	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	17/07/19	Narrative Analysis	8 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	22/07/19	Changes to Case Study 2	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	05/08/19	Narrative Analysis of Personal Accounts (Study 2)	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	05/08/19	Read practitioner development literature (introduction of Study 2)	5 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	06/08/19 – 06/09/19	Study 2 (write-up)	50 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	06/06/17-02/03/20	Engaged in formal (through the reflective log) and informal (peer supervision etc.) in relation to the research competencies – including the research commentary	60 hours	N/A

NW	University of Bolton	27/02/20-01/03/20	Engaged in meta-reflection in relation to the reflective log (re-read each reflective entry and asked myself further questions (layering my reflections) to best prepare for the viva and evidence how my approach to research has changed throughout the length of the course) – specific questions raised: the importance of creating a link between theory and practice. How will not have a research identity impact my career development/progress?	30 hours	N/A
				TOTAL = 578	

Dissemination

Client details	Location	Date(s)	Nature of the activity	Contact Hours	Placement Host details (if applicable)
NW	Salford City F.C.	03/07/17	Workshop: Psychological Qualities of a Professional Footballer	2 hours	Salford City F.C.
NW	LJMU	14/09/17	Presentation: Personal Development Programme	40 minutes	LJMU
NW	LJMU	14/09/17	Presentations	5 hours	LJMU
NW	Bolton University	25/09/17- 15/01/18	Sport and Exercise Psychology in Professional Practice	45 hours	University of Bolton
NW	Bolton University	25/09/17- 15/01/18	Advanced Sport and Exercise Psychology	45 hours	University of Bolton

NW	Bolton University	25/09/17- 15/01/18	Research Methods and Professional Development Planning	67.5 hours	University of Bolton
NW	Bolton University	25/09/17- 15/01/18	Dissertation Tutorials	60 hours	University of Bolton
NW	Bolton University	20/07/17 – 16/11/17	Planned 30 lectures across three modules	90 hours	University of Bolton
NW	Bolton University	29/01/18 – 18/06/18	Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology	45 hours	University of Bolton
NW	Bolton University	29/01/18 – 18/06/18	Psychology and Leadership of Coaching	45 hours	University of Bolton
NW	Bolton University	29/01/18 – 18/06/18	Psychology in Sport Rehabilitation	45 hours	University of Bolton
NW	University of Bolton	05/03/18	Meeting with Daniel Gaunt regarding peer observation feedback (PgCert)	1 hour	University of Bolton

NW	University of Bolton	26/04/17	Delivered 'clinical psychological issues' to the MSc cohort	4 hours	University of Bolton
NW	University of Bolton	17/05/18	Reflection on teaching practice ('Blog 4' and academic identity)	6 hours	University of Bolton
NW	Bolton University	25/09/17-15/01/18	Sport and Exercise Psychology in Professional Practice	45 hours	University of Bolton
NW	Bolton University	25/09/18-15/01/19	Advanced Sport and Exercise Psychology	45 hours	University of Bolton
NW	Bolton University	25/09/18-15/01/19	Research Methods and Professional Development Planning	67.5 hours	University of Bolton
NW	Bolton University	25/09/18-15/01/19	Dissertation Tutorials	60 hours	University of Bolton
NW	Bolton University	24/10/18	Organised TIRI conference	10 hours	University of Bolton

NW	Belfast	20/12/18	BPS Conference: Belfast	1 hour	BPS
NW	University of Bolton	26/01/19	Reflection: Graded Teacher Observation	2 hours	N/A
NW	Bolton University	29/01/19 – 18/06/19	Psychology in Sport Rehabilitation	45 hours	University of Bolton
NW	Bolton University	29/01/19 – 18/06/19	Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology	45 hours	University of Bolton
NW	Salford City F.C.	10/10/18 – 31/01/19	Coach Education Workshops	10 hours	Salford City F.C.
NW	University of Bolton	20/05/19	Read Robbie's and David's Systematic Review and wrote abstract for BPS conference	5 hours	N/A
NW	Liverpool John Moores University	26/06/19	PsychPag MSc Conference	1 hour	Liverpool John Moores University

NW	University of Bolton	06/06/17-02/03/20	Engaged in formal (through the reflective log) and informal (peer supervision etc.) in relation to the dissemination competencies - including the teaching commentary	60 hours	N/A
NW	University of Bolton	27/02/20-01/03/20	Engaged in meta-reflection in relation to the reflective log (re-read each reflective entry and asked myself further questions (layering my reflections) to best prepare for the viva and evidence how my approach to research has changed throughout the length of the course) – specific questions raised: how does my delivery need to change based on the context I’m in (academia vs elite sport)? Why do I experience	30 hours	N/A

			so much anxiety when delivering at a conference setting?		
				TOTAL = 889	

Reflective Diary

The following reflections have been guided by Gibb's reflective model. The structure of each of the reflective entries below will follow a similar pattern. I have attempted to describe; what happened, my feelings, my understanding of the situation, and what I could have done differently/will do differently if the same situation arose again. However, there were times throughout the reflective process that following this rigid structure actually reduced my ability to reflect effectively and subsequently the structure of some of the entries may not strictly adhere to the process recommended by Gibbs.

Ethics

1. Case for Referral?

Date: 12/06/18

Over the last five weeks, I have been working with a 22-year-old professional rugby league player (TC) who plays for a team competing in the Super League. I met TC at the University of Bolton, through the Athletic Development Centre (ADC). He is enrolled full-time on a Sport and Exercise Science undergraduate course and I taught him for the module 'Sport and Exercise Psychology in Professional Practice' in his final year at the University. Therefore, TC already knew my philosophy of practice as an applied practitioner and was aware of my experience within professional sport. He approached me to seek my support as a sport psychology practitioner as he was experiencing a number of critical moments in his career, which he felt he needed support in navigating (Nesti et al. 2012). Throughout our first session together, it was apparent that he was experiencing a number of challenges, which are outlined comprehensively in 'Case Study Two'. Put simply, he had recently made the transition into the first team squad (Morris, Tod, & Eubank, 2017) and was finding this environment less supportive than the academy setting (Richardson, Relvas, & Littlewood, 2013). He was also showing signs of identity foreclosure (Brewer, Van Raalte & Linder, 1993), had a poor relationship with the first team coach (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003) and was in constant competition with his identical twin brother (who also played at the same club). Given my philosophy of practice and approach as an applied practitioner, I felt very comfortable in working with TC to support him through these critical moments. Moreover, we already had a very good relationship as we had gotten to know each other over the last 6 months. Towards the end of our first session together, after TC had discussed all of these challenges and was becoming more comfortable, he disclosed to me that he thought he had experienced depression in the past. He then suggested that his current experiences were negatively impacting on his well-

being in a similar way now. TC was aware that this fell outside of my scope of practice, as I had explained this to him at the start of the session whilst discussing confidentiality. However, I felt the need to readdress this again, given what TC had just disclosed. TC completely understood and agreed with me that this was something that we needed to be aware of moving forwards. Nonetheless, I chose to meet with TC a second time, primarily because I didn't feel his case was grounds for a referral at this point and I was comfortable continuing with our sessions, whilst keeping his well-being at the forefront of my mind. During our second session, it was clear (anecdotally) that TC was making some small progress in relation to the aims of the support we had agreed upon (again, see '*Case Study Two*' for more detail here). Therefore, I was confident my support was helping TC and positively impacting his well-being to the point that a referral wasn't required. However, in the days following our second session together, TC had received more bad news from the Head Coach regarding his place in the squad and also had to go for a scan for a potential shoulder injury he had picked up in training that week. TC and I would regularly text one another and that day his text read: '*I'm really not in a good place at the minute mate*'. After reading the text, I was immediately filled with anxiety and began questioning my decision not to refer. It was clear that these further challenges had led to a reduction in his mental well-being and I was concerned that any progression he had made with my support had now been undone. I arranged another meeting with TC to discuss this with him, but by the time we had the opportunity to meet for the third time, his circumstances had changed again! The Head Coach had been fired, TC's scan results had not revealed an injury and the new coach had chosen to start him as prop, alongside his brother, for the game at the weekend. In our third session together, TC was nothing but positive. He was also showing signs that he had made even more progression, by demonstrating a broader perspective of his life and identity as a person, whilst also being aware that the unpredictable nature of sport could leave him out of the squad again the following week. After the game, TC text me and stated that he was happy with his own individual performance, had received positive feedback from the coach and was confident he would be starting again next week. Whilst TC is currently showing signs of progression and increases in his positive well-being and performance, I need to be mindful of the unpredictable nature of sport and the impact this might have on him moving forwards.

Arguably, the most important aspect of this experience to focus on is the decision surrounding referral. Personally, I feel I made the right decision not to refer and felt largely

comfortable in my decision (except when reading the text). However, this experience has highlighted to me, now that I am engaging in applied practice independently of a professional club, that I need to be more aware of the correct referral pathways and the challenges involved with this process. It is becoming more common for Sport Psychologists to work alongside Clinical Psychologists (Rotheram, Maynard, & Rogers, 2016) as the environment of professional sport can often cause or exacerbate existing mental health disorders (Roberts, Faull, & Tod, 2016). Statistics from professional rugby union demonstrate that the prevalence of mental health symptoms/disorders are worryingly high: 25% (distress), 28% (anxiety/depression) and 29% (sleeping disturbance) (Goutteborge et al., 2016) and athletes are generally at higher risk of developing mental health disorders whilst experiencing 'performance failure' (Rice et al., 2016) as was the case with TC. However, referral can often be met with scepticism by the athlete (Morton & Roberts, 2013) and it is also common for sport psychology practitioners to take different approaches to referral based on their approach to service delivery (performance vs well-being) (Brady & Maynard, 2010). My approach centres on the assumptions that performance and well-being are inescapably linked, which is why I felt comfortable continuing to support TC through his current experiences. Whilst the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (British Psychological Society, 2009) states that Sport Psychologists are required to "refer clients to alternative sources of assistance as appropriate, facilitating the transfer and continuity of care through reasonable collaboration with other professionals" (p. 19), this still remains unclear regarding specific advice to trainee practitioners such as myself. Moving forwards, I need to utilise the experience and knowledge of my supervisors to better understand the referral process and how my own philosophy of practice might impact on the decisions I make (Eubank, 2016). I am strongly considering enrolling on additional clinical training following successful completion of this professional doctorate.

2. Blurring Personal and Professional Boundaries

Date: 12/07/18

TC and I, over the last 6-7 months, have developed a very strong professional relationship. Without this relationship, TC wouldn't have approached me to seek my support and I am convinced our work together wouldn't have been as effective (Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006). I am feeling confident and competent as a practitioner and as a

result, I am more relaxed during our sessions together, which is further contributing towards the development of a strong relationship. However, I received a text from TC following our third session together, in which he thanked me for the support and asked if I was free to play table tennis with him the following week (we had been discussing other sports he had played and I had made a joke that I would beat him if we ever had an opportunity to play). This text made me feel slightly uncomfortable and I didn't know how to respond. It was clear to me that the personal and professional boundaries were potentially becoming blurred (Haberl & Peterson, 2006). However, I have mixed feelings regarding whether or not I should be concerned by this text. By being genuine and authentic during our sessions together (Nesti, 2004), I have successfully developed an excellent working relationship with TC, which is providing me with the foundations to be able to support him through a difficult moment in his career. I am proud of this achievement as an applied practitioner. However, regardless of how good my relationship is with TC, ultimately, I can never allow our working relationship to be viewed as a friendship. In previous roles (at West Bromwich Albion F.C. and Everton F.C.) I would often engage in informal work with players, by challenging them to games of '2-touch' etc., but this felt different, as TC wanted to formally plan a meeting, rather than allowing it to occur naturally. I responded to TC by stating that I was going on holiday and so wouldn't be free. However, this is a short-term 'solution' and I need to reflect on this further to decide on a more conclusive course of action.

More recently (06/11/17) whilst conducting an interview with TC (during which I was attempting to evaluate the effectiveness of the consultancy process with TC), he stated that one of the main reasons for the positive changes was as a direct result of the relationship we had been able to develop. However, whilst discussing the importance of our relationship, CT discussed the concept of us being 'friends':

Massively, if one I didn't trust you or two I didn't see you as a friend, I probably would have stopped, like coming... like if I felt at any time it was starting to get awkward or, the relationship was breaking down or anything like that, I probably would have just left it

...you have to sort of be friends and I don't know how that works for you in practice as a psychologist and what you're told or anything, but I feel like,

especially in Rugby League, or in sport, you need a friend, it's a friend you need to speak to

Even TC was questioning this, from my perspective, as to whether or not this was something that was appropriate as part of my professional role, but despite this, the relationship (or friendship, from TC's perspective) was clearly a key part of why he decided to keep coming back to the sessions. It was vital that TC kept returning to these sessions with me given my earlier reflection (surrounding mental health above) as TC later confirmed that he had been very low during our initial meetings and without our meetings would have given up seeking the support he clearly needed.

I would have had to respect your decision, but to be fair, if I went to speak to someone else, I probably wouldn't have gone back, if I'm being honest, I probably would have just left it. Other people had already tried and it just didn't work. I probably would have just left it, I wouldn't have pushed you probably [to come back], but I should have done back then, because I needed it, but I probably wouldn't have, I probably would have just respected it and got on with it

I have reflected on this challenge numerous times 'informally' and believe that the decision to refer and the idea surroundings relationships/friendships comes down to two things: 1) A practitioner's philosophy of practice (performance and well-being) 2) the authenticity or practitioner's identity during the consultancy process.

- 1) As I've stated and discussed on numerous occasions, I am comfortable as a practitioner (and actually actively encouraging my clients) to discuss challenges related to both performance and well-being, as clearly the two are linked (Brady & Maynard, 2010). The challenges that TC was experiencing were very much within my 'comfort zone' and reinforced the approach I adopted as an applied practitioner (Existentialism). However, this was my first experience with an individual experiencing mental health challenges/symptoms and as a trainee, I wanted to be sure I was approaching the situation ethically and within the scope of my practice. This uncertainty

about referral, wasn't because I wasn't comfortable working with TC, it was more a question of the 'rules'. After speaking with a number of experienced practitioners, including my supervisor, the 'rules' around referral seem a lot more relaxed than I had first thought. TC wasn't a harm to himself or others and this was a very mild case of depressive symptoms. Clearly, my philosophy and approach as a practitioner was congruent and aligned with the challenges TC was experiencing and so there was no reason why I couldn't work with him. This experience has given me a lot more confidence to work with athletes who may be experiencing mild depressive symptoms and my 'line in the sand' so to speak has shifted because of this experience. I now know that clinical training isn't something I actually need to do, as this case is clearly within my role as an applied sport psychology practitioner. However, I will be enrolling on mental health courses to further my knowledge in the area.

- 2) As my training has progressed, I have been exposed to situations and clients that have challenged my core values and beliefs as both a person and a practitioner. At the start of my training, I was clearly struggling with my own identity as a practitioner (see *Practitioner Identity*). However, even during this early reflection, I was coming to understand that there didn't have to be a difference between me as a person and me as a practitioner. This understanding has only developed and evolved during the last two years, to the point where this understanding has been converted in something more tangible. What I mean by this is, there is absolutely no distinction between me as a person and me as a practitioner. My experience with TC had and still has been my most successful experience with a client and this was as a direct result of me being truly authentic throughout the consultancy process. This in itself has been vital to my learning, as my personal and professional experiences have allowed me to develop into someone who is 'comfortable within their own skin' in any situation I find myself in. Furthermore, I now feel I can truly engage in the encounter as an Existential practitioner, as a key component of this approach is to be authentic and spontaneous. By being genuine, spontaneous, and authentic, I was able to engage in what is often referred to as the I-Thou relationship (Nesti, 2004), which I believed

positively impacted upon the consultancy process. By being true to myself (combining my personal and professional selves) throughout the process, I was able to build a strong relationship with CT. However, I was also mindful that being someone's equal, from an existential perspective, was different than being his or her friend. Therefore, whilst engaging in this process, I had to continually reflect upon whether the personal/professional boundary was becoming blurred. In this case, I don't believe that they were blurred to an extent that should concern me. Yes, TC had used the word friendship to describe our relationship, but I now understand that this was a difference in language used to describe the relationship. The relationship has and will always be a professional one and I would much rather be on the boundary of a personal/professional relationship with a client, than be ineffective as an applied practitioner.

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3. Charging Private Clients and 'Measuring' Effectiveness

Date: 19/12/18

Historically, I have always worked full-time for a sporting club/organisation. This meant that I signed a contract with that particular club or organisation (usually lasting one

year) and was paid a regular income to work with the athletes affiliated with that club. This approach had both strengths and weaknesses. Under this model, I had a guaranteed income and didn't need to negotiate a fee with each client at the start of the consultancy process. However, this also meant that regardless of the number of clients I had (and the number of hours I worked), I was still paid the same amount. Now I work in academia, I still have an annual salary (and all the associated benefits that come with that), but also have private clients so I can maintain my applied practice and development as an applied practitioner, as well as earn an extra income. This means that for the first time, I have to negotiate a cost with my clients, which ultimately raises a number of questions: How much is my consultancy worth? How can I justify the price I charge? What should I be charging given my current experience/qualifications (Hays, 2006)? Do I charge different clients different amounts depending on their own income/experience? Do I feel comfortable charging clients at all? Reflecting upon these questions and the potential answers has caused me a considerable amount of anxiety since starting my work with private clients. Furthermore, charging clients privately also seems to have increased the pressure I feel to provide a 'suitable' service (see *'Pressure to Provide a Solution'* below). In the short-term, to overcome some of the pressures and anxieties associated with charging for my services, I feel I have asked for less than I could have (in some cases nothing at all) given my experience/expertise. However, even now this is difficult to judge, as there is huge variability in what applied practitioners charge for their services (Meyers et al., 2001). I have spoken to a number of applied practitioners, including some of my peers and supervisors, who seem very guarded about what they charge for their services. However, there seems to be some applied practitioners who are happy to charge a huge, and in my opinion, ridiculous amount of money for their services and some who are content with providing consultancy for next to nothing. I attended a conference recently, where the keynote speaker (someone with a considerable amount of experience and expertise) admitted to giving away at least 40% of the profits he made from his applied consultancy to charitable organisations. Therefore, I seem to find myself in a situation where there are a variety of answers to the questions posed above. Relying on the opinions and experiences of others might help provide vague guidelines, but ultimately, I need to reflect upon my own values and beliefs to answer the questions in a way that is congruent with my approach.

Fortunately, I find myself in a position (at the moment) where I earn a good salary; more than enough to sustain my current lifestyle. Therefore, technically, I don't need the extra money that working with private clients provides. Moreover, for me, there is something about charging my private clients that feels morally and ethically wrong. Essentially, I am charging vulnerable individuals; who might find themselves in some very difficult and challenging moments in their life, for my support. This contradicts the reason I started this profession in the first place, which was ultimately to support, develop, and care for people. It's my belief, that sport psychology support should be made available for all individuals, despite their salary and status. Therefore, by exploring both my financial and ethical motives, I find myself in a position where charging for consultancy doesn't seem to fit congruently with my approach as an applied practitioner. Hence, unsurprisingly, I regularly choose to provide my services for free (Triathlon, Rugby League, Wrestling). However, I also have a number of clients who I have charged or am currently charging (Gymnastics, Golf, Football) £50, £60 and £80 per session respectively. Upon reflection, there are two reasons why I have chosen to charge half of my clients and not the other half and I make this decision by asking the following questions: What are their current personal/professional circumstances and how much do they earn (or how successful is their sporting career to date?). The first three clients either presented challenges that were having a considerable impact on their well-being (Rugby League/Wrestling) or hadn't made it to a point in their career where they were earning a significant amount of money from the sport (Triathlon/Wrestling). The last three clients were either earning a good amount of money from their career in sport (Golf/Football) or were presenting with challenges that (at first) didn't seem to be impacting too much upon their well-being (Gymnastics). By asking these questions, I am able to judge each client on a case-by-case basis, in a way that is congruent with my values as an applied practitioner. Having a rough set of guidelines like this provides more structure to my thoughts in relation to charging for my consultancy and has significantly reduced the anxiety I feel when working with new clients. Moreover, I am now more confident when negotiating a price with my private clients, as I am able to be transparent and honest with them during our first phone call together (Anderson et al., 2001). Interestingly, to date, I have never had a client state that the price quoted was too much. Therefore, as I become more experienced and competent (and more comfortable asking for money!), I am beginning to increase the cost of my consultancy (as long as this remains in line with the structure posed above) and

push the boundaries of what I am able to earn. Ultimately, I am providing a service to these individuals and there are very few professions (especially within elite sport) where practitioners would provide their services for free. The idea that a Sport and Exercise Scientist, working within elite sport, would work for nothing or even begin to reflect upon the questions I have posed within this extract, seems ludicrous. Upon completion of this doctorate; as a fully chartered Sport and Exercise Psychologist, I plan to set up my own private practice. A large part of my motivation behind this is to develop expertise as an applied practitioner and support as many people as possible, but also to earn more money and satisfy my extrinsic motives for engaging in the profession. Therefore, I need to ensure I keep reflecting upon this issue, so I can continue to find a balance between my ethical and financial motives when working with private clients in the future. For example, would the conclusions drawn from the current reflection have been different if I relied on the income earned from my private clients as my only salary?

The final question that requires further reflection is, the issue surrounding the measurement of effective applied practice. Whilst none of my individual clients have ever challenged the price I have quoted, every single one of them have asked (a version) of the following two questions: How many sessions will this take? Can you guarantee results? My belief is that we, as Sport and Exercise Psychologists, cannot measure our effectiveness objectively and so can never and should never make exaggerated claims about the impact we can make. My approach, to date, in response to these questions, is to be open and honest about this; stating that objective measurement is not the aim, but instead personal and performance development, judged by the individuals themselves. For most, this answer seems to be sufficient. However, I recently attended an informal interview at a Premier League football club and was asked how I could measure my impact by the Head of Sport Science and Medicine. This wasn't unsurprising, given his job role and based on his own objective performance markers, but my answer didn't seem to be sufficient (based on the lack of contact I've had with the club recently). To be critical of myself here, how can I justify charging this particular club £250, for a day's work, when I can't answer a simple question about whether or not I can make an impact? For now, the answer I provided here, would be the only answer I'd be comfortable making (despite knowing a lot of practitioners would have made exaggerated claims and probably have signed a contract then and there!) and this was more of a conflict of beliefs and values,

rather than lack of expertise on my part. Working congruently with my own values and beliefs is more important to me than earning money!

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4. Countertransference and Dependency

Date: 21/02/19

I received a call from a client (TC) who immediately requested an ‘emergency’ meeting with me that same day. This was highly unusual for TC, who was usually very proactive in organising his meetings with me weeks in advance and I could tell by the way he was talking that something significant had happened that he needed support with. Fortunately, I was at the University and had some free time, so agreed to meet with him (however, given how concerned I was for TC following the phone call, I would have cancelled any existing meetings I had had to meet with him anyway). As I approached the room where TC and I would normally meet, I saw him sat on the floor with his head in his hands. He looked exhausted. He immediately explained to me that the club he was contracted at had gone into administration and he was at risk of losing his contract. He also hadn’t been paid that month, due to the financial difficulties of the club and was unable to pay his rent and bills. To make things worse, his brother, who also played for the club, decided that this was a good moment to ask TC for money that he had loaned him; leading to a huge argument. TC’s brother was one of the few people that TC felt he could rely on for support and this argument, given the circumstances, couldn’t have come at a worse time. TC also relied quite heavily on his mother but expressed to me that she was attempting to ‘sugar coat’ the whole situation and couldn’t truly support TC at this moment as it would have caused a conflict of interest with her other son. This left me. I was now

the only person that TC trusted enough to provide him support during this difficult moment. During the meeting, this wasn't something that I had time to reflect on, because my primary concern was to support TC through this challenging moment. However, after the session, perhaps because of the unusual nature of our meeting, I took the time to reflect on what had just occurred. My initial feeling was one of happiness; happiness that the relationship TC and I had was strong enough that he felt he could rely on me in such a difficult moment of his life. However, whilst the relationship I had developed with TC was strong and had given us a good foundation throughout the consultancy process; should I have been happy that he 'needed' me during this time of crisis? This almost contradictory emotion (given the challenging session TC and I had just had) highlighted that there was something deeper that needed to be considered here. Research has highlighted that practitioners must demonstrate self-awareness in relation to the practitioner-athlete relationship in order to achieve successful sport psychology delivery (Petitpas et al., 1999). This is vital to ensure that the practitioner is meeting the needs of the client, rather than their own (Giges, 1998). By answering the call to TC and immediately agreeing to meet with him, was I meeting my own needs or his? Was it possible to do both? There have been occasions throughout my life in general where I have experienced an overpowering need to be liked/accepted by others. I have also experienced extremely strong emotions or the need to 'protect' one of my clients in the past (see *Case Study One*), which occurred when my role as uncle, to a young niece, transferred to a young female gymnast (Peterson, 1990; Winstone & Gervis, 2006). Whilst Hayes (2004) believes countertransference is a natural part of being human (having unresolved emotional conflicts) it is important for practitioners to manage countertransference to ensure safe and effective professional practice (Rowan & Jacobs, 2002).

In this example, I had felt a sense of satisfaction that TC had thought to call me whilst experiencing this difficult moment. At the time I believed it reflected the strong professional relationship we had both developed over the last 12 months, which was a strength of this particular consultancy experience. I believe it also demonstrated that TC valued the support he had received from me throughout this process. Both of these factors provided me feedback that the support I had offered had been received positively by TC, which may have been why I had experienced a positive emotional response when receiving the call. However, as stated above, there was also an element of satisfaction derived from the idea that TC 'needed' or had 'chosen' me in this instance. I had also experienced a

strong sense that I needed to protect him. Upon reflection, I believe these feelings were predominantly underpinned by the reasons I wanted to become a Sport Psychologist in the first instance; to help and support people. I don't believe that caring for my clients in this way is a weakness of my approach to consultancy but having an awareness of them is important to ensure they don't develop into something that eventually has a negative impact on the support I offer. Currently, I view these core values, to care and support others, as a key strength of my approach to applied practice. However, these strong feelings, to want to support my clients, could also create another issue; dependency. By wanting to support my clients in this way, am I making them reliant on this support? At the point at which TC called me, he had been coming to see me for ten months. During this time, should I not have been able to teach him to develop the skills to overcome challenging situations, similar to this, himself? Had the support I had provided him been insufficient given that he felt he needed to call me in this situation? Is our job as practitioners to put ourselves out of a job (Anderson & Williams-Rice, 1996; Henschen, 1991)? At this point, ten months into the consultancy process, I began to question and reflect on the support I had offered TC. I had also never supported one athlete for this amount of time before and so didn't know if my own needs to support people and be 'needed' was beginning to create a dependency. When reflecting on our sessions together, I began to see a pattern. Whenever TC was experiencing a difficult moment, he arranged a meeting. For example, if he was left out of the squad or performed poorly, he wanted to meet with me and discuss the situation. This meant that he wanted a very reactive service. Based on this, I started to wonder whether or not this prolonged type of support was having any influence on him at all? During the more positive experiences; being included in the squad, playing well, receiving scoring bonuses etc., TC very rarely arranged meetings with me. I had allowed a situation to be created throughout this consultancy process where TC knew he could rely on me when he was going through difficult circumstances. This realisation led to two more reflections. Firstly, can we ever provide support that outweighs the challenges of professional sport? Secondly, had I unknowingly created a dependency with TC? I believe the first point relates more to individual support vs organisational support. As a consultant, I couldn't influence the culture TC was in, so had no choice but to provide him with individual support. The second point regarding dependency was something I had not considered or experienced before as a practitioner. One of the ways to potentially reduce this sense of dependency in the future could be to re-evaluate the

primary aims of the support more regularly. Consistently asking myself and the client the question 'have we achieved the primary aims?', ensures that both me and the client are able to reflect on the direction the support is taking. In this particular case, the primary aim with TC was to create a confidential space where he could discuss his experiences. So, technically, I was meeting these aims and meeting the needs of TC by providing this reactive service. It could have been that the aims of the intervention should have been changed to something that was perhaps more specific, meaning I would be in a better position to 'measure' whether or not we have achieved the aims. Evaluating a more measurable aim in this situation may have reduced the creation of such a reactive service and allowed me to be more confident that I was positively impacting TC and not creating a dependency.

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Consultancy

1. Agreed Goals and Role Expectations (from full-time to part-time)

Date: 13/06/17

The Academy Manager of Salford City F.C. (JR) and I had arranged a meeting on Friday 9th June 2017 to establish role clarity and discuss the pre-season programme and what time I could contribute to the club during this period of the season. Upon arrival I was introduced to the new full-time coach working alongside JR with the ‘youth team’. JR then led the meeting and proceeded to show me a document outlining the progress they had made since our last meeting (two weeks prior). What struck me initially was how fast paced the development of the academy was moving. In just a two week period, the club had made so many decisions regarding the structure and key ‘pillars’ of the club (what was being referred to as the culture), as well as signing players, hiring full-time staff and arranging an entire pre-season programme that corresponded with the 1st team. It took us over an hour for them to ‘catch me up’ on their progress. Whilst this was exciting to see (as I felt part of something ‘big’) it also made me realise that there would be a huge difference in my role working part-time at Salford City F.C. as opposed to working full-time at West Bromwich Albion F.C. (WBA). My thoughts as the meeting was taking place were; how effective can I be as a practitioner when I can only commit to a day a week at the club? Can I make any meaningful changes with regards the culture of the club? As a trainee Sport Psychologist, I view one of the potential roles that I can adopt as being involved in the development and maintenance of the culture (Nesti, 2010). Although this has never been formally part of my job description (at either Everton or WBA) it has been something that I have actively sought to achieve. Whilst I believe the one-to-one work that I conduct with players to be valuable and meaningful, I feel that working culturally allows me to promote more positive change and perhaps more importantly to me at this stage of my development, ‘proves’ my worth as a practitioner (Anderson et al., 2004). This desire to work organisationally began when I started my MSc, as both Mark Nesti and Martin Littlewood, who I developed good relationships with, were big advocates of the role a Sport Psychologist can play in cultural processes within professional football (Nesti & Littlewood, 2009). Not only did they highlight the benefits of working with this philosophy, but they regularly provided examples of successful individuals working within other organisations that were earning a lot of money! As well as this, working alongside

Martin at Everton and watching him conduct this role, as well as working closely with JR (who I first met at Everton), further increased my desire to work with this philosophy of practice. Now that JR has employed me to work at Salford, my initial approach going into the role was a continuation of the cultural discussions that we would have at Everton. However, realistically, even when I was full-time at WBA, I perceived myself to have made very little progress with regards changing the culture, so it might be naive of me to believe that I can make any meaningful changes working one day a week at Salford. On the other hand, JR recognises the role a Sport Psychologist can play in the development of a culture, he is aware and agrees with the vast majority of my beliefs and values in relation to how the culture should 'look' at a football club and he approached me to work alongside him knowing both me as a person and my aspirations as a practitioner. Furthermore, there are certain benefits of being 'removed' from the culture, as it might allow me to gain a different perspective, which could present me with the opportunity to make more meaningful changes, as opposed to being completely absorbed/institutionalised by the culture and becoming part of the 'problem'. However, returning back to the meeting, in my absence (over the 2 week period), the key members of staff (both academy and 1st team) had already established the ten 'pillars' of the club, as well as agreeing upon the five psychological qualities they wanted to integrate as part of their coaching philosophy. My opinion was sought after presenting these ideas, but I got the feeling that this was more out of respect as opposed to a genuine attempt to consider my thoughts and make any changes suggested. Despite feeling this way, I did feel comfortable enough to contribute my thoughts on the development on the five psychological qualities (perhaps because of my close relationship with JR). At this point, they had only stated the qualities they wanted their players to develop, they hadn't created a working definition. My suggestion, whilst basic, was that each member of staff, both academy and 1st team, should come up with a working definition individually and then collate ideas, to ensure everyone was 'on the same page'. I then suggested that in order for the players to feel as though they were part of the culture, a workshop should be developed and delivered to give them an opportunity to define what was meant by these five qualities and also educate them on the culture itself. This suggestion was met positively and both individuals admitted that this wasn't something that they had considered. I volunteered to deliver the workshop during pre-season and again this was accepted positively. Having the confidence to provide my input despite feeling slightly as an 'outsider' left me feeling extremely positive, especially as my

suggestions had been met so enthusiastically. Furthermore, the fact that the coaches were recognising the importance of my role in the development and maintenance of the culture left me feeling satisfied, as working organisationally is something that I am extremely passionate and motivated to do throughout my career. Undoubtedly, situations similar to this will arise constantly throughout my time at Salford City F.C. A forward-thinking club like this will always be looking for ways to move forward and develop. I need to ensure that I maintain the confidence I demonstrated here to provide my input despite being the only part-time member of staff. Furthermore, I need to hold the work I conduct with individuals in higher regard regardless of whether it gives me the opportunity to prove my worth as a practitioner or not. I love this part of my job. Making a genuine difference to the development of an individual is and will always be a huge passion of mine.

The meeting ended with JR agreeing to send me over the pre-season programme and for me to highlight dates when I was available to deliver workshops and meet individually with the players. JR and I agreed that my main priority was to work with the players on a small group/one to one basis during this part of the season, as it was important for me to build strong relationships with them before the season began.

One discussion that didn't take place (that I was hoping would) was a discussion regarding my fees. This was something that I was slightly apprehensive to discuss, as it wasn't something I had ever done before and I was unsure about how much to charge or whether to charge at all! Prior to this role, I have always been employed at an organisation full-time and so negotiating pay has never been something that I have had to do. JR did allude to the fact that there would be some money available (as he knew that this was something I wanted to discuss) but he was vague and suggested that he needed to speak to the Performance Director (CC) before he could commit to anything. I didn't push the matter as me and JR weren't alone, and I didn't feel comfortable discussing it in front of the other coach. However, this discussion is something that needs to occur at my next meeting as the longer it goes on the more they will expect me to work for free. At this point, I value the placement experience over any extrinsic rewards. However, I also feel that with my experience of working in professional football and the fact that JR asked for me personally, I deserve to be paid for the work that I do for the club. Prior to my next meeting, I need to have a better idea about what fees I'd be happy to accept and possibly discuss it in more detail with one of my supervisors to gain a different and more experienced perspective.

PHONE CALL RECEIVED 13/06/17: JR “It’s us that’s going to be driving this (culture)”
This further reinforced that JR wants me to have some influence culturally.

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2. Practitioner Identity

Date: 29/06/17

Yesterday I attended a meeting at Boothstown F.C. (the temporary site where Salford F.C. will be training and playing). The purpose of the meeting was for all members of staff (1st team and academy) to view the facilities and meet one another. The meeting was directed by the Performance Director (CC) who introduced me to the 1st team coaches and gave me the opportunity to explain who I was, where I’d worked previously and what I could offer the players at Salford F.C. Whilst this discussion was brief, both coaches seemed to respond quite positively with regards utilising my services with the 1st team players. When the meeting had finished, I was asked to attend a ‘foot-golf’ day they had planned on Saturday (2 days later), which was presented as a great opportunity for me to get to know the players informally and start building relationships with them. At that moment two thoughts crossed my mind 1.) I agreed that it would be a great way to get to know both the players and staff and 2.) I already had plans with a friend on Saturday. Needless to say, reflecting in action doesn’t present you with much thinking time to make a decision such as this and before I knew it, I’d already agreed to attend the foot-golf event. I instantly regretted the decision. Whilst this informal setting was perfect for me to start building relationships with the staff and players, I didn’t want to go. Attending was an inconvenience for me as I had already planned to go for a meal with a friend. However, despite these feelings I had automatically accepted the offer to attend. Hence, the main

purpose of this reflection was to understand why I had made this decision. Now having the time to reflect 'on action', the answer to that question is very complex and is rooted in past experiences.

It became clear very early in my career that being a Sport Psychologist (in training) was not simply something that you could 'turn off and on'. For me, it is impossible to separate the person behind the practitioner, as these two aspects of my identities share my core characteristics (Chandler et al., 2016). When I first started at West Bromwich Albion F.C., my circumstances were far from ideal and this made it almost impossible to separate the two aspects of myself even if I had wanted to at the time. I was living in Manchester and commuting to Birmingham six days a week. I was newly married, and my wife was studying at Salford University, which meant we had decided not to move to Birmingham so she could continue her studies with the support of her friends and family. Also, the club had only offered me a 1-year contract and we wouldn't have been able to get a mortgage based on this anyway. Initially, whilst demanding, I was able to cope. The excitement of working in the Premiership made the sacrifices worthwhile. However, as time went on, my relationship with my wife began to deteriorate. I was at a point where I knew I had to choose between my job and my marriage. Still, knowing I had to make this choice, I didn't leave my job. I was hoping that my wife would be able to be strong enough to get through it and I was also scared about what I would do next. How could this 'perfect' job have gone wrong so quickly? Reflecting upon these experiences now, it could be argued that whilst teaching others not to experience identity foreclosure (Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996), I myself, without realising it, developed a one-dimensional identity (see further reflections on this below). I was also experiencing severe burnout (Skovholt, Grier, & Hanson, 2001) and perhaps most importantly lacked the courage to make the decision I know I needed to make (Nesti, 2004). Eventually, I found the courage to quit my job at the club, but in the months that followed it became apparent that my relationship had reached a point where it couldn't be saved. Going through an experience such as this, makes you re-evaluate everything, especially your own identity (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). The months that followed were extremely difficult for me as I battled to find out who I was again and what I wanted from my life (Carless & Douglass, 2008). Be a Sport Psychologist (in training) will always be a big part of who I am and fortunately I managed to gain the position at the University of Bolton and then the role at Salford F.C. However, I will never let my role as a practitioner create such negativity to my personal life again. I know there

will be times when my professional life conflicts with my personal life and moving forwards I need to be mindful that I find a better balance between the two and between who I am as a person and practitioner.

Practitioner Identity continued...

Date: 07/07/17

Yesterday I was at LJMU for the second day of a two-day meeting. We were discussing how our philosophical assumptions about the nature of people and the world ultimately impacts on our theoretical approach to consultancy (see reflection Philosophical Underpinnings). MN joined the session and began discussing the concept of a 'vocation'. In the above reflection, it is clear to see that I believed who I am as a person is inseparable from who I am as a practitioner and it is also clear to see how I was beginning to view this negatively due to the destructive impact I felt this had had on my life. However, yesterday, listening to MN talk about Sport Psychology as a vocation completely resonated with me. It made me change the way I viewed and thought about identity, particularly my own. Being a Sport Psychologist doesn't need to mean that I have developed a one-dimensional identity as I state above. It doesn't need to mean that I choose to spend my Saturdays with Salford as opposed to my friends. Since leaving West Bromwich Albion F.C., I have struggled to find a sense of authenticity with regards my identity, because I felt I could never allow myself to be 'completely consumed' by a role. However, being a Sport Psychologist is who I am, and I believe it'll always be who I am. Just because I'm no longer working in a full-time role as a Sport Psychologist, doesn't mean I have to change who I am. Also, on the flip side of this, if I was to ever work full-time in professional sport again, I don't need to allow it to take over my life. In fact, finding a balance between the two comes at the benefit of both me as a person and practitioner. I no longer have to view the two as a conflict, I can view them as complimentary to one another and this is an extremely liberating feeling. Since experiencing this challenge in my life, I have consistently experienced anxiety, due to the fact I have felt I had to change who I am. I now have a clear idea of who I am and a clear self-concept (Treadgold, 1999), which I believe will provide me with a solid foundation when experiencing any challenges in the future.

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3. Philosophical Underpinnings (Counselling vs MST)

Date: 19/07/17

For the past few weeks I have been working with a Triathlete (SH) through the Athletic Development Centre (ADC) at Bolton University. SH is also a student of mine who is on a scholarship at the University and had sought my support following a lecture I had delivered to his cohort. In our first meeting, I was keen to establish a relationship with him that transcended the student-lecturer relationship we had already developed. Working with an athlete that you also teach has never been something that I have experienced before, and I was mindful of the perceptions he may have of me already from our initial contact. I was particularly mindful of how the status of lecturer might portray connotations of 'the expert' to this particular individual. Whilst I attempt to create an environment that is safe for my students and encourages them to think critically and ask and answer questions, the status as 'lecturer' naturally creates a gap between me and my students. On the other hand, when providing sport psychology support to an athlete, I certainly don't want to be viewed as the 'expert', but as someone that can help guide and support the individual who is taking responsibility for their own development. Therefore, in this instance with this particular student-athlete, I knew I had to break down the barriers that a

student-lecturer relationship might create and build a more trusting and personal relationship. Reflecting in the moment, I decided to raise this point with SH as I felt as though it was something that he should be mindful of as well. As a way of attempting to build this new relationship with SH, we used a timeline exercise to explore his journey, both in and outside of sport, up until this point. This is a ‘technique’ that I have used successfully in the past and I have found it is a good way to conduct an intake and then naturally a needs analysis with the athlete (Keegan, 2016), whilst also learning about them as a person. Furthermore, this is the first time that I had ever worked with an athlete outside of professional football, so I was particularly keen to gain a better understanding of the demands of the sport (Eubank, Nesti, & Cruickshank, 2014). Initially, SH found it a lot more comfortable discussing his sporting experiences, but as time passed and with my support, he began discussing his wider life outside of sport, something that I was very comfortable with him doing. Reading the work of Collins, Evans-Jones and O’Connor (2013) has made me realise that my experiences of consultancy are very different to theirs. I have always been comfortable with working with the person behind the athlete (Friesen & Orlick, 2010) and less comfortable providing solutions to ‘problems’. I strongly believe that this is due to the training I have received as a trainee practitioner and something that I am extremely grateful for. However, having the opposite experiences of these once trainee practitioners isn’t without its challenges and recent discussions with my peers and supervisors has encouraged me to explore the philosophical assumptions underpinning my service delivery (again!).

After conducting a needs analysis with SH, I was now at the point where I had to choose an intervention, something that did cause a little anxiety for me with this particular individual (Collins, Evans-Jones & O’Connor, 2013). It had become apparent over the two sessions me and SH had already had together that he was presenting traits of perfectionism and pre-race anxiety, but at the same time he had also discussed a critical moment in his life where he was facing the decision to stay and study in England or move back home to train in Ireland. This particular decision was causing him further anxiety in the wider context of his life, preventing him from sleeping and ultimately impacting negatively upon his performance. As I saw it, there were two possible interventions that I could utilise with SH. One focused on the perfectionist traits and pre-race anxiety (Stoeber, Uphill & Hotham, 2009) and the other focused on a more counselling based approach where I would attempt to guide him through the critical moment he was experiencing (Nesti et al., 2012).

Both of the challenges that SH presented were based around anxiety, but in my opinion required two very different ways for me to approach the situation. In the days that followed, I developed two interventions, one based on goal-setting and anxiety (Stoeber, Uphill & Hotham, 2009), (which I had searched for immediately after the needs analysis) and the second was more my usual approach, via humanistic/existential counselling. At the start of our next meeting, I recapped on what we had discussed in the previous session and presented SH with a choice between the two interventions I had developed. SH highlighted that he felt it was pointless to work on his pre-race anxiety when he had this big life decision to make, which was having more of a negative effect on both his well-being and performance. The rest of the session then was based around us discussing the decision he had to make and me asking questions regarding his studies, relationships with friends and family, his sporting career etc. At the end of the session he expressed his gratitude for the support and seemed genuinely grateful and appreciative of me for providing him with a safe space to discuss this choice. I immediately felt a great sense of achievement and relief. Relief that SH had chosen the intervention that I believed in and was more comfortable delivering and achievement that I had worked in congruence with my beliefs and values (Lindsey et al., 2007) and seemed to have made a genuine difference. Reflecting back on this moment, the biggest question that I have is, should I have offered him a choice of interventions in the first place? If I was so relieved that he had chosen the second option, how comfortable would I have been as a practitioner if he had asked me to develop a goal-setting intervention for him? I categorically didn't believe that this was the right intervention for this individual in this moment. By giving him a choice of interventions, I was opening myself up to chance that I would have to work incongruently. On one hand, this may have allowed me to meet the needs of the client (Tod, Anderson & Marchant, 2009) (if he had preferred a goal-setting intervention), however, on the other hand, I would have had to work with this individual against my beliefs and values. Hence, the real question is; as a practitioner should you be willing to contradict your own beliefs and values to meet the needs of the client? From this experience, I have learnt that I am not comfortable providing the client with a choice of an intervention, at this stage of my development as a practitioner, if it doesn't fit with my beliefs and values. At this point, I am not willing to work incongruently as I believe that it encourages inauthenticity and ultimately reduces my effectiveness as a practitioner. Looking ahead, there may be occasions in the future where I must decline working with a particular client if their needs

don't match my theoretical and philosophical beliefs. However, it could be that with time, I learn to develop flexibility in my service delivery (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992).

Core Values and Beliefs:

1. People view the world subjectively
2. People have free will in the choices that they make
3. All individuals are of equal value
4. People must be understood within their social contexts
5. An individual's history influences their present
6. Human beings have the ability to change, adapt and grow given the right environment

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4. Pressure to provide a solution (Elite Gymnast)

Date: 07/11/17

On the 15/10/17 I received a phone call from the father of a potential client. His daughter, a 14-year-old elite gymnast, had recently been injured and had been receiving treatment from a colleague of mine (from the University of Bolton) who had suggested that she seek some psychological support and so referred her to me. The father of the gymnast explained to me on the phone that his daughter was suffering with a 'mental block' on a specific move on the uneven bars. He also admitted that both he and the coach were getting frustrated with her lack of progress in overcoming this block. The family had just moved from Belgium to England in the last two months and the father acknowledged that this might also have something to do with his daughter's lack of development. As any potential client would, the father asked about the cost of the sessions and how many sessions would be required in order to help his daughter overcome the block. I had anticipated this discussion and was prepared with my answer. Firstly, I told the father that I charged £50 a session, which included the write up. At the time I felt apprehensive asking for this much money and I felt the need to justify this price by going into detail about the information that would be included in the reports following each session and the potential long-term benefits psychological support could have for his daughter. The father accepted the cost instantly without asking any further questions, making me feel as if I didn't need to be worried in the first instance. Secondly, I was open and honest with him and explained that it was difficult to tell how many sessions would be required before meeting his daughter and getting a better understanding of the situation. He understood the response but reinforced that the coach was getting frustrated and that his daughter had a competition in December, which seemed to imply that he was looking for a 'solution' sooner rather than later. After the phone call I was both excited and anxious about the prospect of working with a new client. This was a sport that I have no experience of working within and was a great opportunity for me to learn and develop. However, I felt anxious as I didn't know what to expect upon meeting the client and I got the impression I would be asked to provide a quick fix; something that isn't congruent with my philosophy of practice

(Philosophical Underpinnings (Counselling vs MST)). However, the father had acknowledged some broader challenges his daughter was experiencing (moving countries/relationship with the coach), which I felt could be underpinning the 'mental block' and so felt comfortable progressing in order to understand the client's experiences. Perhaps because of the anxiety I was experiencing regarding working with this new client (because I perceived I might be asked to provide a 'solution' to the problem) and in order to be prepared for the possible challenges that might arise from the initial intake and needs analysis, I read a number of journal articles related to gymnasts experiencing mental blocks and the psychological skills that they utilised in order to overcome them. Some of the techniques that these athletes were utilising included imagery, self-talk and pre-performance routines (Magyar & Chase, 1996; Chase, Magyar & Drake, 2005; Martin et al., 2008; Howell, 2017). However, I was also mindful at this point, not to approach my first session with preconceived ideas that would influence the way I work with this particular client. I felt that this was essential for me to be successful in working with this client, as I needed to understand her experiences. Furthermore, the challenges that the father presented might not have provided a complete insight into the situation or may not have represented the client's experience at all. In line with my philosophy of practice, I was consistently aware of the broader issues and the challenge that moving away from home could have on an athlete, especially an athlete so young (Barker-Ruchti & Schubring, 2016).

During the first session, I combined the intake and needs analysis, in order for me to begin building a relationship with CS and to gain a better understanding of her current experiences. Upon reflection, another reason I may have combined these two aspects of consultancy was because I was being paid per session, as opposed to being paid annually by a professional organisation and as mentioned above, I was under the impression that the father wanted a quick solution, therefore, I didn't feel I could justify spending two sessions on these two aspects of the consultancy process. Following the first session, it became apparent that the challenges that CS was experiencing were broader than simply experiencing a mental block as her father had explained. The family had moved from Belgium to England to ensure CS was training at an elite gymnastics club, hence she felt under a lot of pressure to continuously train and compete at the highest level. She explained that when in Belgium, she had lived, trained, and studied at a gymnastics school, which she found very challenging as she missed her family and friends. At this point, at the

age of 12, she had stopped enjoying the sport and hadn't enjoyed it since. She experienced anxiety before every training session and couldn't switch off from gymnastics as she trained 27 hours a week meaning it dominated her life. She discussed the mental block 50 minutes into the session and unsurprisingly, in comparison to the other challenges she was experiencing, she didn't seem overly concerned by it. As well as explaining her current experiences, she had explained to me that she had worked with a Sport Psychologist in the past and had been taught breathing techniques and imagery. However, she clearly expressed to me at this point that she hadn't felt that these techniques had been useful in improving her performance. It was clear after the first session that the psychological skills highlighted in the research I'd read prior to the session would be insufficient to support CS through her current experiences. It was also clear that the father of CS didn't fully understand or appreciate the current experience of his daughter; hence the expectations of CS were different from the expectations of her father. Despite understanding the needs of CS and my own personal philosophy (from earlier reflections), I still felt anxiety and pressure from the expectation of providing a solution for CS and as a result considered the use of mental skills alongside a more counselling based approach in order to prove my effectiveness as a practitioner to the father. However, I was also very aware of how working in this way, given my philosophy of practice, would create a sense of incongruence (Lindsey et al., 2007).

Due to this anxiety and uncertainty, I contacted my supervisor (MN) who confirmed that MST would be inappropriate for someone experiencing such broad challenges (which I had expected). MN suggested that the father of CS might not know the experiences of his daughter and my role could be to facilitate the communication of these challenges between CS and her parents. Hence, in the following session, I asked CS to go into more detail about some of the challenges she was experiencing and asked her directly if she had communicated any of these challenges to her parents. She admitted that she hadn't. She didn't like to talk about gymnastics at home, because she wanted to switch off from it and because the family had moved country for her to train and compete, she felt under an enormous amount of pressure and as a result didn't want to tell her parents that she wasn't enjoying the sport anymore. Despite this pressure, with my support, she agreed that she would be happy for us both to sit down with her parents in the next session and communicate openly about her experiences. She also repeatedly expressed her gratification for the support I had offered, and I felt both a sense of congruence and achievement. I

explained to CS's parents after the session had finished that I would like them to be involved in the next session and they seemed very enthusiastic about the prospect of being included.

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5. Parental Meeting (Elite Gymnast)

Date: 17/11/17

On 16/11/17 I had my first session with both CS and her parents. Prior to the session, I had tried to anticipate how CS's parents might react when hearing her experiences for the first time. Hence, I understood going into the session that it would be vital for me to start the session by creating an environment that was safe for everyone's voice to be heard (non-judgmentally). This was especially important for CS herself, as she had already admitted to me previously that she has struggled to communicate with her parents in the past. It was also essential for me to explain my philosophy of practice, as I anticipated CS's parents might challenge my approach to service delivery upon hearing the

challenges me and CS had been discussing (given that her father had hired me to help her overcome a 'mental block'). Hence, I explained my holistic standpoint and that my role was to facilitate discussion and communication between all family members and ensure we were all working collaboratively towards the same goal. I added to this by stating that I wouldn't be adopting the role of 'expert' in this situation, as it would be inappropriate for me to offer any solutions to their current situation and that they needed to work together to decide what was best moving forwards.

Once I had introduced the purpose of the session, explained confidentiality and my philosophy of practice, I encouraged CS to talk to her parents about her current experiences, as we had agreed in the previous session. She immediately got upset, but courageously told her parents about the challenges she was experiencing. Her dad's immediate reaction was to hug CS, but his body language gave me an insight into his thoughts, and he seemed to be extremely disappointed/despondent with what he was hearing. It was also clear that he was taken aback by what he had heard and instantly began expressing his thoughts on what his daughter had said. His opinion centred around how disappointing it would be if she didn't continue with the sport and how she would make the whole family proud if she carried on; *"Think about how good it'll be when we can come and watch you perform"*. On the odd occasion he stated, *"If you want to quit I support your decision"*, but followed this up with a statement that suggested CS really didn't have a choice. At one point he asked me; *"Am I saying the right sort of things"* to which I explained there wasn't necessarily a right or wrong answer; this session was about the whole family communicating openly. At this point he began talking about his own childhood and his own achievements, discussing how he had made sacrifices in order to become successful and how she needed to do the same. In my opinion, he began to belittle CS's experiences, by making statements such as, *"It would be a shame to quit gymnastics just because you want to see your friends"*. He also told his daughter that she would regret the decision to quit if that's the choice she made. The entire time CS's dad was making his thoughts known, CS was looking at me, with tears in her eyes and a look of disappointment/sadness on her face. She had seemed so optimistic at the prospect of finally telling her parents what she was going through and I sensed that she immediately regretted it. This invoked an emotional response in myself. I had developed a good relationship with CS over the last three weeks and seeing her vulnerable and upset made me want to

‘protect’ her. I was aware of my emotions in the moment and had to put them to one side in order to prevent myself becoming judgmental with her father.

CS’s dad then attempted to discuss the ‘mental block’, which left CS visibly confused. This clearly demonstrated to me that he had failed to understand the experiences of his daughter or was refusing to acknowledge them. At this point I explained that given his daughter’s current situation, the ‘mental block’ wasn’t the priority, but CS’s happiness and well-being. However, he continued to return to this point throughout the discussion. Again, this invoked an emotional response in me; how was he not understanding that his daughter was unhappy and that this so much more important than a ‘mental block’?! I was also conscious at this point that CS’s mother hadn’t spoken and I was keen to give everyone an opportunity to express their opinion. To my disappointment, when she spoke, she reinforced everything CS’s father had said. However, I got the sense that this wasn’t what she truly felt. Her response, I believe, was rooted in her upbringing. She was of Asian heritage, where it is common for the men to be viewed as the authority figure. Hence, CS’s mother didn’t want to be viewed actively going against her husband. Again, I reinforced how it was vital to be open and honest here. At this point, CS’s mother began describing her own experiences (depressed because she had no friends, experienced challenges of moving to a new country). However, frustratingly, she didn’t seem to be able to make the connection between what she was experiencing and what her daughter was experiencing. CS was experiencing the same challenges, but with the addition of school and gymnastics! It was at this point that CS’s father began to tell CS to stop focusing so much on school. He gave her the ‘permission’ to not complete homework. I attempted to remain neutral (my role here was still to facilitate discussion, not give my opinion) but I felt I had a duty of care to CS who I felt was the client I was here to support. With my frustration growing, I feel my line of questioning may have changed from neutral to be viewed almost as threatening by CS’s parents and this may have contributed to increasing the already wide gap between them and CS. With a sense that I had already failed, I began to change my approach to the session and asked them to think practically about what they felt they could change, as a family, to best support their daughter. As a family they agreed to improve lines of communication (something CS was going to take a leading role in) and create ‘protected family time’, which they would utilise to watch a film each week and switch off completely from gymnastics. To me, these were very small steps that I felt wouldn’t make

much difference in the long-term. However, at least it was an acknowledgement that something needed to change!

As the session drew to a close, I asked the family what they wanted from me moving forwards. CS's father again returned to the mental block, as if the last 90 minutes hadn't happened! Once again, in line with my philosophy of practice, I outlined how it was more important to focus on some of the broader challenges here. The response: *We asked you to come here to get her past the mental block...* Upon reflection, I perhaps could have made it clearer regarding the links between well-being and performance and how by focusing on some of the broader challenges CS might successfully overcome the mental block. Despite the fact that CS's mother invited me back (and offered to make me food), CS's dad didn't invite me back. I wrote up the report from the session, again highlighting the need to focus on CS's happiness and I also texted CS's father to ensure he knew I was still available if he changed his mind about utilising my support. In my mind, I had failed and I had never felt this emotional and disheartened by a consultation in my career to date. My desire to support CS made me consider offering my services for free, but I decided against this as I felt I couldn't make a meaningful difference under the circumstances anyway.

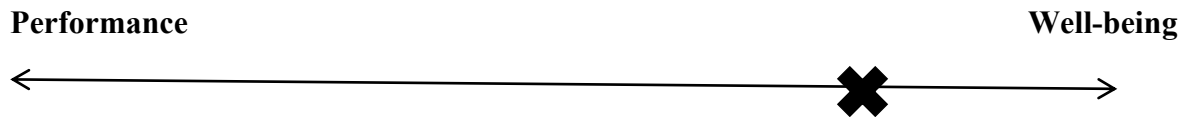
6. Performance and Well-Being Continuum

Date: 20/12/18

Almost exactly 17 months ago to the day (19/07/17), I ended a reflection with the statement: *'However, it could be that with time, I learn to develop flexibility in my service delivery (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992)'* (see; *Philosophical Underpinnings (Counselling vs MST)* above). Since this reflection, I have worked with a number of clients, who have presented with a variety of different challenges, affecting both their well-being and performance; providing with me further opportunities to reflect upon my philosophy of practice. Reading the use of the word 'vs' in the title of my earlier reflection, further highlights the progress and development I have made in adding flexibility to my approach, which I hope to articulate in the following extract by using recent clients from a number of sports.

The argument/debate about the role of a Sport and Exercise Psychologist in relation to performance and well-being is one that is on-going (Brady and Maynard, 2010) and

something that has resonated with me throughout my training. I often engage in a ‘continuum task’ with my peers and students, to create debate/discussion about whether or not our focus should be predominantly performance or well-being. When asked to engage in this task myself, I usually draw an X on the continuum closer to well-being than performance (see below).



To be clear, I place myself closer to well-being on the continuum in the belief that performance and well-being are inescapably linked. Therefore, by impacting positively upon an individual’s well-being, I am more than likely indirectly impacting upon their performance. However, my understanding of this performance-well-being link, up to now, has been over-simplified and one-dimensional. Through engaging in one-to-one sessions with clients and through conversations with other trainee practitioners, I have come to the realisation that the link between the two isn’t always this simple. It can and has been the case that an athlete can experience low performance, but high well-being (golf). It can and has also been the case that an athlete can experience high performance and low well-being (triathlon). Therefore, it seems, based on these cases, that the two aspects are not always directly linked (at least not in the short-term). To add an extra layer of complexity to this link; if an athlete is experiencing low well-being, it is possible that by focusing on an improvement of performance, a consultant can improve well-being indirectly. This sentence may seem simple to many applied practitioners, but it hasn’t ever been something that I’ve considered and this realisation that focusing on performance can positively impact well-being, directly challenges my position (the ‘X’) on the continuum. Up until now, when faced with this performance/well-being ‘dilemma’ I have always found myself focusing on well-being (long-term development) (Corlett, 1996) as opposed to adopting a more performance-based approach – with the belief that performance improvements would be a by-product of improvements in well-being. However, I have had a number of clients recently that have caused me to re-think and be critical of this rigid approach.

Triathlon & Gymnastics

Whilst working with SH (triathlete), we began to discuss the concept of meaning, purpose, and identity. To provide a simplified overview of the case; SH highlighted that his sport gave his life meaning, but, he also seemed to have developed a foreclosed athletic identity (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993), that had the potential to lead to him experiencing psychological burnout (Coakley, 1992). Put simply, sport was giving his life meaning and purpose, which was leading to him experiencing high performance; it was also reducing his well-being away from the sport (relationship with girlfriend, academic stresses etc.). Whilst working with SH, based on my philosophy of practice, my initial instincts were to discuss and understand his identity and encourage him to explore a broader identity outside of his sport. However, at the same time, I was also concerned that by encouraging him to explore a broader identity, I was simultaneously undermining the aspect of his life that gave him a purpose (and potentially his performance). Was it possible for me, as a consultant to do both things simultaneously? Upon reflection, I had a very similar experience with the gymnast CS (see *Parental Meeting* above). However, in her case, she was experiencing both low performance and low well-being and my initial instinct was to explore her life and identity away from sport (a choice I still believe was correct). During one of our sessions together, CS clearly expressed the desire to stop competing/training to reduce the anxiety and low well-being she was experiencing and at the time I was comfortable with this suggestion. However, most athletes, at an elite level, experience anxiety throughout their sporting careers and if my role as a practitioner is to ultimately improve performance, shouldn't I have provided her with an opportunity to better understand this anxiety, whilst helping her cope with the demands of the sport? Moving forwards, to maintain this performance enhancement focus, I need to become more comfortable with my clients being uncomfortable and understand that in the short-term, high performance and low well-being can often be the reality of elite sport.

Golf

Similarly to the clients discussed above, when meeting AH (golf) he wanted support to help him switch off from golf, and again, his identity had been completely consumed by his role as an athlete. After a number of sessions, where we explored his identity and his life away from sport (focusing predominantly on well-being as he was actually taking time out away from golf), he made excellent progress. Based on

improvements in his well-being, he decided to go back competing, on tour, in Portugal (well-being/performance link) and so, based on his progress (and achieving our initial objectives) I suggested that he no longer needed anymore support. As I saw it, we had achieved our objectives and he had returned to sport with a new outlook on himself as a person and athlete. However, AH clearly stated that he wanted to continue the sessions, but this time wanted me to support him with his imagery and pre-performance routines (Cotterill, Sanders, & Collins, 2010). As was the case with previous reflections, this MST/performance focus, led me to experience anxiety, as based on my philosophy of practice (long-term holistic development) I felt a sense of incongruence (Lindsay, Breckon, Thomas, & Maynard, 2007). However, it is beginning to become clear that this rigid approach to consultancy is limiting my effectiveness as a practitioner. To be an effective practitioner, I must understand the demands of the sport (Eubank, Nesti, & Cruickshank, 2014) – in this case; a closed skill sport, that requires effective use of mental skills (imagery, pre-performance routines, attentional control), to meet the needs of the client. Furthermore, I have an excellent understanding on the research/literature associated with imagery and pre-performance routines, so why would I limit myself as a practitioner and not delivery this, if this is what the client wants? I need to become more comfortable with moving my ‘X’ across the continuum, to meet the needs of the client. I have spoken to two people about this reflection, who have both reinforced this statement:

Ben: “I am whatever the client needs/wants me to be at that time”

Neil: “I don’t follow a rigid philosophy/theoretical orientation”

Rather than limiting my approach (humanism/existentialism) I need to explore more approaches to service delivery to ensure I can make an informed decision about which approach fits most closely with my values and beliefs and maximises by impact as an applied practitioner. I don’t believe that this will result in a change in my philosophy of practice (I will still approach practice predominantly from an Existential approach), but it may involve me using a more integrated approach to allow me to move more fluidly across the performance/well-being continuum.

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7. 'Nick Wadsworth Sport Psychology Limited'

Date: 20/02/19

Yesterday I officially registered my private practice as a Limited company. I decided to set up my own consultancy company, because I wanted to find a better balance between my academic role and my role as an applied sport psychology practitioner. Working as an academic member of staff over the last two years has meant I haven't been able to engage in as much applied practice as I have done in the past. Whilst the role change has been largely positive for my development as a practitioner (I now have time to read, conduct research, reflect, and improve as a teacher/disseminator), I don't feel I have been exposed to as many experiences as an applied practitioner as I did when I was working in professional football on a full-time basis. I also want to be able to demonstrate more diversity in my training as an applied sport psychology practitioner and setting up my own private practice was the perfect opportunity to work in different sporting environments and with a variety of athletes. Although I am mostly excited about this new opportunity, I am also apprehensive. Now I have officially registered the company, I feel under more pressure to make it a success. I know that one of the ways I can achieve this is

by advertising my services and creating myself an online presence. Whilst I have never done this before and don't know exactly how to do this (creating a website etc.), this is something I can pick up through trial and error. The real issue here is whether or not, as a practitioner, I feel comfortable advertising my services. Over the years, I have spent time on Twitter and LinkedIn and often cringe at those practitioners who are consistently reporting about themselves and their practice. I also fundamentally disagree with those practitioners (most of the time individuals that aren't actually chartered practitioners) posting the names of their clients as a demonstration of their own abilities. The idea of advertising myself clearly doesn't align with my own values and beliefs and my code of ethics, which puts me in a difficult situation. Do I go against my own values to increase the chances that the business will be a success? Or do I act in alignment with my own beliefs despite this potentially not being a good 'business' decision. From my perspective, at this stage of my development, acting congruently as an individual is more important to me than running a successful business (so much so that I almost didn't set up my own private practice in the first place!) For me, sport and exercise psychologists should be humble and not make exaggerated claims about their abilities. Working with an athlete who experiences success in their sporting career does not necessarily mean it was as a direct result of the work we conducted with them. Any practitioner claiming otherwise, for me, does not fit well with the discipline as a whole. We are just small cogs in the whole machine. Also, just because the athlete gave you permission to use their name online, doesn't mean you should be asking them in the first place. If you are asking the athlete this, you are putting them in an awkward situation, one which potentially raises ethical concerns surrounding confidentiality. *"Everything we discuss in this session is completely confidential, unless you're happy for me to take credit for your career and post it all over social media so I can earn more money?"*.

We recently had a guest speaker come in to talk to all of the Professional Doctorate students, who spent a large proportion of his presentation discussing, in detail, his most high-profile athlete and how he had contributed towards his world class performances over the last few years. He could have been the best practitioner in the world, but in all honesty, I stopped listening. However, it seems he has a very successful business and my (humbler) approach may prevent me from gaining clients and may not make me much money! I am aware of practitioners that don't discuss their most high-profile clients and run successful businesses, but they seem to adopt a different approach: 'making psychology tangible'.

What I mean by this, is they oversimplify the discipline as a way of selling a product. Again, I struggle with the concept of creating a 'product' that can support a wide variety of people, despite the practitioner never having met these people! For example, people that publish books (usually using an animal in the title!) that claim to be able to understand the reader and provide a model that can guide them through their life experiences. No book, or app, or even a board game can provide bespoke individualised support that can truly understand the individual's lived experience. As Sport and Exercise Psychologists, we are the product. We are the instrument of service delivery (Poczwadowski, 2017). We are doing the public a disservice by making exaggerated claims about our field. On the other hand, creating products, such as these books, is making psychology accessible to the public. So, are these books having a positive impact on people and as a result the field? Is this part of our role as Sport and Exercise Psychologists; to impact on the wider population? This approach also seems to help build a practitioner's reputation and credibility (Lindsay & Thomas, 2014). If I'm unwilling to create myself an online presence by telling everyone how good I am at the job and I'm not going to actively create a product to sell; how do I ensure the business is a success? Also, if this business was my sole means of income, would my approach be different? Would I still be true to my beliefs and values or would I be more concerned with paying my mortgage? It's easy for me to criticise those adopting a different approach to me whilst I sit comfortably in an academic role. Research exploring the experiences of practitioners working at an elite level has highlighted that, due to the lack of job security (and financial concerns), some practitioners are willing to adapt their approach to fit with the elite sporting culture. However, most practitioners interviewed agreed that this flexible approach can only take the practitioners a certain distance from their own values and beliefs before the incongruence experienced makes the role unsustainable; *"How flexible do you get? Sometimes there is a need to be incongruent to get the work done, but not to the point where you can't sleep at night"* (McDougall, Nesti, & Richardson, 2015: p. 274). Luckily, at the moment, this isn't something I have to be worried about, but I'd like to think that my beliefs and values are strong enough that I wouldn't contradict them to earn more money. However, of course I still want to make the business a success. Therefore, to achieve this and maintain my values, I have decided to adopt a simple approach. I recently read a book about the habits of the most successful people in the world. In this book, one of multi-billionaires stated that all a business needs is six true followers. These followers are people who value the business so much, that they

will buy any ‘product’ the business has to sell. Of course, because these people love the product so much, each of these six people tell at least one of their friends and the business then gains another six followers. This exponential growth eventually makes the business successful. One of the reasons I believe this approach will be successful in sport and especially the world of sport psychology, is because both seem to be a very small (everybody knows everybody else). For example, all of the athletes I have ever worked with (bar one who contacted me through LinkedIn) have been referred to me by colleagues or former clients. Also, adopting this approach means I can run the business without having to compromise on my values and beliefs. If I stay true to myself as both a person and practitioner, I will undoubtedly ‘perform’ better as a practitioner, provide a quality service that my clients are more likely to recommend, and actually enjoy the entire experience. My primary aim here isn’t to be a millionaire, my aim is to improve and develop as a practitioner, help people, and continue doing the job I love for as long as I possibly can.

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8. Burnley F.C.

Date: 22/07/19

‘Nick Wadsworth Sport Psychology Limited’ is very close to signing its first ‘big’ contract with a professional football club. This is an important step in my development and the growth of the company as a whole, because it supports my approach to gaining clients (highlighted in the reflection above). Through my experience at other clubs and through

the people I know in football, I was actually recommended for the role. This means I have been able to stay true to my values (not advertising my services and staying humble as a person), whilst securing a high-profile ‘client’!

If agreed in writing, the role will see me working for 15 hours a week, 44 weeks a year, with the U23 squad and will earn the company £13,200. Even I, as I start this reflection, am shocked that I’ve decided to discuss the money above everything else in the first instance:

*“My primary aim here **isn’t** to be a millionaire, my aim is to improve and develop as a practitioner, help people, and continue doing the job I love for as long as I possibly can.”*

However, I’m reflecting on the potential salary for a number of reasons. Firstly, because I think it’s important for me to recognise that money is important to me. Maybe I don’t need to become a millionaire, but I am, at least to a certain degree, extrinsically motivated (Deci & Ryan, 2008). I want to have a good career, earn a good salary, buy multiple properties, and provide for my family. This does not mean that money is my primary motivation and it definitely doesn’t need to take away from my other motivations (developing myself, developing and supporting others, and the actual enjoyment I get from the role), but it is part of the reason I am doing what I do. Not recognising that would be a mistake, because motivation will ultimately impact on my decision making throughout my career. Secondly, I believe it reflects how far I’ve come as a practitioner since starting the Professional Doctorate. At the end of my very first consultancy reflection, I discussed actively avoiding the awkward conversation about charging for my services. This anxiety and avoidance about negotiating a contract ended with me working at the club for free. Now, here I am, two years later, negotiating a contract that will potentially see me earning a salary equivalent to a £39,000 full-time role. This demonstrates to me that I finally understand my worth as a practitioner and am confident enough to express this to potential clients. I now have a good amount of experience and feel I can justify this kind of salary, given what I feel I can offer a professional football club such as Burnley F.C. Finally, I believe this salary is also a small ‘victory’ for the field itself. Recently, I have seen a number of sport psychology roles being advertised that don’t pay anything. A lot of sports clubs seem to think that practitioners doing their Stage Two, or in some cases completing

their Stage Two, aren't worthy of a salary. As trainee practitioners, we are supposed to be content with some kit, travel expenses, and maybe a match-day ticket here and there, if we're lucky. I can't think of any other field, where people with so much experience and so much training are expected to work for so little. Therefore, actively negotiating this contract felt like an added bonus considering the challenges within the field at the moment (too many practitioners and not enough jobs). However, this also raises a moral dilemma. I am aware that there are a number of people, currently enrolled on the Professional Doctorate (and most likely beyond this qualification), that don't have part-time or full-time applied roles that actually pay them anything. I'm also aware that a lot of these individuals are paying for the course themselves. Whereas, I already have a job as a lecturer, the fees are being paid for me by the University of Bolton, and now I have potentially secured a part-time contract, which will see me earn more money and gain more valuable experience. Furthermore, this role wasn't advertised, it was essentially given to me. All of this has made me feel very uncomfortable since I found out about the role and has made me question myself ethically. On one hand, the role was offered to me because of my prior experience and training. I have worked hard to gain this experience and develop as a practitioner to reach this stage of my career. I feel I could do the job effectively and have a lot to offer the club. On the other hand, I entered into this career to support people and if I was to suggest that this role be advertised to the Professional Doctorate students, I would be providing them with an opportunity that I know a lot of them really want and need. The context surrounding the field of Sport and Exercise Psychology seems to be that everyone is battling to make their way in the world. Practitioners don't seem as willing to share clients, people are predominantly focusing on earning a living, the most experienced practitioners are getting all the best roles, and no one seems overly concerned with helping each other, unless there is something to be gained (payment for supervision etc.). On the surface, it feels as though the discipline is forgetting, or at least momentarily moving away from, some of the characteristics we should be striving to demonstrate as Sport and Exercise Psychologist (caring, empathetic, supporting etc.). We demonstrate this with our clients, but we don't seem to extend this with one another. Do I want to add to this by selfishly accepting the role? But, can I justify turning a role like this down considering all my career ambitions as a practitioner? Would anyone turn this opportunity down in my situation? Would people even be reflecting on this? Despite feeling uneasy about the situation, I know I won't turn the role down. I value the opportunity too much and

ultimately, it isn't my primary job (yet) to support other practitioners – at this stage of my development I have to look after myself. However, just to add an extra layer of reflection (and probably confusion) to the whole situation; I've also been reflecting on why I wanted a role like this in the first place. As I've highlighted in earlier reflections, I have been looking to find a better balance between my academic role and my applied practice. I want to continue my development as a practitioner and this opportunity provides me with that chance. I also have aspirations of working in a 1st team environment at a Premiership football club and so need to continue my development to achieve this. However, one of the first things I remember thinking when I was offered the role was *'I'm looking forward to being able to introduce myself as someone who works in professional football again'*. I think this in itself gives an insight into my desired identity as a practitioner. I want to be viewed as a successful Sport Psychologist, who works in professional football. I also initially remember viewing this as an opportunity to make up for my 'failures' at West Bromwich Albion F.C. I left West Brom, just before starting the Doctorate, with an overpowering sense that I had failed as a practitioner. Therefore, I was/am viewing this as an opportunity to make up for that period of my career and prove myself as a practitioner (Christensen & Aoyagi, 2014). These two motivations combined (wanting to be viewed a certain way/overcoming my 'failures') could actually be detrimental for my mental health. I am potentially placing too much pressure on this one consultancy experience. Towards the end of my time at West Brom, I was in a very bad place mentally and this line of thinking has the potential to lead me down that path again. If I am successful in gaining the contract, I have to remember that this experience does not define me. 'Win or lose' I'll still be the same person. I have a much more balanced understanding of my own identity and must maintain this perspective as I start the role. I am more than the role and I think working on a part-time basis will prevent me becoming consumed by the culture of professional football.

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9. Role Clarity

Date: 21/08/19

Last week I met with the academy manager at Burnley F.C. to discuss my potential role at the club. The aim of the meeting was to get to know one another, begin to establish some clarity around the role, and to discuss how I could contribute towards the ongoing progression of the academy. We began by discussing my past experience in professional football and JP spent some time listening to my approach to this role and my philosophy of practice as an applied practitioner (Poczwadowski, Sherman, & Ravizza, 2004). Once he had a better idea how I would approach the role, he began to align my approach to the academy's structure and highlighted aspects of the programme that I could contribute to (parent education, player support etc.). JP seemed satisfied with my proposed approach to the role and as a result the meeting was very positive. At the end of the meeting, JP asked if I would want the chance to write my own job description. This was perfect. JP already seemed to trust me and be providing me with ownership over the role, which is something I valued. Having a blank job description meant I had the opportunity to create a role that fit with my own approach to practice (see table 1). I created this job description and sent it to JP, who agreed that nothing needed to be changed. However, I received a phone call a few days later, from the other Sport Psychology practitioner (JL) at the club, stating that the Head of Safeguarding (LL) had raised some issues with some parts of the job description I had written. LL's main concern was around one component in particular: "*To provide bespoke sport psychology support with a specific focus on performance enhancement and psychological well-being*". She felt that a focus on the well-being of the players was her role (and the role of the new player care officer they were currently recruiting for). As a result, the purpose of the phone call was to establish whether or not I would be comfortable removing the 'well-being' aspect from the job description and stating that my role was to solely improve the performance of the players (very similar to the approach the English Institute of Sport adopts with their Performance Psychologists and Performance Lifestyle Advisors). The performance/well-being link is something I have reflected on extensively throughout the Stage Two process and clearly, I believe that the link between the two is inseparable (Brady & Maynard, 2010). However, when attempting to explain this approach, I received a despondent response on the other end of the phone. I got the sense that JL wanted me to make everyone's life easy by agreeing to remove 'well-being' from

the job description. However, my philosophy of practice wasn't something that I was willing to compromise on. This meant that, despite thinking that the role was virtually agreed, I now have to attend another meeting with JP, JL, and LL to ensure that we establish clear boundaries between our roles. After the phone call I was really frustrated. Since being offered the role, my motivation for starting at the club had been increasing and I really wanted the contract to be signed so I could begin my work. I also really wanted some clarity over my future as this was starting to become a source of stress for me (trying to juggle the Doctorate, as well as apply for other academic roles/attend interviews, and attempting to secure this position). Part of my frustration was with myself. I had been so stubborn in my respond when discussing my philosophy of practice. Perhaps if I had been more flexible, I'd have had the contract signed already! This calls into question how I will approach the next meeting. I have the feeling that if an agreement can't be reached at the next meeting, that the offer of a contract will be removed. How willing am I to be flexible in my approach to gain the contract? Congruence as a practitioner is something I feel I have only very recently achieved (Lindsay et al., 2007). However, congruence isn't stable, but a dynamic journey that is constantly changing throughout a practitioner's career (McDougall, Nesti, & Richardson, 2015). Furthermore, the culture of elite sport (win at all costs) can often not align with sport psychology practitioners' philosophy of practice. Therefore, experienced practitioners working in elite environments have stated that there are occasions when they need to be incongruent to be effective within this environment (McDougall, Nesti, & Richardson, 2015). However, adapting their approach to service-delivery requires high levels of self-awareness, ensuring they don't move too far away from their core values and beliefs. Furthermore, developing a coherent and congruent philosophy of practice is not sufficient for applied practitioners. Sport psychology practitioners must understand how their approach fits into elite sporting cultures (Larsen, 2017). I cannot accept that my approach to practice doesn't fit into the structure of Burnley F.C. My philosophy of practice has largely been shaped by my experiences of working within professional football, especially with the U23 group as they transitioned into the first team squad. So, I know an agreement can be reached between my role and the environment. Now I need to ensure I convince key stakeholders at the club of this. The phone call had frustrated me, but the conversation ended leaving me with hope that the role hadn't completely passed me by. My approach to the next meeting will be to listen to LL and JL as they discuss their role and ensure I explain my approach to practice in a way that

allows them to understand how we can work together as a collective, rather than viewing me as a threat to their current position/structure. Also, now I am more secure in my approach to practice, I can maintain authenticity, whilst working in an elite sporting culture and I now no longer have to 'wear a mask' (Hings et al., 2018) like I did at West Bromwich Albion F.C. Furthermore, because I won't be at the club on a full-time basis, I will have more time and scope to reflect on how my approach fits into the culture at the club (if I do actually get the job in the first place!). If during these reflections I decide I am having to move too far away from my approach to practice and who I am as a person, I may need to decide whether or not staying in the role is sustainable moving forwards. However, I don't want to miss this opportunity by being too rigid in my approach during this meeting and becoming more flexible (moving along the well-being/performance continuum) is something else I have aimed to achieve more recently. On the other hand, I would rather work in an environment that values my approach to practice and there is only so much I am willing to 'flex'. I believe that this demonstrates my progress along the individuation process (finding a fit between myself and the environment) (McEwan, Tod, & Eubank, 2019), because in the past I would have attempted to fit my approach to the environment. Now I have a better understanding of how much I'm willing to 'flex' before the role becomes undesirable to me. I also have a better awareness of the importance of self-care (Quartioli, Etzel, Knight, & Zakrajsek, 2017). When I first heard of this job opportunity, I immediately felt anxious. I knew I wanted the role straight away, but I was also mindful of the impact a job in football had had on my life in the past. I even spoke to my girlfriend to make sure she was ok with me taking the role (something I wouldn't have even have thought about in the past) and I actually wanted her opinion, as opposed to asking because I knew it was the right thing to do! If I gain this position, I'll be working a full-time academic role (37.5 hours) and a part-time practical role (15 hours), but I'm not opposed to working hard. Being the hardest worker is something I am always striving for. I just need to ensure I don't allow it to consume my life. I need to maintain my current self-care habits (going to the gym, doing yoga, walking the dog, seeing friends and family), because self-care helps us as practitioners be more like the person we want to be, more of the time (Quartioli, Etzel, Knight, & Zakrajsek, 2019).

Table 1. Job Description written for the role at Burnley F.C

Job Title:	Sport Psychologist
Department:	Burnley FC: Academy
Reports to:	Head of Sport Science and Medicine
Hours of work:	15 hours a week
Contractual Status	One-year contract (44 weeks a year) (£13,200)
Job Purpose:	To provide individual support to all Professional Development Phase (PDP) players & sport psychology workshops for parents & players within the Youth Development Phase (YDP)
Duties and Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide individual sport psychology support to all PDP players • To provide bespoke sport psychology support with a specific focus on performance enhancement and psychological well-being • To support players transitions into the PDP and 1st team squad • To lead the psychological support across the academy for parents and players; including the delivery of educational workshops • To liaise with all members of the multi-disciplinary team (MDT) to create a player-centred environment • To reinforce the academy vision by providing support that focuses on the development of both the person and the player • To promote the psychological well-being of all players; including lifestyle support and personal development • To liaise weekly with the other academy sport psychology practitioner • To maintain a comprehensive database of all work conducted with players within the academy • To create or utilize existing external referral pathways when required

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10. Coherent and congruent philosophy of practice (ABC²)

Date: 26/08/19

Since beginning the Professional Doctorate, a lot of my consultancy reflections have been about developing my philosophy of practice. I've worked with clients where I've felt complete congruence and I've worked with clients where that congruence has been challenged (Lindsay et al., 2007). Whilst I understand congruence isn't stable and is something that a practitioner must continuously reflect on as they progress throughout their career (McDougall, Nesti, & Richardson, 2015) I feel I am the closest I have ever been to achieving it. I also feel in a much better position to be able to answer the question; '*what is my philosophy of practice?*'. As I've highlighted at the end of my third and final case study (whilst working with the junior wrestler experiencing performance anxiety), this philosophy can be simply described by the following equation: ABC^2 . Earlier in this reflective log, I reflected on starting my own business and began to battle with the idea of selling my services. I discussed the concept of creating a product and adopted quite a rigid and stubborn approach to this, stating that we, as Sport Psychologists, are the product:

"I struggle with the concept of creating a 'product' that can support a wide variety of people, despite the practitioner never having met these people. As Sport and Exercise Psychologists, we are the product. We are the instrument of service delivery."

However, creating the ABC^2 principle is my best attempt of creating my own product. I feel comfortable with this, because the principle itself isn't a product necessarily, but more a representation of me and how I practice. However, what it does achieve is, it makes my approach to practice understandable to a wider variety of people. For example, the principle itself could be described to someone with no knowledge of the psychological literature, as well as another Sport Psychologist. The benefit of this is I can now use this principle to discuss my approach with my clients, as well as engage in reflective discussions with my supervisors and peers. Before, I would have gotten lost in the psychological literature and wouldn't have been able to explain, quite as coherently, how I approached work with an athlete. I feel I could now clearly articulate my approach to practice. It feels slightly frustrating that it's taken so long to develop such a 'basic' philosophy (essentially the first three letters of the alphabet multiplied by two!), but this is an approach to practice that aligns with my values and has been 'tried and tested' within an

applied setting. Don't get me wrong, it needs to be continuously tested and will likely shift and adapt over the years as I myself change, but it's a start!

The principle itself can be described by two separate strands of the ABC equation. The first ABC stands for; *Authenticity*, *Balance*, and *Control*. Clearly, this strand of the equation draws heavily from the Existential literature (Nesti, 2004) and focuses on key aspects of this holistic approach to practice.

Authenticity refers to both the practitioner and the client, who must engage authentically with each other; bringing their true self to each session and engaging as best they can in the *I-thou* relationship. This meeting of two people, being unapologetically themselves, is not easy, but if achieved can create the necessary foundations for successful service delivery. At a very basic level, authenticity allows for the development of the necessary relationship required between the practitioner and client to engage in psychological support. At a deeper and more complex level, achieving authenticity can be the intervention itself. By demonstrating you are completely present for your client, the client is able to comfortably and confidently engage with the support and tell their story. I believe I've only ever achieved true authenticity once in my career to date. It was the best consultancy experience I've ever had, but paradoxically the most challenging. Exposing your true self to the client, means you are completely invested in their lived-experience and if this experience is full of challenges, as was the case on this occasion, you can often leave each session exhausted. Authenticity is something I feel will become more common in my practice as I develop. It requires a practitioner to know themselves, know their values, know their beliefs, and develop a personality that they are comfortable to bring to each session and environment they are in. This takes time. It requires the practitioner to develop themselves as a person. Who we are will influence how we practice. Therefore, I believe the more life experience a practitioner has, the better they are able to understand themselves, and the more often they can demonstrate authenticity in their practice.

Balance draws on the identity literature and highlights the holistic nature of the support I offer. By holistic, I refer to the person behind the athlete (Frieson & Orlick, 2010), the link between performance and well-being (Brady & Maynard, 2010), and eventually, life beyond sport (Wylleman, Alfermann, & Lavallee, 2004). This is a central component to the support I offer, because it's central to my belief system; we work with people who happen to be very good at sport. The sport doesn't define them and engaging with the whole person has always improved the support I've offered. Very rarely do I

engage with clients, especially those at more of an elite level, that don't, directly or indirectly, discuss their identity. In fact, this is probably where I encourage most of my clients to start. *'Tell me about your journey, in and outside of sport and how you have come to this point in your life'*. If all they discuss is sport, I encourage them to discuss their family, friends, school etc. If they can't achieve this and demonstrate a complete performance narrative (Douglas & Carless, 2009), then this gives me an insight into their strong athletic identity (or foreclosed identity), which in some cases may be the cause of some of their challenges. Broadening an individual's identity can help provide them with perspective. As they start to view themselves as more than just an athlete, they are able to switch off from the sport. They are able to receive critical feedback without it feeling like they are complete failures. They are able to view good and bad performances in a more balanced way. They can develop skills that will allow them to be successful in environments beyond sport (Gould & Carson, 2008) Also, they can begin thinking about their life after sport. What will they do when they retire? What type of person do they want to be? Finding a balance between their sporting life and their life beyond sport, provides them with more of a balanced identity and in most cases serves to improve both their performance and well-being.

Control refers to another key aspect of the Existential literature and one of my most importantly held beliefs about human beings; we have free will. This free will means we have freedom and control, but it also means we must take responsibility. Taking responsibility can often cause anxiety. This anxiety, when not faced constructively and with courage, can be detrimental to a person's development. Athletes often face moments throughout their careers when they must make a decision (Nesti et al., 2012). When not being selected in the squad, week after week, do they stay and fight for their place or do they leave and find another club where they will be automatically picked? When injured, do they approach their rehabilitation proactively and positively, or do they cut corners and not adhere to the process? When their relationship with the head coach is strained, do they arrange a meeting to discuss what they can do better or do they talk about the coach behind their back? Ultimately, each individual has control over the decisions they make. Each decision has consequences and so we are the product of these decisions. My role is to ensure my clients are aware of this. Are they taking responsibility of the situation? Are they taking control of their own life? Or are they hiding from this responsibility and hoping the situation will change itself? This can often require the practitioner to ask some very

challenging questions of the client, which can be deeply uncomfortable for both the practitioner and the client. This type of support requires a very strong professional relationship between the practitioner and client and doesn't work without a level of authenticity discussed above.

This strand of the ABC principle is best utilized or most appropriate for those athletes that are at more of an elite level. Professional athletes that have already developed the necessary mental skills to perform consistently at the highest level. Individuals who are regularly exposed to broader life challenges and critical moments that will define them and their careers. Individuals who have developed a certain level of self-awareness and self-knowledge. For example, yesterday I watched Ben Stokes score 153 in one innings to singlehandedly win the test and prevent England from losing the Ashes series. He did this with a smile on his face and looked so comfortable in such an uncomfortable situation. Not long before this, he won the World Cup for England in the one-day format of the game. To demonstrate such an elite performance so consistently, it is clear that he already possesses the mental skills to deal with the demands of the sport. Therefore, we need to ensure that our approach to practice has something to offer an individual, such as Ben Stokes, or we risk doing the field a disservice. Mental skills training alone is insufficient. However, there are occasions when mental skills training can be appropriate, which leads me onto the second strand of the *ABC²* principle: *Affect (emotion), Behaviour, and Consequence*. Put simply, our emotions impact on our behaviours and our behaviour has consequences, which subsequently impacts our emotions (and the cycle continues). This has only recently become a part of my philosophy of practice and has been included to ensure I can work effectively with those individuals who haven't yet developed the necessary psychological skills to perform at the highest level (Barker, McCarthy, & Harwood, 2011). For example, younger athletes who are in the developmental stage of their careers, may be exposed to performance anxiety and not have the skills to cope with this pressure. Adopting more of a Cognitive-Behavioural approach with these clients, utilising the mental skills literature, can help these individuals develop the skills required. It also ensures that I, as a practitioner, can work with a larger variety of client, from young developmental athletes through to older more elite athletes; moving fluidly along the performance/well-being continuum. Adding this to my philosophy of practice felt like the final part of the puzzle. Instead of actively avoiding the use of mental skills training, which I had been doing previously, I now have an approach that can work with all athletes, regardless of their

needs. I also have a very comprehensive understanding of the mental skills literature, so including CBT in my approach with clients has opened up a lot more possibilities. On the other hand, I haven't used this approach as much and also haven't read as much literature. I need to strengthen this aspect of my philosophy and so need to attend conferences/workshops that will give me a better understanding of how to integrate CBT with athletes in an applied setting.

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Research

1. Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice

Date: 21/12/18

The worlds of elite sport and academia have a completely different set of demands and expectations. These two environments differ significantly in relation to the importance placed upon research. In elite sport, research is only used if it is grounded in and has genuine potential to make an impact upon the practical experiences of elite athletes (mainly in improving their performance!). Whereas, in an academic setting, based on the expectations of the Research Excellence Framework (REF), academic staff are encouraged to write and publish as much research as possible. This pressure to publish can cause academic staff to experience a significant amount of stress and in some cases burnout (Miller, Taylor, & Bedeian, 2011). Often, the research published, is written for the sake of writing and makes no contribution to real-world problems. Having spent considerable time in both elite sport and academia, I feel we need to find a balance between both worlds. I struggle with the concept of writing research for research sake! I also struggle to listen to people in elite sport who completely de-value what research can 'bring to the table'. I recently organised a conference at the University of Bolton titled 'Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice', during which one of the guest speakers (based full-time at a professional football club) spent an hour critiquing the need to conduct and read research altogether (clearly misunderstanding the point of the conference!). However, based on a lot of the research I have read myself, I understand why he and other applied practitioners would think this way (given the lack of understanding some researchers seem to demonstrate of the real-world of elite sport!). I would often find myself out of my depth within professional football and at first; I would turn to the research for support and guidance. Nine times out of ten, I would be left disappointed with what I read and would need to rely on practical experiences of peers/supervisors and my own intuition to guide me through my challenges. Due to the amount of time I would spend fulfilling my role within elite sport, I barely had time to read research, let alone write my own! I now find myself in a position where I can still engage with elite sport, but also have the time to read and write my own research and I strongly believe that the gap that exists between research

and practice needs to be shortened and if possible removed altogether! The notion of ‘Publish or Perish’ is everything that is wrong with an academic environment (De Rond & Miller, 2005; Van Delen & Henkens, 2012) – especially within a Sport Department, which relies on its strong links to elite sport and the real world. Recently, I attended a research meeting where, as a department, we were told we needed to be able to produce a minimum of 2.5 journal articles each (not sure how to write half a paper) before REF 2021. Whilst I am confident in my ability to achieve this target (and beyond), a lot of my colleagues responded negatively to this challenge. This will undoubtedly lead to a lot of academic staff, writing research that makes no difference to the world. Looking at this more broadly, if this becomes accepted within our field, it will lead to the reduced effectiveness of the field of Sport and Exercise Psychology as a whole and create further segregation between those who work in elite sport and those publishing the research.

To date, I have only published one journal article. However, the article I have written has been published in the *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action* and clearly provides applied practitioners with guidance of how to use technology in applied consultancy at a professional football club (Wadsworth et al. 2018). I am currently in the final stages of writing a systematic review, which focuses on the development of applied practitioners by exploring their applied experiences within elite sport. In addition to this, I am involved in several projects that are taking part in professional football, I am writing a number of case studies that I intend to publish and I am collaborating with applied practitioners to encourage and support them in publishing their own case studies and applied reflections. These projects are being guided by the practical needs of the clubs/clients involved and not driven by the research agenda (someone sat in a University worried about REF 2021!). Whilst my research portfolio is small, I am proud to be able to say that all of the research I am involved in has a clear link to practice. Based on my own high expectations, I aim to publish a minimum of five journal articles by 2021 (double the expectation of the University of Bolton), demonstrating that it is possible to publish research that makes some impact or have some link with the real world of sport.

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2. Conducting a Systematic Review

Date: 12/08/18

Conducting a systematic review has been, without a doubt, the hardest component of the entire Professional Doctorate. During my plan of training, at the very start of the course, I had identified it as an assessment I wanted to 'get out of the way'. I had no experience of conducting a systematic review before and in all honesty had very little motivation to do it. This lack of motivation saw the systematic review drop to the bottom of my very busy to-do list. As the months began to pass, my motivation to start the research dropped even more. It didn't help that one of my colleagues at the University of Bolton had started his in the first year of his PhD and I could see through observing him, just how hard the process was! As time continued to pass, it got to the point where I just had to do it! This is an unusual situation for me, because I have been passionate about 95% of the work I have conducted on this programme. I have genuinely enjoyed the vast majority of my time on the course so far. However, my passion and motivation for this particular aspect has been extremely limited. I think one of the main reasons for this, is because when I was thinking of a research question, nothing came to mind. A lot of the other students on my cohort seemed to have a particular passion for a specific area of research (mindfulness, talent development pathways etc.) and I had no real research focus and so didn't know where to start. As I've highlighted in the reflection above, I don't ever want to conduct research for research sake. I wanted my systematic review to be meaningful and either make a difference for me or for others (or both). Therefore, to help me choose a topic and create a meaningful question, I began to reflect on how the research could help my career. Where did I see myself in 10 years and what information did I need to know to help me get there? One of my ambitions is to become a supervisor. I want to

support the development of the next generation of Sport and Exercise Psychologists, because I believe, just like working organisationally in sport, being a supervisor will allow me to have more of an impact on the field of sport and exercise psychology as a whole. To be an effective supervisor, I knew I needed to become a more effective practitioner. These reflections seemed to point me in one direction; practitioner development literature. I had read a number of practitioner development articles (McEwan & Tod, 2014; Tod, Hutter & Eubank, 2017), which had helped me understand my own developmental journey and so perhaps reviewing this literature could help others too? At around the same time that I loosely decided on a research area, an opportunity arose to volunteer to be part of a research group that would aim to review the BPS training pathway. The main focus of the research group was to conduct research and create a report outlining how the BPS training pathway could be changed/improved. This seemed to fit with my desire to become a supervisor and so I decided to volunteer. Being part of a research team also meant I had a better chance of being supported as I conducted the systematic review and I knew this support would be essential to me completing this assessment to a high standard. After a number of meetings with other members of the group, I decided to focus my attention on reviewing the reflective practice of applied sport psychology practitioners. I thought that this gave me the best chance to maintain the research/practice link, as these articles were focusing on applied experiences. I also understood that engaging in reflective practice was a key skill that led to the development of competence as an applied practitioner (Anderson, Knowles, & Gilbourne, 2004). One of the main areas of this research that I wanted to understand was; do practitioners in different stages of development reflect on different things? Do they experience similar challenges in different ways? What impact could this have on the long-term development of practitioners as they progress throughout their career? Therefore, I decided to categorise the reflective articles into three distinct stages: trainee, neophyte, and experienced. By doing this I could explore themes across the developmental stages and better understand the journey applied practitioners go on as attempt to become competent practitioners. Furthermore, by doing this, I could also begin to understand what my own journey might look like as I transition from trainee to neophyte and beyond. At this point, after finalising my research question, I experienced a sudden surge of motivation. I now had a research direction and most importantly a topic that I was beginning to develop a passion for. However, I wasn't prepared for the number of reflective articles that my initial search would produce! After screening thousands of

journals and conducting a forward and backwards search on the included articles (which seemed to take weeks), I was left with 66 articles. At this point in the process, I began to feel overwhelmed and realised that I should have been more specific with my research question. Not only did I have to read all of these articles, I had to understand them and be in a position to provide an overview of their key findings. At this point in my development as a researcher, I didn't feel I had the skill set to be able to achieve this to the standard required. I didn't actually know where to start. Supervision was vital for me at this point. David Tod, who has published a lot of systematic reviews over the years, made himself available to me on a weekly basis. He took the time to break the systematic review down into smaller, more manageable parts. He was also very patient with me, which was essential in the early stages, because I had a lot of questions! I came to understand that I was making the mistake of viewing the entire project as a whole, as opposed to breaking it down into small sub-sections. Essentially, I needed to remind myself of the goal-setting literature a little better at this point! By focusing on small processes (organising the literature in an excel spreadsheet, understanding key pieces of information that needed to be identified from each article etc.) I was able to gain more control of the assessment. This actually played into one of my key strengths as a person; organisation. I then dedicated a specific number of hours each day to achieving a specific set of tasks. My thought process was, if I continuously chip away at this, eventually I'll finish it! However, I was overly optimistic with my end date for this component (I underestimated the size of the project) by stating I would be finished by June. When I got to Christmas and still hadn't finished, I knew I needed a break! One of the challenges of 'walking away' from a project of this size is, it's difficult to remember where you left it. Again, I struggled with the motivation to restart the process and I was becoming increasingly mindful that I didn't have much time left if I wanted to finish all the other components too! My systematic review journey had already had many highs and lows by this stage, and I was beginning to feel drained! I needed my motivation and passion back. I needed to remember why I had started the project in the first place; to understand my own journey through the experiences of others. As I began to delve deeper into the literature, I began to get lost in people's stories and could clearly see similarities with my own experiences. For example, some of the trainee practitioners were reflecting on how they immersed themselves in their environment in an attempt to enhance their effectiveness as a practitioner (Christensen & Aoyagi, 2014) and how at times this was difficult to achieve (Howells, 2017; Rowley, Earle & Gilbourne,

2012). The literature was actually helping me understand experiences I had had prior to enrolling on the Doctorate. I was also beginning to gain an insight into what my life as a practitioner could be like post-Doctorate. For example, the neophyte practitioners would often reflect on attempting to understand the link between their personal and professional selves (Collins, Evans-Jones & O'Connor, 2013; Haberl & Peterson, 2006). By focusing my attention back on the literature and the reason why I had started the review in the first place, I was finally able to complete the project. The entire paper went through the feedback process 12 times, but the twelfth draft was something I could be proud of. I actually believe it's the best piece of research I have written to date and when I finish the Doctorate, I plan to attempt to publish it in the *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*. I have also learnt a lot about the research process as a whole, which is something I will reflect on in more detail below.

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3. Writing for Publication (Process over Outcome)

Date: 06/07/19

In the past few months, there have been at least eight Sport and Exercise Psychology lecturer posts advertised at various University's across the UK. I've applied for a lot of these roles but have been unsuccessful for the vast majority of the them, largely due to my lack of publications. I currently have three papers accepted for publication and am beginning to gain a better understanding of the publication process. Nonetheless, this is an area of my development that I need to continue to improve as I progress throughout my career. The first study I attempted to publish (Wadsworth et al., 2018) was a long and challenging experience. I was new to writing research and if I remember correctly, the paper went through nine reviewer feedback cycles before it was eventually accepted for publication. In hindsight, I should be extremely grateful to the reviewers for demonstrating so much patience for such a long period of time! However, at the time, each time the paper was rejected, and I read the reviewers' feedback, I would get very emotional. These emotions usually consisted of either frustration or despondence (or a combination of the two). It almost felt as though the reviewers, whoever and wherever they were, weren't just criticising my work, but were criticising me. I would take the feedback very personally and would require at least a day or two to overcome my emotions before I was able to re-read the feedback and start making the necessary changes. I viewed my work as an extension of me. I knew this was one of my areas of weakness and sending my work off for publication almost felt like I was exposing my own weaknesses to the world. However, despite all the time and effort I dedicated to my first publication, when it was finally accepted for

publication, it didn't feel like I thought it would. I actually didn't even really celebrate. I quickly moved onto the next study, in an attempt to improve my CV. I was beginning to view the publication process from a very outcome-orientated perspective. I wasn't really enjoying the writing process and I was just concerned with the number of publications I had. This was fuelled, to a certain extent, by the pressure I was under to produce research for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) coupled with the pressure I was placing on myself to demonstrate progression in my academic career. I did feel a greater sense of pride when I published my second (Wadsworth, 2019) and third papers (Wadsworth, Paszkowec, & Eubank, in draft), but I still automatically moved onto the next paper, without really stopping to think about what I had achieved. It isn't until now, when I've forced myself to stop, think, and reflect, that I realise this outcome focused approach isn't going to work for me as I progress throughout my career. If I stay in academia for the rest of my working life, I have a least another 40 years to go! 40 years is a long time not to celebrate and enjoy the 'victories' when they do come along. Research is something I am becoming more and more passionate about and I need to change my approach to ensure I can actually enjoy it fully. By taking this approach, my last study (on practitioner individuation) has been the most enjoyable piece of research I have conducted! I have at least another four or five papers that are very close to completion and once I finish the Doctorate, I will attempt to publish them. However, I am now viewing the feedback process as developmental as opposed to a critique of me. 99% of the time, the reviewers' comments are completely justified and very constructive in improving the overall quality of the paper. The feedback process is an opportunity to learn from people who are more experienced than myself. Furthermore, experiencing the review process a number of times over the last two years has taught me a lot about my writing style and how I structure my work. Recently, I have attended a number of writing workshops at Liverpool John Moores and feel my writing has dramatically improved. One of these workshops in particular has had a significant impact on my approach to writing. It helped me understand the writing process more structurally and as a set of 'rules' that can be followed. For example, reducing the number of adverbs, can decrease the complexity of a sentence and make it more easily readable for the targeted audience. It has also helped me develop my own research 'blueprint'. This blueprint provides me with a structure to my work that ensures I am producing research in a methodical and rigorous manner. For example, I now see the introduction to any study as five distinct questions that need to be answered; a) what is the

issue/how does the topic affect people? b) what do we know? c) what don't we know? c) why do we need to know it? e) what is the purpose of the research? (credit to David Tod for these five questions). However, what really appealed to me from this workshop was one key message; understand the rules, so you can begin to break them. I've come to refer to this a 'structured creativity'. The blueprint gives me a structure, but I am free to break the 'rules' of writing within this structure. Therefore, the questions provide the structure to the introduction, but I am free to answer these questions creativity, utilising research, and adopting a writing style to best inform the target audience. Writing is a creative process and would become very boring and mundane if we all followed the same rules. Creativity is something that I'm beginning to value more and more and is something that is beginning to influence my choice of data collection and analysis. For example, for my last empirical study, I have chosen to analyse the data from a narrative perspective (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). Whilst I haven't had the time within the limits of the Doctorate, I would have liked to have represented the participants' stories through creative non-fiction. This approach to writing and research is so far away from the approach I adopted when I first started the course and marks my development as a researcher. I want to continue to challenge myself as a researcher, by adopting new methods and continuously practicing the writing process. Each time I engage in research, I learn something new about the process. As I improve the process, the outcome will naturally follow!

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4. Review of Reviews (The Super Review)

Date: 19/07/19

The annual Sport and Exercise Psychology (BPS) conference is fast approaching and as part of the research team (investigating the BPS pathway), I have just had my abstract accepted for my part of the symposium presentation:

(1) A review of reviews: Sport and Exercise Psychologists' training and development across time

Nick Wadsworth and Robbie Anderson

Purpose: The purpose of this presentation is to assess and critically discuss the evidence underpinning sport psychologist training, by combining the findings of three systematic reviews. **Background:** The development of applied sport psychology practitioners is complex and multifaceted. Despite over 30 years of research, we have a limited understanding of how this literature informs us about the training and development of sport psychology practitioners. **Methods:** The first review used a meta-study method to synthesise research on the characteristics of effective sport psychology practitioners. The second review used thematic content analysis to explore the reflective accounts of applied sport psychology practitioners. The third review used a meta-study method to review empirical evidence on supervision and training. **Conclusions:** Results highlight that the development of applied sport psychology practitioners is reliant on five interconnected areas: (a) who we are, (b) what we know, (c) what we do, (d) what we experience, and (e) how we develop. Key findings include: (a) the contribution practitioner characteristics' make to the formation of working relationships; (b) the need for sport psychologists to develop coherent philosophies of practice, congruent with their worldviews and work settings; and (c) the observation that sport psychologists develop expertise in similar ways to other helping professionals (e.g., counsellors). These findings can inform educators, supervisors, trainees, and applied practitioners about how to assist sport psychologists in developing optimally, contributing towards the progression of the discipline as a whole.

As part of the research group, there have been three systematic reviews conducted; a) exploring the reflective accounts of applied practitioners (mine), b) exploring characteristics of effective practitioners, and c) empirical studies investigating the development of sport and exercise psychologists. The purpose of the presentation is to

provide a review of the reviews. At our last group meeting, when I was asked if I wanted to lead this presentation, I was both proud and nervous! At the last BPS conference, I was only given a six-minute section of a presentation and that was to review my own findings. Now I was being asked to open the symposium by reviewing all of the systematic reviews. I was proud that the group had trusted me with this responsibility. However, I was also very anxious! The last conference presentation, whilst only six minutes long, was a very anxiety provoking experience for me (see BPS conference reflection). That presentation was actually a very basic task, but it was my first experience of delivering at a conference. This presentation requires me to read, understand, and combine three systematic reviews and then present the key aspects of this research to the audience. Not such a simple task. I want to be able to repay the trust the group has shown in me by developing and delivering an effective presentation. I also want to build on my experience from last year and provide the audience with some key messages that might impact on their own development as practitioners. After all, opportunities like this (impacting the field) was one of the main motivators for my choice of topic (practitioner development) in the first place. One of the ways I have approached the development of the presentation can probably be best described as a layering or scaffolding approach. Just as I broke the systematic review down into smaller sections, I have broken this presentation down into its component parts. David recently used the analogy of building a house to describe the research process. If you consider individual research papers as bricks, then a systematic review uses these bricks to build a wall. Continuing along these lines, a review of reviews (multiple walls) is an attempt to build a house. That is a big task for someone who has only just started producing bricks of his own! However, by approaching the presentation one brick at a time, the task hasn't seemed as difficult. The first process was to read and re-read each of the systematic reviews. I've read all three of the systematic reviews a number of times now and feel I understand the key findings and messages from each. The second stage was to spend some time attempting to understand how each study relates with the next. The third stage was to find a way of communicating the key findings from each review in a way the audience can understand and comprehend. The fourth and final stage was to find a way of representing the super review (as I like to call it) within a diagram that improves the transparency of the presentation. After following these four steps, I have produced a diagram that I feel represents the overview well (Diagram 1). I very recently presented this idea to the research group and received some very positive feedback! Each member of the

group understood the key findings and felt the diagram represented the research well (although there was a long discussion about making the diagram 3D and animated!). I was also able to answer all the questions the group had about the research and this has improved my confidence for the final conference presentation. I have progressed as a researcher from producing bricks, to building walls, and now to building a complete structure. Conducting research and presenting the findings at conferences was something I wanted to achieve when I first asked to join this research group. I feel I am making a genuine contribution to the field with this presentation and the entire process as made me a better researcher, a better practitioner, and a better teacher.

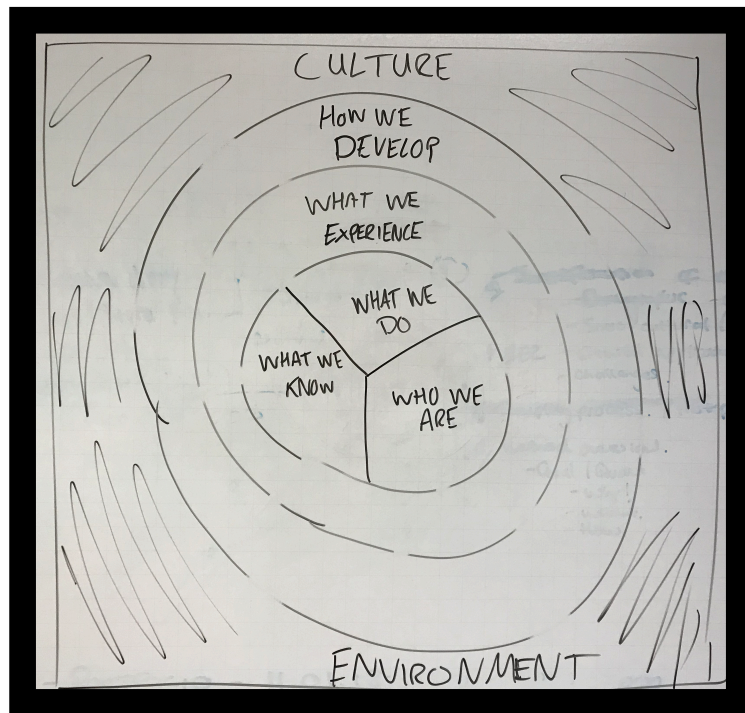


Diagram 1.

5. Developing a Research ‘Identity’

Date: 08/08/19

Throughout the last two years, I’ve reflected on both my identity as a practitioner and my identity as a teacher, but I haven’t yet reflected on the development of my research identity. At the moment, I have a variety of research studies in different stages; some have been published, others are currently going through the review process, some are just being finished, and the rest are being planned. However, if I look at the topics of these research projects, there isn’t a consistent theme. I have conducted research into improving the self-awareness of coaches in professional football, I’ve provided reflective accounts of my own applied consultancy experiences (case studies), I’ve researched the reflective accounts of other practitioners, I’m currently researching the practitioner individuation process, I’m involved in a study exploring the use of psychology in the rehabilitation process, and I’m also interested in the transition/dual-career experiences of professional athletes. I have a diverse range of research interests. However, I have recently begun to reflect on whether or not this is a strength or a weakness. Typically, when people find out I am studying a Doctorate, their first question is ‘what’s your research question?’. I then have to explain that I don’t have a specific topic and I’m free to research different areas within the field. “Doctorates are different from traditional PhDs”. Whilst I’m a little bored of having to explain this to people, I do actually view this as a huge strength of the programme. I value how the course allows for the combination of both research and practice. However, having a diverse portfolio of research outputs may not always be a strength. For example, when applying for jobs, a common question is: ‘how do your research interest(s) fit into the research agenda of the department’ and a lot of the time I’m not sure, given my wide variety of research interests, how to answer this question. Also, I’m becoming worried that my lack of research focus might prevent me from becoming an ‘expert’ in one particular area. For example, when you think of Existentialism, you think of Nesti (Nesti, 2004), when you think of quiet eye, you think of Causer (Causer et al., 2010), when you think of PETTLEP imagery, you think of Smith (Smith, Wright, & Cantwell, 2008), when you think of practitioner development, you think Tod and Eubank (Tod, Hutter, & Eubank, 2017). What do I want people to think when they think of me? A ‘golden thread’ that I attempt to include as part of all my research outputs is a clear link to practice. However, linking theory and practice is not in itself a research topic. Perhaps, because I’m no longer working full-time as an applied practitioner, I’ve lost focus with my research. Previously,

my research interests were driven by my applied experiences. For example, when working in professional football, I had a desire to work organisationally, which meant I read a lot of research on culture and environments of elite sport. Mark Nesti discusses Existentialism because it's his approach to practice as an applied practitioner. If my passion is to bridge the gap between theory and practice, then maybe I need to start with the practice and let that drive the research, as opposed to the other way around. My most recent case study is a perfect example of this. Working with an athlete who was potentially experiencing a mental health disorder, fuelled my passion to research the referral process and how this could impact the relationship between practitioner and client. When I recently experienced a long-term injury playing football, I was inspired to research the use of psychology in the rehabilitation of patients. As I reflect, I have realised that practice should drive research in the first instance. Developing research interests from practice means that the research is meaningful. For me, being a successful researcher, requires me to be a successful practitioner and conducting research will undoubtedly make me a better practitioner. The two should always be connected. Perhaps then, I don't need to develop one area of interest to demonstrate competence and expertise as a researcher. On the other hand, as my approach to practice becomes more refined (developing a coherent philosophy of practice, working in specific sports/environments etc.) my research might become more focused. For example, if I successfully gain this position at Burnley F.C. and have an opportunity to conduct research; the research has to be applicable and the world of professional football. Otherwise, there is very little point of me doing the research in the first place. Moving forwards, I need to find a better balance between myself as a practitioner and myself as a researcher. I seem to have moved from one extreme to the other in my career so far. I went from full time applied practice to full time academic. My ideal role would be a combination of applied practice and academia. This way, I can maintain a strong link between my applied practice, research, and teaching. Demonstrating competency in these three areas, in my opinion, is the best way I can develop expertise as a practitioner.

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Dissemination

1. Teaching Philosophy

Date: 10/01/18

The University of Bolton has a strong focus on the employability of its students, and this is particularly true within the sport department. Having worked full-time in professional sport, I understand the demands that this often brutal and volatile environment can place on individuals working within it (Nesti et al., 2012). Hence, it is of no surprise that I place great emphasis on the need to develop my students holistically: providing them with the knowledge and skills to ‘survive’ within this cut-throat world upon graduation (Tod, Anderson & Marchant, 2011). Whilst enrolled on the PgCert, I have been introduced to pedagogical literature and engaged in critical discussion with both peers and tutors that has only strengthened this belief. Moreover, I have come to understand that my role as a lecturer goes beyond solely focusing on the holistic development of individuals and extends to contributing towards the development and design of the modules themselves. By focusing on module and programme design, I can hopefully interact with key stakeholders within the University to contribute towards a positive supportive culture for my students.

In recent years educational institutes have begun to move away from teaching facts and move more towards developing competent students and future employees (Gulikers, Bastaens & Kirchner, 2004). Constructive alignment is an approach to teaching that considers the intended outcomes prior to teaching taking place. The learning outcomes are clearly stated, and teaching, assessment and feedback are all aligned to successfully achieve these outcomes (Biggs, 2014). In order for constructive alignment to be successful, knowledge must be “constructed through the activities of the learner” (Biggs, 2014; p.9). Hence, it is vital that we, as academics, view teaching as a collaborative process (Mascolo, 2009) by focusing on the engagement of our students and the motivational climate that we

create. Since beginning my teacher training, I've been challenged to critically consider the motivational climate I create for my learners. Drawing upon my comprehensive understanding of psychological theory, I have been able to successfully incorporate certain aspects of the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) of motivation into my teaching practice. Adopting an approach to my teaching that centres on fulfilment of the three basic psychological needs (competence, autonomy, and relatedness) (Deci & Ryan, 2010), I have been able to create an autonomy-supportive environment that has enhanced the students' intrinsic motivation towards both the subject area and their own learning (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). Furthermore, I have come to understand that my dual role as practitioner and academic can be combined for the benefit of my students. Within my professional practice, as a trainee Sport and Exercise Psychologist, the relationships I develop with my clients are of paramount importance (Andersen, Van Raalte, & Brewer, 2001). If the same importance is placed on developing relationships with my students, the collaborative process can be enhanced (Mascolo, 2009) as well as my students' learning (Adeyeye & Yusuff, 2012). Furthermore, by considering the key principles of Humanistic psychology I can focus on creating a safe and supportive environment for my students, demonstrating genuine interest in their development and ensuring they are comfortable to approach me for both academic and social support throughout their time at University (Aregbeyen, 2010). This is particularly important when considering the experiences of the student-athletes (Aquilina, 2013), who often find themselves isolated (Tekavc, Wylleman & Erpič, 2015) and lacking the more self-determined forms of motivation (Woodruff & Schallert, 2008).

Consequently, with the individual needs of my students in mind, the importance of preparing them for life after University has been reinforced. Based on my experiences of academia so far and given my background in professional sport, I would strongly argue that, as a whole, 'we' aren't doing enough to prepare our students for the transition into employment. Having had the opportunity to critically reflect on my own teaching, as well as explore key literature in relation to both learning theories and assessment, there are aspects of the modules I have adapted in the short-term to bridge this gap between University and professional employment. Moreover, there are elements of the module I will strive to change if given the opportunity moving forwards. Firstly, the module (Sport and Exercise Psychology in Professional Practice (SPS6004)) on which this reflection is based is underpinned by Bloom's taxonomy (Pickard, 2007), a more traditional approach

to study design. However, arguably Fink's taxonomy of Significant Learning would be more suitable when considering the holistic development of the students as it synthesises six categories that together create a more significant learning experience for the students (Fink, 2003). It is clear to see, that Fink's taxonomy goes beyond understanding and remembering information, by focusing on aspects of the students' development, such as; interests and values, understanding of oneself and critical thinking. Perhaps it is concerning that the current module structure fails to consider all six elements of Fink's taxonomy. Furthermore, when considering the 'constructive alignment' of the current module, I would argue that the learning outcome, "critically understanding the application of sport psychology in professional sport environments to impact on performance" doesn't sufficiently consider the broader development of the students in order for them to be successful within the world of professional sport. However, given the limited time I have been at the University, I haven't had the opportunity to re-design the module. Therefore, to ensure my students are developing the required skills, I have utilised the Graduate Attributes Matrix of Employability (GAME) initiative within my teaching practice. Upon closer inspection, the GAME framework clearly overlaps with Fink's taxonomy of Significant Learning. Hence, I have been able to give my students the opportunity to develop skills, which go beyond basic academic knowledge, without having to change the module structure. In order to achieve this, I have incorporated problem-based learning within the formative assessments to best prepare my students for the final summative assessment and improve their employability skills. This problem-based learning approach to teaching is utilised in the belief that learning is most effective when knowledge is obtained in the context in which it will be used (Kwan, 2000). This was essential for this particular module, as the cohort is made up of third year students who will soon be graduating from the University and so need to be given an insight into challenges they may face in the 'real-world'. Furthermore, one of the summative assessments for the module is a presentation designed to encourage the students to utilise key psychological theories and apply it to athletes to improve their performance. By presenting the students with a challenge such as this and actively encouraging them to problem-solve, their learning will be enhanced (Levine et al. 2008). Moreover, the self-directed learning or autonomy involved in problem-based learning has been shown to increase intrinsic motivation (Kilroy, 2004) reinforcing the motivational climate I strive to create for my learners (Niemic & Ryan, 2009). As a result of this increase in intrinsic motivation, problem-based

learning has been shown to be more effective in knowledge acquisition over time (Capon & Kuhn, 2004).

Despite this, constructive alignment cannot work if the assessment doesn't allow the students to demonstrate their knowledge and application of this knowledge in relation to the stated learning outcomes for the module. Furthermore, for constructive alignment to be truly successful, it must be embedded within a supportive culture (Biggs, 2014). Whilst it is beyond the scope of this reflection to critically discuss the culture within the University, based on my experiences so far, constructive alignment needs to be considered more closely, especially in relation to authentic assessment! Of the three modules I have led this semester (consisting on six separate assessments), there is only one assessment that demonstrates any level of authenticity. For this assessment the students are asked to present a 15-minute presentation applying psychological theory in order to improve the performance of a group of athletes (as mentioned above). This task is a very common challenge presented in applied practice and so provides a good level of authenticity. However, whilst this assessment does demonstrate a certain level of authenticity, especially in relation to construct validity (Gulikers & Theo, 2007), I would argue that it still fails to replicate the challenges and accompanying anxiety that would be experienced in a professional sporting environment. Currently, the assessment is conducted within the 'safe' environment of the University. If the physical context was considered more closely, research supports the idea to utilise real athletes, perhaps within a professional sporting environment, to create a truly authentic assessment (Gulikers, Bastaens, & Kirchner, 2004). Given that increasing the authenticity of assessments can have a positive impact on both student learning and motivation (Herrington & Herrington, 1998), whilst also better preparing them for the challenges of employment, there seems to be a strong argument towards focusing on this key element of module and programme design.

As I have already mentioned, in preparation for the above assessment, I have designed two formative assessments underpinned by the concept of problem-based learning. However, for these formative assessments to improve my students learning in preparation for their summative assessment, they must be accompanied by effective feedback. Feedback can significantly enhance learning (Carless, 2006) by giving students an opportunity to be reflective of their own performance (Archer, 2010). However, in some cases, feedback has been found to have little impact on students' learning (Sadler, 2010). Hence, it is vital that academics critically consider the way feedback is provided to their

students, something that my teacher training has encouraged me to do. For this particular assessment, I decided to record both formative assessments, provide my students with a copy of this recording for them to view individually, and then arrange a one-to-one meeting to provide feedback in line with Pendleton's rule. Pendleton's rule starts with the positives and then discusses areas of improvement in order to create a safe environment for students (Chowdhury & Kalu, 2004), something which sits congruently with my values and beliefs as both a practitioner and a lecturer. Feedback has been shown to be most effective when both positive and negative comments are provided (Hyland & Hyland, 2001). Whilst some students might react negatively to constructive feedback (Weaver, 2006), critical comments are essential for student development (Holmes & Papageorgiou, 2009). I have chosen to incorporate this form of feedback into my practice above others as it considers whether or not the learner is ready to receive feedback and then gives them an opportunity to reflect on their own performance (Chowdhury & Kalu, 2004). However, Pendleton's rule has been criticised for its lack of flexibility (Chowdhury & Kalu, 2004) and in practice, I have found that one-to-one meetings with students often don't follow this rigid structure for a multitude of reasons. However, some students lack the confidence to engage and seek one-to-one feedback (Polous & Mahony, 2008) and so I have tried to ensure I am approachable (Pitt & Norton, 2017) and supportive (Nicol, 2010) in order for this form of feedback to be effective. Whilst I strongly believe I have been successful in doing this, it has been extremely time consuming. With the increased pressure on academics to produce research (Brown, 2007) and having undertaken the highly demanding task of a full-time Professional Doctorate alongside my role at the University, I have to ask myself the question; is it realistic for me to continue with this structure with all of my students moving forwards? Looking towards the rest of the academic year, I believe it would be beneficial for me to further explore my identity as an academic in order to maximise my effectiveness as a lecturer and to continue my development moving forwards.

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2. “Thrown in at the deep end” Development of an Academic Identity

Date: 23/05/18

My teaching career at the University of Bolton started in January 2017, when I was given one week's notice to prepare for and deliver three modules, across numerous levels of study and programmes within the Sport department. Given that I had never taught before at any level, within any institution and had recently moved to the University from professional practice, I can say, without hesitation that I was 'thrown in at the deep end' (Boyd & Harris, 2010; Heaviside, Staff & Donnan, 2017). At the time, my only frame of reference regarding delivery as an academic within Higher Education (HE) was my own experience as a student. The limited time I was provided with to prepare for the semester forced me to view teaching from a technical perspective; focusing solely on the content and completely ignoring the social element of the role (Nicoll & Harrison, 2003). Because of this and without any awareness or consideration for pedagogical literature, I adopted the role of 'expert' within my teaching practice, based on what I thought a 'good' lecturer should be (Boyd & Harris, 2010). The semester that followed was filled with challenges and anxiety. Planning the lectures on a weekly basis – usually on a Saturday and Sunday,

prevented me from achieving a work-life balance (Waumsley, Hemmings & Payne, 2010), which was one of the main reasons why I'd left professional football in the first place. On top of this, I was shocked at how little support I had received from my peers. At the time, I knew how vital it was for me to engage with more experienced lecturers in order to continue my professional development (Boyd & Harris, 2010) and so beginning the PgCert was the perfect opportunity for me to access this support. Moving into Semester 2, I have been introduced to pedagogical literature on curriculum design, provided with the opportunity to engage and observe other lecturers from different departments and perhaps most importantly, encouraged to engage in reflective practice. Furthermore, the action research project has allowed me to better understanding curriculum design and delivery and has informed my practice by shaping my identity as a lecturer (Boyd et al., 2007). The concept of an identity being; an unstable self that is socially and culturally constructed through life experience (McKeon & Harrison, 2010) is not a new concept to me. Throughout my sport psychology development, I have consistently been challenged to reflect on my practitioner identity. However, until beginning the PgCert, I hadn't transferred this into my professional practice as a lecturer. It has been suggested that for professional development to be meaningful, it must consider an individual's values and beliefs (Putnam & Borko, 1997). Therefore, in the last 6 months, I have utilised literature of professional development from the field of sport psychology, as well as accessing pedagogical literature, to challenge and shape my academic identity. The idea of understanding one's beliefs and values begins by engaging in reflective practice and is essential for any practitioner to ensure effective practice (Poczwadowski, Sherman & Ravizza, 2004). Despite this, there is often a discrepancy between what academics believe and how these values translate into teaching practice (Kane, Sandretto & Heath, 2002). Poczwadowski, Sherman, and Ravizza (2004) introduced a hierarchical model of professional philosophy (Figure 1.), which has been invaluable to my professional development, challenging me to reflect on my core values and beliefs, both in academia and professional practice.

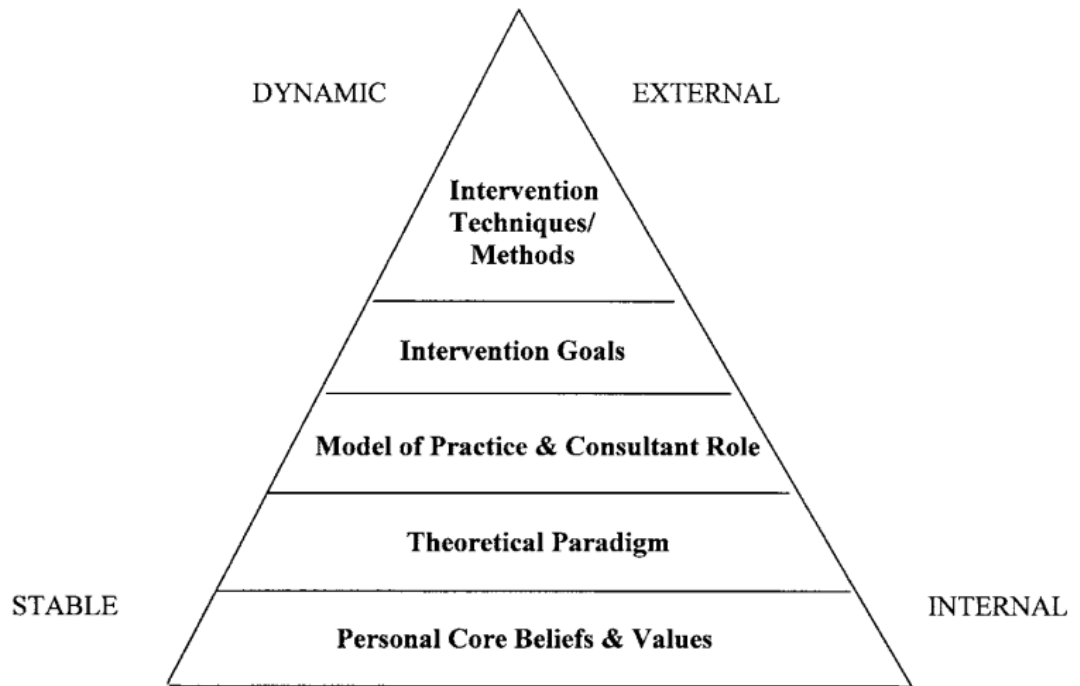


Figure 1 — Hierarchical structure of professional philosophy.

Using this model, it is clear to see why adopting the role of ‘expert’ in my teaching practice, had caused me to experience anxiety. This approach to teaching (which sits at the intervention stage of the model) was not aligned to my core values and beliefs (which provides the very foundation of the model). My view of individuals, whether that be students or professional athletes, is that they should be viewed as autonomous, self-directed people who possess free-will and the opportunity to make choices (Nicoll & Harrison, 2003). Hence, my role as a lecturer is to create the right environment in order to support positive change. Therefore, this approach requires a shift from ‘expert’ to student-teacher led learning (Lunenberg & Korthagen, 2003). Whilst adopting the role of ‘expert’ I was teaching in a way that was incongruent to my values and beliefs and as a result caused me to experience a considerable amount of anxiety (Lindsay, Breckon, Thomas & Maynard, 2007). Since coming to this realisation, I have observed and been observed by others, which has only contributed towards strengthening this identity. Key to my development throughout Semester 2 has been the opportunity to engage with peers. Sharing my journey of reflection regarding my academic identity with others, has challenged their values and beliefs and encouraged them to consider their teaching style

more closely. On top of this, it has encouraged me to view the role of an academic more broadly. In order to provide the best experience for my learners, I must consider their holistic development, by engaging in research and practice and preparing them for life after University (Oliver & Jorre de St Jorre, 2018). Whilst my first semester teaching was extremely challenging, the PgCert and reflections that have followed have undoubtedly helped shape my professional identity as an academic and have provided me with a platform to continue my professional development (Heaviside, Staff & Donnan, 2017). I now need to focus on implementing my values and beliefs as an academic, into my teaching on a weekly basis.

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3. BPS Conference

Date: 10/12/18

I've just returned home after spending two days in Belfast for the annual Sport and Exercise Psychology (BPS) conference. During the conference, I was asked to support the delivery of a symposium, by contributing a 6-minute section to one of the presentations. During the presentation I discussed the preliminary findings of my systematic review. Our symposium was scheduled for the second day of the conference, which meant I spent the first day attending other peoples' presentations and networking with other practitioners. As my own presentation grew closer, I began to get more and more nervous. This was my first experience at a conference, as both an attendee and a presenter and so I didn't really know what to expect prior to arriving. I think having the chance to watch other people present was actually making me more nervous. I recognised a lot of people on the stage, from either their research or their roles in professional sport and it became very apparent that there were a lot of very experienced people in the room. How was I supposed to go on stage and tell these people something they didn't already know? I felt like a fraud and this only increased the anxiety I was experiencing. Standing on stage and delivering presentations is something I am used to as a lecturer, but I was very aware that this was different. The people in the crowd were no longer less knowledgeable than me. In fact, the vast majority of people had more experience in both research and applied practice. Also, my usual delivery style when lecturing is to engage my students in discussion, asking lots of questions, and being responsive to these questions. This meant I would usually get my students involved in debates about the topic area and acted as more of a facilitator, as opposed to a providing instruction/information. However, I couldn't do this in this format.

Conference presentations usually consist of a speaker, on the stage, speaking and the audience listening. I could of course try and challenge this approach and deliver the presentation in my usual style, but I wasn't confident enough that the audience would respond well to this – leaving me asking questions with no response. Plus, I only had six minutes and so needed to be concise with the information I provided – there wasn't enough time to ask questions and start a discussion. I was, without a doubt, significantly out of my comfort zone. Why hadn't I prepared better? Usually I would practice presentations so much that I knew exactly what I was going to say once I started. My lack of preparation and my underestimation of the task at hand meant I was now suffering the consequences. I also felt an added level of pressure, because I wasn't alone, I was part of a research group. I didn't want my lack of experience and inability to deliver an effective presentation to negatively influence the rest of the group. The anxiety was so bad before I went to bed that I actually didn't sleep much that night. I'm used to experiencing anxiety in my everyday life, but this was different, this was going to be detrimental to my performance unless I did something about it. One of my reactions to anxiety is sweating. Sweating then causes me more anxiety, because I'm worried about how I look and what people think. This starts an endless cycle of anxiety, sweating, more anxiety, and more sweating. Because I had experienced this before, I decided to wear all black the day of the presentation. At least then people wouldn't be able to tell I was nervous! I also decided to get down to the room early, so I could get comfortable in the environment. I got myself a cold glass of water, sat on the front row, and imagined myself on stage delivering the presentation. If my clients can deal with the stress of elite sport, I could do this, surely?! As the rest of the group began to arrive my anxiety increased even further. They all looked so relaxed. I was going to let everyone down when it was my turn. Once the symposium had started, waiting for my turn was the worst part. I was on fourth and I could barely hear what the other members of the group were saying. I'm sure I looked calm on the surface, but inside I was petrified. Irrationally, I started to think about how I was going to step onto the stage. Should I go with my left foot first or my right? I was so nervous that I wasn't even confident in my own legs at this point! It was my turn. As I walked up onto the podium, I instantly decided to start with a story. I hadn't planned to do this until the very last minute, but it was something I had done in the past and knew it had the potential to relax me. It worked, as soon as I started my story, which naturally led into the presentation, I relaxed. It almost felt like an out of body experience. I could see and hear myself talk and I went on

autopilot. The six minutes were up, and I had done it. I was so relieved at this point! But, the symposium wasn't over; the audience still had a chance to ask questions. Before I realised what was happening, I found myself answering the first question and the second. I felt so comfortable now I had finished my presentation. I came into my own.

Following the symposium, I received a lot of positive feedback from members of the audience and was pleased with my delivery style (although I actually don't really remember it). It was at this point that I admitted to David Tod how nervous I had been. He simply responded, "you didn't look it, you looked very confident". It was at this point, that I felt equal for the first time. Everyone in the research group had more experience than me, but this almost felt like an initiation into the group. As I reflect on this experience now, I feel I 'got away with it' on this occasion. I am sure I will be asked to present at more conferences in the future and there are a few things I need to do differently then. Firstly, I will practice the presentation more. Knowing what I will say always relaxes me. Secondly, I will begin with another story. Telling stories always engages the audience and provides me with confidence that people are actually listening to me. Thirdly, I will consider my delivery style more closely. Could I maintain my usual delivery style and still be effective in a conference setting? Finally, I will set up a practice presentation with other trainee practitioners to receive feedback before the real thing!

4. Graded Teaching Observation

Date: 24/12/18

I rarely remember a time in professional football, where my workshops and presentations (that weren't of a confidential nature) weren't watched and critiqued by a member of staff more senior than myself. In my current role, I have been observed (formally) once in the last two years. Therefore, to maximise the amount I could learn from this process, I recorded the delivery of the session, watched the session back and wrote some reflections on each of the categories that I was being observed on (and whether or not I felt I achieved a good/outstanding). These reflections are included below:

1. Planning and Differentiation:

A key part of my teaching philosophy is to develop good relationships with my students. Therefore, I take the time to understand their backgrounds, their career aspirations, they current jobs and/or academic focus for the module and as a result I am

able to tailor the lecture to their specific needs. For example: Connor had experienced an injury himself whilst playing rugby, so I was able to draw on his experiences as an athlete so he could better understand the learning outcomes of the session. Paul works as a personal trainer alongside studying part-time at the University, so I was able to relate the learning objectives to his experiences of clients with injuries (training through the injuries). This allowed me to make the topic relevant to all the learners and ensured they were able to better understand how the topic related to themselves as practitioners. There were times when I feel I could have achieved this more consistently with some of the other learners in the room. **(Good)**

2. Promotion of Positive Behaviour

I believe that by understanding my students, I am able to engage with them as both a person and a learner. I believe that throughout the session, I gave all students an opportunity to ask and answer questions related to the topic and the learning outcomes and created an environment where they felt safe to do so. I hope that as a by-product of my passion for the subject area, they were able to engage better in the session. Interestingly, this was one of the first sessions that Paul (the student who usually dominates the conversation) wasn't present and this seemed to encourage more of the students to get involved in the conversation/discussion. There were no occasions where I needed to manage bad behaviour, as the group as a whole seemed engaged throughout **(Outstanding)**

3. Subject Knowledge

I feel through a combination of my applied experience and my understanding of the literature, I was able to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the subject area and this provided me with the opportunity to highlight applied case studies that would often contradict the research. My lecture also incorporated the GAME matrix and gave students an opportunity to demonstrate *adaptability* and *problem-solving* skills with the tasks that I set. Again, I believe that this knowledge and passion for the subject was able to motivate the students to engage with the lecture being delivered. **(Outstanding)**

4. Teaching and Learning Strategies

I attempted to use a variety of teaching and learning strategies within the session. For example, to begin, I used a simple, but emotive picture to help the students demonstrate their understanding of the topic prior to the start of the lecture. I also used a number of videos in an attempt to 'bring the topic alive'. I provided the group with an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding as individuals and in a group setting. I believe by using the experiences and opinions of my students, I was able to 'grab the moment' on numerous occasions. These unplanned moments are often the most effective at engaging the students and solidifying their understanding of the topic in a way that is relevant to their own personal experiences. **(Outstanding/Good)**

5. Resource Utilisation

Short video clips were used in an attempt to be emotive and 'bring the topic alive' as mentioned above. There was a consistent use of research integrated throughout the lecture, with a clear and comprehensive reference list so students were able to access the journal articles themselves following the session. I was also able to direct students to a recent blog, if they were interested in studying the subject further. For the first part of the session, the students mostly remained in their seats. However, the group work encouraged them to utilise the room a little more effectively. Furthermore, the role-play activity was very effective in helping the students understand the practical challenges of working with an injured athlete from a psychological perspective. I could have encouraged more group activities throughout the opening part of the session. **(Good)**

6. Assessment Strategies

The students were presented with a number of opportunities to both ask and answer questions, which provided me with an opportunity to assess their understanding throughout the lecture as both individuals and as a group. The 'dragons den' task gave me an insight into what information they had understood in relation to the first objective and also allowed each student to judge the quality of each other's learning. For the three students I asked, I gave very specific and tailored feedback to each individual on what they did well, which also gave the group an insight into the key information that should have been taken away from the opening part of the session. With the group task, I spent time with each group (although this could have been extended) listening to their thoughts on the

challenges posed and offering questions to test and challenge their answers. I then fed back the thoughts of both groups to the group as a whole and encouraged debate around the topic. Finally, the role-play scenario allowed me to understand the capabilities of the students in applying this theoretical knowledge into practice and I took them time to allow each pair to feedback their experiences of this role-play. **(Outstanding/Good)**

7. Promotion of Equality and Diversity

I believe the environment I created within the lecture, provided all students with the opportunity to engage in the session, as they were able to understand that their opinion and input was valued. On occasions when there were disagreements, I was able to respect each student's opinion and manage the debate effectively. Within the opening 10/15 minutes, all individuals within the group seemed to be engaged. However, this engagement, in some of the students, seemed to reduce as time progressed. I attempted to encourage these individuals to maintain their engagement, but felt I could have done this more consistently. **(Good)**

8. Use of Reflective Practice and Research

By combining my practical experience with my theoretical understanding, I was able to provide a clear overview of the subject area. I regularly drew on my own applied experiences and the applied experiences of my colleagues. I also used current and past case studies. These applied experiences were consistently compared with the research in the area and this provided the students with an opportunity to critically understanding the topic. The theoretical approaches to this topic were introduced later in the lecture and could perhaps have been highlighted earlier. **(Outstanding/Good)**

9. Professionalism

I would hope that this is one of my strongest areas as an academic. By using my practical experiences, I am able to make strong links between the topic area (in practice) and the learning outcomes for the session. I also put a strong emphasis on the employability skills of my learners. The foundation of my philosophy as both a practitioner and an academic is the relationships I develop with my students. I take the time before and after lectures to understand them as much as I possibly can. This allows me to ask tailored questions to help them better understand the topic area. Two of the students were late to

the session and I would normally make more of a point about this and how it related to employability, but on this occasion I didn't and perhaps should have. **(Outstanding/Good)**

The following feedback was received from the teaching specialist based on this lecture:

Grading Criteria and reference		Main strengths/qualities	Areas for development
1	Planning and differentiation (Outstanding)	Exceptional planning and execution of the session meant that all learners were aware of the LO's, learning activities were matched to the outcomes and learners were challenged appropriately and progressively for the duration of the session. LO's were linked to GAME attributes and both LO's and GAME symbols appeared when relevant throughout the PP.	
		The teaching has a cumulative nature to the module and there are frequent links to previous material covered as well as content from other modules and how they interact with one another.	
2	Promotion of positive behaviour (Outstanding)	Classroom management is excellent and ensures that learners are ready to learn (the scene is set using the title slide on the PP as a starter activity), know what is expected of them and how their efforts contribute to the community of learning that you are working to develop. Late arrivals are acknowledged appropriately and do not disrupt delivery.	

		Learners were fully engaged for the duration of the session and made excellent effort with the T&L activities set for them.	
3	Subject knowledge (Outstanding)	<p>Outstanding depth of subject knowledge which was clearly reflected in the learners' respect for the tutor and their own underpinned knowledge demonstrated throughout the session.</p> <p>Tutor's level of knowledge was equally exemplar in the style of delivery and clarity of information transferred. Frequent industry examples, examples from the tutor's own experience and industry practice were a natural part of delivery and enhanced the learning experience.</p>	
4	Teaching and learning strategies (Outstanding)	Outstanding range of T&L activities were employed to maintain engagement (e.g. storytelling from professional experience & Dragons Den activity) and allow students maximum opportunity for learning. T&L activities were progressively challenging and fully supported by real world examples (e.g. Paul Lake and Derek Redmond).	

5	Resource utilisation (Outstanding)	Excellent use of digital presentation resources to support the presentation.	Encourage learners to view case study videos outside of classroom delivery and engage in discussion as a group via Moodle forum which could then be reviewed as a peer activity in the session to further promote student led learning.
6	Assessment strategies (Outstanding)	Frequent checks on learning are made, through both completion of activities, feedback to/ from learners and Q&A which leads to discussion and further questioning appropriate to the level.	There did seem to be some reliance within the cohort for the same group of learners

		<p>You did work the feedback very well from the Dragons Den activity to bring in some of those that hadn't yet contributed and then provided your own +/- aspects to the learners. This could have perhaps been developed further as a tally chart/peer assessment opportunity.</p>	<p>to answer questions. Consider developing your practice to bring in directed questioning techniques/ change some activities to small paired discussions that you then seek feedback on (e.g. holistic model of philosophy of practice).</p>
7	<p>Promotion of equality and diversity (Outstanding)</p>	<p>Very good use of reflective learning from prior sessions. This was confirmed through Q&A.</p> <p>Excellent implementation of case study of professional footballer Paul Lake. Group led discussion identified the negative psychological impact on the individual whilst promoting empathy within the group.</p>	
8	<p>Use of reflective practice and research (Outstanding)</p>	<p>Outstanding use of reflective practice and research for each area of the session covered.</p> <p>Derek Redmond athletic injury on the track led as an excellent example to demonstrate empathy with the group supported by tutor's own reflective experience within the field.</p>	

9	Professionalism (Outstanding)	Excellent relationships with the student group, this forms a real community of learning. You clearly have a passion for your subject and extensive professional experience; this enthuses and inspires your learners.	
		You clearly know your students as individuals and are invested in their success. You are clearly a partner in their learning process and verbalise this to them (state that they may know more than you about certain aspects e.g. radiography) which develops their confidence, both as learners and potential sports psychologists.	

Good Practice to disseminate	Criteria Ref No
Outstanding introduction that engaged all students within the first five minutes.	1,4,6
Holistic and highly effective approach to pedagogy to meet LO's of the session, develop employability attributes and contextualise learning.	7,8,9

Overall Grade Awarded (Best fit)	Outstanding 9/9
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Based on the overall 'grade' (9/9 outstanding), I have exceeded my own high expectations in relation to be ability as an academic, especially at this stage of my development. I now have a real passion and confidence in my own abilities. I have put forward a plan to develop an 'Applied Sport and Exercise Psychology' (MSc) programme, which has been accepted at the University of Bolton and I can now put my passion and knowledge into developing the Sport and Exercise Psychologists of the future.

Consultancy Case Study 1:

Pressure to Provide a Solution: One-to-One Support with an Elite Junior Gymnast

Abstract

This article presents a reflective case study, from the perspective of a trainee Sport and Exercise Psychologist, of an applied consultancy experience with a 14-year old gymnast. The case study highlights a number of applied challenges, such as: working with a client in an unfamiliar sport, questioning who the client is throughout the consultancy process, adopting a philosophy of practice different from the expectations of the parents, and further difficulties when including parents within the consultancy process. The case study also highlights how challenges to a practitioner's philosophy of practice can be deeply uncomfortable and involve the practitioner to question their approach to service delivery. Although the intervention only lasted three sessions, there are a number of observations and lessons to be learnt from an applied perspective, such as: being aware of countertransference when building relationships with a client and understanding how the dynamics of the consultancy process might change when involving parents.

Keywords: ethical practice, holistic support, anxiety, countertransference

To be effective as an applied sport psychology practitioner, individuals must be able to regulate themselves as both a person and a practitioner (Poczwardowski, 2017), whilst delivering effective interventions within an applied setting (Poczwardowski & Sherman, 2011). Reflective practice can enhance an individual's effectiveness within an applied context by increasing a practitioner's self-awareness and providing them with a platform to make sense of their applied experiences (Knowles, Gilborune, Tomlinson, & Anderson, 2007). Reflective practice can also allow applied practitioners to understand themselves within their context (Fletcher & Maher, 2013), generate practice-based knowledge (Cropley, Miles, Hanton, & Niven, 2007), and develop a coherent philosophy of practice within the unique environment of professional sport (Larsen, 2017). The following case study, delivered by a trainee Sport and Exercise Psychologist, provides a detailed overview of an applied consultancy experience with a 14-year old gymnast. The client experiences a multitude of challenges simultaneously and the first author relies heavily on reflective practice throughout the consultancy process to make sense of and learn from the variety of challenges presented.

Context

The Practitioner

At the time of the consultancy experience, I was 24 years of age and was four months into my British Psychological Society (BPS) Stage Two training. BPS Stage Two training requires applied practitioners to demonstrate a multitude of competencies across four distinct areas: ethical practice, research, dissemination, and applied practice. Prior to my enrolment on the BPS training pathway, I had engaged in applied practice within two Premier League football academies and so had had multiple opportunities to reflect upon my own philosophy of practice (Poczwadowski, Sherman, & Ravizza, 2004). This philosophy of practice was based around the holistic long-term development of both the person and the athlete (Friesen & Orlick, 2010), with the belief that performance and well-being are inescapably linked (Brady & Maynard, 2010). The development of this approach to applied consultancy was undoubtedly influenced by my supervisor at the time (Tod, 2007), but had also been strengthened through the clients I had worked with within professional football. These individuals would often experience multiple critical moments throughout their careers (Nesti, Littlewood, O'Halloran, Eubank, & Richardson, 2012), which required a long-term holistic focus, as opposed to the use of mental skills training to reduce the symptoms of the experience (Corlett, 1996). Furthermore, by adopting a philosophy of practice that was underpinned by my core values and beliefs (Poczwadowski, Sherman, & Ravizza, 2004), I had been able to work congruently within an applied setting (Lindsay, Breckon, Thomas, & Maynard, 2007). However, during these applied experiences, I had not had the opportunity to transfer this philosophy of practice into other contexts and sports and I was mindful that I needed to demonstrate more diversity in my training, which could be achieved by working with a variety of sports and athletes. Moreover, as a male practitioner, it was important for me to gain experience of working with female clients in an unfamiliar sport, to enhance my development as an applied practitioner.

The Client

The client (CS), involved in the following case study, is a 14-year-old female, elite junior gymnast, currently competing nationally and internationally within her sport. Gymnastics is a sport that requires early specialisation (Baker, Cobley, & Fraser-Thomas, 2009) and involves intensive training programmes that can lead to athletes growing up too

soon and losing their childhoods (Pineiro, Pimenta, Resende, & Malcolm, 2014). The demands of the sport can often prevent individuals from engaging in activities that would be viewed as 'normal' by others (David, 2004). CS had recently injured her ankle performing a dismount from the uneven bars and had been attending physiotherapy sessions. The owner of the clinic recommended to both CS and her father that they contact me for some psychological support. CS's father contacted me directly and explained that upon her return to training, his daughter was experiencing a 'mental block' on the move that had caused the initial injury. CS had a competition in six weeks that she and her coaches were now preparing for and the 'mental block' was preventing her performing a move that was integral to the routine for the competition. As a result of this, both her coach and her father were growing increasingly frustrated at her lack of progress and her father was keen to highlight that he wanted her to overcome this challenge as soon as possible. It is often the case that parents place their trust and faith in the coach, as they lack the experience and knowledge to support their child themselves (Kerr & Stirling, 2012). The role of the gymnastics coach should be to create an appropriate motivational climate and reduce any anxiety gymnasts might be experiencing (White & Bennie, 2015). However, based on the phone call with CS's father, it seemed both he and the coach were putting pressure on CS to overcome the 'mental block' before the competition in 6 weeks' time. In addition to the 'mental block', CS's father also explained how the family had recently moved countries so that CS could train at a more elite gymnastics club. CS's father did acknowledge that this could be having an impact on her current lack of development as an athlete and recognised some of the broader challenges involved with this transition.

The Consultancy Process

Reflections Prior to Intake

After the phone call with CS's father I was both excited and apprehensive. The prospect of working with a new client was exciting, especially in a sport in which I had little experience of working. However, I felt anxious as CS's father had given me the impression that he wanted me to provide a 'quick-fix' to the 'problem' he had presented; something which is not congruent with my philosophy of practice (Lindsay et al., 2007). On the other hand, the father had acknowledged some broader challenges his daughter was experiencing (moving home/countries/schools, and the relationship with her coach), which I felt could be underpinning the 'mental block' and so felt comfortable progressing to

understand CS's experiences further. Despite this and perhaps because of the anxiety I was experiencing, I read a number of journal articles related to gymnasts experiencing 'mental blocks' and the psychological skills that they utilised to overcome them. Some of the techniques that these athletes were utilising included imagery, self-talk, and pre-performance routines (Chase, Magyar, & Drake, 2005; Howell, 2017; Magyar & Chase, 1996; Martin, Polster, Jackson, Greenleaf, & Jones, 2008). However, I was also mindful not to approach the intake and needs analysis with preconceived ideas that would prevent me from understanding CS's experiences. Moreover, I was aware that the challenges that the father had presented might not have provided a complete insight into the situation or may not have represented CS's experiences at all. In line with my philosophy of practice, I was consistently aware of the broader issues CS could be facing and I was particularly aware of the challenge that moving away from home could have on an athlete, especially an athlete so young (Barker-Ruchti & Schubring, 2016). Moreover, these critical moments throughout an athlete's career, are often accompanied by a significant amount of anxiety, as the individual's identity is challenged (Nesti et al., 2012; Ronkainen & Nesti, 2017) and so a more holistic approach to service delivery needed to be considered here.

With CS's upcoming competition in mind and her father's expression of a desire for a 'quick-fix', I felt I could not justify separating the intake and needs analysis and so I combined these two elements together in my first session with CS. Separating these two elements of consultancy can be beneficial, although it is not uncommon for them to become blurred throughout the consultancy experience (Keegan, 2016). The primary purpose of the intake session is to build a relationship with the client, whilst allowing the practitioner to provide an honest and transparent overview of their philosophy of practice and any ethical considerations (scope of practice etc.) so the client can make an informed decision about whether to continue their engagement with the consultancy process. The needs analysis session is primarily designed to gain a complete understanding of the experiences of the client and agree on a primary aim for the consultancy process, to help inform the practitioner when developing an appropriate intervention.

Intake and Needs Analysis

Given the ethical considerations of working with a junior athlete, ethical approval was obtained from both CS and her parents before beginning the consultancy process. Moreover, based on the age of the client, I had decided that it would be appropriate for the

session to take place in CS's home. I wanted to ensure that CS felt comfortable to improve the relationship I could develop with her and the efficacy of the work we could achieve together. However, I had little or no control over the environment I was entering into and so had to strongly consider whether or not the environment would be appropriate with regards confidentiality. Confidentiality is essential when working with all athletes and in this particular case was vital, as I wanted to understand CS's experiences, free from the influence of her parents. After meeting CS's parents, they showed me to the room where I'd be working with CS and thankfully respected the boundaries of confidentiality by leaving CS and I to begin the session alone. I began the session by explaining confidentiality to CS and reassured her that the content of our discussions would remain between the two of us if that is what she preferred. I also briefly highlighted my philosophy of practice; in a simple way she could comprehend and appreciate. Understandably, she seemed nervous and I was aware that my role initially was to make her feel more comfortable and to build a rapport with her based on trust (Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006). I achieved this by starting with a broad question, which she could answer comfortably and at her own pace: "...tell me about your journey, in and outside of sport, which has led you to this point". CS began by discussing her experiences of gymnastics at the age of seven, when it had been fun and something she 'loved' doing. However, she quickly progressed the session onto the main challenges she was currently experiencing. Throughout the first session with CS, it became apparent, almost instantly, that the challenges she was experiencing were broader than simply a 'mental block' as her father had explained (see *Appendix: 'Case Report One'*). The family had recently move to England to ensure CS was training at an elite gymnastics club, which meant she felt under a lot of pressure to continuously train and compete at the highest level. It is often the case that athletes feel compelled to carry on training because of the sacrifices their parents have made throughout their career (Pinheiro et al., 2014). CS explained that in her previous country, she had lived, trained, and studied at a gymnastics school, which she found very challenging as she missed her family and friends. At this point, at the age of 12, she had stopped enjoying the sport and had not enjoyed it since. She experienced anxiety before every training session and could not switch off from gymnastics as she trained 27 hours a week, leading to it dominating her life (Pinheiro et al., 2014). She struggled to manage the demands of both school and sport and so had little time or opportunity to develop friendships outside of these environments (Tekavc, Wylleman, & Erpič, 2015). As a result

of moving to a different country, which required her to move both school and club, she felt she had very little support from friends and coaches and at this point in the session she expressed her feelings of isolation (Aquilina, 2013). She became very upset at several moments throughout the session. She did not discuss the 'mental block' until I prompted her to do so 50 minutes into the session and unsurprisingly, in comparison to the other challenges she was experiencing, she did not seem overly concerned by it. As well as explaining her current experiences, she had explained to me that she had worked with a Sport and Exercise Psychologist in the past and had been taught breathing techniques and imagery. However, she clearly expressed to me at this point that she had not felt that these techniques had been useful in improving her performance (Corlett, 1996). To conclude the session, CS and I discussed her aspirations as an athlete and how she felt I could help her achieve these goals in the future. Despite the challenges she was currently experiencing, she expressed that her long-term goal was to be an Olympic athlete. One step she wanted to take towards achieving this ultimate goal was to compete in the British Championships that were taking place next year. We agreed that during our next session(s) we would focus on three specific areas to help her achieve both of these goals: a) switching off from gymnastics when away from a training or competitive setting, b) reducing the anxiety she experienced before training and to begin enjoying the sport again and c) overcoming the 'mental block' she was experiencing.

Reflections Prior to the Development of an Intervention

It was clear after the first session that the psychological skills highlighted in the research, I had read prior to the session would be insufficient to support CS through her current experiences. It was also clear that there was a discrepancy between the challenges the father had presented, and the challenges CS had discussed (Smits, Jacobs, & Knoppers, 2017). At this point what was not clear was whether this discrepancy was due to a lack of understanding or appreciation from the father of his daughter's experiences, or whether CS had not communicated these challenges to her parents. Nevertheless, at this point, with regards the development of an intervention, the expectations of CS were different from the expectations of her father, which raised the question; who was the client? Ultimately, the client was CS, but her father was paying me for my services and perhaps had a different set of expectations regarding the aim of my support. Despite understanding the needs of CS and my own personal philosophy, I felt anxiety and pressure, based on the father's

expectation of a 'solution' and as a result considered the use of mental skills training alongside a more counselling based approach. However, after reflecting further and engaging in critical discussion with my supervisor, I came to the conclusion that any attempt to implement mental skills training would be insufficient in overcoming the more holistic challenges CS was experiencing and I was also very aware of how working in this way, given my philosophy of practice, would create a sense of incongruence (Lindsay et al., 2007). I was also mindful to gain a better understanding of whether CS had communicated any of these challenges with her parents, as based on my discussion with her father, he did not seem to be aware of any of the experiences she had discussed.

Developing the Intervention

Having reached the conclusion that mental skills training would be insufficient in dealing with CS's broader challenges (Corlett, 1996), I adopted a counselling-based approach to our second session together, underpinned by the core principles of Humanistic psychology. I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of some of the more holistic challenges she was experiencing and provide CS with a safe environment in which to discuss these challenges. Due to time constraints and the amount of challenges CS had discussed in our first session together, I felt as though we had not had the opportunity to go into much detail about the specific challenges she was experiencing, which more than likely occurred as a direct result of me attempting to combine the intake and needs analysis sessions. This highlights the potential benefits of separating these two sessions during the consultancy process. Taking time to conduct a thorough intake ensures the practitioner develops an effective relationship with the client, which has a direct influence on the detail the client is willing to divulge in the subsequent needs analysis. The more detail the client is willing to provide, the more likely the intervention developed will meet the needs of the client. In addition to wanting to gain a better understanding of CS's experiences, I was also mindful that CS's parents did not know what their daughter was experiencing. Hence, the following session acted as a second, more detailed needs analysis, whilst also allowing CS to shape the intervention herself (regarding the decision to include her parents). The suggestion to include the parents in the consultancy process was initially discussed between my supervisor and I. My supervisor had recently experienced a similar applied experience and found that including the parents in the process had been successful in

supporting the client through their challenges. However, I wanted to ensure that CS was comfortable with this.

I decided to utilise the report I had written from our first session as the basis for the discussion in the second session. I did this for three reasons. Firstly, I wanted to ensure I had fully understood CS's experiences as she had described them and demonstrate that I had a genuine interest and understanding of these experiences. Secondly, I wanted to give her an opportunity to change or add anything to these experiences, which would stimulate further discussion between us. Finally, I wanted to give CS an opportunity to reflect on what we had discussed and allow her to consider the inclusion of her parents as the foundation for our next session together. Using the report from the previous session worked well. CS seemed to be more comfortable with me in the second session and so expanded on each of the challenges she had mentioned. However, providing CS with the opportunity to reflect made her noticeably upset and concluded in us having the following exchange:

CS: *Begins to cry* 'I don't know why I'm so sad'

NW: 'What is it you think is making you sad?'

CS: 'Speaking to you has made me realise for the first time that I don't do anything other than gymnastics'

At this point, CS also re-emphasised the enormous pressure she was under from her parents, given that they had moved country to ensure she was training at an elite level and we both agreed that her parents needed to hear what she was experiencing (see *Appendix: 'Case Report Two'*). CS expressed how she found it difficult to communicate with her parents at times, because of their consistent focus on gymnastics. She mostly chose not to discuss her experiences of gymnastics, because she wanted to switch off when not training or competing. However, she agreed that telling her parents what she was experiencing would help her overcome some of her challenges in the future. In fact, she was noticeably relieved at the suggestion of involving her parents. We then discussed what options CS had in relation to how to communicate most effectively with her parents. I presented CS with three options (which my supervisor had suggested in our previous conversation): a) for her to speak to her parents without me present, b) for us to talk to her parents together, or c) for me to talk to her parents on her behalf. We agreed that it would be best if we both spoke to her parents in the next session, which would allow CS the opportunity to discuss her

experiences of the sport, particularly how she felt pressure and anxiety due to the fact that the whole family had moved to England for the purposes of her training.

The Intervention

The third session included both CS and her parents and was designed to form the initial part of the intervention; facilitating communication between all members of the family. To achieve this, I was aware that I needed to create an environment where everyone's voice could be heard. This was vital given that CS had already highlighted how she struggled to communicate with her parents. It is often the case that young athletes, who are part of a sporting culture, do not communicate effectively, through fear it will be viewed negatively (Coakley & Pike, 2009). Furthermore, it can often be the case that the high level of commitment involved with elite sport and the facilitating role parents adopt, might inhibit young athletes from disclosing their experiences (Stirling, 2011) and it is particularly common within gymnastics for the athletes to develop a 'code of silence' (Pinheiro et al., 2014). Hence it was essential for me to build a strong rapport with the family, based on trust and respect, to ensure the intervention would be effective (Greenless, 2009). Moreover, I was also unsure of how CS's parents might react and so needed to consider their emotional response and psychological well-being as well. Therefore, I began the session by reinforcing the boundaries of confidentiality and outlining my role within the session, which would be to create a safe environment, facilitate communication, and allow the family to discuss potential solutions for the future. Everyone seemed satisfied with the supportive role I would adopt and so I encouraged CS to begin the session by telling her parents what she had been experiencing. CS immediately got upset, but courageously described her experiences to her parents. Her father's immediate reaction was to hug CS, but his body language gave me an insight into his thoughts, and he seemed to be extremely disappointed with what he was hearing. It was also clear that he was taken aback by what he had heard and instantly began expressing his thoughts on what his daughter had said. His opinion centred around how disappointing it would be if she did not continue with the sport and how she would make the whole family proud if she carried on; "...*think about how good it'll be when we can come and watch you perform*". Research has found that whilst parents do want their child to enjoy the sport, in a lot of cases, they also want them to become Olympic Champions and so dedicate a lot of their own lives in achieving this goal (Smits, Jacobs, & Knoppers, 2017) to the extent that

it 'becomes a significant part of their identity' (Donnelly, 1997: p.399). Moreover, parents are often unaware of the negative impact elite sport can have on their child's well-being and psychological development (Grenfell & Rinehart, 2003). This was definitely evident through the father's response as he also began discussing the sacrifices, he had made within his own childhood to achieve his successes within his life. Whilst doing this, he began to belittle CS's experiences, by making statements such as; "*It would be a shame to quit gymnastics just because you want to see your friends*". He also did not seem to fully understand the magnitude of what was being discussed, as he continued to return to the 'mental block', which left CS visibly confused and frustrated.

Reflections throughout the intervention.

It was becoming apparent to me at this point in the session that the father was not fully understanding or acknowledging the experiences of CS. His lack of empathy towards his daughter and continuous reference to his own needs and experiences was evoking a negative emotional response in myself. I had developed a strong relationship with CS over the last two sessions and so felt protective of her. She was noticeably upset and frustrated at her father's response and I got the sense that she regretted telling her parents how she felt. Because of this, I had a strong sense that I was failing her. I also could not understand how her own father did not seem to be taking a similar protective approach in relation to his daughter's experiences. These emotions and thoughts, in the moment, led to an almost tangible distance between me and CS's parents. Upon reflection, I needed to revisit the question of 'who is the client?', when preparing for the family session. Earlier, it had been clear that CS was the client. However, by including CS's parents as a key part of the consultancy process, I should have spent more time considering the impact this could have had on the relationships and dynamics of the support I was providing. Within applied sport psychology delivery, it is not always clear who the client is (Haberl & Peterson, 2006) and without enough consideration I approached the third session in a similar way to the first two sessions (CS was the client). Because of this, when CS's father did not respond in a supportive manner, my line of questioning moved from being supportive and exploratory, to emotive and potentially directive at times. However, I was aware of this in the moment and attempted to return to my facilitative role, by encouraging CS's mother to provide her thoughts on the situation, in the hope that she would provide more of a balanced view and show some empathy towards her daughter's situation.

Disappointingly, CS's mother reinforced everything CS's father had been saying. However, I got the sense that this was not how she truly felt. It was clear to see by observing the dynamic of the parent's relationship, that the father was viewed as the authority figure. At this point within the intervention, I reinforced how important it was for everyone to speak openly and honestly. CS's mother then began to discuss her own experiences, which were very similar to her daughter's experiences. She discussed how challenging the move to England had been for her and expressed how she would often experience severely low moods, due to having no friends or support. However, frustratingly, she did not seem to demonstrate any empathy to her daughter, who was experiencing the same challenges, with the added challenge of training and competing 27 hours a week in the highly pressured environment of elite sport. With my frustrations growing, alongside the feeling I had failed CS, I changed my approach to the intervention. I actively encouraged the family to begin thinking about possible changes that could be made that would help CS through this difficult period. Initially CS's father actively encouraged CS to reduce her focus and efforts towards her schoolwork. This reinforced the idea that his identity and focus was solely directed towards his daughter becoming an elite athlete and led to me becoming more frustrated and despondent. Eventually, with further guidance from myself, as a family they agreed to improve lines of communication (something CS was going to take a leading role in) and create 'protected family time', which they would utilise to watch a film each week and switch off completely from gymnastics (See *Appendix 'Case Report Three'*). To me, these were very small steps that I felt would not make much difference in the long-term. However, at least it was an acknowledgement that something needed to change!

At the end of the session, I asked the family what they wanted from me in the following session, in the hope that this would provide me with an opportunity to continue my support of CS and perhaps educate the family further on how to overcome these challenges. CS's father immediately returned to the 'mental block', which further highlighted his lack of empathy or understanding towards the situation and potentially provided more of an insight into the pressure he was under from CS's coach (Kerr & Stirling, 2012). I attempted to explain the potential link that existed between performance and well-being and how by focusing on these broader challenges, CS might be in a better position to overcome the 'mental block' (Brady & Maynard, 2010; Friesen & Orlick, 2010). However, CS's father did not seem to appreciate this response and ended the

session by stating “...we’ll contact you if we want you to come back”. This response reinforces the different approaches CS’s father and I had adopted towards the situation. Despite hearing all the challenges his daughter was experiencing, CS’s father was still focused on overcoming the ‘mental block’. Based on my philosophy of practice (long-term holistic support of the person), overcoming the ‘mental block’ was not the priority, which made it almost impossible to continue the consultancy process due to these different perspectives on the situation.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Intervention

Unsurprisingly, in the weeks that followed, CS’s father did not ask me to return, despite CS’s mother clearly expressing her desire for me to come back again. Therefore, I did not have an opportunity to gain any objective or subjective feedback on the effectiveness of the intervention (although not being asked to return is a pretty conclusive insight into how CS’s father had evaluated the intervention!). To better understand the potential effectiveness of the intervention, I needed to rely on my own reflections of the consultancy experience.

My lack of experience in sports other than football made this consultancy process difficult to begin with. My awareness of this lack of experience prior to the first session with CS had made me unusually anxious, which led to an unnatural and unauthentic meeting between CS and me. Furthermore, my past experiences of working for a professional organisation meant I had had limited experiences of engaging with parents in the way I had with CS’ father, which perhaps impeded my effectiveness with this particular case. With regards the different perspectives CS’s father and I had adopted, I feel I should have spent more time discussing the relationship that exists between well-being and performance and how focusing on the broader challenges could have supported CS in overcoming the ‘mental block’. Perhaps taking the time to educate the family on my approach to service-delivery, before the third session, would have allowed them to better understand how I was attempting to support their daughter. However, it was clear throughout this consultancy experience, based on my understanding of the literature, my theoretical orientation, and the needs of CS, that the ‘mental block’ was not the priority. Despite this, in the weeks following the third session, I could not help but feel I had failed CS. She was noticeably upset and frustrated at the end of our third session together and without the invitation to return, I could no longer support her. After texting CS’s father and

reinforcing that I was available if needed in the future (with no response) I considered offering my support for free. I felt a strong duty of care towards CS and was frustrated that this support relied on her father, as the gatekeeper, inviting me back. However, I decided not to do this, as ultimately it was not the money that was the issue, it was the difference in expectations regarding the outcome of the consultancy process that was the problem and this would have prevented me from developing the right relationships with CS's parents, leaving any future intervention pointless.

After a few weeks had passed, I was able to reflect on the consultancy process without being influenced by the emotions I had experienced. Whilst I was still disappointed that the intervention had ended so abruptly, I was able to reflect positively on the experience. As a trainee practitioner, I was able to successfully build a strong relationship with a young female athlete competing in a sport I had no experience of working within. All my experience, prior to this client, had been working with adult male professional footballers and coaches and so successfully building a strong relationship with a client of a different demographic allowed me to demonstrate diversity in my training to become a chartered Sport and Exercise Psychologist. Moreover, I was able to work congruently, in line with my core values and beliefs (Poczwadowski, Sherman, & Ravizza, 2004), despite a number of external pressures and doubts I had had at the time. This sense of congruence led to me experiencing my most positive consultancy experience to date (during and after the second session with CS). I was able to create a safe environment for CS to explore her experiences, which resulted in her developing more self-awareness and realising things about her life that she had not realised before. Following the second session, CS thanked me for my support and this genuine heart-felt appreciation reinforced why I had dedicated so much of my life to this profession! I am confident, that if given the opportunity, I would have been able to successfully support CS through this critical moment in her life and consequently had a positive impact on both performance and well-being.

Whilst there are a number of positives to take away from this experience, there are aspects of the consultancy process I would change if given the opportunity again. To begin with, I needed to spend more time considering my relationship with CS's parents. The moment I introduced them as part of the intervention, the dynamic of the service delivery changed. At this point, did they become the client as well as CS? I would argue that CS was still the client primarily and her parents were there to support her. However, by

adopting this approach and not getting the supportive response I had expected, it created a gap between CS, her parents, and me, which ultimately led to me not being asked to return. Perhaps if I had taken more time to build a relationship with CS's parents, I would have been given another opportunity to return and support their daughter. Moreover, I needed to consider my relationship with CS more closely. Why did I feel so protective of her? I have always felt an emotional 'attachment' to my clients, which I believe comes through empathetic understanding. However, my emotional response to CS was a lot stronger than previous clients. Upon reflection, I believe that, because CS was a young female athlete, I may have viewed her as more vulnerable than some of my previous clients and this may have fostered the idea that I needed to adopt more of a protective role with her. Feeling strong emotions towards a client can be a sign of countertransference (Winstone & Gervis, 2006), which can occur when the client evokes thoughts and feelings in the practitioner that originate from a previous relationship. It is not uncommon for practitioners to 'want to save' their clients (Anderson & Williams-Rice, 1996), which is exactly how I would describe my emotional response to this consultancy experience with CS. With time I have come to understand that my identity as an uncle to a young niece may have been the underpinning cause to this countertransference with CS. It is vital that applied practitioners become aware of the practitioner-athlete relationship to improve service-delivery (Petitpas, Danish, & Giges, 1999), but more importantly to ensure safe ethical practice (Rowan & Jacobs, 2002).

Conclusion

This reflective case study highlights a number of challenges experienced by a trainee Sport and Exercise Psychologist at the start of his BPS Stage Two journey. The applied practitioner had to build a relationship with a client in an unfamiliar sport, withstand challenges to his philosophy of practice, demonstrate sound ethical practice when working with a junior athlete, attempt to include the parents in the intervention to improve support for the client, closely consider the concept of countertransference, and overcome the anxiety associated with this unsuccessful consultancy experience. This case study highlights the complexities of working as an applied sport psychology practitioner in elite sport and addresses how these experiences can contribute towards the overall development of the practitioner.

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Appendix

Case Report One

Date: 26/10/17

The purpose of our first session together, was for us to get to know each other and begin building a relationship that would allow us to work together effectively moving forwards. We started with a timeline exercise, where I asked you to give me an overview of your journey, both in and outside of sport, up until the current day.

You explained to me that you had started gymnastics at the age of seven and up until the age of 12 you really enjoyed the sport. At the age of 12 you enrolled at a gymnastics school, which you explained was similar to a boarding school. You trained and studied there full-time (5 times a week) and it was at this point, for the first time, that you stopped enjoying gymnastics. The first six months in particular were very challenging for you, as you missed your family and friends. You have recently (in the last 2 months) moved to England for your previous home, where you had lived for 9 years previously. You described this move as less disruptive than previous occasions where you have moved house and country.

We then began discussing your current experiences of gymnastics. You explained to me that you train 27 hours a week and that gymnastics takes up a lot of your time. You often experience anxiety immediately before training. You have been experiencing this anxiety for the last two years, since you started training at the school at the age of 12. You explained to me that this anxiety is reduced when you have a better idea of what you are

doing in training and you have more of a set routine. At the moment, because of the short time you have been back in England, you haven't developed a relationship with your coach, which means her training seems unpredictable to you. You also began to describe the differences between your previous coach and your current coach. One of the differences that you described was that your previous coach was more likely to get 'angry' if individuals didn't perform or train well, whereas your current coach was more likely to be 'disappointed'. When I asked if you felt she was currently disappointed with you, you seemed unsure. You also seemed unsure about whether or not you were able to compete in the British National Championships, which was one of your goals for the future. You also explained to me that you struggle to switch off from gymnastics. You added to this by telling me that you had made the decision to attend training even when experiencing an injury that was preventing you from physically training yourself. The only times you get an opportunity to switch off from gymnastics are when you are at school (although that can be challenging as well), when you watch TV (and YouTube) and when reading. You told me how you liked reading Harry Potter and how you liked "getting lost in that world".

It was really interesting to hear you talk about your hobbies outside of gymnastics at this point. You seemed more relaxed and upbeat when talking about your passion for reading. When we discussed the idea of working together to help find ways for you to switch off from gymnastics, you seemed excited. You also agreed that switching off from gymnastics would actually be beneficial to your performances as an athlete. We agreed that this weekend (your trip to the Lake District) would be a good time for you to think about different that you could switch off from gymnastics.

Finally, we discussed your current experiences of a 'mental block' on the uneven bars. You have experienced a mental block before on the vault that took you 6 months to overcome. You explained that you couldn't get passed the block on the previous occasion because of the pressure of the upcoming competition. However, once the competition had passed and the pressure was reduced you were able to perform the move again.

Do you think the current pressure you are experiencing might be contributing towards the 'block' you are having now? We can discuss this in more detail in our next session together.

Additional Notes:

You have worked with a sport psychology practitioner before, in a group setting. He taught you how to use breathing techniques and imagery. You didn't feel that these techniques were very helpful. However, you did describe how you use imagery before you go to sleep at night.

Your aspirations are to compete in the British National Championships in one year's time and your ultimate goal is to compete in the Olympics. We agreed that I could help you achieve these goals by doing the following:

1. Helping you switch off from gymnastics
2. Help reduce the anxiety you experience before training
3. Help get you passed the 'mental block' you are experiencing.

Case Report Two

Date: 02/11/17

In our second session together, we spent some time going through the discussion we had had the week before. This was to ensure I had understood your current situation properly and to give you an opportunity to change or add more detail to any areas you felt I had missed or misunderstood. By reflecting on last week's session and going over the 'homework' you had completed, we were able to go into more detail, which I've highlighted below:

You discussed the idea of 'belonging'. For you it is important that you feel you belong at the gymnastics club where you currently train. Even though there isn't anyone at the club that is the same age as you, you get along with all the girls in your group (both younger and older). You feel your relationship with your coach could be better, but you don't want to become over familiar with her at this point. In order to improve your relationship with your coach, you'd like to learn more about her, but at the same time, you'd like to maintain certain boundaries. You described the club that you currently train at as more fun when comparing it to your previous club. At your previous club you wouldn't do anything outside of gymnastics, whereas at your current club they do more activities that don't just focus on gymnastics.

Considering that you have only been training at the club a couple of months, you seem to be developing good relationships with the other gymnasts and over time these relationships will continue to improve. Remember that what you are currently

experiencing is completely normal and the other girls at the club could be experiencing similar things.

You've admitted that the relationship you have with your coach could be better, but as long as both you and your coach are working towards improving it, it will improve with time.

At this point, I asked you the question, "*What does success look like to you*" and your response was "*being in the right place, being around the right people and not being injured*".

This is an extremely mature response to this question and again highlights the importance of the relationships that you develop with the people around you. It might be helpful to start thinking about who you want/need to develop better relationships with and how you can begin to improve these relationships over time.

At this point of the session, we both discussed what we felt were the most important parts of last week's session and agreed that the following three areas were where we should focus our attention:

- Your lack of enjoyment for gymnastics
- The anxiety you feel before training
- Not being able to switch off when you're away from gymnastics.

You became a little upset at this point in the session and you described that the reason you were upset was because this was the first time you'd discussed this with anyone before and it had made you realise that you don't do anything outside of gymnastics. You explained that in order for you to enjoy gymnastics again, you'd want to train less (3 times a week).

You also described how you feel a lot of pressure at the moment because your family had moved over to England specifically so you could train. We agreed, after a little discussion, that your parents needed to hear what you were currently experiencing. You admitted that you don't usually like to talk about the challenges you experience and when asked by your parents about gymnastics, you choose not to go into any detail because you want to switch off from the sport.

We then spoke about what we wanted to achieve in our next session with your parents and we agreed that we would focus on telling them the following:

- Your experiences in your previous country. Especially how challenging the first 6 months were for you, because you missed your family and friends
- Your current experiences. Specifically, how you feel pressure and anxiety, because of the fact that the family have all moved to England for the purposes of your training.

You want your parents to know your experiences, because you think they want to know and it'll help all of you moving forwards. You want to be able to choose when you do and don't speak about gymnastics. There are some occasions where you would benefit from talking about it, whereas sometimes you would rather switch off from the sport and concentrate on other things.

Case Report Three

Date: 16/11/17

Session three was the first session that included both you and your parents. I began the session by explaining the boundaries of confidentiality and expressing my appreciation to your parents for respecting confidentiality up until this point. I also provided some detail about my philosophy of practice and how my role in today's session was to facilitate open, non-judgmental communication between each family member. You then began the session by communicating the messages we had discussed in the previous session:

- Your experiences at the 'gymnastics school'. Especially how challenging the first six months were for you, because you missed your family and friends
- Your current experiences. Specifically, how you feel pressure and anxiety, because of the fact that the family have all moved to Liverpool for the purposes of your training.
- Your current lack of enjoyment for the sport, your inability to switch off and your lack of engagement in activities away from gymnastics.

Your parents then discussed some of their concerns, specifically:

- How it would be a shame for you to quit gymnastics after all the time and effort you had put into the sport
- How you could achieve great things and make the family proud.
- How they were willing to support you, by allowing your friends to come over on her days off.

- How they wanted you to communicate more effectively with them.

In the future, the family have agreed to:

- Consider their communication with each other. You will initiate the communication with your parents when you feel comfortable to do so.

Part of the challenge in the past has been that you didn't want to communicate, as you wanted to switch off as soon as she got home. However, your parents want you to communicate, as they feel excluded given the club's no parent policy.

- Create some 'protected time' throughout the week where the family can engage in an activity that will allow you to switch off from the sport.

Consultancy Case Study 2

One-to-One Support with a Professional Rugby League Player: Case for Referral?

Abstract

This article presents a reflective case study of an applied consultancy experience with a 22-year-old professional rugby-league player. The primary aim of the intervention was to provide the client with a confidential space where he could discuss his experiences in and outside of a sporting context, whilst also exploring and challenging his core values and beliefs. The consultancy process lasted for 12 months, leading to the development of a strong relationship. During this time, the client experienced multiple critical moments, such as; de-selection from the first team squad and contract negotiations, which at times led to reductions in his well-being and forced the trainee sport and exercise psychologist to consider his scope of practice in relation to mental health and depression. Reflections are provided that explore the possibility of referral during these moments. The case study also provides an insight into the trainee sport and exercise psychologist's philosophy of practice and how influential this can be when considering referral of a client. The importance of supervisor support during uncertain moments is highlighted and the case study concludes with reflections from the client, trainee practitioner, and peer supervisor regarding the efficacy of the intervention and the decision not to refer.

Keywords: mental health, scope of practice, referral, critical moments

Context

The Practitioner(s)

At the time of the intervention, I (author one) was ten months into British Psychological Society (BPS) Stage Two supervised training and Ben (author two), who adopted the role of 'peer supervisor' or 'critical friend' throughout the consultancy process, was ten months into British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES) supervised practice. The BPS and BASES training pathways require applied practitioners to demonstrate a multitude of competencies across a specific time period. Prior to enrolment on these respective training pathways, Ben and I both had experience of

working within professional football together, where we would regularly discuss our philosophy of practice and development as applied practitioners. Ben and I had met whilst studying a Sport Psychology (MSc) and developed a strong personal and professional relationship. I would regularly contact Ben for advice and support with this particular case and many others, as his professional role exposed him to Olympic athletes experiencing a variety of challenges as they prepared for life after sport. This applied experience equipped Ben with the knowledge and practical insight to offer advice and support to me as an applied practitioner.

Our philosophy of practice as applied practitioners is to focus on the holistic development of people, in the belief that performance and well-being are inescapably linked (Brady & Maynard, 2010). This means that when working with a client, performance enhancement is always balanced with the welfare of the individual (Stambulova, Wrisberg, & Ryba, 2006). As applied practitioners, we particularly focus on gaining a better understanding of the client's lived-experiences as a person, by adopting an Existential approach to practice. Existential psychology allows for the exploration of both the positive and negative experiences that an individual might encounter within sporting and non-sporting contexts, by focusing on concepts such as: death, love, courage, isolation, anxiety, and meaning (Nesti, 2004). This approach to applied practice can be particularly useful when individuals are experiencing a crisis or are making a transition. When supporting an individual through these transitions or critical moments, an Existential practitioner will not focus on the use of techniques to reduce the symptoms associated with this difficult moment (Corlett, 1996), but will instead accept that the individual has freedom and autonomy in the choices they make; embracing the anxiety that will inevitably accompany this freedom. By being authentic and focusing on the encounter itself, an applied practitioner can provide their client with an opportunity to increase their self-knowledge and grow psychologically.

In addition to adopting a philosophy of practice that focuses on both performance and well-being, prior to my engagement with this particular client, I had completed a mental health first aid course through my role as mental health 'champion' at the University where I was situated. This had improved my knowledge of mental health and had increased my ability to spot the signs and symptoms associated with mental health disorders in both students and athletes. Mental health was also a topic we had discussed extensively on the Professional Doctorate in Sport and Exercise Psychology that I was

enrolled on, where we were regularly exposed to real-world case studies to critically discuss, alongside clinical psychologists and experienced sport and exercise psychologists.

The Client

The client (CT), involved in the following case study, is a 22-year-old professional rugby-league player, playing for a team in the English Super League. In the last two years, he had progressed from the academy at the club into the first team squad. At the time the consultancy process began, he was a year into his first (two-year) professional contract at the club and had played over fifteen times for the first team. Due to the unique circumstances of the client involved in this particular case study, an array of identifiable information has been omitted, to ensure complete confidentiality is maintained. Therefore, this case study provides a snapshot into the 12-month consultancy process with CT.

The Consultancy Process

Throughout this consultancy process, the boundaries between the intake, needs analysis, case formulation, and intervention were blurred and overlapped with one another, as they often do within one-to-one sport psychology support (Keegan, 2015).

Intake

Prior to the official start of the consultancy process, CT and I had already met (under circumstances that will not be discussed to ensure complete confidentiality of the client). This informal engagement, over time, naturally led to the development of a strong and professional practitioner-client relationship; providing us with a solid foundation when formally engaging in one-to-one sessions together (Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006). During these informal meetings, CT and I would often discuss the importance of ethical practice within applied sport psychology, which provided me with the opportunity to highlight my own philosophy of practice as an applied practitioner. I reminded CT of this approach to practice at the beginning of our first session, whilst also discussing the boundaries of confidentiality and highlighting my scope of practice in relation to mental health. CT understood and stated that he had approached me based on my philosophy of practice as it had resonated with his own experiences. As a result of our earlier engagement, CT seemed comfortable and eager to progress straight into discussing his personal and professional challenges. During the first session, CT disclosed that he thought he had experienced depression in the past, but made it clear that he did not feel he was currently depressed. Nonetheless, I needed to gain more information from CT to inform a

potential referral decision and so I spent the remainder of the session exploring his past experiences of depression. CT explained that he had never been formally diagnosed with depression, but had experienced symptoms associated with depression, such as: low mood, inability to sleep, lack of concentration, fatigue, and withdrawing from family, friends, and teammates. Immediately following the intake session, I contacted my supervisor to explain CT's circumstances and to review whether or not this case was grounds for referral. At the time, I didn't feel referral was necessary as CT wasn't a threat to himself or others, but as a trainee sport and exercise psychologist I wanted to be sure that this was the right decision. My supervisor and I agreed that it was something I needed to be mindful of as the consultancy process progressed, but currently wasn't something that fell outside of my scope of practice and as long as I felt comfortable, I should continue to support CT.

Needs Analysis

In line with my philosophy of practice, I continued to adopt a client-led approach throughout the second session, because I wanted to understand CT's lived experiences in more detail and to gain a better understanding of the reason(s) he had approached me for support. I reinforced at the start of this session that CT could discuss his experiences both in and outside of sport and as with the intake session, CT was clearly comfortable with me and was able to provide me with a detailed insight into his experiences. It quickly became clear that CT was experiencing a multitude of challenges simultaneously, which were all having a negative impact on both his performance and well-being (Nesti, 2007). The two main challenges discussed during this second session centred around CT's transition into the first team squad and his experiences of prolonged de-selection. However, as the consultancy process continued and CT came closer to the end of his professional contract, CT began to question his future in the sport and had to deal with the anxiety that accompanied the decision regarding his next contract.

Progression into the First Team Squad. CT had recently made the transition from the academy into the first team squad. He had been at the club for the vast majority of his career as a rugby player; nonetheless, CT found this transition difficult. Individuals, such as CT, experiencing this transition from academy to first team are often progressing from an environment that was nurturing and caring, in which they received a high level of support; to an environment that is lonely and isolated and may lack the necessary support

required. CT was expected to function within this new challenging environment (Nesti & Littlewood, 2011), when he may not have possessed the required skills, knowledge, or experience (Richardson, Relvas, & Littlewood, 2013). Furthermore, he expressed that he no longer belonged to the academy and still had to prove himself as a first team player, which left him with a sense of uncertainty and anxiety. Individuals making this transition now have a limited amount of time to prove they can perform within the outcome-orientated environment of first team sport (Nesti, 2010). CT no longer fully belonged to either the academy or the first team squad (Richardson et al., 2013) and so required support to overcome the unique demands of this phase of his career. In addition to having to adapt to this new environment, CT was also struggling to develop a relationship with the first team coach (Røynesdal, Toering, & Gustafsson, 2018; Stambulova, Franck, & Weibull, 2012), whom he felt lied to him about the selection process and as a result could not trust on a personal or professional basis.

Pro-longed De-selection. In addition to this, over the last few months, CT had experienced prolonged de-selection from the first team squad (Brown & Potrac, 2009), which had begun to reduce the confidence he had in his own abilities. Prolonged de-selection, which is often unexpected and unpredictable in nature, has been described in the literature as a ‘critical moment’ that athletes face throughout their careers (Nesti et al. 2012). These critical moments describe moments experienced where an individual must confront anxiety, due to changes in their identity (Ronkainen & Nesti, 2017), providing the individual with the opportunity to increase their self-knowledge (Ronkainen et al. 2014), and grow psychologically. However, this growth can only occur if this individual takes personal responsibility (Douglas, 2014) and challenges their own personal values and beliefs to improve their self-knowledge (Ronkainen, Harrison, & Ryba, 2014). Whilst progressing throughout the academy, CT had rarely experienced de-selection and had flourished within this environment, resulting in him playing at an international level. He had also experienced a good start to his professional career within the first team squad, making a number of appearances. However, due to the increased demands of playing at a professional level, he was finding it increasingly difficult to break into the starting team at the expense of some of the more senior players.

Contract Negotiations. As the consultancy process progressed, CT was slowly coming towards the end of his professional contract. Naturally, this left CT questioning his career at the club and his future in the sport altogether. In the months leading up to the end of his contract, the chairman of his current club offered CT a contract extension. In the same week, two other Super League clubs approached CT and expressed their interest in signing him during the next transfer window. CT now faced a decision between signing a new contract at his current club or transferring to a new club, who were currently in a better position in the league. As discussed above, these critical moments always involve anxiety, otherwise described from an Existential perspective, as normal anxiety (May, 1977), which occurs because of the ability the individual has to act freely and make decisions in a given situation (Nesti, 2004).

Identity. There was also an underlying discussion of identity throughout the consultancy process, with CT consistently questioning who he was as both a person and an athlete. The transitions that athletes navigate throughout their sporting careers can often have a negative impact on their well-being (Schinke, Stambulova, & Moore, 2017) and lead them to question who they are and who they want to be (Wylleman & Reints, 2010). When considering the above challenges as a collective, it was becoming apparent that CT was demonstrating a strong performance narrative in relation to his role as an athlete (Carless & Douglas, 2013). At times, his identity seemed exclusive to his athletic role and he showed signs of developing identity foreclosure (Petitpas, Van Raalte, & Brewer, 2013). Individuals who subscribe to an exclusive performance narrative can begin to demonstrate culturally saturated athletic identities (Ryba & Wright, 2005) or experience a loss of identity altogether (Brown & Potrac 2009), which can lead to depression (Wood, Harrison, & Kucharska, 2017), distress, helplessness, and isolation when experiencing critical moments (Nesti et al. 2012) or when forced to disengage from elite sport (Lavallee et al., 2000). This one-dimensional identity can also intensify the emotions experienced during moments of perceived failure or when receiving critical feedback.

Aims of the Intervention. It was clear that the support I provided CT would need to consider his holistic experiences and provide him an opportunity to explore his values and beliefs so he could face the inevitable anxiety that was accompanying these critical moments. At the end of the second session CT and I agreed two clear goals to the intervention: 1) create a confidential environment where CT could discuss his experiences

and 2) explore and challenge CT's core self and the impact this was having on his current experiences.

The Intervention

The intervention lasted for 12 months in total and during this time, CT and I met on 15 occasions (lasting anywhere between one hour and two hours, depending on what CT had experienced since our last meeting). In addition to this face to face contact, CT and I would regularly communicate with each other via text. I would usually send him a message after a game to ask about the result and his own individual performance and CT would often message me to let me know how his week had been and to arrange our next session. This consistent communication allowed me to monitor his progress closely, ensuring I was aware of any setbacks he was experiencing. Without needing to be prompted, CT would tell me about aspects of his life relating to his well-being (sleeping better, losing weight, exercising more regularly etc.), which gave me a further insight into his progress.

Existential Psychology: 'The Encounter'. From the very beginning of the consultancy process, CT clearly stated that he wanted to be able to discuss all of his experiences (personal and professional) with someone he could trust. To meet the needs of CT and to work in alignment with my philosophy of practice, CT and I consistently engaged in the encounter. From an Existential perspective, engaging in the encounter involves the coming together of two people (and personalities) and requires the practitioner to consistently demonstrate presence, empathy, and spontaneity. Existential psychology rejects the use of techniques to reduce the symptoms associated with an experience (Corlett, 1996) and instead encourages individuals to courageously confront the anxiety that always accompanies critical moments throughout an athlete's career (Nesti, 2004). This was particularly important when working with CT, as at the start of the consultancy process, he would often attempt to avoid this anxiety by questioning his future within the sport. By encouraging CT to explore and recognise his responsibility and the freedom he had during these difficult moments, he was able to take more control of his circumstances and deal with the pressure and anxiety constructively. To achieve this, I had to truly listen and understand CT's lived-experiences, demonstrating empathy throughout the consultancy process. This approach meant I was meeting the complex needs of CT as a client, but also ensured I was working congruently as a practitioner (Lindsay, Breckon, Thomas, & Maynard, 2007). By being genuine, spontaneous, and authentic, I was able to engage in

what is referred to as the I-Thou relationship (Nesti, 2004), which I believed positively impacted upon the consultancy process. By being genuine and authentic (combining my personal and professional selves) throughout the process, I was able to build a strong relationship with CT. However, I was also mindful that being someone's equal, from an Existential perspective, was different than being his or her friend. Therefore, whilst engaging in this process, I had to continually reflect upon whether the personal/professional boundary was becoming blurred. Furthermore, engaging in the encounter involves immersing yourself in someone else's lived-experiences, which for the practitioner, can be emotionally demanding (Nesti, 2004). There were a number of occasions (particularly during the more challenging moments) that I would finish the session exhausted and found myself experiencing a similar emotional response to CT. Therefore, I also had to be mindful that these emotional responses were not negatively impacting upon the consultancy experience.

Scope of Practice

Case for Referral?

During our first three sessions together, CT had been demonstrating a noticeable improvement and had begun to make small life changes (sleeping better, eating well, exercising more etc.). He was beginning to take responsibility for the aspects of his life that he could control. He was also beginning to explore activities, outside of a sporting context, that helped him switch off from rugby. Moreover, his professional circumstances had changed. The assistant coach, with whom CT had a good relationship, had replaced the head coach at the club. As a result, CT had been informed that he would be playing for the first team the following week. However, CT had performed poorly in his return to the starting team and had been left out of the squad in the following game, which had had a detrimental impact on his well-being. During one of our weekly text conversations, when discussing how CT was feeling, CT stated: *"I'm really not in a good place at the minute mate"*. Based on discussions CT and I had had during our sessions together and the feedback he had sent me via text up until this point, his well-being had been improving, however, it was clear that performing poorly on his return to the team had caused a further reduction in his well-being and I was concerned that any progression he had made over the last few months had now been undone.

After receiving the text, I immediately contacted my supervisor (Eubank, 2016a) as based on this new information, I needed to decide again whether or not CT needed to be referred for more specialist support. My supervisor again took the time to listen to the circumstances surrounding CT's recent experiences and my reflections on the consultancy process so far. My supervisor had extensive knowledge of the BPS guidelines and had also attended a conference of mental health in sport that same week, described the referral process as a traffic light system; with CT's case bordering the green/amber category. A client in the amber category may be experiencing symptoms associated with low well-being, such as poor mood or sleep deprivation, but was not experiencing a clinically diagnosable mental health disorder. Further reflections with my supervisor highlighted that, perhaps as a result of my trainee status, I may have been overly anxious about CT's changing circumstances (Eubank, 2016b). Our discussion then progressed onto the concepts of comfort and competence. By comfort, my supervisor was referring to whether or not CT's experiences were aligned to my approach to applied practice and by competence, he was referring to my "ability to function optimally within the recognized limits of knowledge, skill, training, education, and experience" (British Psychological Society, 2009, p. 15). It was clear that CT needed support that primarily focused on improving his well-being, as opposed to his performance, but based on the information I had received from CT and discussions I had had with my supervisor; it was clear that CT's case was not clinical. Furthermore, as discussed above, my philosophy of practice centres on the assumption that performance and well-being are inescapably linked, and prior to this consultancy I had two years' experience providing support to professional footballers that predominantly prioritised well-being. Hence, my supervisor and I both concluded I was competent to support CT through his current experiences and I felt more than comfortable doing this based on my approach to practice.

BPS Guidelines

The BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (British Psychological Society, 2009) states that Sport and Exercise Psychologists are required to "refer clients to alternative sources of assistance as appropriate, facilitating the transfer and continuity of care through reasonable collaboration with other professionals" (p. 19). However, the guidelines remain a grey area for applied practitioners and after reading them a number of times throughout this consultancy process, they raised more questions than answers in relation to my role and

responsibilities during this particular case. What if the sport psychology practitioner doesn't recognise that the athlete is experiencing a mental health disorder? What if the athlete purposefully hides their condition through fear of being referred? If making the decision to refer, how long would it take for the athlete to be seen by a clinical psychologist? During this time, can the sport psychology practitioner continue to support the athlete? If not, what further support will the athlete have access to whilst they wait for their appointment? What if referral leads to a loss of trust between the athlete and practitioner, leaving the client with no support? Moreover, once the athlete has seen the clinical psychologist, what if they decide they don't want to continue to work with them? Or what if the athlete refuses the referral altogether? Answers to these questions aren't provided by the current guidelines and so it seems, when presented with borderline cases such as CT's experiences in this case study, it is down to the individual practitioner to judge whether or not they have the qualifications, expertise, and experience to support the athlete through their challenges or whether they must navigate the complexity of a referral process.

Furthermore, athletes are most likely to approach the practitioner(s) that they feel most secure with, meaning that support staff, such as sport psychology practitioners, sport scientists, and physiotherapists are highly likely to encounter an athlete experiencing symptoms of poor mental health (Morton & Roberts, 2013). In addition, if a referral is made, there are no guarantees that a clinical psychologist will be able to support the athlete through their challenges, given their lack of understanding of elite sport (Roberts, Faull, & Tod, 2016). It is apparent then that the current guidelines are not clear and need to be reviewed and reformed to provide applied sport psychology practitioners with a clearer insight and understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to referral of athletes experiencing challenges to their mental health.

Evaluating the Intervention

Client Feedback

12 months into the intervention, CT agreed to take part in an interview, which was designed to gain a better understanding of whether or not the intervention had successfully met the aims stated at the start of the consultancy process. The interview lasted for 67 minutes, was recorded on a dictaphone and transcribed verbatim. Thematic content analysis was used as the method of data analysis, because it allowed me to become aware

of patterns that emerged from the interview, which represented CT's experiences (Braun, Clarke, & Terry, 2015). During the data analysis process, it was essential for me to recognize how my own philosophy and experiences of the consultancy process would contribute towards the emergence of the themes presented below (Yilmaz, 2013). Whilst it was impossible for me to remove myself completely from the data collection and data analysis process, the questions were designed to be open-ended to ensure CT had the opportunity to provide direction to the interview. Furthermore, the transcript and themes were reviewed by Ben (author two) to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

Case for Referral? During the interview CT discussed his circumstances in more detail, but more importantly highlighted that seeking support during this period was one of the most challenging things he had ever done:

Honestly, one of the most challenging parts was, the first session, because I used to keep a lot of things in, about rugby and I'd been going on a downward spiral for a couple of years now and I felt like I was losing it, like losing how I was in rugby, how I was as a person and I just really couldn't speak to many people and so the toughest part was definitely, when I'd hit rock bottom, being able to go and tell someone about it... because I wouldn't even say the toughest part was rock bottom, it was more going to have to speak to someone about it, that was the toughest part

CT was aware of my scope of practice and admitted that if I had decided to refer him, he would have respected the decision, but would not have accessed support anywhere else:

I would have had to respect your decision, but to be fair, if I went to speak to someone else, I probably wouldn't have gone back, if I'm being honest, I probably would have just left it. Other people had already tried, and it just didn't work. I probably would have just left it, I wouldn't have pushed you probably [to come back], but I should have done back then, because I needed it, but I probably wouldn't have, I probably would have just respected it and got on with it

Before seeking my support, CT had been referred to see two other individuals: The Welfare Officer at the rugby club and the Mental Health Advisor (MHA) at his University. However, he explained that the support he had received from the club had actually made

the situation worse and that the MHA was too 'textbook' and knew very little about elite sport:

I tried speaking to someone at the club before and it just didn't work, there was always a conflict of interest, they just want to jump in and do something for you and it ends up just sending your anxiety either further ...like I went to the guy in Uni as well, like the mental health person, or whoever he was and I didn't see him again, because of the basis that I just, I just didn't think he was as good, like he was too like to the book, if you get what I mean?

Athletes can often not seek additional support once referred for a number of reasons (Van Raalte & Andersen, 2013). In CT's case, he struggled to develop an effective relationship with other practitioners, who he felt were not able to help him and so a referral in this particular case would have left CT with no support, potentially leading to a further reduction in his well-being.

Impact of the Intervention. Following our first session together, CT described how he valued how much I knew about professional sport and how I made the environment comfortable for him to discuss his challenges:

You knew a lot about team culture and that was the thing that sold me on it to be honest and because you'd worked in other sports, you actually understand compared to others, who had no idea about sport and that just didn't benefit me at all

From the first session, my first impression of you was that you were a calm person and you knew how to wind me down, because I was quite emotional... I can remember our first session and it was not overwhelming at all and it was easy to speak to you and you'd expect the first session when someone's opening up to someone it might be a bit awkward, but it was just dead natural really quickly and you're just a really open person to come and speak to, like comfortable and easy to come and talk to. From session one, I felt like I could trust you, because if I didn't I wouldn't have come back and it was just me and you in a room, I just felt like I could say anything and I'd never had that before. There were things I was talking to you about that I wouldn't even talk

to my mum about or my brother and it was things... I just felt like, how you made the environment around me and spoke to me, I'd just tell you everything CT kept returning to the sessions with me as he felt it was benefitting him and he openly admitted that without this benefit, he would not have kept returning:

I felt like I came back because I gained something, that's why, like even though, as cut throat as this it, even if I liked you as a person, but I was gaining anything from the sessions, I'd have to go somewhere else, because selfishly if it isn't going to benefit me I'm not going to go, so I came back because it actually benefitted me, I felt like I came out better than when I went in, so that's what I needed at the time. I gained a bit of hope that it could get better and that was from you

These benefits, which CT describes below, give an insight into the holistic client-led support I was able to provide him, focusing on his development as both a person and an athlete:

you help the person like, if you're struggling, you don't try and fix it for me...using external factors... you try and do it internally, instead of externally, you sort of tried to strip down the problems I was having through rugby and tried to make me see that there were other things and I can remember from the first session and you were trying to bring out just me and not just rugby and I felt like you were the only person at that time I was speaking to that could do that, so I came back more and more because I finally started to see how it was about me instead of just about rugby, so you just stripped it back and made me realise that myself was more important...
...concentrating on the person and just being able to strip it back and find core problems and allowing them internally to fix them, like you never told me how to fix something, either I had to realise it or we'd realise it together

Based on this holistic support, CT described how he was able to find himself again, gain more confidence in himself, realise he had control over his own life, and increase his self-awareness:

The way I view myself, is definitely the top one, I didn't feel like I had my own identity and now like, even when I wasn't getting picked, by the end of our sessions, even last year, I was me and I feel like I've found myself again, which is nice and as I said, my confidence was... that was just something I

was portraying to people, when actually I was struggling a fair bit and I've got that back now, where I feel like I'm just being honest with myself and I'm back to being confident and believing in myself and thinking I can actually change stuff and if things are going wrong, I can actually change it now, back then I didn't think I could

The main thing was, they [the sessions] like unclouded the process in my head to be fair, it like, it just shone a bit of light through, if that makes sense?

Instead of me thinking about all this other stuff, we were stripping it back and stripping it back and then it made me realise, oh yeah, this is the root of the problem, like I had all these mini things, then we'd somehow strip it to a main thing and we managed to find the root cause of problems, which I couldn't find on my own, so that's what I learnt about myself, what I was actually annoyed at, so you allowed me to realise that and I learnt what my problems actually were, rather than what I perceived them to be at the start

CT felt that these changes helped him as a person outside of rugby, which consequently had an indirect impact on his performance. However, CT was clear that the support did not have a direct impact on performance:

...no I wouldn't say it had a benefit performance wise, in the sense that... it did, because it helped me get back to sleep more, which means I could train a bit better, but I'd always say I put 100% in performance every week, so I think one of the problems I used to talk to you about, was what I didn't understand... why I was being dropped, but I mean... so I wouldn't say it impacted on me performance wise, but it definitely impacted on me away from rugby a lot, which you actually spend most of your day... away from rugby. It certainly helped me outside of it, which would have had a knock-on effect and helped me perform, but not directly no

Lessons Learned

The environment of professional sport can often cause or exacerbate existing mental health disorders (Roberts, Faull, & Tod, 2016) and athletes are generally at higher risk of developing mental health disorders whilst experiencing performance failure (Rice et al., 2016) as was the case with CT. However, athletes often decide not to seek support or underplay their symptoms, because of the associated stigma surrounding mental health (not

wanting to be viewed as ‘mentally weak’) and the potential impact this could have on their athletic careers (Gorczyński, Coyle, & Gibson, 2017; Gulliver, Griffiths, & Christensen, 2012; Reardon & Factor, 2010). Furthermore, referral can often be met with scepticism by the athlete (Morton & Roberts, 2013) and it is also common for sport psychology practitioners to take different approaches to referral based on their approach to service delivery (performance vs well-being) (Brady & Maynard, 2010).

It was essential for me, throughout the consultancy process, to continuously question whether or not CT’s case provided grounds for a referral to a clinical psychologist. Discussions with my supervisor and Ben (a critical friend) reinforced my earlier reflections; that CT was not experiencing a clinical mental health disorder (was not a harm to himself or others) and did not require referral. Nonetheless, CT was going through a difficult stage of his life and once the decision not to refer had been made (at both points throughout the consultancy process), I had to ensure I was capable and confident as a practitioner to support him through these critical moments. My confidence was undoubtedly influenced by my philosophical approach to practice (supporting the whole person), and with time CT and I were able to navigate through this difficult moment in his career. However, it is important to highlight that whilst CT was not experiencing a clinical disorder, other practitioners, whose philosophy of practice focuses predominantly on performance enhancement, may have referred or chosen not to work with CT in these circumstances, highlighting a need for practitioners to fully understand their philosophical approach to practice when considering referral of a client.

Following the decision not to refer, CT continued to engage in the one-to-one sessions and with time was able to regain his place in the starting team. Alongside this increase in his performance, CT committed his future to the club, by signing a new professional contract. It seemed that after months of instability, CT had finally reached a point in his professional career where he could be proud of his achievements. He expressed this to me during one of our sessions together by stating *“I’ve finally reached a point where I’m happy with who I am again”*. However, whilst this particular case ended with a positive outcome (meeting the agreed aims of the intervention) it was both challenging and rewarding in equal measure and highlights the need for the guidelines surrounding referral to be revisited and reformed to provide clearer and more practical advice to applied practitioners who might find themselves in a similar position.

Peer Reflection

This case study demonstrates how important it can be for applied practitioners to understand their professional philosophy of practice in an applied setting (Poczwadowski et al., 2004). This philosophically informed approach can have a direct impact on the decision to refer an athlete experiencing symptoms associated with a mental health disorder (Eubank, 2016a). CT's lived experiences highlight the myriad of potential challenges elite athletes face throughout their careers, which can impact both performance and well-being, and potentially lead to the development of depression and other mental health disorders. CT disclosed his own personal experience of depression prior to this consultancy experience and at times during engagement with Nick showed signs of depressive symptoms. Given that the lines of referral are blurred (Roberts, Faull, & Tod, 2016) it can be difficult to identify when an applied practitioner engages in practice beyond their competency or scope of practice. Supervisors and peer support networks can be crucial in supporting the applied practitioner when making this decision. However, arguably the most significant factor is the philosophy of the practitioner. Nick's Existential approach to counselling allowed CT to explore his holistic challenges, resulting in an increase in self-awareness. Adopting a philosophy of practice that focuses on both performance and well-being allowed Nick to demonstrate confidence and competence in dealing with CT's experiences, ultimately influencing the decision not to refer. Both Nick and CT had to demonstrate courage to engage in the process, which can be extremely challenging for both the client and practitioner. However, by making the decision not to refer and avoiding quick fix solutions, long-term change can and has been achieved. In this particular case, CT's well-being was enhanced, which indirectly improved his performance as an athlete. This specific case highlights the need to review and reform the current guidelines surrounding mental health and referral for applied sport psychology practitioners, perhaps suggesting that applied sport psychology practitioners would benefit from working alongside clinical psychologists (Rotheram, Maynard, & Rogers, 2016) rather than referring and ceasing support altogether.

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Consultancy Case Study 3

Breaking the Cycle: Use of Motivational Self-Talk and Imagery to Increase Self-Confidence

Abstract

This article presents a reflective case study, from the perspective of a trainee Sport and Exercise Psychologist, of an applied consultancy experience with a 16-year old wrestler, who had recently been invited to attend Great Britain's national training camps. This case provided the sport psychology practitioner with his first experience of delivering a mental skills/performance focused intervention, which led to reflections regarding his current philosophy of practice. The client regularly experienced panic attacks, due to high levels of anxiety, which would prevent her from attending training or competitions. The sport psychology practitioner used performance analysis footage to implement an imagery and motivational self-talk intervention, with the aim of improving the client's self-confidence. The intervention achieved the primary aim of the consultancy experience by reducing the frequency and intensity of the panic attacks and allowing the client to return to training. Both the practitioner's and the client's reflections are included to provide a critical insight into the efficacy of the consultancy process.

Keywords: Self-talk, Imagery, Confidence, Anxiety

Context

The Practitioner

At the time the consultancy process took place, I was coming towards the end of my British Psychological Society (BPS) Stage Two supervised practice journey and so had been presented with a variety of different challenges and experiences that had led to reflection upon my philosophy of practice. My philosophy of practice is based upon the belief that performance and well-being are interconnected (Brady & Maynard, 2010) and so by focusing on the holistic development of the individual (primarily their well-being), I am able to indirectly improve the individual's performance. Normally, in an applied setting, I would adopt an Existential approach to counselling and focus on the client's free will and the inevitable anxiety that accompanies this freedom (Nesti, 2004). I would often view my approach to applied practice as a continuum between performance and well-being and if asked to choose a fixed position on that continuum (and I often was by my students), would select a position closer to well-being than performance (Figure 1.).

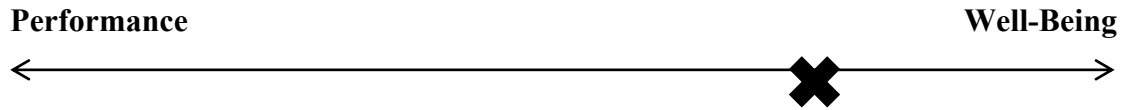


Figure 1. Performance and well-being continuum

However, my understanding of this performance-well-being link, up until this point, had been over-simplified and one-dimensional. Through engaging in one-to-one sessions with clients whilst enrolled on BPS Stage Two training and through conversations with other trainee practitioners, I have come to the realization that the link between the two isn't always this simple. It can and has been the case that athletes experience low performance, but high well-being. In addition, it can and has also been the case that athletes experience high performance and low well-being. Therefore, it seems, based on these cases, that the two aspects are not always directly linked (at least not in the short-term). To add an extra layer of complexity to this link; if an athlete is experiencing low well-being, it is possible that by focusing on improving performance, a consultant can improve well-being indirectly. Whilst this concept may seem simple to many applied practitioners, it had not ever been something that I'd considered and this realization directly challenged my position (the 'X') on the continuum. Up until now, when faced with this performance/well-being 'dilemma' (Brady & Maynard, 2010) I have always found myself focusing on well-being (long-term development) (Corlett, 1996) as opposed to adopting a more performance based approach; with the belief that performance improvements would be a by-product of improvements in well-being. However, a truly holistic practitioner (as I regularly claim to be) would have the ability to move fluidly across the performance/well-being continuum to meet the complex and cultural needs of the client (Larsen, 2017). Furthermore, it is often the case that adopting a performance based/mental skills (MST) approach is required with younger athletes (Harwood, Cumming, & Fletcher, 2004), as they have not yet developed the psychological capabilities to deal with the demands of elite sport. As I approach the end of the BPS pathway, I am attempting to become less rigid in my applied consultancy experiences (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2013) so I am able to meet the holistic and complex needs of my clients. The following reflective case study highlights work conducted with a 16 year-old wrestler, who presented with challenges directly impacting both her performance and well-being.

The Client

The client (ML) involved in the following case study, is a 16-year old wrestler, who had just recently been invited to train and compete with Great Britain's (GB) wrestling squad. The Head Coach of the GB wrestling squad referred ML to me, as he held a number of concerns regarding her 'resilience' and 'mental toughness'. The concept of mental toughness within elite sport is one of the most commonly used, but least understood phrases and can often be used to describe a variety of interconnecting concepts within the field of Sport Psychology (Jones, Hanton, & Connaughton, 2007). Therefore, when preparing for the intake session, I maintained an open-mind about the challenges ML might be experiencing and was determined to understand her lived-experiences more fully.

The Consultancy Process

Intake

At the start of our first session together, I took the time to explain my philosophy of practice and was particularly mindful to spend time explaining the concept of confidentiality. Given that I already had a relationship with ML's coach and he himself had referred ML to come and see me, I wanted to ensure she understood the boundaries of confidentiality. This would be vital to the success of the intervention and is was integral ML and I built a relationship based on trust and respect (Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006). In my experience, the promise of confidentiality initiates the development of a relationship and is the most powerful 'tool' an applied sport psychology practitioner possesses. On this occasion, as with many of my previous clients, the promise of confidentiality seemed to create a safe environment for ML, who immediately began to relax. Once I was confident that ML understood my philosophy and approach to applied practice and was able to trust in the confidentiality of the session, I asked her to describe her journey in and outside of sport, up until the present day. This was a question I would regularly lead with during the first session with a client, as it perfectly highlights my holistic approach (understanding the person behind the athlete) and provides the clients with a safe start to their own consultancy experience (as ML was now in control of what she discussed and the pace at which she disclosed the information).

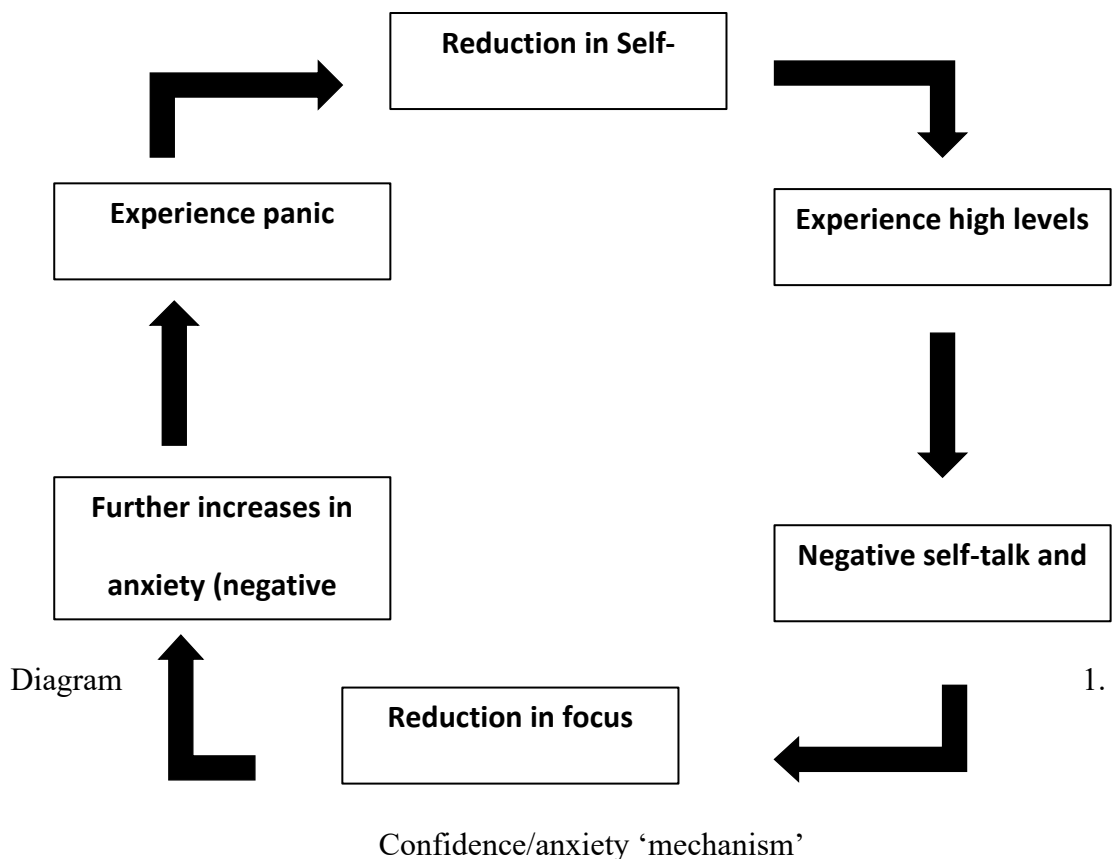
It immediately became apparent that she was a well-educated, articulate individual who possessed high levels of self-awareness. She was able to discuss her journey in and

outside of sport in great detail and as a result, I was able to gain a good insight into her journey and some of the challenges she was currently experiencing (*see* Appendix: Case Report One). ML had competed in both rugby and wrestling since the age of five and at ten, chose to specialize in wrestling. She had recently made the progression to an international level (training with the GB squad) and as a result was experiencing an increase in pressure. ML explained that the reason she had been referred to see me, was because she was experiencing regular panic attacks whilst at the training camps, which was preventing her from training and competing altogether. ML had been taught, by one of her coaches, how to use Mindfulness to control these panic attacks whilst they were occurring, so we agreed the logical next step would be to attempt to better understand the cause or ‘triggers’ of these panic attacks to stop them occurring in the first place.

Needs Analysis

As described above, ML had recently made the transition from a national level to an international level (training with GB’s Olympic squad) and it was immediately apparent that she was finding this transition difficult. She would often describe the environment of these training camps as being more intense and didn’t seem to possess the mental skills required to excel at this level (Richardson, Relvas, & Littlewood, 2013). Furthermore, she was now one of the youngest athletes and didn’t seem to have developed relationships with the other wrestlers or the coaches (Stambulova, Franck, & Weibull, 2012). Moreover, the transition to an international level had increased the pressure on ML, who consistently discussed the expectation she placed upon herself within both training and competition environments. This increase in expectation seemed to be causing an imbalance between the demands being placed upon her (or the demands she was placing upon herself) and her perceived capabilities to respond successfully to these demands (Martens, Vealey, & Burton, 1990a). Elite athletes are required to consistently perform under pressure (Craft et al., 2003) and there are a number of theories that suggest that increases in anxiety, beyond the point of optimum functioning, can lead to reductions in performance or ‘choking’ (Inverted U theory (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908), Catastrophe theory, (Hardy & Fazey, 1987) and Zone of Optimal Functioning model (Hanin, 1980)). Whilst cognitive and somatic anxiety have been linked to a reduction in performance (Martens et al., 1990b), research is now beginning to explore the athlete’s interpretation of this anxiety, which can determine if it is viewed positively or negatively (Hanin & Syrja, 1996; Hanton, Mellalieu, & Hall,

2004; Pjipers et al., 2003). Based on her frequent panic attacks, it was clear that ML was interpreting this anxiety as debilitating, which was having a negative impact on her performance and at times, forcing her to disengage from training altogether. Research has found that young (sub-elite) athletes are more likely to experience intense anxiety as debilitating, in comparison to their elite counterparts (Jones et al., 1993, 1994; Jones & Swain, 1995; Mellalieu et al., 2006; Perry & Williams, 1998). Furthermore, athletes participating in individual sports are more likely to experience the adverse effects of anxiety; in comparison to team sports (Martens et al., 1990b; Terry et al., 1996) and females often demonstrate lower levels of confidence in comparison to males (Krane & Williams, 1994; Lirgg, 1991; Vargus-Tonsing & Bartholomew, 2006). ML reinforced this point, as she very rarely experienced panic attacks whilst playing rugby (*see* Appendix: Case Report One). This discrepancy in anxiety interpretation between wrestling and rugby seemed to suggest that ML was lacking confidence in her own abilities within a wrestling context (which had been reduced further due to her recent transition). ML explained that this lack of confidence was as a direct consequence of a number of recent losses within training, which seemed to be causing her to interpret her anxiety as debilitating (Jones & Hanton, 1996) and is highlighted in the mechanism below (Diagram 1.).



Therefore, ML and I agreed upon one clear goal from the consultancy process: *Reduce the intensity and frequency of the panic attacks so ML could gradually return to training with the GB squad.*

Developing the Intervention

Based on my understanding of ML's needs, there were two approaches I could consider when developing an intervention: reduce the anxiety ML was experiencing (Corlett, 1996) or increase her self-confidence to provide her with the ability to deal and cope with the anxiety (Cresswell & Hodge, 2004) in a positive manner (Lundqvist, Kenttä & Raglin, 2011). Reducing the anxiety that ML was experiencing may have provided her with a short-term solution, but wouldn't have had a positive long-term effect on both her performance and her well-being (thus going against my philosophy of practice). Therefore, in line with my philosophy of practice, I decided to focus on her long-term development by attempting to improve her self-confidence.

Self-confidence has been described as 'one's belief that a certain level of performance can be attained' (Hays et al., 2007: p.435) or 'a set of enduring, yet malleable positive beliefs that protect against the ongoing psychological and environmental challenges associated with competitive sport' (Thomas, Lane, & Kingston, 2011: p.194) and has been consistently highlighted as the most important concept in relation to performance within elite sport (Bandura, 1986; Bull et al., 2005; Jones & Hanton, 2001; Jones, Hanton & Connaughton, 2002; Vealey, 2001; Vealey & Chase, 2008). Research suggests that there are multiple sources of information that improve an athlete's confidence (Maddux & Gosselin, 2003): mastery experience, vicarious experience, imagery experiences, verbal persuasion, physiological states and emotional states, with performance accomplishments possessing the strongest link to improvements in confidence (as they are based on successful past experiences) (Hardy et al., 2001). However, given that I was working with ML on an individual basis (in isolation) there were a limited number of sources that I could draw upon to increase her confidence (Hardy, Jones, & Gould, 2001). It seemed a focus on mental preparation was going to be the most effective in this particular instance (Hays et al., 2007; Hays et al., 2009).

Therefore, the aim of the intervention, was to alter or change ML’s cognitive thought patterns to have a positive impact on her behaviour (breaking the cycle!) (Wessler, 1986). To be clear, the aim of the intervention was not to remove the anxiety (as ML had already openly admitted that a certain level of anxiety was beneficial for her performance), but to change her interpretation of this anxiety, by using positive self-talk and positive imagery (Jones, 2003) (Diagram 2.).

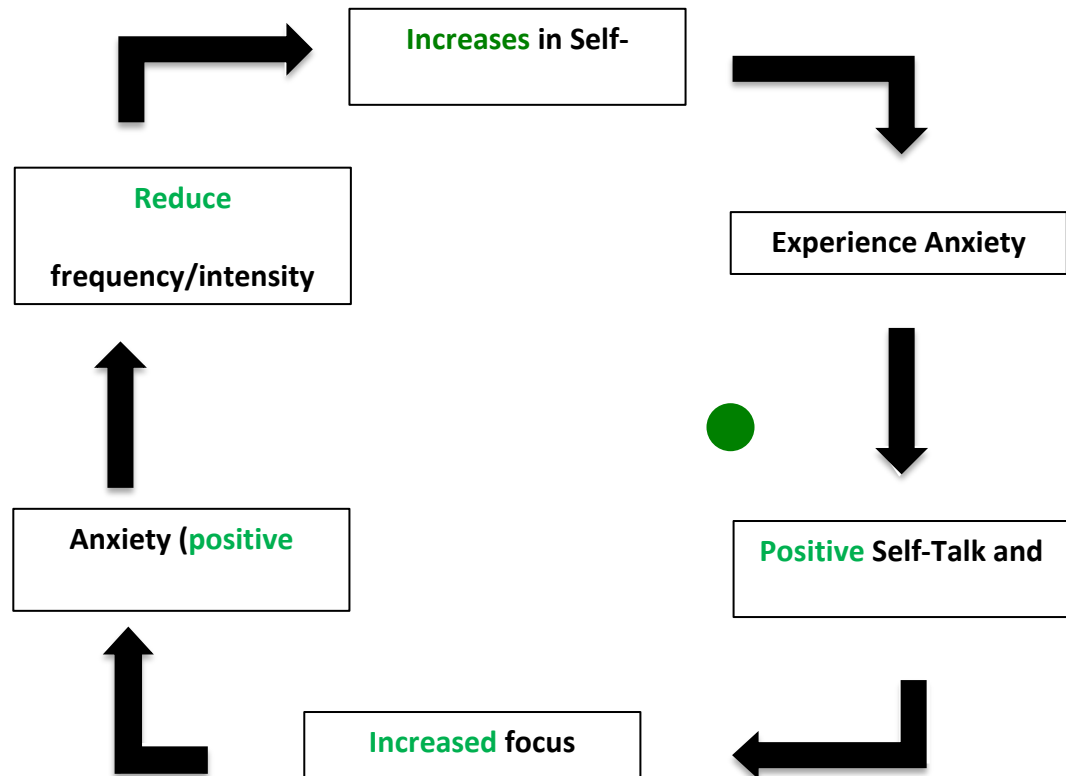


Diagram 2. Visual representation of the aims of the intervention

Use of mental skills training, can provide athletes with the ability to self-regulate (Vealey, 2001) and perform at the highest level whilst experiencing anxiety and this has been found to be particularly important immediately prior to competition (Kingston, Lane, & Thomas, 2010).

Imagery. Imagery has been described as ‘an experience that reflects actual experience in a variety of senses (sight, feel, sound, emotion etc.), without experiencing the real thing’ (Anuar, Cummin, & Williams, 2016: p.185). Contrary to some research, which suggests that imagery should be conducted in a quiet (Williams & Harris, 2001) and comfortable relaxed position (Weinberg & Gould, 2007), recent theoretical advancements have highlighted how these conditions don’t reflect the conditions of a competitive environment (Holmes & Collins, 2001). Holmes and Collins (2001), developed the PETTLEP approach

to motor imagery, which is based on the concept of functional equivalence. Functional equivalence describes how motor imagery and physical execution share the same (similar (Jeannerod, 2001)) neural pathways. By considering the seven conditions associated with the PETTLEP model (*Physical, Environment, Task, Timing, Learning, Emotion and Perspective*) athletes can increase functional equivalence (Wakefield et al., 2013) and enhance the positive impact imagery can have on performance (Smith, Wright, & Cantwell, 2008; Wakefield & Smith, 2009; Wright & Smith, 2009).

Self-Talk. Self-talk is an important aspect of psychological skills training (Hardy, Jones, & Gould, 1996) as it allows an athlete to focus on the appropriate thought process that underpin the required behaviours in their sport (Johnson et al., 2004). Furthermore, self-talk has been shown to improve an individual's self-confidence and performance (Zinnser, Bunker, & Williams, 2006). Motivational self-talk in particular can aid an athlete in controlling their anxiety/arousal levels, increase confidence, and regulate effort (Hardy, Gammage, & Hall, 2001). Given that ML was experiencing low self-confidence and an inability to maintain total concentration on the task, I decided to utilize motivational self-talk, alongside imagery, as the main focus of the intervention. When discussing this with ML and educating her on what motivational self-talk was, she stated that she had done this at previous competitions, which had resulted in her best performances in the sport. However, ML couldn't articulate why she had stopped. Nonetheless, recalling past successful experiences (where she had used motivational self-talk) gave ML a trust in the intervention.

Use of Technology. Using technology can be a creative way of engaging with clients and building effective relationships (Wadsworth et al., 2018). With ML, I used technology to encourage her to access video footage of herself in training and at competitions (*see Appendix: Case Report Two*) and focus on the aspects of her performances that she was doing well (vicarious experience). Vicarious experiences have been shown to be associated with improvements in self-efficacy (Feltz, 2007) and by encouraging her to focus on her strengths, rather than focusing on the negative aspects of her performance, she was taking the first step towards improving her self-confidence. Furthermore, I taught ML to connect the imagery with the motivational self-talk. Hence, when in a training environment, if she felt anxious, she could re-create a positive image from the video footage and reinforce this

image with a trigger word or phrase. For ML, the phrase she chose (which she had used before) was: 'I can do this'.

Delivering the Intervention

Usually in an applied setting, I would avoid adopting the role of 'expert' and would take a client-led approach to the one-to-one consultancy process. However, given that ML was young and had limited understanding of mental skills training, I had to switch from a client-led approach (during the intake and needs analysis) to a practitioner-led approach whilst delivering the intervention. Delivery of the intervention itself required a creative educational approach. In essence, I had to teach ML about the concepts of anxiety, confidence, imagery, and self-talk in a way she could understand and apply to her circumstances and environment. It is often the case that when working with younger athletes, that sport psychology practitioners need to provide age appropriate sport psychology support; as the experiences and stresses of youth athletes are unique to their stage of development (Barker, McCarthy, & Harwood, 2011). Furthermore, the best way to encourage 'buy-in' and commitment to the intervention, is by tailoring the support to the needs of the individual and where possible, making the sessions practical (Evans & Slater, 2014). I attempted to achieve this through use of a whiteboard and a skeleton (I had access to a skeleton as I would meet ML in the Sport Rehabilitation Clinic at the University). We started by drawing the mechanism (highlighted in Diagram 1.). I attempted to switch between client-led and practitioner-led where possible, by asking ML questions and getting her to complete the mechanism with me (after all, these were her thoughts and behaviours I was attempting to draw!). Interestingly, my inability to draw strengthened the relationship between ML and I, as she would regularly mock my drawings and handwriting! Once the mechanism was complete, I asked ML how we could break the cycle (she drew a cross through negative self-talk and imagery) and then we progressed onto understanding imagery (using the skeleton). I drew a brain (it was more of a circle really) on the board and explained (using age appropriate language) the concept of functional equivalence. I moved the skeleton and highlighted on the white board the part of the brain that would be active. I then stated that if we could re-create the seven categories (PETTLEP) the same part of the brain would 'light-up' without having to physically move. Once I was satisfied that ML had gained the required theoretical knowledge, we ended the session by discussing the importance of the environment and the impact different environments could

have on the mechanism. We achieved this by drawing a bubble around the mechanism and highlighting the different environments ML would find herself in and the different demands of each of the environments. We agreed to wait longer between this session and our next to give ML enough time to apply this knowledge at her next training session.

Evaluating the Intervention

The aim of the consultancy process was to *reduce the intensity and frequency of the panic attacks ML was experiencing so she could gradually return to training with the GB squad*. In the six weeks that followed the intervention (introduction of imagery and motivational self-talk) ML had had the opportunity to implement the new techniques in both training and competitive environments. She had been able to watch the videos of her most recent fights and focus on the positives of her performances (whilst linking this to the motivational self-talk). ML stated that both the intensity and frequency of the panic attacks had reduced significantly. As a result, she had returned to training with the GB squad and had decided to attend an international tournament in two weeks' time (*see Appendix: Case Report Three*). ML admitted that there had still been occasions where she had experienced small panic attacks (again linked to the expectations she set herself to beat a particular opponent), but they had been less intense and had been able to return to training shortly afterwards. She also experienced a panic attack when taking part in the fitness testing at the most recent GB squad training camp, but admitted this had been because she hadn't implemented the techniques into this new environment (*see Appendix: Case Report Four*). Overall, the intervention had been successful at achieving the primary aim of the consultancy process.

Client's Reflections

The following 'exit interview' was designed to gain an insight into how ML had viewed the efficacy of the intervention. The interview was conducted with ML in our final session together.

When asked if the support had successfully met the aim of the intervention (*to reduce the intensity and frequency of the panic attacks*) ML responded positively:

Massively, I think almost completely really

Before the intervention ML would frequently experience panic attacks that would prevent her from training or engaging in competitions:

Almost every wrestling session I did, at least once a week, sometimes if it's like the national squad it'd be numerous times a week

Following the intervention, the frequency and intensity of the panic attacks had reduced significantly:

Much less frequently, like, barely even at national squads now, maybe once a month maximum and the intensity has decreased a lot

ML identified that one of the key reasons the intervention had been a success was because ML and I had been able to develop a strong relationship, which provided us with a good foundation throughout the consultancy experience:

I knew that unless you had to tell someone that you wouldn't and that you weren't going to judge me on what I said and I could just be open about everything. I think it [*the relationship we developed*] was very effective, it's allowed me to like, to be very honest with you

Sometimes you can be a bit jokey and like funny with like your drawings and stuff, which relaxes me a bit

You seemed very positive, I didn't really know you, so I wasn't sure what to expect, but you seemed like a really nice person

This relationship seemed to encourage ML to return to the following session, as she wanted to demonstrate the progress she had made and gain more knowledge of how she could improve further:

After that first session, I'd already told you so much about everything and erm, you seemed very interested in trying to help me and erm, I just thought that I

should give this a go and it already, even from the start, seemed like it could make a big impact and like, giving me tasks to do... like going and watching the videos, I then would want to come back and give you feedback on how well it's working, because I couldn't just do one session and then not come back, because I wouldn't have known if there was something else to do

When asking ML to provide more detail on what had changed as a result of the intervention, she responded by highlighting that she had had a significant increase in confidence:

A massive increase in confidence. My mentality and my approach in my wrestling, erm, before I used to be quite negative and think of what I was doing wrong and if I was going into a wrestle, I was thinking... I don't do very well against this opponent, whereas now, I focus on what I can do and focus on how good of a wrestler I can be and like even like visualizing, like me doing something well to tell myself that I can do it and just being overall just very positive about my wrestling and trying to push away all the negative thoughts and not even think about them in the first place

ML also stated that this increase in confidence had had a direct impact on both her performance and her well-being:

Yeah, because the way I now view my confidence, my confidence changed because of you and that's increased my performance, because I'm not feeling the anxiety and that's not preventing me from performing anymore

I feel a lot more positive in most areas of my life as well

Practitioner's Reflections

The consultancy process was a success because it achieved the primary aim of the intervention, by reducing the frequency and intensity of the panic attacks ML was experiencing, allowing her to return to both training and competitions. Moreover, this case provided me with my first opportunity to deliver a performance focused (mental skills training) intervention with a client in an unfamiliar sport. Prior to the delivery of this

intervention, I had turned down work with a number of other clients (who also required a similar performance-focused approach) because I felt this type of consultancy was not aligned to my philosophy of practice. I was aware, having experienced this misalignment before, how incongruent practice led to anxiety and a sense of fraudulence (Lindsay et al., 2007). However, as I come towards the end of my BPS Stage Two supervised training, I have been exposed to more and more clients requiring this type of support and it was becoming clear that not meeting the holistic needs of these clients was reducing my effectiveness as a practitioner and making me question whether or not I was genuinely a holistic practitioner. This consultancy experience has allowed me to truly understand the performance/well-being continuum and how only focusing primarily on the well-being of my clients was limiting my scope of practice as an applied practitioner. As a 'Lecturer of Sport Psychology' I have an extensive understanding of the mental skills training literature, but had previously demonstrated a very rigid philosophy of practice when engaging in applied consultancy, as a direct consequence of imitating my first applied supervisor (Tod, Anderson, & Marchant, 2009). This experience hasn't changed my philosophy of practice; instead it has allowed me to add to my existing approach to service-delivery, by better understanding and incorporating Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) into my sessions. Now, when assessing the needs of my clients, I am able to decide which approach (Existential or CBT) is most suitable to meet their unique needs. The foundations (values and beliefs) of my philosophy of practice (Poczwadowski, Sherman, & Ravizza, 2004) remain the same: *a) people have the ability to change, adapt and grow given the right environment b) people must be understood within their social contexts c) people possess free will in the choices they make d) people view the world subjectively*. What has changed is my ability to move more fluidly along the performance well-being continuum. For example, in Case Study Two (working with the professional Rugby-League player) the client needed support navigating multiple critical moments, which were causing him to challenge his own identity and negatively affecting his well-being, therefore, an Existential approach (primarily focusing on him as an individual and enhancing his well-being) was required to meet his needs. In this case, ML was experiencing panic attacks that were directly impacting on her performance (inability to train or compete) and so a CBT approach was required to directly focus on her ability to perform. In the first case, focusing on CT's well-being indirectly improved his performance and in this case, with ML, focusing on her performance, indirectly influenced

her well-being. In both cases, I have adopted two separate approaches, which have both been aligned to my philosophy of practice and allowed me to meet the holistic needs of my clients. CBT was suitable in this particular case as I was working with a younger athlete, who didn't yet possess the psychological skills to cope with the demands of elite sport (Barker, McCarthy & Harwood, 2011), demonstrating how important it is to truly understand the needs of the individual you are working with.

As a direct consequence of my entire applied consultancy experiences to date (particularly this one with ML), I am now better able to explain my approach to service delivery with one simply equation: ABC^2 (Diagram 3.). The first ABC principle focuses on the concepts of *Authenticity*, *Balance*, and *Control*. *Authenticity* allows me to explore a client's values and beliefs and better understand the environment in which they are situated. *Balance* allows me to highlight the challenges of elite sport and allows me to explore the identity of the individual client (assessing identity foreclosure for example). *Control* allows me to encourage my clients to accept their free will and the responsibility they have in the choices they make. The second ABC principle focuses on *Affect*, *Behaviour* and *Consequence*. *Affect* focuses on an individual's thoughts, feelings and emotions. These thoughts and emotions have a direct impact on their *Behaviour* (performance within a sporting environment). Finally, the performance of that individual always has a *Consequence* (usually impacting on their *Affect*), which completes the cycle. As a result of this enhanced approach to service-delivery, I am less rigid and am able to truly meet the holistic needs of my clients.



Diagram 3. Visualization of the ABC^2 principle

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Appendix

Case Report One

Date: 05/11/18

Our first session together gave us both a chance to get to know one another and provided me with an opportunity to explain my approach to sport psychology support, my scope of practice regarding mental health and the importance of confidentiality. You then began the session by providing me with an overview and your background within sport. You explained that you have been doing wrestling and rugby since the age of 5. At 10/11 years of age, you began to specialize in wrestling and in the last few years you have made the progression to a regional and national level. This progression to a regional and national level has led to you experiencing an increase in pressure and you admitted that you have recently begun to put added expectation on yourself and your performances within the sport. You discussed that with some of your opponents, who you may have beaten before, you are expecting yourself to beat them on a consistent basis and this is increasing the pressure you are experiencing during both training and competition. Also, recent losses in training and disagreements with coaching staff, has led to a decrease in self-belief. As a result of this lack of self-belief and the increased pressure and expectation you are under, you have been experiencing panic attacks over the last 18 months. These panic attacks have started since you made the progression to a national level and very rarely happen when you are training and playing in rugby. You described the big difference between rugby and wrestling, was that in wrestling you are on your own, whereas in rugby, you have team-mates to rely on.

When these panic attacks occur, you have an understanding with the coaching staff, that you can remove yourself from training and sit in one of the empty changing rooms. You have been taught how to engage in the process of mindfulness (being in the moment - by focusing on the colour of the floor or the brand of the kit for example). Engaging in this process usually allows you to overcome the panic attacks and you can often calm yourself down enough to return to training. However, the panic attacks have been going on for a long time now and you have reached the point where you are 'worrying about worrying', which at times is leading to more panic attacks. You described your love of the sport, because of how it makes you feel about yourself. You also told me about your aim of attending a Commonwealth Games (with a big smile on your face), but admitted that if something didn't change, you would strongly consider leaving the sport and focusing more on your career within rugby.

We agreed some clear aims and objectives that we both wanted to work on moving forwards:

- Create an environment where you have an opportunity to talk about your experiences and reflect on these experiences
- Attempt to better understand the cause of the panic attacks
- Better understand how you are able to prevent the panic attacks from occurring

You also have a meeting with a counsellor this week and we agreed that once you have had this meeting, we would have a better understanding of how we will work together moving forwards.

Case Report Two

Date: 17/12/18

Almost 6 weeks had passed between our first and second session together, so we spent some time 'catching up' on what had happened in that period. You started the session by explaining that your mum had spoken to the coaches about your anxiety and this had improved the training environment considerably. The coaches are now more considerate of how they provide you with feedback and are also aware of who they partner you with when it comes to the fights. You are now also on the waiting list to be seen by one of the counsellors and you are feeling more positive that support is being put in place for you.

We then began to explore, in more detail, the causes or ‘triggers’ to your panic attacks and started by discussing the concept of ‘expectation’. A lot of the anxiety you experience seems to come from your perception of what others expect from you. To put it simply, you are worried about what people are thinking about you. This is particularly challenging when you are fighting someone you are ‘expected’ to beat. You described moments during the fight, when you would be thinking about what other people were thinking/saying, rather than focusing on how to improve the situation you were in (trying not to get pinned). You also described the differences between the training environment and the competitive environment (where you very rarely experience the panic attacks). You went into detail about your pre-performance routine (imagery, music etc.), which prepares you best for a fight. Therefore, we agreed that it was during the fight that something needed to change. You identified that you needed to reduce the negative self-talk and replace it with more helpful/motivational self-talk. We also talked about the Commonwealth Silver and Bronze medallists and compared your approach to the fight with theirs. If this negative self-talk is taking up 10% of your efforts, then you are already more likely to lose the fight, which in turn, will increase the anxiety about others are perceiving of you. You highlighted that in order to break this cycle, you needed to replace the 10% with more positive/motivational self-talk. Once we discussed motivational self-talk, you described how you used to do this and actually this allowed you to achieve your greatest performance. Therefore, we agreed on three points that you would focus on before our next session together:

1. Watch at least one of your fights each week and highlight three positive things you did during that fight
2. Replace the negative self-talk with more motivational self-talk
3. Have a greater awareness of the mind-body connection and how being physically fit can lead to increases in confidence and self-belief

Case Report Three

Date: 28/01/19

In our third session together, we reviewed the progress you had made in relation to the three points we had discussed in our previous session:

- **Watch at least one of your fights each week and highlight three positive things you did during that fight**
- **Replace the negative self-talk with more motivational self-talk**
- **Have a greater awareness of the mind-body connection and how being physically fit can lead to increases in confidence and self-belief**

Your coach has set you targets related to your physical training, which you are achieving, allowing you to have more confidence in your own physical ability (mind-body connection (*point 3*)). You have also been able to successfully implement the motivational self-talk into training and competitive situations, which seems to be working at reducing the negative self-talk and anxiety (*point 2*). There are still occasions where you return to the cycle (worry/anxiety - 90% - low performance), which is usually linked again to your own expectations (feeling as though you should be beating *name* (for example)). However, the panic attacks are much less frequent and are of much lower intensity, which is excellent progress to have made in such a short space of time.

You have been watching the videos of yourself and are able to identify aspects of your performance that you are doing well (whilst also maintaining an understanding of what you need to improve (*point 1*)). You are also able to link these images with the motivational self-talk during both training and competition. You are using imagery really effectively to create the right positive mind-set, which is positively influencing your performances.

When reflecting on your upcoming tournament in Austria, you seemed very positive about the experience you would gain. You don't have any expectations for the tournament, as you don't know any of the fighters (or the standard). You'd be happy to win one fight, but will need to review this once you are there and have a better understanding of the standard of the other fighters.

We discussed the importance of you continuing to practice the imagery/motivational self-talk and how important it was to transfer this to other environments (the tournament in Austria gives you a great chance to do this!)

You are making excellent progress and we agreed that the aim for the next session will be to:

1. Reduce the frequency and intensity of the panic attacks even more (in all situations/environments)
2. Review the tournament in Austria
3. Ease you into the national training camps a little more (attending more of the training etc.)

Case Report Four

Date: 20/12/18

We started our fourth session together by reflecting on your recent tour to Austria. You stated that the experience had been a hugely positive one, which had ‘opened your eyes’ to a lot of different aspects of the sport that you hadn’t previously known:

- You had an opportunity to fight the world number seven in your age/weight category, so were given an insight into the level you need to reach to become elite in this sport
- This fight had given you an insight into how you need to develop physically and standards you need to reach in this area
- You realised how, in comparison to other countries (Croatia/America), the GB squad was small and not able to compete (currently) with some of the other athletes at this level
- You had gained valuable tournament experience, such as; learning to ‘make weight’ prior to the tournament (what you can/can’t eat and drink and the quantities you are able to consume)
- You also learnt how to manage yourself, both psychologically and physically, whilst waiting to fight – with huge gaps in between your first and second fight

Given that you are the only female fighter in your age/weight category, the amount of tours you will have an opportunity to attend is only going to increase. Therefore, the experience

you have gained in Austria will be invaluable in the future. The tour to Estonia (in March) is a bigger tournament and will be another great opportunity for you to gain vital experience in the sport.

We also discussed your recent experiences at the latest national training camp. You attended the vast majority of the training camp (the only part you didn't attend was due to a college open day that had been rearranged), which was one of our goals when we first started this support. You also didn't experience anxiety/a panic attack in relation to the fighting part of the camp, which further demonstrates your excellent progress. However, you did experience a panic attack in relation to the fitness testing – when completing the bleep test. We had discussed previously, the importance of being able to transfer the mental techniques (positive imagery/motivational self-talk) into other environments and contexts (the amazing bubble that I drew!) and you admitted that on this occasion you hadn't been able to do this successfully. However, you were able to overcome this anxiety and continue with the remaining fitness testing, which you completed to an excellent level (scoring higher than all the females and most of the males in the rowing!). Whilst the goal is to prevent all panic attacks – being able to overcome this anxiety and continue with the fitness testing still demonstrates your progress. The intensity and frequency of the panic attacks are still reducing, which is excellent. We now need to concentrate on being able to use the techniques in all contexts and environments. We agreed that in our next session, we would explore a larger variety of techniques that you can use to help you improve your performance in the future.

Consultancy Contract Report



Contract: Sport Psychology Consultancy

This contract is made on the 24th day of the 4th month, 2018, between Nick Wadsworth (and Nick Wadsworth Sport Psychology Limited), hereafter known as **the Sport and Exercise Psychologist (in Training)**, and TC, hereafter known as **the client**.

Nature of the Contract

The Sport and Exercise Psychologist (in Training) agrees to provide support to the client in accordance with the British Psychological Society code of conduct and its ethical principles. All information discussed between the Sport and Exercise Psychologist (in Training) and client will be confidential, unless informed consent is given by the client to disclose information to a third party. If the Sport and Exercise Psychologist (in Training) feels that the client may be under threat or harm to themselves or others, then in accordance with the ethical code of conduct this may be communicated to an external party (following an ethical decision-making process established in the code) and constitutes an acceptable breach of confidentiality.

Standards of Conduct

Both parties agree to be bound by the Code of Ethics and Conduct and the Professional Practice Guidelines published by the British Psychological Society. All consultancy reports will be stored on a password protected laptop, only assessable by the Sport and Exercise Psychology (in Training) to ensure complete confidentiality.

Recommended delivery:

There will be no time limit attached to this contract. The Sport and Exercise Psychologist (in Training) and the client will work together for as long as both parties feel this is appropriate to meet the desired aims of the intervention. The client will be responsible for arranging meetings at a time that suits them. This can be on a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly basis, either face to face or via skype or phone. Each session, progress will be

discussed and areas of development will be identified. The cost of each session will be £60, which includes a session report following each meeting. The Sport and Exercise Psychologist (in Training) may also recommend that work outside of these meetings needs to be completed by the client and therefore, it is the client's sole responsibility to complete this work. Each meeting will be documented and be kept in a confidential and secure file to protect the anonymity of the client and any personal data that is provided or created.

Sport and Exercise Psychologist (in Training) signature: Nick Wadsworth

Date: 24.04.18

Client signature: (Signature Removed to maintain anonymity)

Date: 24.04.18

Please note Dr Martin Eubank who is a HCPC Registered Sport Psychologist and BPS Chartered Psychologist is supervising the Sport and Exercise Psychologist (in Training), and can be contacted on email M.R.Eubank@ljmu.ac.uk if you have any concerns or would like to make a complaint or report any misconduct.

Name: TC

Date: 24/04/18

Location: University of Bolton



Nick Wadsworth
Sport Psychology

Session Report 1:

Our session started with you describing the difficult period you are currently experiencing (being left out of the squad in the last few games), which has had a negative effect on your confidence. You spoke about not being able to deal well with this setback and that dealing with setbacks has always been something that you've found challenging. You have experienced similar setbacks to this one, when out on loan, which had a similar negative impact on your well-being. You began comparing your current situation to your brother's situation, who you feel is going through a more successful period (being picked for the squad/playing games etc.). Comparing yourself to your brother is something that you feel you have been doing all of your life and it's something that you feel others consistently do

as well. Earlier on in your career, when you were called up to play for England, you felt you were more successful than him. However, in recent years, you feel as though things have ‘flipped’ and recently this has made you realise that you are in “24 hour competition” with him. Naturally being in constant competition is beginning to become a drain and is having a negative impact on your life (unable to switch off from rugby, lack of sleep). You discussed that you are waiting for the moment when things ‘flip back’. You admitted that you are jealous of his current situation and that when he gets an opportunity in the team ahead of you, you want him to play poorly so you can take his spot. This feeling is difficult for you, because it causes a contradiction; you love your brother and described him as your best friend, but at the same time you want his position in the starting line-up. The club don’t seem to treat you as individuals and you are aware that when given your last professional contract you are earning less than he is; something which was difficult for you to know. We agreed that the way you were treated during the contract negotiations was unprofessional and unethical and was just one example of how you are both seen as a collective, rather than individuals in your own right. You feel as though others might view you as the ‘worse twin’ and you seemed to place a lot of importance on the perception others have of you. You admitted that you were proud to be able to call yourself a professional rugby player, but recently, whilst experiencing this difficult period, you have been embarrassed to talk your friends about it. You also admitted that you portray yourself as someone who is confident, when actually, a lot of the time, this isn’t the case. You discussed how you have experienced depression in the past and that given your current circumstances you might be experiencing similar symptoms. This is something that we both need to be aware and consider a priority in order to prevent your negative well-being from getting any worse.

Agreed intervention Goals:

Based on our first session together, we agreed two clear goals to the work we will conduct together:

1. I will create a confidential environment where you can regularly discuss your experiences (in and outside of sport)
2. Together we will explore these challenges and how they are impacting upon your core self (identity as both a rugby player and a person)

Name: TC

Date: 20/02/18

Location: University of Bolton



Session Report 7:

We started our session by discussing the recent news that you will be starting the game tomorrow against [anonymised]. This gave us an opportunity to reflect on the previous ten months and discuss the progress you have made.

What was most obvious from my perspective, which I have started to see in our previous few meetings, was the approach to life/rugby that you have at the moment. You seem to have successfully taken a step back from the situation and gained a different/broader perspective on your career. Previously, you had worried that without rugby you would be nothing, whereas now, you seem to understand and appreciate that rugby doesn't define who you are. Rugby is still a huge part of your life, but you have other aspects of your life that help provide you with a balance (mum, girlfriend, golf, University etc..). This new perspective has made you realise how lucky you are to be in the position to play professional rugby for a living. However, you are also aware, because of the nature of professional sport, that there will still be challenges ahead and it is important for you to maintain this perspective even through the more challenging times. It was refreshing to be able to talk to you about the positives you were experiencing, and it was good to hear you appreciate that you still needed to focus on your psychological development, even when times are good. You also seemed to reflect positively on your potential life after rugby, where you feel you have options that excite you (property development etc.).

At the end of the session, we reviewed the objectives set out at the start of this process and agreed we had successfully met both aims. We agreed that you now had the skills to be able to overcome future professional and personal challenges alone. We also agreed that we would stay in contact and would be able to re-start the sessions if you felt this was appropriate at a later date.

INVOICE



Nick Wadsworth Sport Psychology Limited
3 Henderson Avenue
M27 6BH
07960020267

20/02/18

INVOICE NO.

7

INVOICE TO

TC (anonymized)

DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY	SESSION PRICE	TOTAL
One-to-One Psychology Support	1	£60	Paid
One-to-One Psychology Support	1	£60	Paid
One-to-One Psychology Support	1	£60	Paid
One-to-One Psychology Support	1	£60	Paid
One-to-One Psychology Support	1	£60	Paid
One-to-One Psychology Support	1	£60	Paid
One-to-One Psychology Support	1	£60	TOTAL = £60

Client Feedback:

Below are quotes taken from an interview conducted with TC following the seventh and final session. The interview was designed to provide TC with an opportunity to provide feedback on the consultancy process and to check that the support had met the two aims stated at the start of the consultancy process:

1. Did I create a confidential environment where you felt comfortable to discuss your experiences?

From the first session, my first impression of you was that you were a calm person and you knew how to wind me down, because I was quite emotional... I can remember our first session and it was not overwhelming at all and it was easy to speak to you and you'd expect the first session when someone's opening up to someone it might be a bit awkward, but it was just dead natural really quickly and you're just a really open person to come and speak to, like comfortable and easy to come and talk to, I got like a good vibe straight away. You were just more warming to come to and it felt familiar and comfortable to be able to open up to you, other than anyone else and it just felt like you were just trying to help me be the best I could be. From session one, I felt like I could trust you, because if I didn't I wouldn't have come back and that was the biggest things was being able to trust you and for you to just be honest with me. It was just me and you in a room, I just felt like I could say anything and I'd never had that before, there were things I was talking to you about that I wouldn't even talk to my mum about or my brother and it was things... I just felt like, how you made the environment around me and spoke to me, I'd just tell you everything. I could text you about the good things in my life as well and that's the different thing, as well, it's not just... if you've got someone to share stuff with, I think people usually think you just share all the bad stuff, but I feel with you, the relationship we have, I can just share all the good stuff that's happened as well and be proud about myself, about what I'm doing, to just show how far I've come from where I was you know?

2. Did we successful explore these experiences and how they are impacting upon your core self (identity as both a rugby player and a person)

The way I view myself, is definitely the top thing [that has changed], like I always felt like the worse brother and I didn't feel like I had my own identity and now like, even when I was getting picked, by the end of our sessions, even last year, I was me and I feel like I've

found myself again, which is nice and as I said, my confidence was... that was just something I was portraying to people, when actually I was struggling a fair bit and I've got that back now, where I feel like I'm just being honest with myself and I'm back to being confident and believing in myself and thinking I can actually change stuff and if things are going wrong, I can actually change it now, back then I didn't think I could and I think the main thing was, they [the sessions] like unclouded, the process in my head to be fair, it like, it just shone a bit of light through, it that makes sense? Instead of me thinking about all this other stuff, we were stripping it back and stripping it back and then it made me realise, oh yeah, this is the root of the problem, like I had all these mini things, then we'd somehow strip it, to a main thing and we managed to find the root cause of problems, which I couldn't find on my own, so that's what I learnt about myself, what I was actually annoyed at, so you allowed me to realise that and I learnt what my problems actually were, rather than what I perceived them to be at the start. The reports you sent allowed me to reflect on the sessions and also recap myself what was going on as well, because it was always one thing to another quite quickly

you sort of tried to strip down the problems I was having through rugby and tried to make me see that there were other things and I can remember from the first session and you were trying to bring out just me and not just rugby and I felt like you were the only person at that time I was speaking to that could do that, so I came back more and more because I finally started to see how it was about me instead of just about rugby, so you just stripped it back and made me realise that myself was more important. So you took the problem, which was rugby the main problem and you just went, you are someone else outside of rugby...look at yourself outside (of rugby) you are actually doing this this and this... it made me realise it wasn't as bad as I first thought and over time... don't get me wrong, I didn't come out of the first session thinking, you know, life's sorted, but I came out thinking... that's better, like I'm going in the right direction and you just constantly focused on the person and just being able to strip it back and find core problems and allowing them internally to fix them, like you never told me how to fix something, either I had to realise it or we'd realise it together and it was something I had to do, which helps because I can do... I can't do anything, if you tell me, or the coach could do this or maybe this could happen or... every answer that was given, was something that I could do and work on...

Teaching Case Study

A Coach Education Programme Designed to Increase the Self-Awareness of Two Professional Football Coaches

Abstract

This teaching case study was conducted at a professional football club and outlines a coach education programme delivered to two professional football coaches. Pre-programme interviews were first conducted to understand the needs of the coaches within their environment. Following the pre-programme interviews, it became clear that the coaches had low levels of self-awareness in relation to their coaching philosophy. Therefore, the programme was designed to enhance this self-awareness, by providing the coaches with an opportunity to reflect upon their coaching behaviours and how they aligned with their coaching philosophy. The workshops delivered also included key findings from the coaching literature. The programme took place over 12 weeks and during this time, ten training sessions and 12 games were recorded. The coaches' behaviours were coded using performance analysis software and presented back to the coaches at six intervals throughout the 12 weeks. The coded behaviours were also accompanied by video-analysis footage from both training and competitive situations to reinforce the impact of the programme. Post-programme interviews highlighted how the coaches felt the project met the primary aim of the programme. Both coaches had an opportunity to reflect on their coaching behaviours and philosophy, particularly in relation to how anxiety and pressure changed their behaviours during 'must win' competitive fixtures.

Keywords: coaching philosophy, reflection, self-awareness, anxiety

Context

The Club

The programme was conducted at a professional football club, based in the North-West of England. In the last few years, the club in question had been bought by new high-profile owners and as a result had recently attained professional status. The rapid development and progression of the club meant that it had received a lot of media attention and coverage, which had only increased in recent years, with the first team expected to

gain promotion into League Two this year (season 2018/19). This programme was designed and delivered for two coaches within the academy of the club. The media coverage and expectation surrounding the first team squad meant that the academy was also under a lot of pressure to provide the first team with players capable of supporting their long-term vision (Relvas et al., 2010). However, the football club was not yet governed or dictated to by the Premier League and so was not restricted by the rules of the Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP, 2011). The purpose of the academy remained the same; develop players capable of playing first team football, but without needing to meet the expectations of the EPPP, individuals had more ownership and autonomy over the programme they developed and delivered. This allowed for the development of a creative and purposeful programme, which could be delivered over a pro-longed period of time within the academy of the club.

The practitioner(s)

At the time this programme was delivered, I (author one) was coming towards the end of British Psychological Society (BPS) Stage Two training. This programme was designed to meet a number of competencies related to the applied practice and dissemination elements of the BPS competency framework. In addition to the applied sport psychology qualifications and experience, at the time of the programme, I held the F.A. level 3 (UEFA B License) and all three F.A. Youth Modules and had delivered a very similar programme on the applied placement of my Sport Psychology (MSc) (Wadsworth et al., 2018). This programme was designed to overcome some of the limitations of this previous work. To maximize the effectiveness of the programme, the Academy Manager and I created a full-time, season long internship for one of the Sport and Exercise Science students at the University of Bolton. Liam Preece (author two) was in the final year of his Sport and Exercise Science (BSc) and used this internship to fulfill his applied placement hours. Liam spent a minimum of four days a week at the club, recording training sessions and games, analysing the data collected and acted as the primary data analyst for the programme. Liam's consistent presence at the club, allowed us to better understand the environment in which the programme would be delivered (Larsen, 2017). It also allowed us to develop better relationships with the two coaches, which would be vital for delivery of the programme (Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006). Liam's involvement in the data

collection and analysis was essential and allowed me to lead and deliver the educational workshops to ensure the programme met the needs of both coaches.

The Clients

Coach One. At the time the programme took place, *Coach One*, was Academy Manager at the football club. *Coach One* holds the F.A. level 4 (UEFA A License), Advanced Youth Award and has an undergraduate degree in ‘Sport Leisure and Management’. He had 14 years of coaching experience within professional football and at the time of the programme had been coaching at the current club for one year. With limited resources within the academy and as Academy Manager, *Coach One* also had to organize and oversee the players’ education, accommodation, and travel etc. This role was highly demanding and resulted in *Coach One* not being able to prioritize his coaching responsibilities as he had done in previous roles.

Coach Two. At the time the programme took place, *Coach Two*, was Assistant Head of Academy. *Coach Two* holds the F.A. level 3 (UEFA B License), Advanced Youth Award and has an undergraduate degree in ‘Sport Coaching’. He had 11 years of coaching experience within professional football and at the time of the programme had also been coaching at the current club for one year. *Coach Two* assisted *Coach One* in the day-to-day running of the academy but was able to dedicate more of his time to coaching the academy players.

Needs Analysis

Pre-programme Interviews

Prior to the development and delivery of the programme, both coaches were interviewed to better understand what they wanted to achieve from the programme itself (see *Appendix: Pre-Programme Interview Guide*). Understanding the needs of the two coaches would be essential to the effectiveness of the programme because it has been found that coach education programmes must be tailored to meet the needs of the individuals to create genuine long-lasting change (Nelson, Cushion, & Potrac, 2006; Partington & Cushion, 2013). The interviews also provided me with an insight into the coaching philosophies of the two coaches and whether or not they understood the term coaching philosophy itself (Cushion & Partington, 2014). As part of the pre-programme interview, both coaches were asked to describe their coaching philosophies. It was clear

from *Coach One*'s response that he didn't understand the term coaching philosophy or had at least confused the term with playing philosophy (Cushion & Partington, 2014). *Coach Two* understood the term coaching philosophy but could only describe it at a basic level (Collins et al., 2011; McCallister, Blinde, & Weiss, 2000), by highlighting how he developed relationships with his players both on and off the pitch:

I like to play fast football, attacking football; play through the thirds. I like to have a creative player, the decision maker, on the pitch. Who can do things, like a dribbler, different things like that. So, even though it's a 4-3-3, the number 11 can be the 9 at any point, the 9 can be the 7, the 7 can be the 11 **Coach One**
So, in terms of like my coaching philosophy, it's not just chatting to them on the pitch and when they're here, I'll speak to the lads when they're away from here, I might try to get to know them a little bit more and things like that as well
Coach Two

However, when prompted further, both coaches were able to discuss their coaching philosophies in more detail, by highlighting whether they primarily focused on winning or development. *Coach One* had a clear focus on winning and *Coach Two* focused more on the holistic development of his players. This disparity in coaching philosophy between the two coaches strengthens the use of the individualized approach adopted during this programme:

I wanna win full stop... I wanna win every game we play in, I wanna win that game... so I'm not one of these coaches that will stand quietly and watch things go wrong, like a lot of coaches watch it go wrong and then try it, let them work it out for themselves. I think there's areas that you can do that but I think as a coach you're there to help and support and I think it's that judgement that you've got as a coach **Coach One**

I've always worked in development, so just helping lads I think... you hear a lot of stories about kids who get bullied from clubs and that kind of thing... we are here to develop the lads, whether he either signs the contract or he gets released, the ones that get released are just as important I think as the ones that you sign **Coach Two**

Despite the different coaching philosophies identified during the interviews (*winning* versus *development*), both coaches highlighted the development of relationships with their players as a key part of their coaching philosophies:

I don't think people understand how important relationships are in football

Coach One

The importance placed on developing relationships with their players seemed to influence the characteristics both coaches chose to focus on throughout the programme (*humour, praise, scold, question* etc.). Both coaches chose the same 13 behavioural characteristics (Table 1). These characteristics were provided to the coaches directly from Coach Analysis and Intervention System (CAIS) (Cushion et al., 2011) and would form the basis of the programme.

Developing the Programme

The terms 'coaching philosophy' and 'playing philosophy' are used interchangeably within applied settings and so are commonly misunderstood (Cushion & Partington, 2016). *Coach One* demonstrated this within his pre-programme interview when he discussed his playing philosophy ("*I like to play fast football*") despite being asked to describe his coaching philosophy. Furthermore, coaches often rely on their past experiences and knowledge as players when developing coaching sessions, which can lead to the delivery of coaching practices that are not aligned with an individual's core values and beliefs (Partington & Cushion, 2013). It was clear that both coaches were, to an extent, reliant on their past experiences as players, when discussing their coaching philosophies:

I always think about coaches I had or came into contact with and think I didn't like how he did that so I'm not going to use that but I like how he did that so I'm gonna kind of make it like a bit of a toolkit, so I know for instance that I was the kinda player that needed an arm round me, I know that if I got like shouted at I'd go within myself and recognising players that need that **Coach**

Two

However, this can cause a lack of understanding or a misalignment between behaviours and philosophy, leading to poor self-awareness regarding coaching practices (Wright & Forrest, 2007). Based on the pre-programme interviews, neither of the two coaches were

able to coherently describe their coaching philosophies in any detail (Collins et al., 2011; McCallister, Blinde & Weiss, 2000). Therefore, the primary aim of this programme was to increase both coaches' self-awareness of their coaching philosophies by identifying, measuring, and reflecting upon observable coaching behaviours.

To achieve the primary aim of the programme and to meet the call from research that a mix-method approach is required (Partington & Cushion, 2013), the coaches' behaviours were observed and recorded over a pro-longed period of time and the coaches were also interviewed at the start and end of the programme. These behaviours would then be used as the foundation of the programme to provide the coaches with an insight into whether there was an interaction between their behaviours and their philosophy (Cushion, Ford, & Williams, 2012). One of the ways that coaches can become more aware of this link is through the process of self-reflection (Wadsworth et al., 2018). If coaches are able to view their coaching behaviours (both statistically and through video-analysis footage) and critically reflect on how these behaviours might (or might not) relate to their coaching philosophy, they are provided with a platform to enhance their self-awareness. Reflective practice allows coaches to better understand and critically challenge how their own values and beliefs influence their coaching practices (Knowles et al., 2001; Thompson & Pascal, 2012).

Delivering the Programme

Procedure

The programme took place over 12 weeks, during which, 10 training sessions and 12 games were recorded, resulting in a total of 1,680 minutes of training and competition data being collected. The coaches were observed in both training and in competition, as it has been found that different environments can influence and change coaches' behaviours (Partington & Cushion, 2013). During the data collection phase of the programme, the coaching behaviours (the 13 characteristics in Table 1.) were recorded and coded using Dart Fish Performance Analysis Software. To ensure the accuracy of the results, intra-reliability (establishing an agreement between the coding of the same event, by the same observer, on two separate occasions) of the data analysis process was established (Potrac, Jones, & Cushion, 2007). Furthermore, inter-reliability (establishing an agreement between the coding of an event by two separate observers) was also established on 30% of the behavioural analysis data. This inter-reliability testing was conducted by two practitioners

at the University of Bolton, who held Level Two and Level Three F.A. coaching qualifications (authors five and six respectively) and had a wealth of coaching experience between them. Both tests met and exceeded the 85% similarity criteria (Potrac, Jones, & Cushion, 2007).

Workshop Delivery

Over the course of the programme, there were six opportunities to present this data back to the coaches and facilitate the reflective process, which ultimately formed the basis of the programme itself. The coaches were provided with their own individualized feedback and these sessions were conducted separately to maintain complete confidentiality and ensure the programme met the individual needs of both the coaches. The statistics (coded coaching behaviours) were presented to each of the coaches and they were both given time to consider this data, before being asked a series of questions related to these behaviours. To reinforce the behavioural data, the coaches were also shown a series of video-analysis clips (both training and competition) to highlight and ‘bring to life’ the data they had just been presented with. This footage was also used to form the basis of a critical discussion and encourage the coaches to reflect upon their delivery style (see *Appendix: Feedback*, which provides an overview of the first workshop delivered to both *Coach One* and *Coach Two*). The workshops provided me with an opportunity to focus on three distinct elements to improve the coaches’ self-awareness: a) providing the coaches with an opportunity to review their own coaching behaviours, b) challenging the coaches (and encouraging reflection) about whether or not these coaching behaviours aligned with their coaching philosophy, c) introducing the coaches to literature on coaching behaviours and coaching philosophy.

Training and Education

To meet the primary aim of the programme and to educate the coaches beyond simply reflecting on their own coaching behaviours (and philosophy), each workshop also introduced the coaches to a variety of findings from the coaching literature. The coaches became particularly interested in the research that was conducted in similar environments (professional football) to themselves. Understanding that other coaches (with similar qualifications and experiences to them) also had difficulties articulating their coaching philosophies (Harvery, Cushion, Cope, & Muir, 2013; Partington & Cushion, 2013),

normalized the education programme for them and encouraged them to engage with the workshops more. This literature also seemed to have a motivational effect on the coaches. Both coaches were encouraged when viewing how coaching behaviours (and awareness of coaching philosophy) could change and become more aligned over time (Partington, Cushion, Cope, & Harvey, 2015) by engaging in coach education. The visual way these behavioural changes were represented clearly demonstrated the potential progress that they could achieve if they engaged with the programme fully. However, most of the discussions surrounding this research seemed to focus on the culture of professional football itself (Cushion & Jones, 2006). Both coaches had recently moved from Premier League football clubs (governed by the rules of the EPPP) and discussed the constraints and pressure they felt within these environments. This pressure, at times, meant they would often adopt more ‘traditional’ approaches to coaching, through fear (and often a lack of time) of trying something new (Cushion, Ford, & Williams, 2012). However, now they were the two most senior coaches at their new club and were inspired to have the ownership and responsibility to positively impact the culture. This meant that discussions surrounding coaching behaviours (and philosophy) would often extend to instances off the pitch (for example, dealing with players’ behaviour at college) and the way their coaching philosophy could align with the development of the culture they wanted to create at the club. The intention of introducing the coaches to the coaching literature was to facilitate discussion around coaching behaviour and coaching philosophy (which did have the desired impact), but this literature actually allowed the education programme to exceed the desired aims and provided the coaches with a safe space to explore how their own values and beliefs had and could influence the culture of the club as a whole.

Pedagogical Underpinning

Feedback has been shown to enhance learning (Carless, 2006) by giving individuals an opportunity to be reflective of their own performance (Archer, 2010). However, in some cases, feedback has been found to have little impact on individuals’ learning (Sadler, 2010) and so it is vital that practitioners critically consider the way feedback is provided to their clients. For the coaches, this meant providing the statistical feedback in advance of the workshops, giving them time to consider their behaviours and develop any questions they might have. Furthermore, feedback has been shown to be most effective when both positive and negative comments are provided (Hyland & Hyland, 2001). One of the ways

this can be achieved is by starting with the positives and then discussing areas of improvement to create a safe environment for the individuals involved (Chowdhury & Kalu, 2004). The workshops were delivered in this way. The behaviours aligning to the coaches' coaching philosophy were presented first, followed by behaviours that were perhaps contradictory. The reflective questions were also designed to progressively challenge the coaches thinking, but in a safe environment. Whilst some individuals might react negatively to constructive feedback (Weaver, 2006), critical comments are essential for development (Holmes & Papageorgiou, 2009). This form of feedback considers whether or not the client is ready to receive feedback and then gives them an opportunity to reflect on their own performance (Chowdhury & Kalu, 2004). The workshops with the coaches were conducted in this way, with the coaches being provided with an opportunity to discuss their perception of the data first, before being asked reflective questions related to these behaviours. The questions focused primarily on how the behaviours demonstrated during matches and training, linked to the coaches' philosophies as stated at the start of the programme.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Programme

Behavioural Analysis

Coach One. Throughout the course of the programme, *Coach One* displayed more *instruction* than any other behaviour. *Confer with assistant* and *praise* were also used frequently. The first workshop (Figure 1.) collected data from an FA Youth Cup fixture, U19 League game, and U21 League game. The second workshop (Figure 2.), which also demonstrates the behaviour of *Coach One* during competitive match fixtures, highlights an almost identical pattern of behaviour. However, there is a change in behaviour when data is collected from *Coach One* during training sessions (Figure 3.). *Confer with assistant* reduces significantly; meaning more time can be dedicated to providing *specific positive feedback*. During the final data collection phase (Figure 4.), which highlights the behaviours of *Coach One* from two FA Youth Cup fixtures, behaviour reverts back to the pattern demonstrated during previous competition weeks, with *instruction*, *confer with assistant* and *praise* dominating the behaviours observed.

Coach One demonstrates consistency in his behaviours across the programme, particularly when comparing the data collected from competitive fixtures. This consistency in behaviours also seems to support the coaching philosophy he discussed at the start of the

programme. High use of *instruction* during both competition and training seemed to be used to ensure his team(s) were prepared effectively to win games. However, whilst high use of *instruction* matches *Coach One*'s philosophy to win games, it may have also hindered his ability to develop 'creative decision-makers', which is something he also expressed prior to the start of the programme. A high use of *praise* seemed to be used to build effective relationships with the players; again, demonstrating coherence with the coaching philosophy discussed at the start of the programme. However, *Coach One* does demonstrate a change in behaviours between training and competition weeks. *Confer with assistant* was consistently high during matches and low during training. This finding might be explained due to the anxiety experienced by the coaches during competitive match fixtures and will be discussed in more detail when exploring the post- programme interviews.

Coach Two. *Coach Two* also demonstrated high use of *instruction*, *confer with assistant* and *praise* throughout the programme. During the first workshop (Figure. 5), which highlights data collected from an U16 League game and an U19 League game, *Coach Two*'s behaviour is dominated by *confer with assistant*. *Instruction* is also demonstrated, but this is significantly less in comparison to *Coach One*. *Coach Two* also demonstrates an average *silence* time of 61.96 minutes (55.8%) during these competitive fixtures. The second workshop (Figure 6.), which highlights the behaviours demonstrated during multiple training sessions, portrays a change in behaviour, with a significant increase in the use of *instruction* and a significant decrease in the average *silence* (17.53 minutes (28.4%)). During the final workshop (Figure 7.), which included two FA Youth Cup matches and one U19 League fixture, *Coach Two* reverts back to high levels of *confer with assistant*, but also seems to demonstrate higher use of *instruction* in comparison to the competitive games in programme one (Figure 5.).

Coach Two's behaviours, at times; seem to be coherent with the coaching philosophy discussed at the start of the programme. Low levels of *instruction* during competitive match fixtures and high use of *silence* provide an indication that *Coach Two* was attempting to allow his players to take ownership of the game, contributing towards their development, regardless of the impact this had on the score of the game. However, high use of *confer with assistant* might contradict this, as *Coach Two* may have been relaying his instructions/suggestions through *Coach One*, who consistently demonstrated high *instruction* during competition. High use of *praise* by *Coach Two*, throughout the

programme seemed to be used to build effective relationships with the players. *Coach Two* also demonstrates a change in behaviour between competition and training environments, with a significant increase in *instruction* used during training sessions. Furthermore, *Coach Two* also uses more *instruction* during the third set of data collected (FA Youth Cup fixtures) compared to the first set of data collected (U16 and U19 fixtures). As with the behaviour of *Coach One*, this finding might be explained due to the anxiety experienced by the coaches during competitive match fixtures and will be discussed in more detail below.

Post-Programme Interviews

The post-programme interviews were designed to evaluate the programme and gain a more in-depth understanding of the coaches' experiences over the course of the project; adding more context to the statistics presented earlier (see *Appendix: Post-Programme Interview Guide*).

Both coaches agreed that the programme had met the primary aim of the project, by increasing their awareness of the interaction between their coaching philosophy and behaviour:

...it pointed out things I hadn't necessarily noticed before, I mean, obviously I was a bit surprised with the feedback that you showed me because I thought it [*instruction*] would be a lot more in games [*compared to training*], I thought I'd be more instructive, I thought I'd be very very high on that whereas I actually wasn't **Coach One**

it was interesting that in games that we were down in [losing] I didn't change, I pretty much stayed the same and we still won the game, so it wasn't a case of me shouting more or me being more directive that won the game **Coach One**

it's been really good, it gives you more of an awareness and kind of an idea of what you do. I don't think... in terms of certain behaviours like scold, I don't think I was far off in terms of where I thought I was at; I think kind of pleasantly surprised like using instruction, specific praise, specific feedback, where it's not just me going 'well done', 'that's poor' or whatever, there's information behind it

Coach Two

However, perhaps a more interesting finding to emerge from this programme was the impact the environment had on the coaches' behaviour. Both coaches highlighted how the FA Youth

Cup changed their coaching behaviours, because of the anxiety and pressure they felt to win these fixtures. Furthermore, both coaches were also able to acknowledge how their change in behaviour may have impacted the players:

Obviously Youth Cup games have got a different spin on it, so it's going to give you a different set of results because the games are of more importance... nerves or anxiousness from the coach, can lead to giving more information and then obviously if a coach is doing that then it's going to rub off onto the players, then players will pick up on when they're getting more information and think "shit, coach is really worried today" which makes them anxious too **Coach One**

I think in some of the youth games I changed slightly in my stats, so I think I went from being very much this is all about development to probably just turning, like, turning the notches up on like... we need to win this game, let's sort it out, so does that effect how like the lads play, because I've changed? The last 10 minutes I felt the pressure and I kinda clamed up a little bit. It was 0-0 and it was like if we lose this game, that first doubt came in my head like the last 10 minutes of the game, because if they score we're done **Coach Two**

Coach Two suggested that this pressure not only came from wanting to win these competitive fixtures, but from the impact losing might have on the perception of them as coaches and the club as a whole:

I've had probably that bit of pressure on me in that moment, because it's kinda... we see them games more as like an image of the club, because that's the only opportunity a lot of the fans and people get to see us and it's a massive recruitment tool, so the pressure behind the scenes... in the youth cup last year I think we kinda, we were underdogs and it changed to this year where we are favourites and you might beat [*team's name*] and you're definitely going to beat [*team's name*] and you think pffff, what if we don't? **Coach Two**

Whilst the programme did successfully increase the coaches' awareness of the link between their coaching philosophy and behaviour, their change in behaviour across different environments indicates that the two coaches have not yet developed a coherent and stable coaching philosophy (Horsley, Cockburn, & James, 2015):

I've not had enough opportunity to mould a philosophy when I'm going for 3 points every week, whereas I've worked in development football... so my philosophy would be different in different situations **Coach Two**

A coaching philosophy is a combination of the attitudes, knowledge, and skills a coach uses when developing their players (Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2003) and should remain constant across situations and environments (Marten, 2004). However, it has been found that organisational pressures, such as the need to win competitive fixtures, can cause coaches to question their approach to coaching (Partington et al., 2013). Furthermore, lack of a philosophy or poor awareness regarding coaching philosophy can lead to the external pressures exerting more influence over a coach (Horsley, Cockburn, & James, 2015). This seemed to be the case for both coaches throughout this programme, especially for *Coach Two*, whose behaviours changed significantly (increased *instruction*) during highly pressured (must win) fixtures. However, unlike previous research, where coaches were not able to recognise or explain this behaviour change across contexts and environments (Partington & Cushion, 2013), both coaches in the current programme were aware of the impact the Youth Cup competition was exerting on their behaviours.

Conclusion

The aim of this applied case study was to increase the awareness of two professional coaches' regarding the interaction between their coaching philosophy and coaching behaviours. The programme was successful by providing both coaches with an opportunity to reflect on their coaching philosophy and the behaviours they demonstrated in both training and competitive situations. However, this programme demonstrates that highly qualified coaches, despite an extensive amount of experience within professional football, can still be unsure of their coaching philosophy and how this influences their coaching behaviours. Coaching literature and coach education pathways in particular, might benefit from exploring the applied sport psychology literature, regarding the development of a coherent philosophy of practice (Poczwadowski, Sherman & Ravizza, 2004). If coaches were provided with more opportunities to reflect upon their core values and beliefs, they could develop an increase in self-awareness of their coaching philosophy and behaviour (Poczwadowski, 2017).

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**Coaching
Behaviour**

Description

Positive Modelling	Skill demonstration – with or without verbal instruction that shows the performer the correct way to perform
Negative Modelling	Skill demonstration – with or without verbal instruction that shows the performer the incorrect way to perform
Physical Assistance	Physically moving the performer’s body to the proper position or through the correct range of movement
Specific Feedback (positive)	Specific positive verbal statements that specifically aim to provide information about the quality of performance (e.g. “that was good defending”)
Specific Feedback (negative)	Specific negative verbal statements that specifically aim to provide information about the quality of performance (e.g. “don’t force the pass”)
Instruction	Verbal cues, reminders or prompts to instruct/direct skill or play related to the player(s) performance (e.g. “press”)
Humour	Jokes or content designed to make players laugh or smile
Praise	Positive or supportive verbal statements or non-verbal gestures, which demonstrate the coach’s general satisfaction or pleasure towards a player(s) that do not specifically aim to improve the player(s) performances at the next skill attempt
Scold	Negative or unsupportive verbal statements or non-verbal gestures, which demonstrate the coach’s displeasure towards a player(s) that do not specifically aim to improve the player(s) performances at the next skill attempt
Silence	The coach is silent (both on and off task)
Question	Coach asks a question about skill, strategy, procedure or score, the status of the player’s injury, about the welfare of the player, to a match official etc.
Response to Question	Coach responses to a question that may or may not be directly related to practice or the match competition
Confer with Assistant	Coach confers with the assistant to talk about, manage or reflect on anything concerned with the practice (e.g. organizing players)

Table 1. Descriptions of the 13 coaching behaviours chosen for the programme

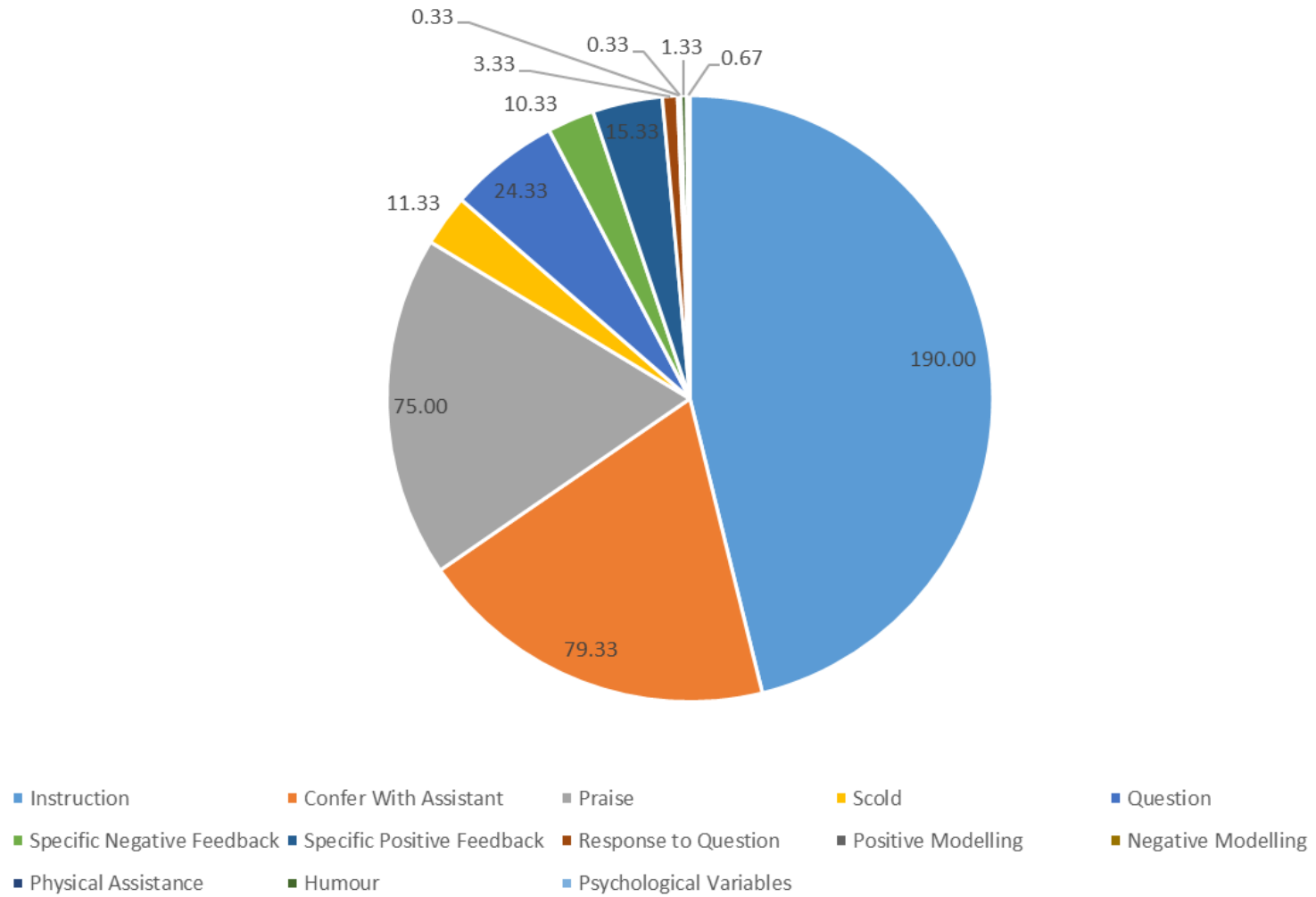


Figure 1. Coach One, Feedback One: Competition Data

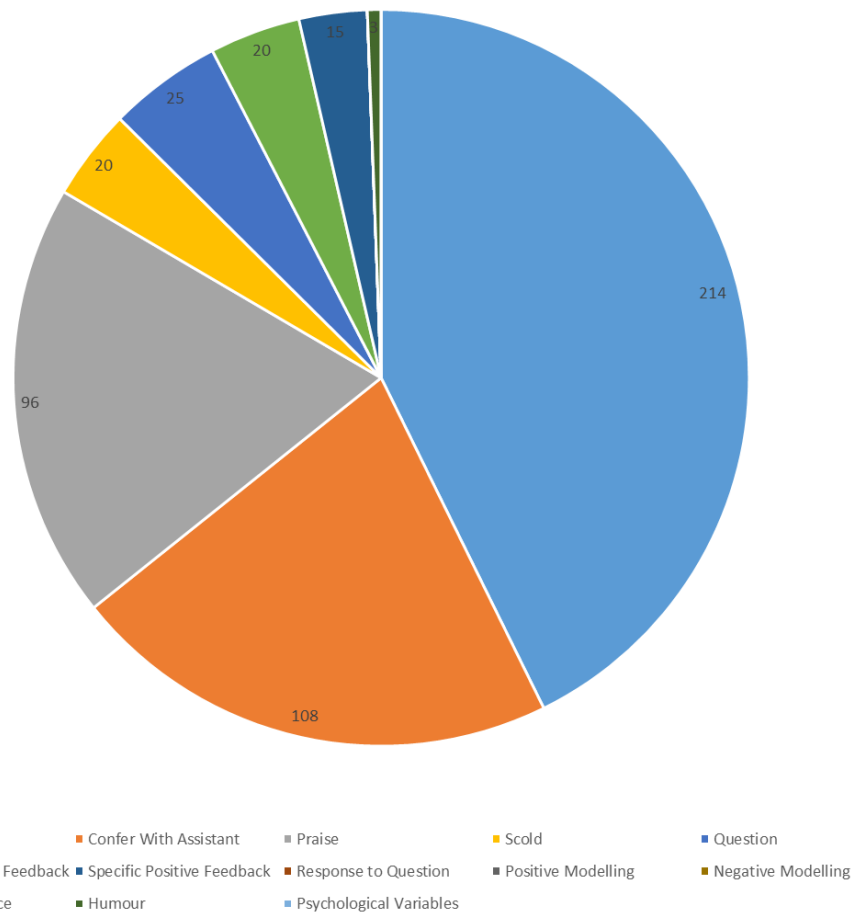


Figure 2. Coach One, Feedback Two (A): Competition Data

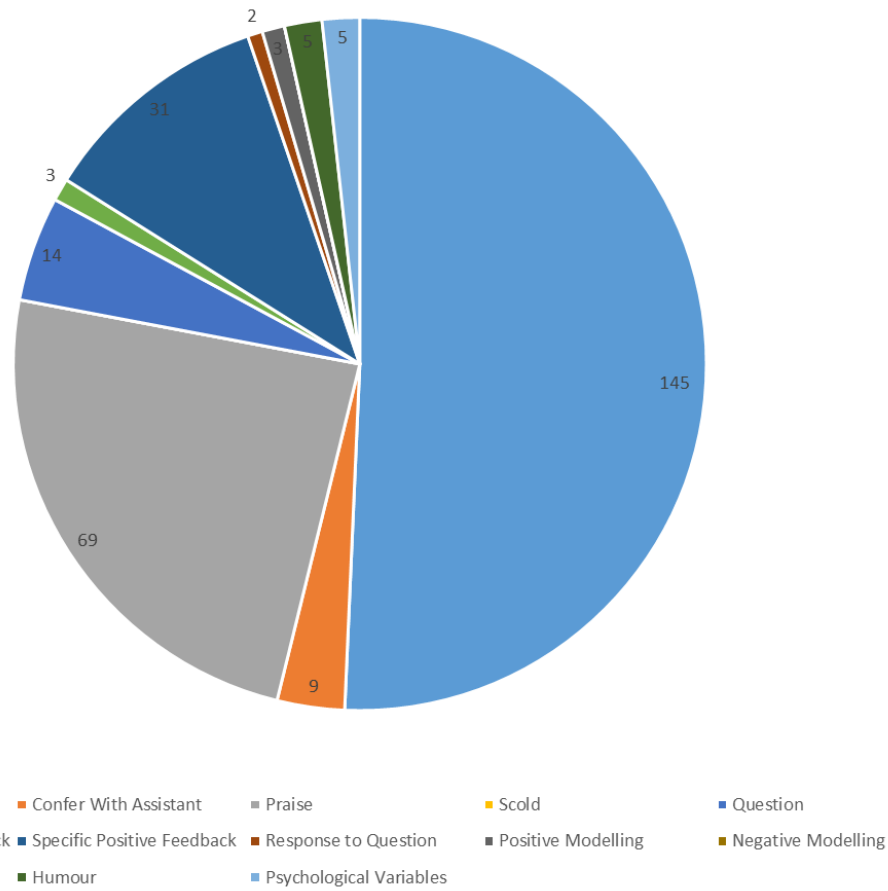


Figure 3. Coach One, Feedback Two (B): Training Data

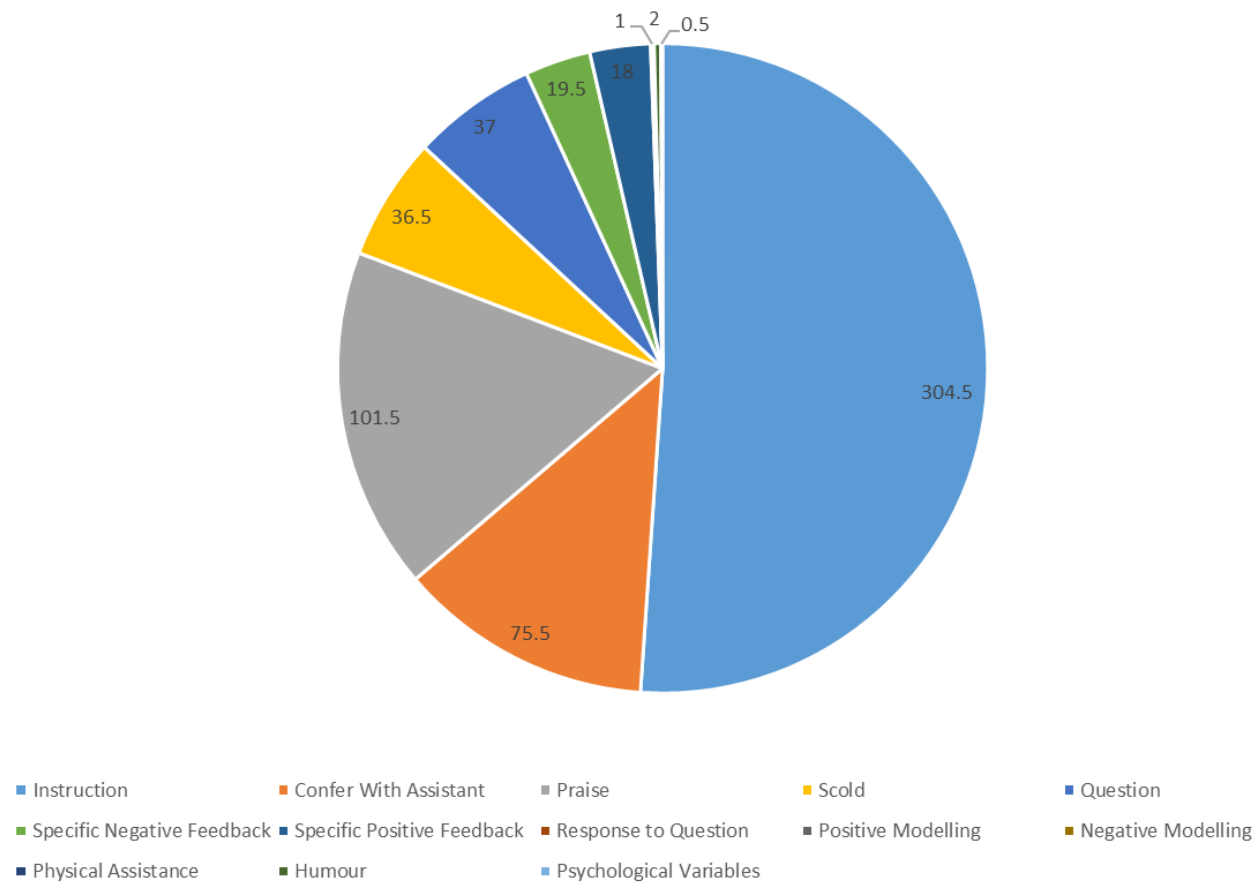
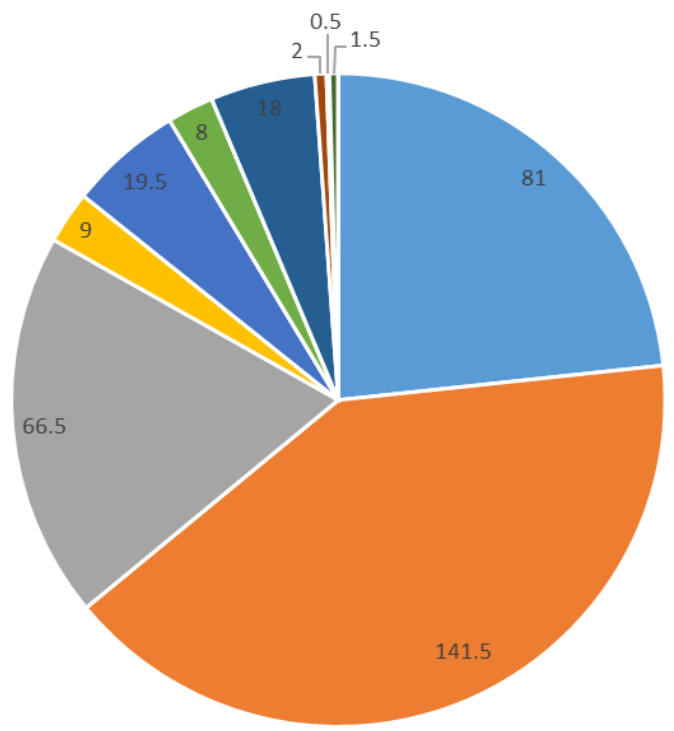


Figure 4. Coach One, Feedback Three: Competition Data



- Instruction
- Confer With Assistant
- Praise
- Scold
- Question
- Specific Negative Feedback
- Specific Positive Feedback
- Response to Question
- Positive Modelling
- Negative Modelling
- Physical Assistance
- Humour
- Psychological Variables

Figure 5. Coach Two, Feedback One: Competition Data

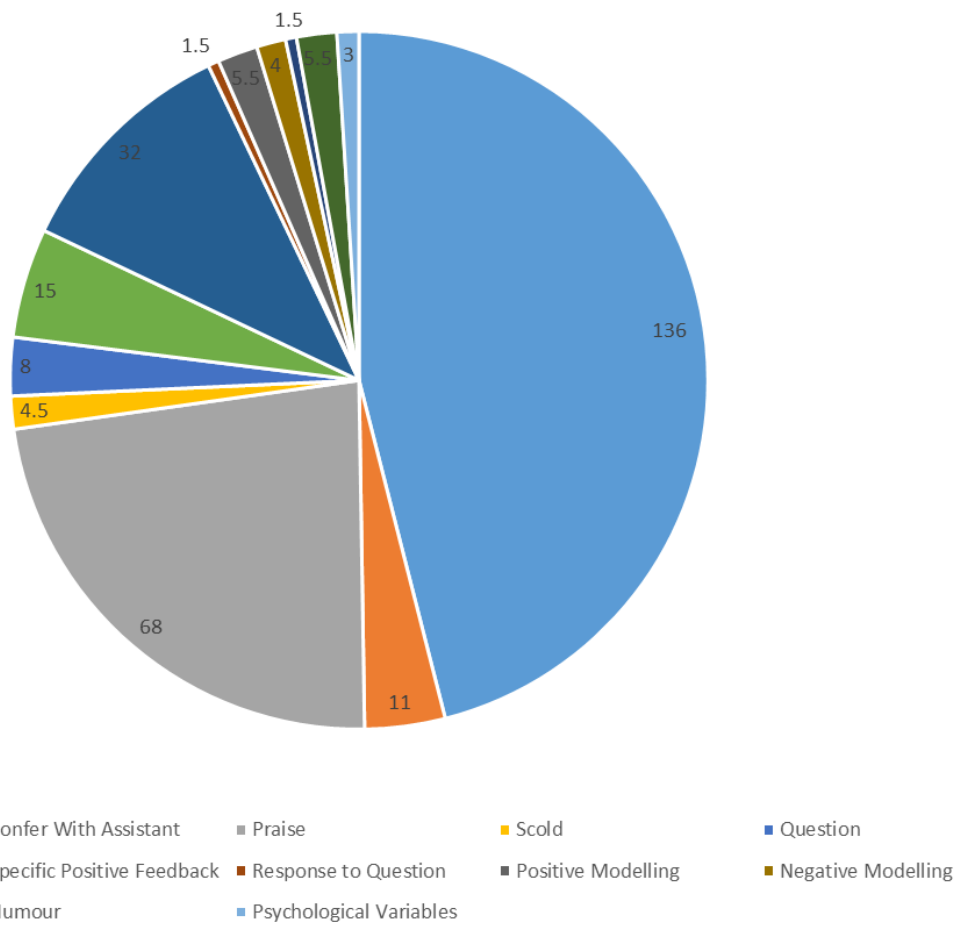
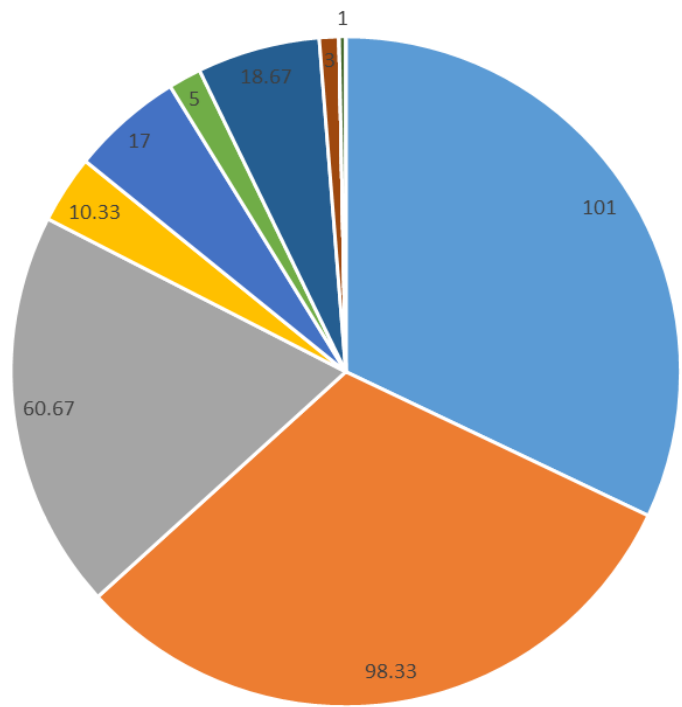


Figure 6. Coach Two, Feedback Two: Training Data



- Instruction
- Confer With Assistant
- Praise
- Scold
- Question
- Specific Negative Feedback
- Specific Positive Feedback
- Response to Question
- Positive Modelling
- Negative Modelling
- Physical Assistance
- Humour
- Psychological Variables

Figure 7. Coach Two, Feedback Three: Competition Data

Appendix

Pre-Programme Interview Guide

Coaching Background

1. How long have you been coaching for?
2. What made you choose coaching as a career?
3. Did you originally play football as a player? Has this had any impact on your career as a coach?
4. What are your experiences of coach education?
5. What were your previous jobs in professional football?

Coaching Style

1. How have your coaching roles shaped your coaching style?
2. What do you feel are the key responsibilities of a football coach?
3. What are your expectations of the players as a coach?
4. What do you want your players to achieve?
5. What are your motivations for coaching?
6. What are your aspirations as a coach?

Coaching Philosophy

1. How would you describe your coaching philosophy?
2. How did you develop this philosophy?
3. To what extent has this philosophy changed over time?
4. What emphasis do you place on winning?
5. What emphasis do you place on development and enjoyment?
6. Have you ever experienced conflict between winning and development/enjoyment?

Scenarios

1. You and your team are in the final of the FA Youth Cup and two of your best players are only 75% fit. The physiotherapist at the club has advised you that there is an increased possibility that these players may sustain an injury during the match, but should be able to 'manage' for 60 minutes. What decision do you make?
2. Your top goal scorer has had a very poor 45 minutes in the first half of the game. He has consistently given the ball away to the opposition and has not yet had a shot on target. You know he is your best chance of scoring, but other players can see how poorly he is playing and are beginning to become agitated. The substitutes clearly want to be brought on to replace him. What decision do you make?

Post-Programme Interview Guide

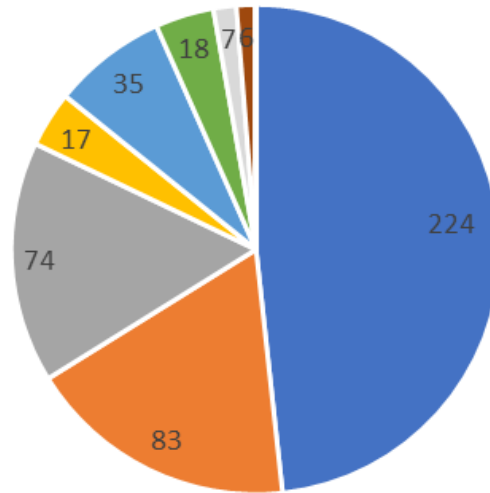
1. How did you find the programme as a whole?
2. At the start of this programme, you identified your philosophy to be *holistic development/winning* – have you found your behaviours have matched your coaching philosophy?
3. Have any of the coaching behaviours you have demonstrated differed from how you thought you would behave?
4. There are been some differences in behaviour between training and matches, can you explain what may have caused you to behave differently in these different environments/circumstances?
5. There are been some differences in behaviour between Youth Cup fixtures and League matches, can you explain what may have caused you to behave differently in these different environments/circumstances?

6. What have been the key things you have learnt about yourself throughout this programme?
7. To what extent has this programme allowed you to reflect on your coaching philosophy/behaviour?
8. What would you change about the project if it were to be delivered again?

Feedback: Coach One – Workshop One

Game1: Full Game

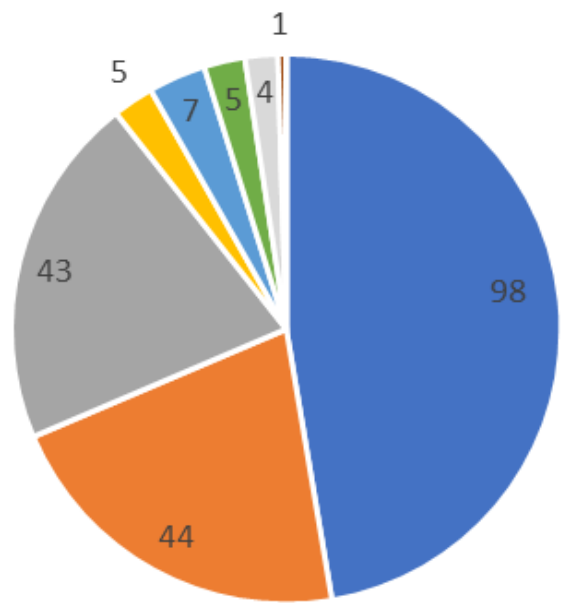
Total Silence: 76.57 minutes (50%)



- Instruction
- Confer With Assistant
- Praise
- Scold
- Question
- Specific Negative Feedback
- Specific Positive Feedback
- Response to Question
- Positive Modelling
- Negative Modelling
- Physical Assistance
- Humour
- Psychological Variables

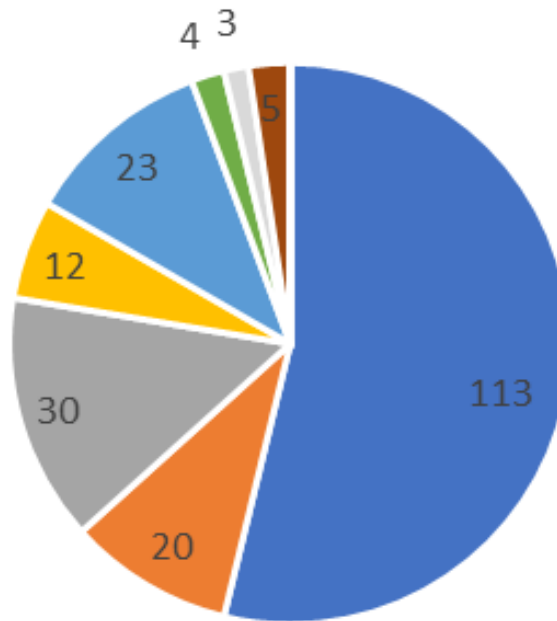
Game1: First Half

Total Silence: 35.33 minutes



- Instruction
- Confer With Assistant
- Praise
- Scold
- Question
- Specific Negative Feedback
- Specific Positive Feedback
- Response to Question
- Positive Modelling
- Negative Modelling
- Physical Assistance
- Humour
- Psychological Variables

Game1: Second Half



Total Silence: 34.17 minutes

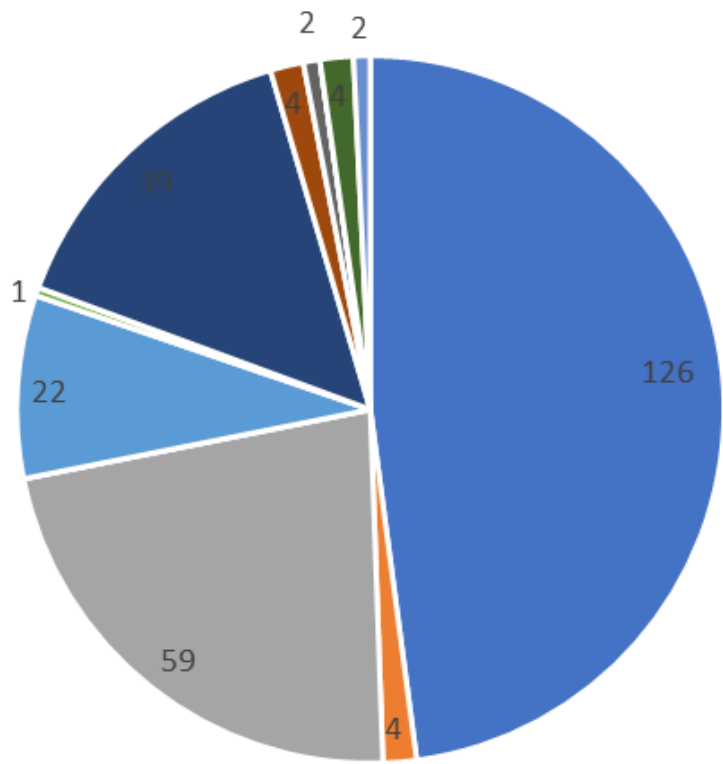
- Instruction
- Confer With Assistant
- Praise
- Scold
- Question
- Specific Negative Feedback
- Specific Positive Feedback
- Response to Question
- Positive Modelling
- Negative Modelling
- Physical Assistance
- Humour
- Psychological Variables

Specific Positive Feedback



Training (Transition Session)

Total Silence: 8.96 minutes (31%)



- Instruction
- Question
- Positive Modelling
- Psychological Variables
- Confer With Assistant
- Specific Negative Feedback
- Negative Modelling
- Praise
- Specific Positive Feedback
- Physical Assistance
- Scold
- Response to Question
- Humour

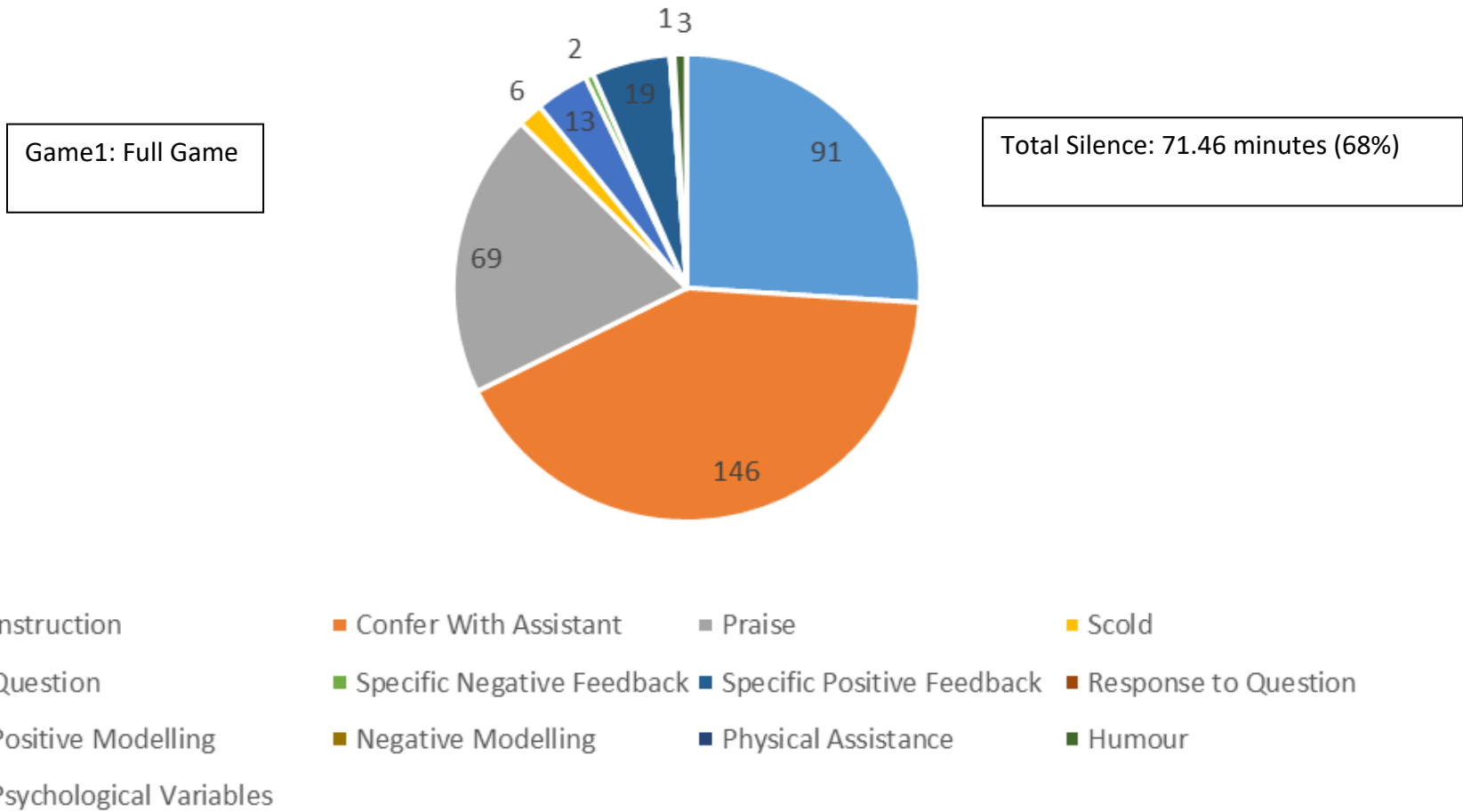
Specific Positive Feedback



Reflective Questions

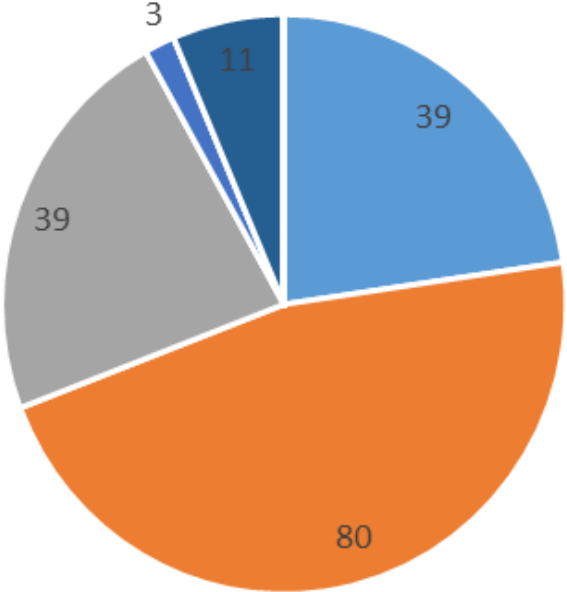
1. Are the behaviours presented here what you expected to see?
2. Are there any behaviours demonstrated that you thought would be different?
3. Are there any behaviours demonstrated that you thought you'd demonstrate more of?
4. Are there any behaviours demonstrated that you thought you'd demonstrate less of?
5. Why might this be the case?
6. To what extent do these behaviours represent your coaching philosophy?
7. Are there any behaviours that you'd like to change next week?
8. What areas would you like to focus on for the next feedback session?

Feedback: Coach Two – Workshop One



Game1: First Half

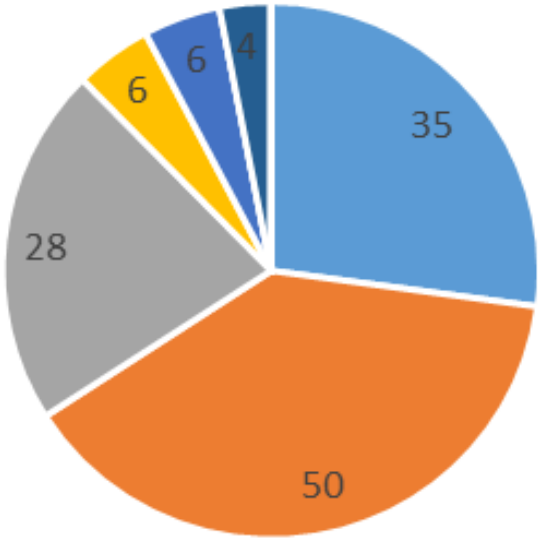
Total Silence: 31.27 minutes



- Instruction
- Confer With Assistant
- Praise
- Scold
- Question
- Specific Negative Feedback
- Specific Positive Feedback
- Response to Question
- Positive Modelling
- Negative Modelling
- Physical Assistance
- Humour
- Psychological Variables

Game1: Second Half

Total Silence: 37.86 minutes



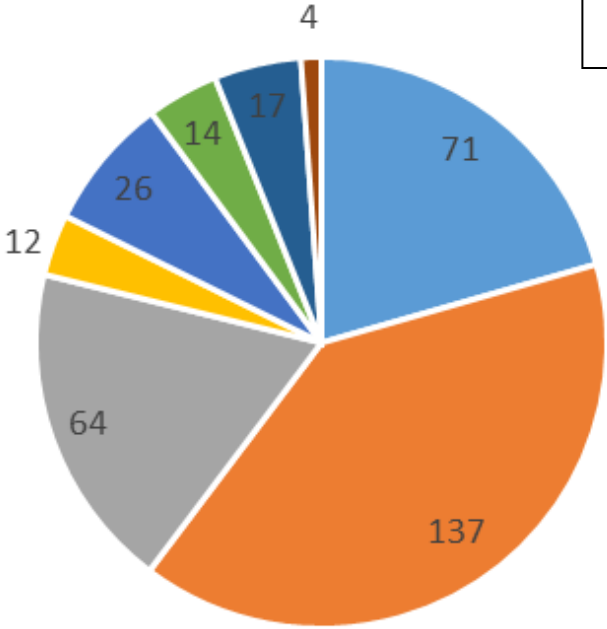
- Instruction
- Confer With Assistant
- Praise
- Scold
- Question
- Specific Negative Feedback
- Specific Positive Feedback
- Response to Question
- Positive Modelling
- Negative Modelling
- Physical Assistance
- Humour
- Psychological Variables

Specific Positive Feedback



Game2: Full Game

Total Silence: 52.45 minutes (52%)



■ Instruction

■ Confer With Assistant

■ Praise

■ Scold

■ Question

■ Specific Negative Feedback

■ Specific Positive Feedback

■ Response to Question

■ Positive Modelling

■ Negative Modelling

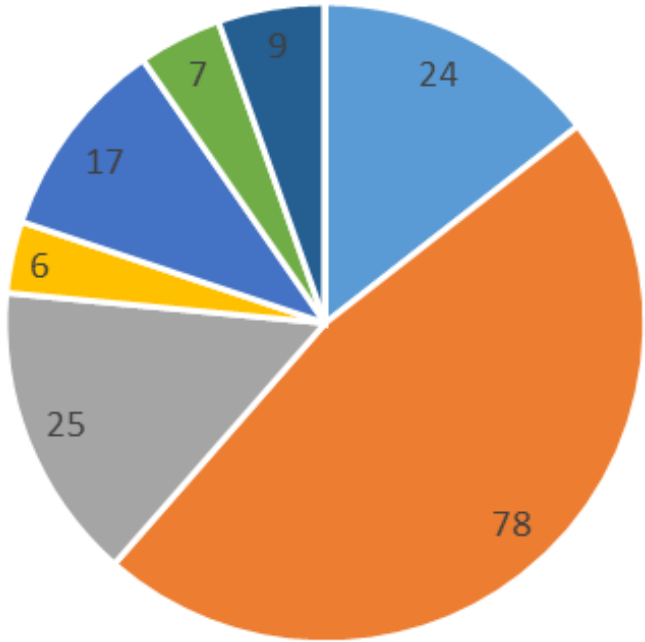
■ Physical Assistance

■ Humour

■ Psychological Variables

Game2: First Half

Total Silence: 29.56 minutes



■ Instruction

■ Confer With Assistant

■ Praise

■ Scold

■ Question

■ Specific Negative Feedback

■ Specific Positive Feedback

■ Response to Question

■ Positive Modelling

■ Negative Modelling

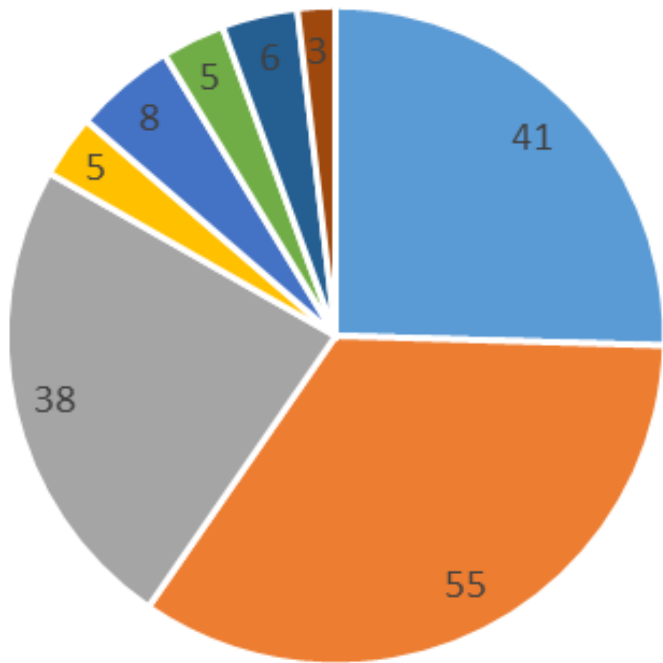
■ Physical Assistance

■ Humour

■ Psychological Variables

Game2: Second Half

Total Silence: 18:59 minutes



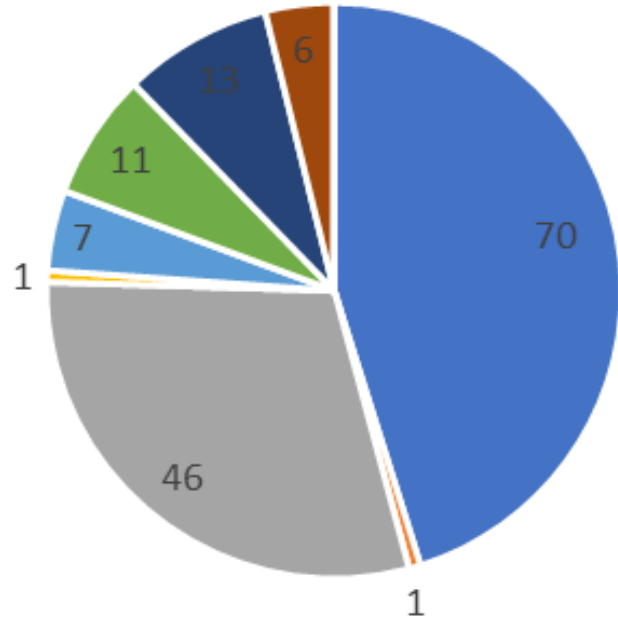
- Instruction
- Confer With Assistant
- Praise
- Scold
- Question
- Specific Negative Feedback
- Specific Positive Feedback
- Response to Question
- Positive Modelling
- Negative Modelling
- Physical Assistance
- Humour
- Psychological Variables

Questions



Training (Transition Session)

Total Silence: 14.84 minutes (53%)



- Instruction
- Question
- Positive Modelling
- Psychological Variables
- Confer With Assistant
- Specific Negative Feedback
- Negative Modelling
- Praise
- Specific Positive Feedback
- Physical Assistance
- Scold
- Response to Question
- Humour

Questions



Reflective Questions

1. Are the behaviours presented here what you expected to see?
2. Are there any behaviours demonstrated that you thought would be different?
3. Are there any behaviours demonstrated that you thought you'd demonstrate more of?
4. Are there any behaviours demonstrated that you thought you'd demonstrate less of?
5. Why might this be the case?
6. To what extent do these behaviours represent your coaching philosophy?
7. Are there any behaviours that you'd like to change next week?
8. What areas would you like to focus on for the next feedback session

Teaching Diary

Before starting the Professional Doctorate in Sport and Exercise Psychology, I worked at a professional football club (West Bromwich Albion F.C.) as ‘Head of Sport Psychology’. My role at the club was to oversee the provision of sport psychology across the entire academy (U9-U23) and meant I had to deliver workshops to players, parents, coaches, and wider support staff on a regular basis. For example, a normal day could consist of me delivering a workshop to U9 players in the morning, followed by a staff in-service in the evening. Essentially, I was beginning to gain a lot of experience of tailoring my communication methods to ensure I had an impact on a wide variety of audiences. I was also becoming used to being observed by high-profile staff members and players, as well as receiving regular (and mostly critical) feedback. At almost exactly the same time that I started the Professional Doctorate, I left my role at West Bromwich Albion F.C. and gained the position of ‘Lecturer of Sport Psychology’ at the University of Bolton. Ironically, I had gained this academic position as a result of my applied practice, but I had no experience/training in relation to teaching within a higher education institution. I quickly learnt that the environment of professional football is vastly different from the environment at a University. I had transitioned from a highly pressured environment, in which I would regularly receive feedback, to an environment that was very slow-paced, in which no one seemed concerned with how I delivered my lectures (beyond me just turning up!). I wasn’t formally observed until nine months into my role and this was only because I’d requested it! Now, on paper, this seems like a positive change. No one to criticise or ‘banter’ my delivery style, no one to shout at me for delivering a 21-minute workshop to the U23 group, when it should have been 20 minutes (because the players needed to get to the gym). However, I really struggled with this change of environment. Without the regular feedback I was used to receiving, I felt lost. I didn’t know how to deliver an effective lecture and I didn’t know what areas I needed to develop to improve. At this point, I knew my delivery style wasn’t at a standard I was happy with and I had accepted that no one else would support me in improving this. I had to rely on my own self-reflections. One of the main issues in the first six months at the University was the anxiety I was experiencing whilst delivering the lectures. This anxiety was much more than I had

experienced at West Bromwich Albion F.C. and I couldn't understand this, because in comparison, I was under less pressure and would face less scrutiny and criticism if I made a mistake with the students. However, with time and continuous reflections, I came to understand that it wasn't who I was delivering to, but my delivery style. With no formal training on how to deliver a lecture, I automatically used my old lecturers as a frame of reference as to how to deliver a 'good' lecture. However, this involved me providing lots of information, critically discussing theory in detail, including lots (and lots) of slides on my PowerPoints and essentially adopting the role of 'expert'. I felt I needed to demonstrate my knowledge to the students to justify my place at the front of the room. What I hadn't realised at the time was, me as 'expert' only served to increase my anxiety and bore the students! I was uncomfortable and ineffective, and something needed to change. The biggest change happened when I realised that my 'academic identity' or approach to the role was in complete contrast to my 'practitioner identity'. When delivering workshops to athletes I was predominantly client-led and used questions to engage my audience. Now, in an academic environment, I had stopped asking questions and was very practitioner (lecturer) led. This dramatic shift in approach was causing an incongruence with my approach to service delivery and was the source of all my anxiety. I decided to enrol on the PgCert and was exposed to pedagogical theories and more importantly a supervisor who seemed to care about my development as an academic (finally!). One of the theories that seemed to closely align with my beliefs about how teaching should be conducted was Constructive Alignment (Biggs, 2014). The idea that learning should be co-constructed between the learning and teacher matched my ontological and epistemological views that one singular reality does not exist, and we experience reality subjectively. Hence, I began to view the teaching process as more collaborative (Mascolo, 2009) and moved away from positioning myself as the expert in the room. I also began to utilise the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2010) within my teaching practice, by attempting to create a motivational climate that would satisfy my students' basic psychological needs (competence, autonomy, and relatedness). This dramatically improved the relationships I was able to develop with my students (Aregbeyen, 2010) and improved my students' learning (Adeyele & Yusuff, 2012). However, the most important thing this course provided me was time; time to reflect and discuss my challenges with other academics in a similar stage of development. After surviving (just about) my first semester at the University, I decided to completely change my approach to teaching. The following

example highlights my delivery on the ‘Sport and Exercise Psychology in Professional Practice’ (HE6) module immediately following this shift in delivery style.

Although this module was a third-year module, I had never met the students before. So, just as I would when meeting a client for the first time, I wanted to understand the students’ backgrounds, their journeys, and their aspirations. Already this was a marked shift from my previous six months in the role, where I was just delivering theory at the students, regardless of them as individuals. In my first session with the students, I used a few tasks to assess their knowledge of the subject area and asked them to complete a ‘performance profile’. One of the main aspects of this profile was to understand their career aspirations and to gain a better understanding of how I and the topic area could help them achieve this goal. I had also decided to integrate employability skills (see Appendix: GAME matrix) into my teaching throughout this module, which helped me to support the individual behind the student (just as I would support the individual behind the athlete). I was already beginning to demonstrate a closer alignment between me as practitioner and me as lecturer. The plan was to teach these employability skills alongside the topic area each week; specifically using my applied experience to facilitate this (see Appendix: Lecture Examples). I also wanted to track the students’ progress throughout the course of the module at both a group and individual level (See appendix: Employability Skills). This allowed me to develop them theoretically, but also prepare them for life after university by making them more employable. Throughout the course of the semester, I would also meet with all the students on an individual basis to provide them with formative feedback and give them an opportunity to discuss their experiences at University. This allowed me to tailor my support to each individual and ensure they had the resources in place to reach their own potential within the module. This module proved to be the most enjoyable teaching experience I had had so far in my career. The anxiety had gone. I was delivering lectures congruent to my approach as a practitioner, I was developing good relationships with my students, and I felt I was having more impact on their development as both students and more broadly as people. To assess whether or not this was the case, I spent time asking the students for feedback on the module (see Appendix: Student Feedback) and being formally observed by colleagues (see Appendix: Peer Supervision Feedback). I was very happy with the response I received. The students seemed to feel valued throughout the module and this had had a positive impact on their development.

At this stage of my development (around 12 months into the Professional Doctorate) I felt I had found an approach to teaching/dissemination that worked in both professional sport and academia. I now wanted to demonstrate this through my teaching case study, where I was asked to deliver a series of workshops to the coaches at a professional football club based in the North-West of England. This meant my teaching journey was beginning to come full circle (football to academia to football). However, regardless of my experience within professional football, I had just adapted to the environment of a University and was now being ‘thrown’ back into the critical, fast-paced environment of professional football. Whilst I had no plans to change my delivery style, I was now under different constraints. Instead of the three hours I had with my students, I now had 20 minutes with the coaches. Instead of the pre-planned room allocation (with all the necessary equipment) at University, I now had no idea where I would deliver my presentation and whether or not I would have the equipment needed. Fortunately, I had already worked with one of the coaches whilst on placement at Everton F.C. during the Sport Psychology (MSc) and so was able to take my time at the start of the intervention to understand the environment the workshops would be delivered in. This also provided me with an opportunity to assess the needs of the individual coaches I would be working with. Details of how I conducted a needs analysis, developed the intervention, delivered the intervention, and evaluated the intervention have already been provided in the Teaching Case Study. The purpose of this extract is to provide a critical reflective commentary into the processes and impact of this intervention, which couldn’t be included within the case study itself:

In my experience, a large factor contributing towards the successful delivery of coach education workshops, centres around receiving ‘buy-in’ from the coaches themselves. Coaches can be resistant to receiving feedback from individuals that they don’t view as credible in their world. During the intervention, I was able to achieve credibility (and buy-in) in a number of ways. Firstly, I had started my career as a coach and had relevant coaching qualifications to support my experiences at both grassroots and professional levels. I also had years of experience at Everton F.C. and West Bromwich Albion F.C. successfully delivering coach education workshops, both in formal settings (classroom based) and informal settings (on the grass with the coaches). Secondly, I had already worked with one of the coaches in the past, which had led to the successful integration of sport psychology into the coaching context (Wadsworth et al., 2018). This meant I had an

existing relationship with one of the key stakeholders at the club at which this intervention would be delivered. In fact, he was the individual who had requested the intervention and acted as my gatekeeper into this environment. He also held the most senior position at the club, which meant gaining credibility with the other coaches came by association with him first and foremost. However, one of the challenges throughout this intervention was the lack of time I was able to dedicate to the initial stages of the intervention, which meant I wasn't present at the club as much as I would have liked. As demonstrated within the Teaching Case Study, I overcame this challenge by creating a career-long internship for one of my students from the University of Bolton. This meant that initially, I had to take a different approach to service-delivery, by working through this individual in the first instance. This provided me with an opportunity to develop another approach to teaching/dissemination in this context, which centred around the individual supervision of this student within an applied setting. Hence, not only did this Teaching Case Study provide me with an opportunity to deliver bespoke workshops to the coaches, it also gave me my first experience as a 'supervisor'. However, this wasn't without its challenges. My lack of presence at the club in the initial stages meant that I wasn't able to make a full assessment of the environment and the coaches myself and so had to rely on the observations of the student. This meant understanding the individual needs of the coaches took longer than usual and impacted the start of the workshop delivery. Furthermore, it also meant I wasn't able to fully assess the coaches' motivation towards the intervention. One of the initial challenges that arose was the motivation of the coach that had requested the intervention (hereby referred to as Coach One). With time I came to understand that Coach One's motivation for the intervention was driven by the earlier publication success we had achieved in the last intervention and not solely based on his genuine want to change his coaching practice. Clearly this could have had a dramatic impact on the intervention itself, because I was, to a certain extent, reliant on his buy-in and passion for the intervention, for it to be a success with the other coaches. Coach One had also had a significant shift in his coaching philosophy/behaviours since the last intervention. He had changed roles, from a development coach (working with the U12s), to the Academy Manager (working with the U23 squad). This change in roles meant he had changed his approach to coaching from development to win at all cost; an approach that didn't align with my own values and beliefs. I now needed to alter my approach to the start of the intervention. I could no longer rely on the information I had gained through the last

intervention and needed to re-evaluate the coaches' needs to ensure the current intervention was effective under these new circumstances. After evaluating both coaches' needs, it became clear that Coach One's motivation wasn't negatively impacting Coach Two's approach to the intervention. In fact, Coach Two seemed very passionate about this development opportunity and had already started reading some of the literature of coach development. At this point, given the differences between both coaches, I decided to split the intervention (and workshop delivery) and make it more individual based. In essence, the needs and motivations of the coaches were different and so the intervention delivery needed to be adapted to be effective for both coaches and to meet the primary aim of the intervention. Despite these differences, there was one commonality between the coaches. They didn't understand the difference between coaching philosophy (core values that influence a coaches' belief about the coaching process) and playing philosophy (the tactics/system a coach deploys). Upon reflection, I should have spent more time ensuring the coaches understood the language we would be using throughout the intervention. I didn't provide enough clarity in this situation and instead progressed too quickly into the 'main' part of the education programme (behavioural feedback). One of the reasons I rushed this stage, was because I was so eager to start the objective observation of the coaches' delivery. I had identified (and it had been highlighted to be by the reviewers when I published the article) that relying just on the subjective feedback of the coach in relation to the success of the intervention was one of the main weaknesses of the paper (Wadsworth et al., 2018) and this clouded my judgement in the initial stages of the current intervention. Furthermore, when beginning the observation of the coaches' delivery during training and games, it became apparent that they were changing their coaching behaviour because of our presence. For example, one of the secondary aims of the intervention (not discussed in the original case study) was to increase the use of psychology in the coaching sessions (very similar to study 1). However, to improve his own statistics, Coach One would purposely mention the psychological words we were looking to integrate rather than genuinely coach and improve these qualities in his players. Put simply, the initial coaching sessions became fake. We overcame this, by allowing for the first two weeks to act as a familiarity process. This worked well. As the coaches became used to our presence (and the presence of the cameras) they reverted back to their usual coaching behaviours. It was at this stage that we started collecting the data of the coaches' behaviours. The longitudinal approach to the intervention helped us collect data that was more representative of their

usual approach and this allowed us to make more of a genuine change in relation to the coaches' behaviours later in the intervention. It also provided me with informal teaching opportunities (that aren't captured in the Teaching Case Study). For example, my presence on the grass with the coaches allowed me to ask them questions about their delivery style, which had instant impact on the training sessions. Sometimes these informal moments can be more valuable than the formal workshop delivery.

Once we had collected the first set of objective coaching behaviours (examples of which can be found in the Teaching Case Study Appendix), we arranged for the delivery of the first workshops. However, they did not go as planned. I arrived at the club, with the data analysed, my PowerPoint ready, and my questions planned. I knew the environment would, to a certain extent be unpredictable, so I was comfortable delivering the sessions in 20 minutes or in two hours (with or without a projector). However, I wasn't prepared to not deliver them at all. Upon my arrival at the club, I was informed that Coach One was busy dealing with an issue with one of the players and might not be available at all that day. Observation and recording of the training sessions hadn't been a challenge, because it didn't require a change in the coaches' timetable; we could just integrate into their normal routine. However, the coaches' presence at the workshops was now viewed as something additional to their already busy schedules and the first workshop didn't even get started before I was told to re-schedule the workshops (both coaches were too busy and didn't have the time that day). Clearly a different approach was required. I called Coach One that evening, and we agreed that both coaches needed time to reflect on the data before the workshop would be delivered. They also wanted a less structured and rigid workshop timetable and so I provided them with more ownership about when and where they would be delivered. Now, two days before each workshop, I emailed the coaches their presentation and provided them with a chance to write down any comments/questions they had. Having an opportunity to view their data seemed to increase buy-in to the workshop delivery and both coaches then made sure they had time to attend the rest of the workshops. They wanted a chance to ask questions about their delivery, because in some instances (somehow) they didn't agree with the objective data! This is where the video analysis feedback was a huge positive influence on the intervention. During the instances where the coaches disagreed with their data, I was able to show them video footage demonstrating the behaviours they were adamant they had not engaged in. These examples stopped the coaches arguing, but more importantly demonstrated areas that the coaches

wanted to change. These behaviours then became the primary area of focus in the subsequent workshops and further increased the coaches' engagement in the process. The intervention was now naturally evolving and having a lack of structure actually allowed me to meet the ever-changing needs of the coaches throughout the workshop delivery. This also served to improve the relationship I had between the coaches, further increasing the effectiveness of the education workshop.

Despite the coach education workshops meeting the primary aim of the intervention (to enhance the coaches' self-awareness of their coaching behaviours), upon reflection, it had only met this aim at a very basic level. If I was to be critical of the intervention, I would have to highlight that whilst the coaches had an increased awareness of their coaching behaviours, their behaviours didn't actually change as a result of the intervention itself. The environment (training versus match) altered their behaviour, but the intervention didn't encourage the coaches to reflect at a deep enough level to influence long-lasting change. Furthermore, because I hadn't spent enough time highlighting the importance of developing a coherent coaching philosophy at the start of the intervention, the coaches hadn't been able to make the link between their behaviours and their philosophy. As a result, I can almost guarantee that if I was to observe them again now, their coaching behaviours still wouldn't align with their coaching philosophy. There are a number of factors I would change about this intervention if I was to do it again. Firstly, I would have conducted the intervention over a longer period of time (at least one entire season) to allow the coaches time to get used to the feedback process and to make necessary changes to their practice. Secondly, I would have spent more time at the start of the intervention outlining the differences between the coaches' behaviours and their apparent coaching philosophy. By doing this, I feel the intervention would have been better placed to encourage long-lasting change. Thirdly, I would have encouraged the coaches to factor the workshop delivery into their timetable for the season. This would have removed any timetabling issues and would have ensured the coaches prioritised the workshop delivery more as the season progressed. Finally, I would have collected subjective feedback from the players to provide an added layer of feedback throughout the season. This would have allowed the coaches to better understand the needs of their players and encouraged them to shape their coaching sessions to meet these needs. Despite this, this intervention was an improvement on the first coach intervention (Wadsworth et al., 2018), because of the

objective nature of the data collection and the individualised approach to meet the coaches' needs.

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Appendix

GAME Matrix:

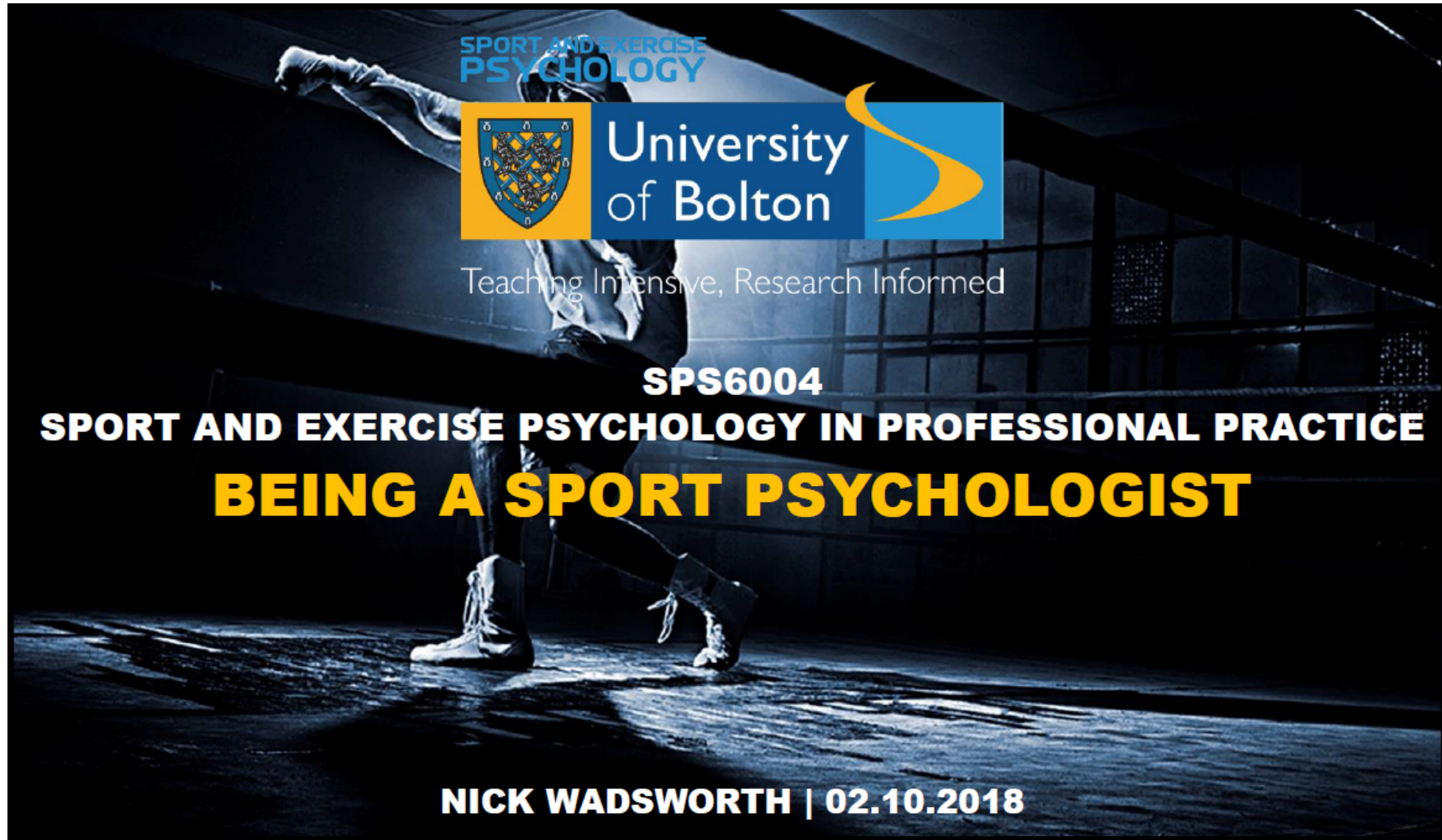


Graduate Attributes Matrix for Employability



Graduate Attribute	Definition
Self-Aware	To have a clear perception of your personality, strengths, weaknesses, thoughts, beliefs, motivations and emotions and how these can affect your subsequent decisions and behaviors through self-reflection
Resilient	To utilise effective coping strategies to withstand, learn from or recover quickly from difficult, stressful and challenging situations.
Problem Solver	To use a range of techniques and consider a number of options in a systematic manner, to find positive solutions to challenging problems posed
Effective Communication	To actively listen, share information, provide direction and express ideas and feelings effectively through a range of different forms (verbally, visually and written) so that the intended message is successfully delivered, received, understood and responded to
Global Citizen	To understand, respect and embrace diversity, different cultures and different ways of working, and to recognise the global issues that affect us
Enterprising	To demonstrate, creativity, innovation, initiative and resourcefulness, and be ready to act as opportunities present themselves
Adaptable	To be flexible and responsive to change in any given situation or work environment, or in response to the needs, wishes or demands of others
Collaborative	To develop a purposeful relationship/team with two or more people to constructively explore ideas and achieve shared goals
Confident	To be able to demonstrate a firm belief in yourself and your abilities
Lifelong Learner	To evaluate personal performance and independently seek and act upon means of improvement to allow for the advancement of skills and knowledge for personal and professional reasons

Table 1. Definitions of each of the GAME employability skills

Lecture Example:



SPORT AND EXERCISE
PSYCHOLOGY

 University
of Bolton 

Teaching Intensive, Research Informed

SPS6004
SPORT AND EXERCISE PSYCHOLOGY IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE
BEING A SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST

NICK WADSWORTH | 02.10.2018

CONFIDENTIALITY: CASE STUDY 1 (MANAGER) BEING A SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST

- **HOW WOULD YOU APPROACH THE FOLLOWING CASE STUDY?**
 - **EIGHT WEEKS INTO THE JOB AS A SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST AT A PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL CLUB**
 - **MANAGER APPROACHES YOU TO DISCUSS THE WORK YOU HAVE BEEN CONDUCTING WITH HIS PLAYERS**
 - **HIGHLIGHTS THAT THE PREVIOUS SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST REGULARLY BREACHED CONFIDENTIALITY**
 - **EXPECTS YOUR WORKING RELATIONSHIP TO BE THE SAME**

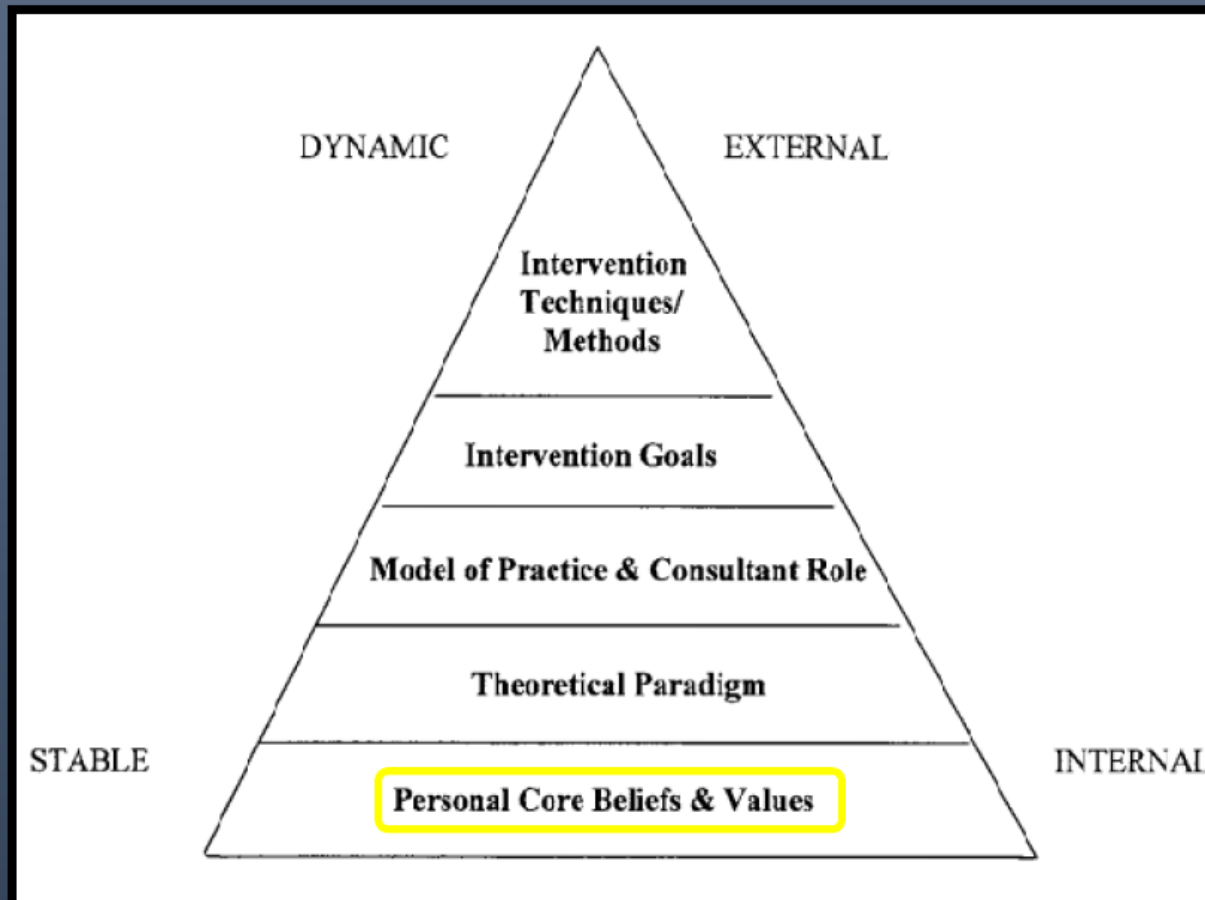


CONFIDENTIALITY: CASE STUDY 2 (PLAYER) BEING A SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST

- HOW WOULD YOU APPROACH THE FOLLOWING CASE STUDY?
 - YOU HAVE ATTENDED A RETAIN/RELEASE MEETING AND ARE NOW AWARE OF THE PLAYERS THAT WILL AND WILL NOT BE RECEIVING A PROFESSIONAL CONTRACT
 - ONE OF THE PLAYERS THAT IS RECEIVING A PROFESSIONAL CONTRACT APPROACHES YOU TO DISCUSS HIS ANXIETIES ABOUT THE UPCOMING DECISION
 - (TAKING PLACE IN THREE WEEKS TIME)
 - HE HIGHLIGHTS HOW THESE ANXIETIES ARE SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCING HIS PERSONAL WELL-BEING AND PERFORMANCE



PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS BEING A SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST



(Dowdall, Chavira & Davis, 2004)

PRESENTATION

BEING A SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST

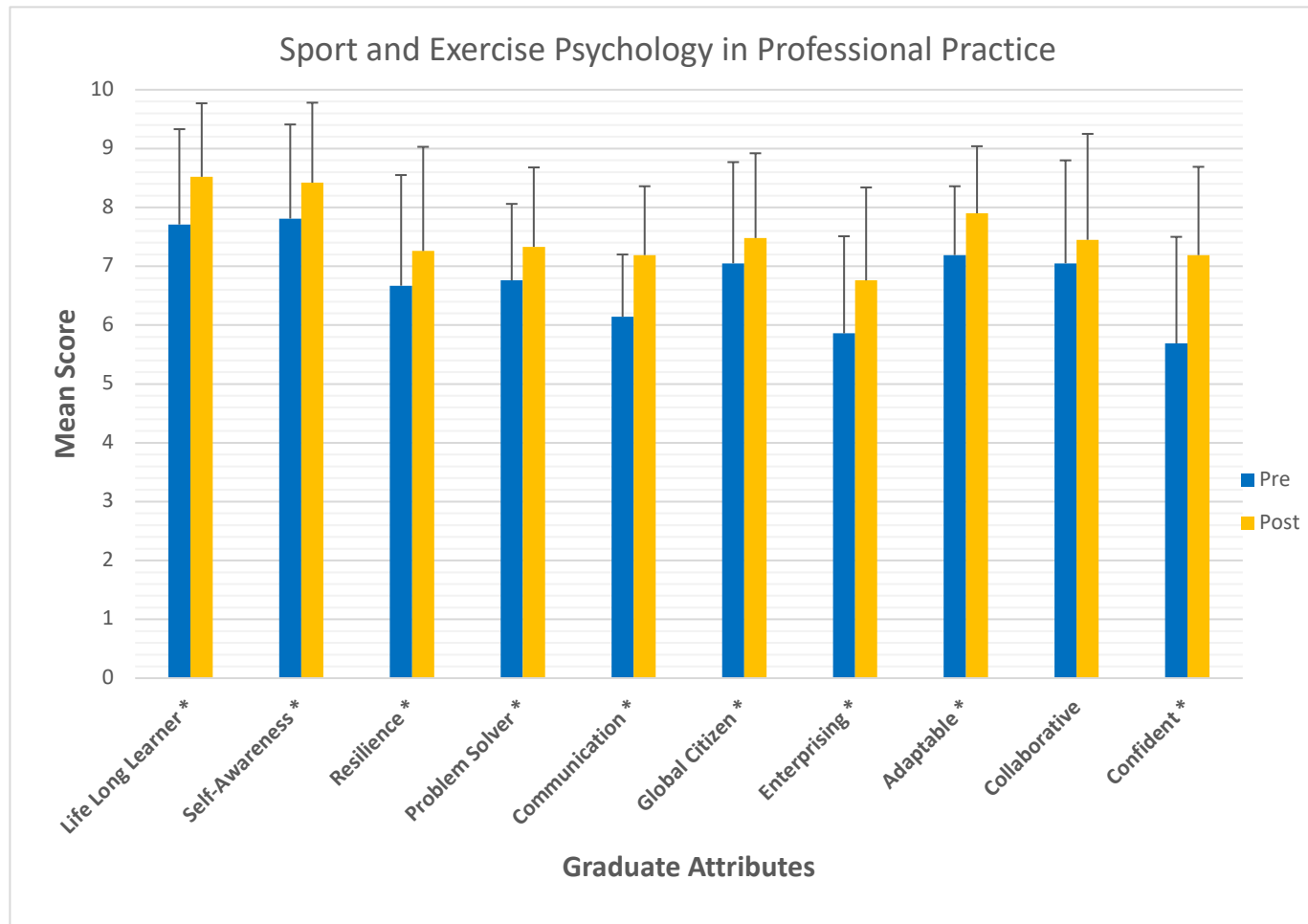
**AS A GROUP, DELIVERY A 5 MINUTE PRESENTATION
OUTLINING YOUR PHILOSOPHY AS A SPORT
PSYCHOLOGIST AND HOW YOU WOULD IMPROVE THE
PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE AT ARSENAL F.C.**

AUDIENCE:

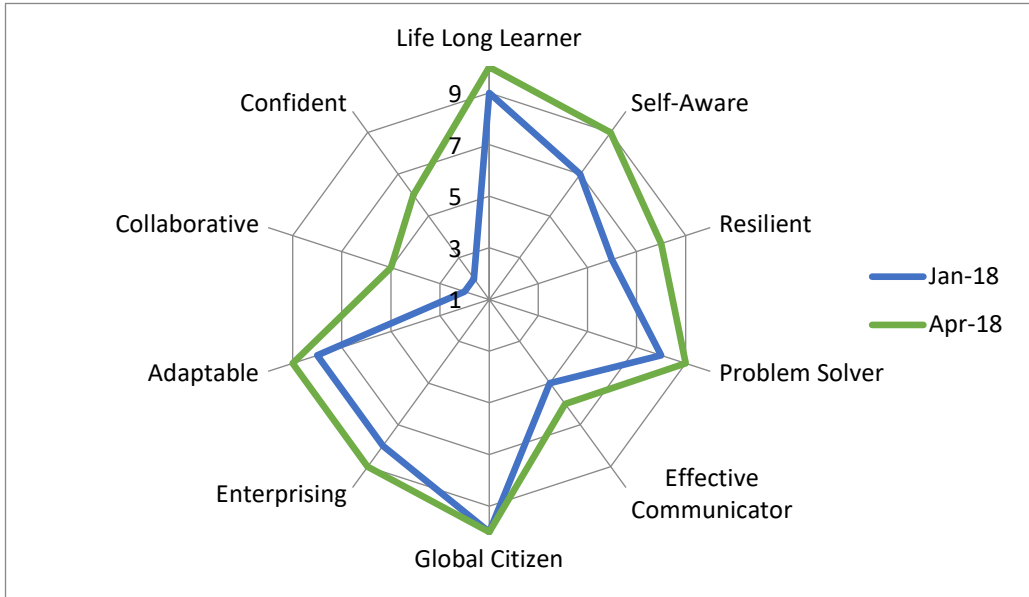
BE PREPARED TO ASK CHALLENGING QUESTIONS



Employability Skills



(*) indicates that the difference between pre and post scores reached a significant level



Student Feedback

NR (Sport and Exercise Psychology in Professional Practice)

Nick is an amazing lecturer and cares a great deal about his students and works to bring out the best in them, such as continuous self-development through performance profiling to help build employability skills.

Within 4 months I have managed to develop and build on my employability skills, for example I have managed to build on my confidence through continuous engagement with class discussions and debates led by Nick, which ultimately helped the development of my presentation skills for my up and coming assessments.

Nick's delivery on the psychology module was great and always interesting. Before I started the module I was already aware of Psychology but due to Nick's delivery I now find Sports Psychology fascinating and I am eager to learn more about it, which is why I have decided to base my dissertation around Sports Psychology.

LS (Sport and Exercise Psychology in Professional Practice)

As a Sport Science student, I had the privilege to have Nick as my Sport Psychology lecturer.

I have started this module being convinced that everything is black and white, however I must admit Nick has completely changed my outlook. As a fitness instructor I certainly started acting far more professionally and became much more understanding towards my clients, who without a doubt benefited from the positive influence Nick has had on me.

At all the times I have found Nick to be very well structured with his lecture classes planned to cover all content needed to be delivered, as well as his ability and drive to always put a significant focus on class engagement and group discussions.

Nick has always put an emphasis on developing employability skills. I cannot thank him enough for the time and effort he has put into this specific area. Nobody has really emphasised employability up till now and exactly what separates Nick from the others, his drive, determination and commitment level is to be admired.

Nick has always attended lectures early to ensure any support we needed throughout the module. Supporting that, he always stressed his constant support availability through e-mails. I personally always received prompt response whenever I needed clarification on given topic.

I truly feel privileged to have had Nick as my lecturer. He has helped me to grow in so many ways and for that I will always be grateful.

RC (Sport and Exercise Psychology in Professional Practice)

During my 4 years at the University of Bolton I would say Nick has been the best lecturer I have had for numerous reasons.

I have grown to believe University is more than just the degree and this is something Nick has successfully helped me understand, in particular through the delivery of the psychology module he delivered to my class this year. Consequently, I have managed to develop a very high level of self-awareness where I can critically evaluate myself and weak areas I can improve on, as well as being more aware strengths I already have. Had Nick not spent the time to help me work through issues related to University work and life outside of University, I highly doubt I would be in the position I am in now. This new found self-awareness has gone a long way to preparing me for life after University in terms of employment and life in general.

In addition to this, I largely attribute the standard of my dissertation to Nick's supervision. Although there was still room for improvement, I highly doubt I would have received the provisional grade I did by doing the work either on my own or being supervised by any other lecturer. My provisional grade has not only shown me I am capable of producing work to a high standard, but also that I can go on to further education and potentially provide something to future research in the area of my dissertation (professional football), as opposed to stopping at being just another undergraduate.

With this being the case I feel if there were more lecturers like Nick that not only challenge students to get the best grades possible, but also support them along the way whilst developing them as an all-round person, more students would leave University with more of an understanding of who they are, what they want to make of themselves, and what they are capable of achieving.

AL (Sport and Exercise Psychology in Professional Practice)

Since approaching Nick for advice surrounding Dissertation project ideas towards the end of my 2nd year, he has made an outstanding contribution to my progress. Due to his excellent work ethic, he ensures he is always available whenever help is needed, making sure students get the most out of their degree. Nick taught the 3rd year Sport and Exercise Psychology module 'Sport and Exercise Psychology in Professional Practice' in which I achieved a high 1st class mark. This module was continuously interesting and engaging, due to his excellent knowledge, communication, and presentation delivery. During this module, I learnt and developed many valuable employability skills, and my knowledge in Sport and Exercise Psychology dramatically increased. As my 3rd year dissertation supervisor, Nick again helped me to achieve a high 1st class mark. He was always available and adaptable to discuss questions or ideas I had, with very fast feedback, helping me remain positive and productive. Additionally, Nick inspired me to further my education in Sport Psychology. During my 3rd year, I discussed career paths within Sport Psychology with him. He continually believed in my abilities, with an extremely positive attitude, resulting in my successful application to study the MSc in Sport Psychology at Liverpool John Moores University. He provided me with insight into what it's like to be a student there, and what I could do beyond the masters. I am very thankful and pleased to have met Nick, and I hope I will have the opportunity to work with him in the future.

Peer Supervision Feedback

- Engage the students by asking questions and encouraging discussion

The students responded very well to the challenging questions often posed and Nick commanded their responses exceptionally well. When students voiced their opinions Nick tailored his response to praise where appropriate, refer to previous or prospective sessions and encourage further thought, or remind the students of the ethical considerations associated when responses crept outside of the professional boundaries that would be expected of this particular cohort in their careers.

Developmental goal 2: (describe the strategies observed in relation to this goal)

- Use real case studies to consolidate students' learning

The observed session included an integrated approach, delivering important theoretical concepts with case study scenarios. Nick challenged the students to link the theory to the applied professional examples with some autonomy, initially encouraging them to speak with their colleagues around them; to explore their thoughts and opinions, and then promoted wider group discussion. Nick was also clear to break down particularly complex content into smaller pieces, where appropriate.

Developmental goal 3: (describe the strategies observed in relation to this goal)

- Answer questions clearly

In addition to the points mentioned around developmental goal 1 above, as the session developed, more students engaged in the challenge voiced their opinions, presumably, as they grew in confidence. It was clear from the quality of discussion that the students had a strong rapport with Nick, respect for his subject knowledge, and were engaging in thinking about the theoretical content in the professional contexts. I think it was essential to the success of the session that Nick's responses were always positive, and never dismissive. When the students offered their opinions verbally - and on occasions where it was clear that the student had perhaps missed the target a little - Nick was clear to always thank them for input and refocus their thoughts politely in the correct direction.

What are your impressions on the session observed?

- The observed session was exceptionally well structured and focused at meeting the learning outcomes and achieving the developmental goals set out by the tutor.

What aspect(s) went particularly well?

- The level of engagement with the group was especially commendable considering the cramped learning environment and large group

Systematic Review

A Systematic Review Exploring the Reflective Accounts of Applied Sport and Exercise Psychology Practitioners

Abstract

This article presents a systematic review of the literature exploring the reflective and autobiographical accounts of applied sport and exercise psychology practitioners. Following a systematic search of the literature, a total of 66 studies were included within the review, which were analysed using thematic content analysis. Analysis of the reflective accounts resulted in the creation of nine higher order themes: *Relationships with Clients, Cultural Awareness, Practitioner Individualization, Developing a Philosophy of Practice, Anxiety, Reflective Practice, Support, Ethical Practice and Measuring Practitioner Effectiveness*. In addition, a comprehensive method of critical appraisal is designed and presented to help researchers better understand and judge the quality of reflective accounts of applied experiences. The article also includes recommendations for future research, such as the use of narrative analysis to provide further insight into applied practitioners' experiences. Based on the results, the review ends by providing practical implications, which are tailored to match the specific demands of the different development stages and include, creating peer support networks for trainee practitioners, highlighting the importance of self-care for the newly qualified practitioners and a focus on continual reflection and learning for the experienced practitioners.

Keywords: reflective practice, practitioner development, applied sport and exercise psychology

The development of competence and excellence as an applied practitioner is related to an individual's ability to regulate themselves as a person and practitioner (Poczwadowski, 2017). Applied sport and exercise psychology practitioners often find

themselves as the key instrument to service delivery and so successfully managing the self is essential in delivering effective interventions within an applied setting (Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011). Furthermore, developing high levels of self-awareness (understanding who you are, what you do, and why you do what you do) is suggested to be key when pursuing excellence in applied service delivery, because it allows practitioners' to better understand their core values and beliefs and how they influence the consultancy process (Poczwadowski, 2017). Moreover, these personal core values and beliefs, which are viewed to be stable across time and context, influence the theoretical paradigm an applied practitioner chooses to use and the expectations the practitioner and client have regarding the consultancy experience (Poczwadowski, Sherman & Ravizza, 2004). Practitioners aware of their own values and attitudes can begin to develop a professional identity (Tod, Hutter & Eubank, 2017), enhance authenticity, ensure congruent practice (Lindsay et al., 2007), and increase knowledge of how an individual's personal qualities are associated with effective service delivery. The personal qualities a practitioner demonstrates, such as authenticity, humility and integrity are perceived to contribute towards successful applied practice (Chandler et al., 2016), allowing a practitioner to genuinely care for and build strong relationships with their clients (Hodge & Sharp, 2011; Prochaska and Norcross, 2010).

Reflective practice can present practitioners with an opportunity to understand, make sense of, and learn from their applied experiences (Knowles et al., 2007; Knowles, Gilbourne, Borrie & Nevill, 2001), and positively influence an individual's development as a person and practitioner (Anderson, Knowles & Gilbourne, 2004). It can also allow an individual to better understand themselves (Fletcher & Maher, 2013) within their context and so provides applied practitioners with an opportunity to generate practice-based knowledge (Cropley et al., 2010; Jones, Evans & Mullen, 2007). In addition, engaging in reflective practice ensures applied practitioners develop a coherent philosophy of practice that can be delivered within the unique culture of professional sport (Larsen, 2017a).

Although reflective articles have been a feature of sport and exercise psychology literature throughout its history, there has been a steady increase in the publication of these reflective accounts since Anderson, Knowles, and Gilbourne (2004) discussed the value of reflective practice. Reflective practice influences all stages of a practitioner's development, enhancing the learning of both trainee (Holt & Streat, 2001; Tonn & Harmison, 2004; Wadsworth et al., 2018) and experienced practitioners (Lindsay, 2017; Mellalieu, 2017;

Tod, 2014). These reflective accounts have included discussions on a wide variety of topics, such as: providing support at Olympic games (Christensen & Aoyagi, 2014; Hung et al. 2008; Males, 2006; Timson, 2006), overcoming ethical challenges in applied practice (Haberl & Peterson, 2006), working with student-athletes (Carr, 2007; Harwood, 2008), enhancing the working alliance (Tod, 2007; Tod, 2008) and engaging with youth athletes (Barker, McCarthy & Harwood, 2011; Cotterill, 2012; Evans & Slater, 2014).

Reflective articles exploring the development of applied practitioners within the field of sport and exercise psychology has grown significantly in recent years, contributing towards a substantial amount of research that focuses on the autobiographical experiences of applied practitioners. To date, there has been no attempt to synthesise this literature. Synthesising this literature will allow us to better understand the experiences that contribute towards the optimal development of applied sport and exercise psychology practitioners and provide multiple stakeholders (education providers, supervisors, students and applied practitioners) with an opportunity to enhance their effectiveness. Collectively understanding the experiences of applied sport and exercise psychology practitioners can help shape the education pathway of applied practitioners (Hutter et al. 2017): improving trainees' experiences, increasing the competency of qualified practitioners, enhancing clients' experiences and growing the reputation of the discipline as a whole (McEwan & Tod, 2015). In addition, it is still unclear how to evaluate a reflective account of applied consultancy experiences. Critically appraising the reflective accounts of applied practitioners will improve the reflective literature, by highlighting strengths and weaknesses of these autobiographical accounts and ensuring that future reflective accounts provide more of a critical and transparent insight into the applied experiences of sport and exercise psychology practitioners.

McEwan and Tod (2015) suggested that to better understand the development of sport and exercise psychology practitioners, we could draw on other disciplines from mainstream psychology. Similarly, theories of counsellor development (Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2009; Worthington, 1987) could provide us with a suitable framework to better understand and synthesise the reflective literature within the field of sport and exercise psychology. Research has found that both counselling psychologists and trainee sport and exercise psychologists adopt rigid approaches when first working with clients and often imitate their mentors during their early-applied experiences (Tod, Anderson & Marchant, 2009). Rønnestad and Skovholt's (2013) theory of counselor development is one model

that could provide a suitable theoretical foundation when attempting to understand the development of applied sport and exercise practitioners. This theory, which was developed by interviewing over 100 counselling practitioners, highlights six stages of practitioner development (Lay-Helper, Beginning Student, Advanced Student, Novice Professional, Experienced Professional and, Senior Professional), successfully adopting a life-span perspective of professional consultancy. For example, this model highlights that upon graduation, practitioners often become disillusioned with how their training has prepared them for the challenges they are facing and shift their focus from external (e.g. relying on models and theories) to internal (exploring their own strengths and weaknesses) to develop an 'internal expertise' (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2013). Reflective practice is key to gaining this understanding and has been essential to the counselor development literature, which is why these models could provide a suitable framework when exploring the reflective accounts of applied sport and exercise psychology practitioners.

The purpose of this systematic review is to explore the reflective and autobiographical accounts of applied sport and exercise psychology practitioners. The specific aims of the review are to a) synthesize the reflective accounts of applied sport and exercise psychology practitioners and highlight themes that represent practitioner development across time and, (b) critically appraise the reflective practice literature and present a method for understanding and critiquing the autobiographical accounts of applied sport and exercise psychology practitioners. The review will be guided by Rønnestad and Skovholt's (2013) theory of counsellor development and will improve real-world processes, by informing key decision makers and stakeholders within the field of sport and exercise psychology about key experiences that contribute towards optimal practitioner development. To provide answers to these questions, a thematic content analysis of the data was conducted (Braun, Clarke & Weate, 2016), to describe and identify the themes and patterns within the data. The data analysis process will be outlined in the following section.

Method

To enhance transparency, the following review has been conducted in line with the ENTREQ framework (Tong et al., 2012). A table, outlining these guidelines, can be found in the Appendix (*Table 5*).

Developing Keywords for Electronic Search

A scoping review was first conducted to develop key search terms that would ensure a comprehensive systematic search of the relevant literature. This scoping process involved reading seven reflective articles. The seven reflective articles identified (Cecil, 2012; Collins, Evans-Jones & O'Connor, 2013; Cox, Neil, Oliver & Hanton, 2016; Haberl & McCann, 2012; Tod, Eubank & Nesti, 2015; Williams & Anderson, 2012; Woodcock, Richard & Mugford, 2008), which were selected as they provided an insight into the experiences of practitioners at different stages of development, were read and key words were highlighted. These key words were then placed into categories, which allowed for the development of the search terms to be used in the following procedure. The key search terms are included in the next paragraph.

Formal Search

The subsequent search strategy, which was initially conducted in March 2018, included (a) an online search of the following electronic databases: *Web of Science*, *SPORTDiscus*, *PsychINFO*, *PsychARTICLES*, *Open Grey*, and *Scopus* using the following search terms: *Sport Psychol** AND (*Adaptability* OR *Anxiety* OR *Relationships* OR *Identity* OR *Reflection* OR *Philosophy*) AND (*Supervision* OR *Education* OR *Development*); (b) a table of content search, which explored all of the titles and abstracts of all volumes in the following journals: *The Sport Psychologist*, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology in Action*, *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology*, *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *Sport and Exercise Psychology Review* and *Case Studies in Sport and Exercise Psychology* and (c) a forwards and backwards search of all retrieved articles, which involved exploring the reference lists of all original articles found and searching for all papers that had cited the original paper found.

The search of the electronic databases, yielded 1,305 hits and after removing duplicates and cross-referencing with the forward and backwards searches, a total of 994 potential articles remained (see PRISMA diagram in Figure 1). The final 994 articles were screened against the inclusion criteria, which were that the paper must be (a) a self-reflective account that focused on the applied experiences of sport and exercise psychology practitioners (b) qualitative or autobiographical, (c) papers of any year, (d) English

language papers, and (e) published or unpublished. Following this initial screening process, 925 of the 994 articles were excluded; leaving a total of 69 articles that met the inclusion criteria required for the systematic review. A further three articles were excluded when conducting the full-text eligibility criteria. Two of these articles focused on the supervisory experience and one focused on the process of reflective practice itself, rather than focusing on the applied experiences of sport and exercise practitioners directly. The final pool of articles included 66 reflective accounts of applied practitioners' service-delivery experiences.

Data Extraction

The remaining 66 articles were read and re-read to ensure the data extraction and data analysis process could be conducted on two levels. The primary author first extracted and recorded the: authors' name(s), date of publication, gender, experience level, topic of reflection, sport, country, and the theory underpinning the reflective account (see Table 2).

The reflective accounts were then read again to allow the primary author to conduct the thematic content analysis. During both stages, the articles were placed in chronological order to help explore how topics discussed in the reflective accounts had changed across time. Similarly, the experience level of the authors was recorded to identify themes that were representative of the differing developmental stages of the applied practitioners. Identifying themes that were representative of differing development stages was undertaken to mirror the development stages identified by Rønnestad and Skovholt (2013) in their research on counsellor development. Trainee practitioners were identified as those individuals who had not yet achieved accreditation through their respective governing body and mirrored the *Beginning Student* and *Advanced Student* phases. Newly qualified practitioners were those individuals who had achieved accredited status five years prior to writing the article and mirrored the *Novice Professional* phase. Experienced practitioners were identified as individuals with five or more years' experience at the point the reflective account was written and mirrored the *Experienced Professional* and *Senior Professional* phases.

Analysis of the Practitioners' Reflections

Philosophical Approach. Thematic analysis was chosen as a method of data analysis because it allowed for the identification and creation of patterns, which focused on

meaning across the data set. The creation of patterns provided the research team with the opportunity to gain an insight into the shared experiences of applied sport and exercise psychology practitioners (Braun, Clarke, & Terry, 2014). Thematic analysis is grounded in a interpretivist paradigm, informed by ontological relativism and epistemological constructivism and has been used in the current review to better understand the experiences of applied practitioners (Cohen & Manion, 1994), by focusing on the perspective of the individual being studied (Creswell, 2003). Thematic analysis allowed the research team to recognize and understand that these individuals exist as part of a social setting and this understanding facilitated the development of a close relationship between the research team and autobiographical accounts. During the data analysis process, the research team acknowledged how each researcher's philosophies and experiences contributed towards the themes presented (Yilmaz, 2013).

Analysis Procedure. The procedure utilized during the data analysis phase of this systematic review followed Braun, Clarke, and Weate's (2016) thematic content analysis. During Phase One the primary author immersed himself within the data set by reading and re-reading the 66 reflective accounts and noting any emerging areas of interest in relation to the research question. During Phase Two, the primary author built upon these emerging areas of interest by creating codes. The codes were created by inputting data directly from the article into a spreadsheet. The primary author attempted to use similar language to the authors in the articles and created codes that were interpretive in nature by consistently considering the overall focus of the research. Phase Three involved searching for themes amongst the codes. The codes generated from the data set were transferred into a separate document and grouped together to create themes that represented patterned responses from the reflective accounts. The codes were also colour coordinated to highlight the experience level of the practitioner who had reflected on that particular topic (for example, trainee practitioners were coded in blue to separate them from newly chartered practitioners who were coded in orange). Due to the large data set generated from the structured search strategy, Phase Four focused on reviewing the themes generated in relation to the overall purpose of the research. This process involved transferring the themes from the document, onto a white board, allowing the primary researcher to review the codes and ensure they directly represented the themes created. Furthermore, it also provided the primary researcher with an opportunity to view all codes and themes collectively, to gain an insight into the bigger picture in relation to the research question. Phase Five focused on naming

the themes and highlighting the essence or unique aspect of each theme. Phase Six involved representing the themes in a way that provided a critical insight into the experiences of applied sport and exercise practitioners.

Data Representation. To achieve the primary aim of the research, the emerging themes were first created and then, where appropriate, compared with Rønnestad and Skovholt's (2013) theory of counsellor development. The themes were compared to seek parallels between the emerging themes and existing theoretical frameworks. For example, the five sub-themes: *practitioner self-care*, *multiple roles*, *practitioner identity*, *authenticity/congruence* and *blurred boundaries*, were combined to create the theme *Practitioner Individualization*. *Practitioner Individualization* was then directly compared with Rønnestad and Skovholt's (2013) first theme regarding Integration of the Personal and Professional Selves. Furthermore, themes were identified that represented the unique experiences of practitioners in a particular stage of development. For example, the theme *Anxiety*, which represented the experiences of trainee or early career practitioners, was directly related to Rønnestad and Skovholt's (2013) seventh theme regarding Anxiety. The themes presented provide an insight into practitioner development over time, as well as the specific challenges experienced at different development stages.

Critical Appraisal

To critically appraise the reflective practice literature, a tailored approach needed to be developed because no benchmarks or criteria currently exist. We drew on non-foundational approach to appraise the 66 papers (Smith & Sparkes, 2013). To engage in a non-foundational approach, the primary researcher reflected upon the values or characterising traits (Smith, 1993) that could be relevant when appraising reflective or autobiographical accounts. When adopting this non-foundational approach from a relativist perspective (Smith & Deemer, 2000; Smith & Hodkinson, 2005; Sparkes, 2002), a number of values were identified that resonated with the primary researcher: *Interesting*, *Honest*, *Innovative*, *Expressive*, *Ethical* and *Meaningful* (see Table 1). These values were then aligned to the critical appraisal criteria. Six key criteria were used to help appraise the research: *engaging*, *transparent*, *adding to existing knowledge*, *rich description*, *ethical approach* and *level of reflection*. *Engaging* specifically focused on the writing style of the authors and how they represented themselves within the story they were telling to captivate the reader. *Transparency* referred to the level of critical insight the authors provided in

relation to their applied experiences. *Adding to existing knowledge* focused on how the authors demonstrated innovation, which directly contributed towards new ideas in research and/or applied practice. *Rich description* focused on the extent to which the authors provided support, through the data they presented, for the claims they were making about their applied experiences. An *ethical approach* was judged on how the authors explicitly considered their ethical practice in relation to their specific client group. Finally, the *level of reflection* focused on the extent to which the authors had reflected on the topic they had stated at the start of the research, to achieve the primary aim of the research.

The primary author scored each item good (3), satisfactory (2) or poor (1), which were then converted into a traffic light system (green, amber and red respectively; Higgins & Green, 2011). The traffic light system helped identify how the reflective accounts could be understood by the reader in relation to the appraisal criteria (see *Appendix B: Critical Appraisal*). The appraisal criteria was not used to exclude papers from the systematic review, but instead identified strengths and weaknesses in relation to the writing of reflective accounts. Furthermore, the use of a non-foundational approach acknowledges that the judgement of the reflective accounts can change and is subjective, depending on the context, purpose and the reviewer conducting the critical appraisal. This criteria does allow for a systematic and transparent method to reflect upon and communicate the critical appraisal conducted. The criteria developed within the current review was designed to be used as a guideline, to help readers understand how the papers can help them both practically and theoretically. Given the subjective nature of this non-foundational approach, the critical appraisal method can be adapted to reflect the reviewer's own values.

Results

General Findings

A total of 66 articles were reviewed and included within Table 2. Only seven of the articles (10.6%) were published before 2004 and 59 (89.4%) of the articles were published after 2004. Of the reflective accounts 48 (72.7%) were written by a male practitioner, 13 (19.7%) of the articles were written by a female practitioner and five (7.6%) were written by both male and female practitioners. Trainee practitioners wrote 13 (19.7%) accounts, nine (13.6%) were written by newly qualified practitioners and 44 (66.6%) were written by experienced practitioners. The applied experiences were from a variety of different sports, including: hockey, golf, cricket, equestrian, swimming, rugby, baseball and football and

authors reflected on a number of different topics, such as: providing one-to-one support, developing a life skills programme, working with young athletes and attending an Olympic games. The articles covered a range of countries, including: Australia, Denmark, New Zealand, Taiwan, Romania and South Africa, with the largest proportion of the articles coming from America (22.7%) and the United Kingdom (62.1%). Only 16 (24.2%) of the articles explicitly mentioned the use of a reflective model to structure their reflective/autobiographical accounts, with seven (43.8%) adopting Gibb's (1988) model of reflection to provide structure to their work, two (12.5%) using Bordin's (1994) working alliance model and two (12.5%) using John's (1994) model of reflection to guide their reflection. The rest of the reflective articles used Schon's (1983) theoretical model of reflection, Anderson, Knowles and, Gilbourne's (2004) five stage model, Anderson et al., (2004) model of critical reflection, Tripp's (1993) critical incident reflection and Boud's (1985) reflective learning model (see table 2).

Thematic Analysis Results

Following the thematic analysis of the 66 articles, 30 lower order themes and nine higher order themes were created from the dataset (see Figure 2.). An overview of the themes will be given below, focusing on the meaning of each theme and which group (trainee, neophyte, experienced) predominantly reflected upon this area. Examples will be provided directly from the literature and where appropriate, the themes of the current study will be linked to Rønnestad and Skovholt's (2013) theory of counsellor development. The raw findings from each individual study can be found in the Appendix (*Table 3*).

Relationships with clients. was discussed by practitioners in each of the development stages. Practitioners highlighted the importance of developing trust (Botterill, 1990) and caring for the client (Dorfman, 1990), as well as understanding their unique needs (Bull, 1995). Developing a relationship with the client was consistently discussed as a key component of successful applied service delivery (Anderson, 2014) and was the most prominent theme found throughout the reflective accounts.

Cultural awareness. was predominantly discussed by the experienced practitioners. Trainee practitioners did highlight the importance of immersing themselves within the environment (with the primary focus being on proving their worth (Christensen & Aoyagi, 2014)), but at times struggled to achieve this (Howell, 2017; Rowley, Earle & Gilbourne,

2012). Whereas, experienced practitioners consistently discussed the importance of understanding the culture in which they were situated (Lindsay, 2017; Pattison & McInerney, 2016; Tod, 2014) and how working with and through support staff increased their effectiveness as applied practitioners (Cecil, 2014; Cotterill, 2012; Mellalieu, 2017). It seems one of the reasons experienced practitioners were able to work successfully within the culture of professional sport (in comparison to the trainee practitioners) was because of their high levels of self-awareness (Poczwadowski, 2017). This self-awareness allowed the experienced practitioners to explore and better understand how their professional selves fit into the culture/context in which they were situated (Stambulova & Schinke, 2017) allowing them to deliver effective and culturally sensitive interventions within this applied context (Larsen, 2017a).

Practitioner individualization. was discussed by all practitioners, regardless of experience level. This theme can be closely linked with one of Rønnestad and Skovholt's (2013) themes; 'Optimal Professional Development Involves an Integration of the Personal Self into a Coherent Professional Self'. Trainee and neophyte practitioners consistently reflected upon 'wearing many hats' or adopting multiple roles within an applied setting (Collins, Evans-Jones & O'Connor, 2013; McGregor & Winter, 2017; Timson, 2006; Williams & Andersen, 2012), which inevitably led to questions regarding authenticity and congruence (Christensen & Aoyagi, 2014; Haberl & Peterson, 2006; Holt & Streat, 2001; Lindsay et al., 2007; Mărgărit, 2013). Furthermore, the less experienced practitioners would often face boundary situations with their clients (Christensen & Aoyagi, 2014), where they struggled to separate their personal and professional selves during their consultancy experiences (Collins, Evans-Jones & O'Connor, 2013; Haberl & Peterson, 2006; Williams & Anderson, 2012). On the other hand, the experienced practitioners discussed becoming more relaxed around their clients and not feeling the need to separate their personal and professional selves (Anderson, 2014; Tod, 2014). This suggests that with time and more exposure to applied experiences, practitioners are able to develop a clear and authentic professional identity (Lindsay, 2017; Moran, 2014) allowing the practitioner to experience a sense of congruence in their service delivery (Lindsay, 2017).

Developing a philosophy of practice. was discussed by all practitioners, regardless of experience level. Earlier reflections from experienced practitioners did recognise non-

sporting challenges (Dorfman, 1990; Orlick, 1989), but predominantly focused on the use of mental skills training to improve performance (Halliwell, 1990; Loehr, 1990). More recent accounts from practitioners in each stage of development focused on the importance of holistic support (Evans & Slater, 2014; Lindsay et al., 2007; McArdle & Barker, 2016), by attempting to understand the person behind the athlete (Evans & Slater, 2014; Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006; Lindsay et al., 2007), as well as the link between performance and well-being (Johnson, 2017; Mellalieu, 2017). This was particularly apparent when exploring trainee and neophyte practitioners' recent experiences (Collins, Evans-Jones & O'Connor, 2013; Märgärit, 2013; McGregor & Winter, 2017; Woodcock, Richards & Mugford, 2008).

Anxiety. was predominantly discussed by trainee and neophyte practitioners who would often focus on feelings of self-doubt (Collins & McCann, 2015), apprehension (Katz, 2006), and pressure (Moyle, 2015). This theme can be closely linked with one of Rønnestad and Skovholt's (2013) themes; 'Many Beginning Practitioners Experience Much Anxiety in Their Professional Work'. Attending major events, such as the Olympic games, seemed to intensify the pressure and doubts of the trainee and neophyte practitioners (Christensen & Aoyagi, 2014; Henrikson, 2015; Moyle, 2015), which contributed towards the experience of more negative emotions (helplessness, uselessness and isolation) and feelings of fraudulence during the consultancy process (Collins, Evans-Jones & O'Connor, 2013; Williams & Anderson, 2012)

Reflective Practice. was discussed by all practitioners, regardless of experience level and focused on the importance of understanding core values and beliefs (Cox et al., 2016), as well as links between reflection and development of the practitioner (Gordon, 2014). Applied practitioners engaged in reflective practice for a number of reasons, such as: increasing self-awareness (Woodcock, Richards & Mugford, 2008), enhancing and maintaining development (Tod, 2014), establishing a professional identity (Williams & Anderson, 2012) and gaining a better understanding of the discipline as a whole (Lindsay, 2017).

Support. was discussed by all practitioners, regardless of experience level, and can be closely linked with one of Rønnestad and Skovholt's (2013) themes; 'Interpersonal

Sources of Influence Propel Professional Development’. Trainee and neophyte practitioners in particular, would often highlight the importance of sharing their experiences with empathetic peers (Christensen & Aoyagi, 2014; Timson, 2006).

Ethical Practice. was predominantly discussed by the neophyte practitioners, who often highlighted the desire to build credibility (Lindsay & Thomas, 2014), whilst being cautious of the ethical challenges media involvement could create (Haberl & Peterson, 2006). Furthermore, neophyte practitioners seemed to experience conflict, between the need to promote their services (and gain clients) and the lack of confidence they had to ‘sell their services’ (Collins & McCann, 2015).

Measuring practitioner effectiveness. was discussed by all practitioners, regardless of experience. However, trainee practitioners would often focus on the need to make a difference (Woodcock, Richards & Mugford, 2008) and the pressure to provide a solution (Tonn & Harmison, 2004). Experienced practitioners seemed to judge the quality of their service delivery based on the feedback gained from their clients (Bull, 1995; Neff, 1990) and also discussed the need to add value (Gordon, 2014), especially when working as part of a multi-disciplinary team (Larsen, 2017b).

Critical Appraisal Results

Following the critical appraisal of all 66 articles (*Table 4.*), the strengths and weaknesses of the reflective accounts can be seen in Graph 1. Across the body of literature, the majority of the reflective accounts scored Satisfactory to Good in *Engaging* and *Ethical Approach*. *Level of Reflection* and *Transparency* scored highest in the Good category, meaning that the reflective accounts were written with good critical insight, whilst achieving the primary purpose of the research. *Adding to Existing Knowledge* and *Rich Description*, scored highest in the Poor category, meaning that the reflective accounts didn’t provide enough evidence for the claims being made; preventing some of the research adding to our knowledge in the area. Six of the reflective accounts scored Good in all six categories (Gilbourne & Richardson, 2006; Larsen, 2017a; Lindsay et al., 2007; Lindsay & Thomas, 2014; McGregor & Winter, 2017; Williams & Andersen, 2012) (See *Appendix B*).

Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the reflective and autobiographical accounts of applied sport and exercise psychology practitioners. A total of 66 studies met the inclusion criteria and following a thematic analysis of the literature, nine higher order themes were created: *Relationships with Clients*, *Cultural Awareness*, *Developing a Practitioner Identity*, *Developing a Philosophy of Practice*, *Anxiety*, *Reflective Practice*, *Support*, *Ethical Practice* and *Measuring Practitioner Effectiveness*. In addition to the creation of the above themes, the primary researcher designed a method of critical appraisal to help researchers better understand and judge the quality of reflective and autobiographical accounts. The results of this systematic review advance knowledge in a number of ways.

The first way that the results add to existing knowledge is by highlighting what applied sport and exercise psychology practitioners believe is worth discussing within their reflective accounts, based on their own experiences, challenges and developmental journeys. For example, trainee practitioners' reflections were dominated by the concept of immersion within the sporting environment (Christensen & Aoyagi, 2014), adopting multiple roles within this environment (Collins, Evans-Jones & O'Connor, 2013), authenticity/congruence (Holt & Streat, 2001) and feelings of anxiety and pressure (Woodcock, Richards & Mugford, 2008). Neophyte practitioners reflected more on experiencing a lack of contact time with athletes (McGregor & Winter, 2017), the importance of practitioner self-care (Jackson, 2006), self-promotion (Lindsay & Thomas, 2014) and ethical challenges (Haberl & Peterson, 2006). Whereas, experienced practitioners discussed the need to understand elite sport (Fifer et al., 2008) and its unique culture and environment (Tod, 2014), working with and through support staff (Brooks, 2007), professional identity (Anderson, 2014) and the concept of countertransference (Tod, 2007). Understanding what topics applied practitioners are reflecting on in the different stages of development provides us with a critical overview of the development of applied sport and exercise psychology practitioners over time (from trainee to experienced) and across multiple contexts and cultures, as well as an in-depth insight into the progress of the discipline as a whole. Knowledge of the applied experiences of practitioners in different developmental stages can therefore contribute towards the advancement of the field of sport and exercise psychology by allowing education providers to meet the unique needs and requirements of practitioners and contributing towards their development as competent professionals.

The second way these results are novel is how they highlight a philosophical shift in applied service-delivery over time. With time (development from trainee to experienced) and over time (from 1990 onwards) practitioners' philosophies have shifted from a predominant mental skills/practitioner-led approach, to a more holistic/client-led approach. Earlier reflections seemed to be dominated by the use of mental skills training to improve performance (Bull, 1995; Dorfman, 1990; Halliwell; 1990; Loehr, 1990). However, over time, there seems to be less applied practitioners adopting this 'expert' role (Tod, 2008) and more practitioners discussing the concepts of holistic support (McArdle & Barker, 2016), authenticity (Harberl & Peterson, 2006) and congruence (Lindsay et al., 2007). One of the reasons for this apparent philosophical shift could be due to the current literature providing us with the language and theoretical underpinnings to adopt a broader perspective when attempting to understand elite athletes and applied service delivery. Furthermore, we now have access to a plethora of autobiographical accounts that have created a frame of reference for practitioners to critically understand their own applied experiences and the experiences of others, further contributing towards this philosophical shift.

The third way these results advance knowledge is by providing a unique and comprehensive method of critically appraising the reflective literature, which can be adapted based on the beliefs of the reviewer. By drawing on a non-foundational approach, a framework was created to specifically appraise the reflective accounts. Furthermore, by using a traffic light system (Higgins & Green, 2011) the strengths and weaknesses of these reflective accounts could be clearly highlighted. A large proportion of the authors consistently achieved the primary aim(s) of their research (*level of reflection*) by writing well-structured and focused reflective accounts. Furthermore, authors were consistently critical (highlighting the reasons behind both successes and failures) when describing their applied experiences, adding to the transparency of the research. On the other hand, the reflective accounts were often lacking in supporting evidence to reinforce the claims being made (*rich description*) and this, for a lot of the reflective accounts, prevented the research from adding to existing knowledge. To improve the quality of reflective accounts, authors should aim to further reduce the gap between theory and practice, by explicitly providing a more comprehensive theoretical framework underpinning their service-delivery. Furthermore, because of the adaptability that a non-foundational approach provides, it would be useful for more researchers to reflect on their own values and beliefs when

judging the quality of reflective accounts, further contributing towards the critical appraisal of the literature and the quality of the research being produced.

This systematic review included reflective accounts from a variety of different countries. However, by only including papers written in English, the majority of the accounts were from the United Kingdom and America (84.8%), reducing the international scope of the research. By dedicating more resources to future systematic reviews, a larger variety of reflective accounts written in languages other than English could be included, providing more of an insight into the applied experiences from practitioners situated in different cultures/countries. On the other hand, it has been found that inclusion of non-English studies in systematic reviews has very little impact on the overall results (Hartling et al., 2017; Morrison et al., 2012).

Thematic analysis was chosen as the method of analysis for this systematic review as it provided the research team with an opportunity to create meaning from the reflective accounts. However, it quickly became apparent that with the volume and variety of reflective topics being discussed, the literature had more to offer in better understanding all stages of practitioner development. Other forms of qualitative inquiry, such as a narrative analysis, could add an extra layer of understanding and interpretation to the autobiographical accounts. By focusing on how applied practitioners are telling their story and representing themselves within their own narrative, we could gain a more in-depth critical insight into their developmental journey.

As demonstrated in the results, trainee practitioners, who are often engaging in their first applied experiences, are very keen to demonstrate their worth within an applied setting (Woodcock, Richards & Mugford, 2008), increasing the expectation they place upon themselves (Mărgărit, 2013), further enhancing the pressure and anxiety that they experience (Holt & Streat, 2001). Furthermore, the anxiety that accompanies these first applied experiences is increased further when trainee practitioners fail to reflect on their own values and beliefs and how they contribute to their professional philosophy and identity as applied practitioners (Collins & McCann, 2015). Anxiety during these initial applied experiences is inevitable. However, education providers (academic institutions/supervisors etc.) should encourage trainee practitioners to reflect upon their philosophies earlier, to reduce the sense of incongruence/inauthenticity they experience. Furthermore, individuals at this stage of development would greatly benefit from increased peer support networks (Christensen & Aoyagi, 201). These peer support networks, could

be incorporated into and facilitated by the supervisor and would provide trainee practitioners with a platform to reflect and critically discuss their own applied experiences with a wider network of trainee practitioners. Moreover, listening to the experiences of others would enhance the learning process and prevent feelings of isolation.

Neophyte practitioners have successfully demonstrated that they can meet all the competencies and expectations of their respective training pathways, but still have a significant amount to learn on their developmental journey to becoming experienced practitioners (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2013). As highlighted in the results, the reflective accounts of neophyte practitioners are still dominated by a sense of anxiety and feelings of being 'fraudulent' (Williams & Anderson, 2012). Furthermore, they consistently reflect upon having to adopt multiple roles within an applied setting (Jackson, 2006; Timson, 2006; Williams & Anderson, 2012), which inevitably leads to discussions regarding practitioner well-being (Moyle, 2015) and self-care (Barker, McCarthy & Harwood, 2011) and so support for these individuals shouldn't stop upon completion of supervised practice. Neophyte practitioners would still greatly benefit from a peer support network and perhaps the creation of an 'alumni group' would support their transition into chartered status and beyond.

When exploring the reflective accounts of experienced practitioners, it is clear that these individuals are closer to developing a clear professional identity (Lindsay, 2017) and a congruent philosophy of practice, which can be applied to multiple cultural contexts (Larsen 2017a). This increase in authentic practice improves the practitioners' ability to build relationships with clients and have a more successful consultancy experience (Larsen 2017b). However, based on the current findings, there is also a recognition that learning is a continuous process (Carr, 2007) and so reflective practice is still essential at this stage of development, because it can help individuals better understand how their own needs impact upon the consultancy process (Tod, 2007). Therefore, experienced practitioners should continuously be exposed to situations that places the individual 'out of their depth' (Tod, 2014) creating new learning experiences and further encouraging the use of reflection to enhance competency and attainment of excellence as an applied practitioner.

This systematic review explored the reflective and autobiographical accounts of applied sport and exercise psychology practitioners, providing a critical insight into the experiences and challenges faced throughout the developmental process. Themes were created from the literature, which represented the unique experiences of practitioners in

different stages of development. Furthermore, a method of critical appraisal was designed and presented, providing suggestions of how to improve future reflective accounts. Finally, a number of practical implications were suggested, such as: creating a peer support network for trainee practitioners, highlighting the importance of self-care for neophyte practitioners and the importance of continuous reflection for experienced practitioners

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Value	Description
Interesting	The reflective article influences and affects the reader through various methods
Honest	The reflective article is self-reflexive and transparent
Expressive	The reflective article contains rich description
Innovative	The reflective article adds to existing knowledge theoretically and/or practically
Ethical	The reflective article considers ethical procedures closely
Meaningful	The reflective article achieves its primary purpose

Table 1. Description of the values underpinning the critical appraisal criteria

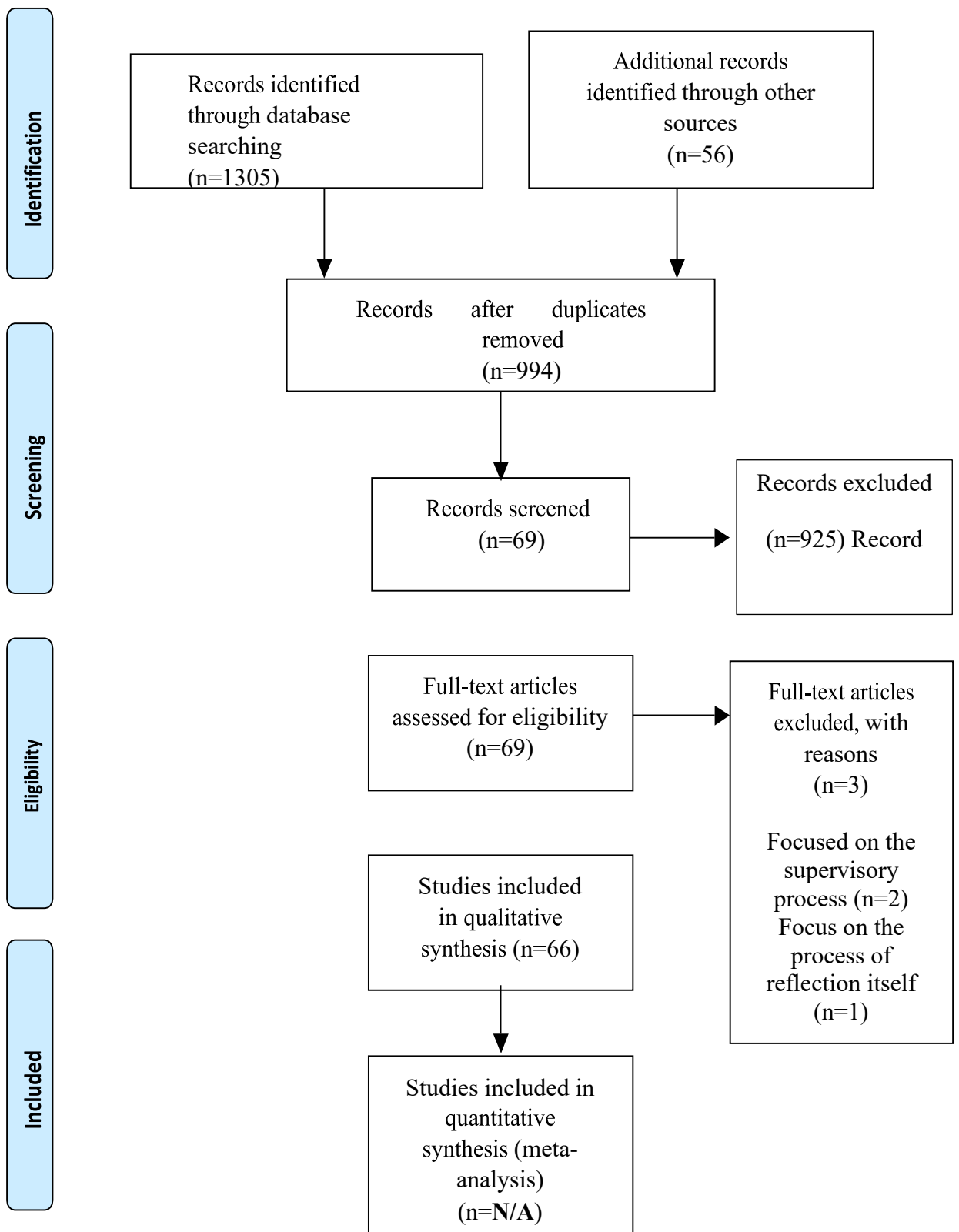


Figure 1. PRISMA diagram

Study	Gender	Experience Level	Topic	Sport	Country	Method of Reflection
Anderson (2014)	Male	Experienced	Developmental Journey	Variety	America and Australia	Unstructured
Barker, McCarthy & Harwood (2011)	Male	Newly Chartered	Working with Youth Athletes	Cricket & Football	UK	Unstructured
Botterill (1990)	Male	Experienced	Mental Skills Training	Professional Hockey	America	Unstructured
Brooks (2007)	Female	Experienced	Working at the Olympic Games	Equestrian	UK	Gibb's Model of Reflection
Bull (1995)	Male	Experienced	Long-term preparation for a World-Cup	Women's Cricket	UK	Unstructured
Carr (2007)	Male	Experienced	Delivering Sport Psychology Support to Student-Athletes	Variety	America	Unstructured
Cecil (2014)	Female	Experienced	Developmental Journey	Variety	UK	Unstructured

Christensen & Aoyagi (2014)	Male and Female	Trainee	Service Delivery at Olympic Trials	Swimming	America	Schon's Theoretical Model of Reflection (via a reflective diary)
Collins & Cruickshank (2015)	Male	Experienced	Organizational Approach in Preparation for the Olympic Games	Olympic Sports	UK	Unstructured
Collins & McCann (2015)	Male	Newly Chartered	Navigating Stage 2 Training	Variety	UK	Unstructured
Collins, Evans-Jones & O'Connor (2013)	Male and Female	Trainee	Developing a Philosophy of Practice	Golf, Football & Equestrian	UK	Gibb's Model of reflection
Cotterill (2012)	Male	Experienced	Working within a Developmental (Academy) Environment	Cricket	UK	Gibb's Model of Reflection
Cotterill (2017)	Male	Experienced	Implementing a Leadership Development Programme	Cricket	UK	John's Model of Reflection
Cox (2014)	Male	Experienced	Developmental Journey	Variety	UK	Unstructured

Cox et al. (2016)	Male	Trainee	Developing a Resilience-Based Life Skills Programme through Coaching	Golf	UK	Anderson, Knowles and Gilbourne's 5 Stage Reflective Model
Cropley et al. (2007)	Male	Trainee	Improving 1-1 Support	Rugby	UK	Anderson's Model of Guided Reflection
Dorfman (1990)	Male	Experienced	Service Delivery in Professional Baseball	Baseball	America	Unstructured
Evans and Slater (2014)	Male	Newly Chartered	Working with Young (8-10) Gifted and Talented Athletes	Variety	UK	Unstructured
Fifer et al. (2008)	Male	Experienced	'What Works When Working With Athletes'	Variety	America	Unstructured
Giges (2014)	Male	Experienced	Developmental Journey	Variety	UK	Unstructured
Gilbourne & Richardson (2006)	Male	Experienced	Providing Psychological Support	Professional Football	UK	Unstructured

Godfrey & Winter (2017)	Female	Trainee	Delivering ‘Winning Mentality’ workshops	Professional Football	UK	Gibb’s Model of Reflection
Gordon (2014)	Female	Experienced	Developmental Journey	Variety	UK & Australia	Unstructured
Haberi & Peterson (2006)	Male and Female	Newly Chartered	Ethical Dilemmas when Travelling with an Olympic Team	Variety of Olympic Team Sports	America	Unstructured
Halliwell (1990)	Male	Experienced	Sport Psychology Support in Professional Hockey	Hockey	America	Unstructured
Harwood (2008)	Male	Experienced	Consulting with an Elite British Student-Athlete Team	Women's Field Hockey	UK	Unstructured
Henriksen (2015)	Male	Experienced	Preparation for the Olympic Games	Sailing	Denmark	Unstructured
Hodge (2014)	Male	Experienced	Developmental Journey	Variety	New Zealand	Unstructured

Holt & Streat (2001)	Male	Trainee	Providing 1-1 Support	Ice-Skating	UK	Tripp's Critical Incident Reflection
Howell (2017)	Female	Trainee	Working with a young (9) gymnast	Gymnastics	UK	Johns Model of Reflection
Hung et al. (2008)	Male and Female	Experienced	Preparing for an Olympic Games	Archery	Taiwan	Unstructured
Jackson (2006)	Male	Newly Chartered	Working at the Paralympics	Wheelchair Rugby	UK	Unstructured
Johnson (2017)	Male	Experienced	How to gain the position of Sport Psychologist within a University Athletic Department	Student-Athletes (Variety)	America	Unstructured
Jones, Evans & Mullen (2007)	Male	Trainee	Adopting Multiple Roles when delivering a 14 week Imagery Intervention	Professional Rugby	UK	Unstructured

Katz (2006)	Male	Experienced	Providing Organizational Support in preparation for an Olympic games	Variety	UK	Unstructured
Larsen (2017b)	Male	Experienced	Developing Psychological Services for a Junior National Team	Ice Hockey	Denmark	Unstructured
Larsen (2017a)	Male	Experienced	Developing and Implementing a Sport Psychology Programme	Professional Football	Denmark	Unstructured
Lindsay (2017)	Male	Experienced	Developmental Journey	Variety	UK	Unstructured
Lindsay & Thomas (2014)	Male	Experienced	Working as a Sport Psychologist with the Media	N/A	UK	Unstructured
Lindsay et al. (2007)	Male	Newly Chartered	Philosophy of Practice and Congruence	Figure Skating	UK	Gibb's Model of Reflection

Loehr (1990)	Male	Experienced	Mental Skills Training	Tennis	America	Unstructured
Mace (2014)	Male	Experienced	Developmental Journey	Variety	UK	Unstructured
Males (2006)	Male	Experienced	Providing Sport Psychology support to GB Olympic Squads	Variety	UK	Unstructured
Mărgărit (2013)	Female	Trainee	Working alongside a Gymnastics Coach	Recreational Gymnastics	Romania	Unstructured
McArdle & Barker (2016)	Male	Trainee	Cognitive-Behavioural Approach to Performance Enhancement	Golf & Basketball	UK	Unstructured
McGregor & Winter (2017)	Female	Newly Chartered	Providing Sport Psychology Support during World Cup Preparations	Lacrosse	UK	Unstructured

Mellalieu (2017)	Male	Experienced	Consulting in Professional Rugby Union	Rugby Union	UK	Unstructured
Moran (2014)	Male	Experienced	Developmental Journey	Variety	Ireland	Unstructured
Moyle (2015)	Female	Experienced	Issues that Arise at the Winter Olympic Games	Winter Olympic Sports	America	Unstructured
Neff (1990)	Male	Experienced	Delivering Sport Psychology to a Professional Sport Organization	Variety	America	Unstructured
Orlick (1989)	Male	Experienced	Delivering to Olympic Athletes and Coaches	Variety of Olympic Sports	America	Unstructured
Pattison & McInerney (2016)	Male	Experienced	Season-Long Intervention with an Amateur Rugby Club	Rugby	South Africa	Unstructured
Pepitas (2014)	Male	Experienced	Developmental Journey	Variety	America	Unstructured

Rhodus (2006)	Female	Experienced	Preparing Two Squads for the Olympic Games	Archery	America	Gibb's Model of Reflection
Ross (2015)	Female	Trainee	Experiences of a female Sport Psychologist	Variety	UK	Unstructured
Rowley, Earle & Gilbourne (2012)	Male	Newly Chartered	Developing Sport Psychology Programme	Academy Super League (Rugby)	UK	Unstructured
Stambulova & Schinke (2017)	Male and Female	Experienced	Importance of Context/Culture in Applied Delivery	Variety	Multiple	Unstructured
Symes (2014)	Female	Experienced	Developmental Journey	Variety	UK	Unstructured
Timson (2006)	Male	Experienced	Preparing for the Olympics Games	Olympic Sports	UK	Gibb's Model of Reflection
Tod (2007)	Male	Experienced	Working Alliance with Professional Rugby League Player	Rugby League	UK	Bordin's Working Alliance Model (guided reflection)

Tod (2008)	Male	Experienced	Developing an Effective Working Alliance	Power Lifting	UK	Bordin's Working Alliance Model (guided reflection)
Tod (2014)	Male	Experienced	Developmental Journey	Variety	New Zealand & UK	Unstructured
Tonn & Harmison (2004)	Female	Trainee	Delivering Sport Psychology Support over the course of a season (Mental Skills Training)	Basketball	UK	Unstructured
Weinberg (2014)	Male	Experienced	Developmental Journey	Variety	UK	Unstructured
Williams & Andersen (2012)	Male	Newly Chartered	Preparing for the Olympic Games	Cycling & Table-Tennis	Australia	Unstructured
Woodcock, Richards & Mugford (2008)	Female	Trainee	Engaging in Group and Individual work with Athletes on a 9-week Internship	Variety	UK	Boud's Reflective Learning Model

Table 2. Systematic Map

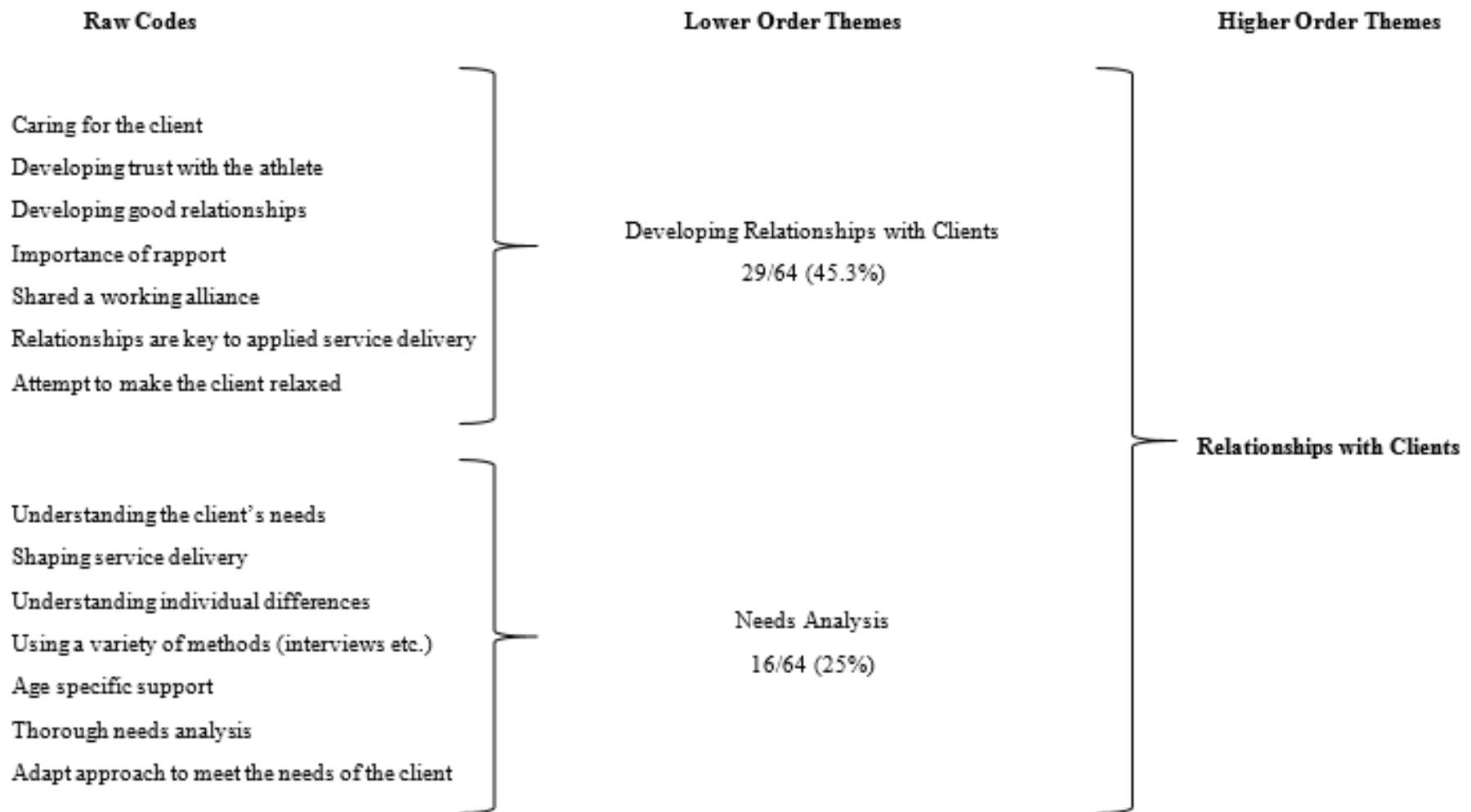
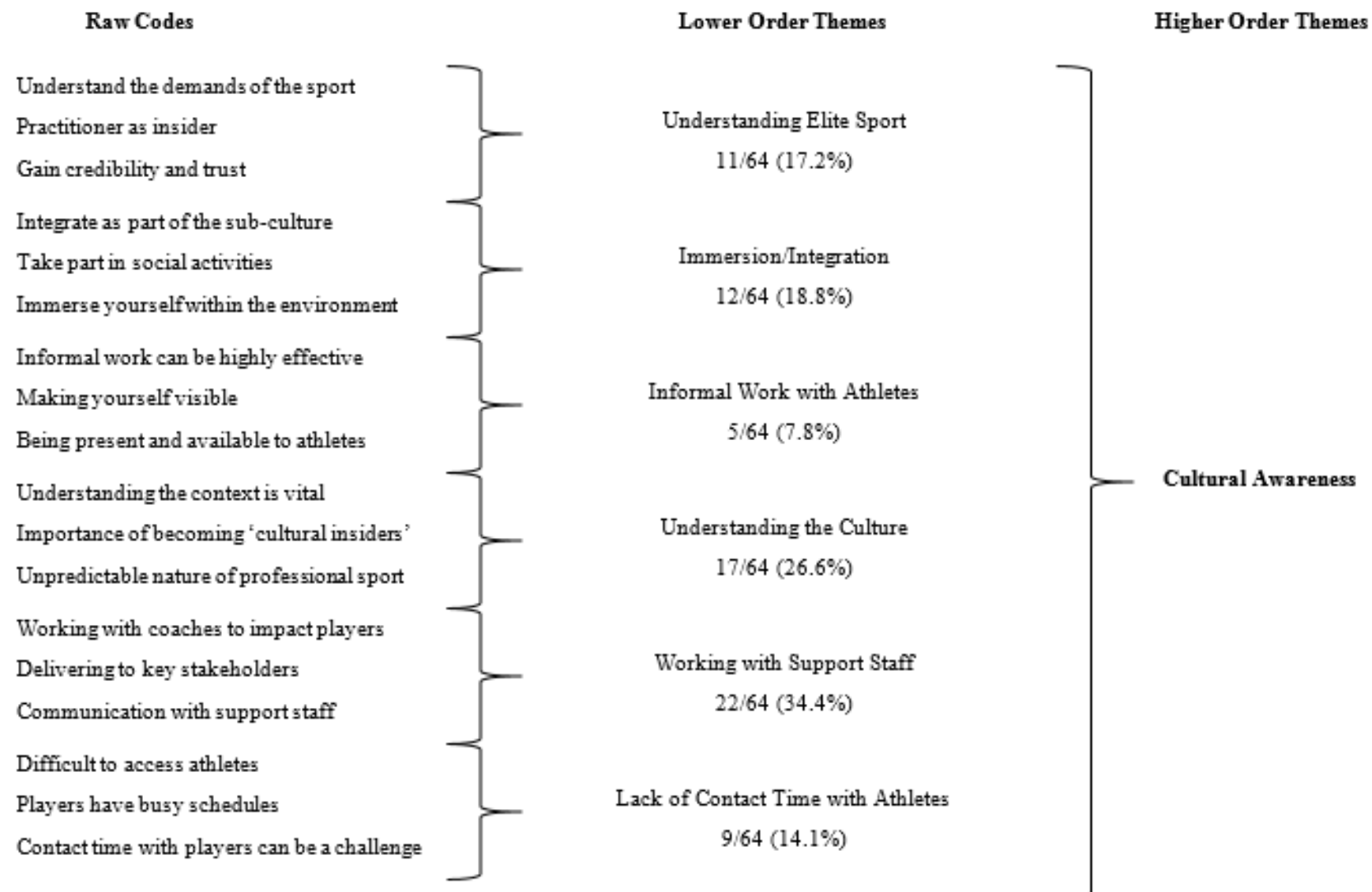
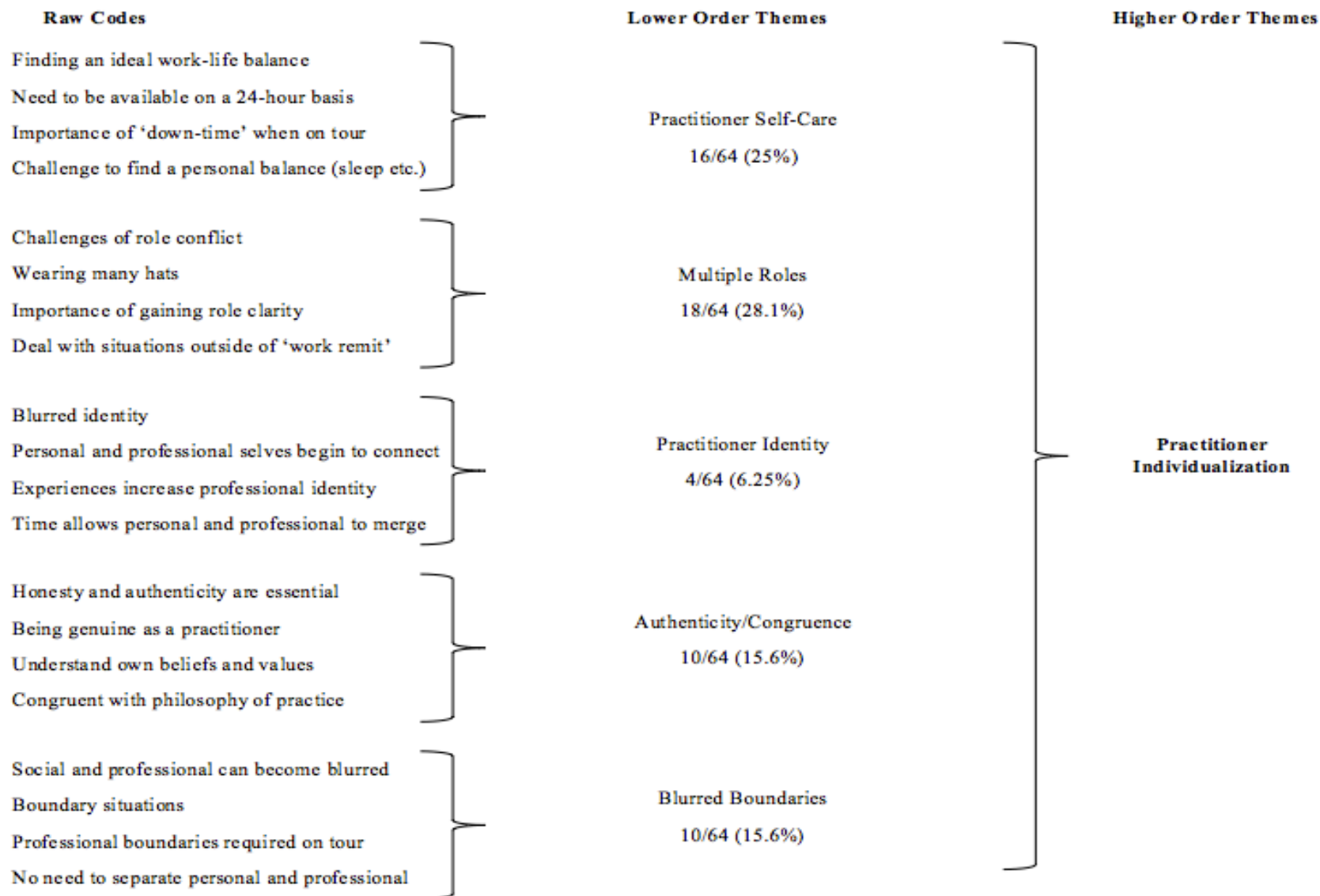
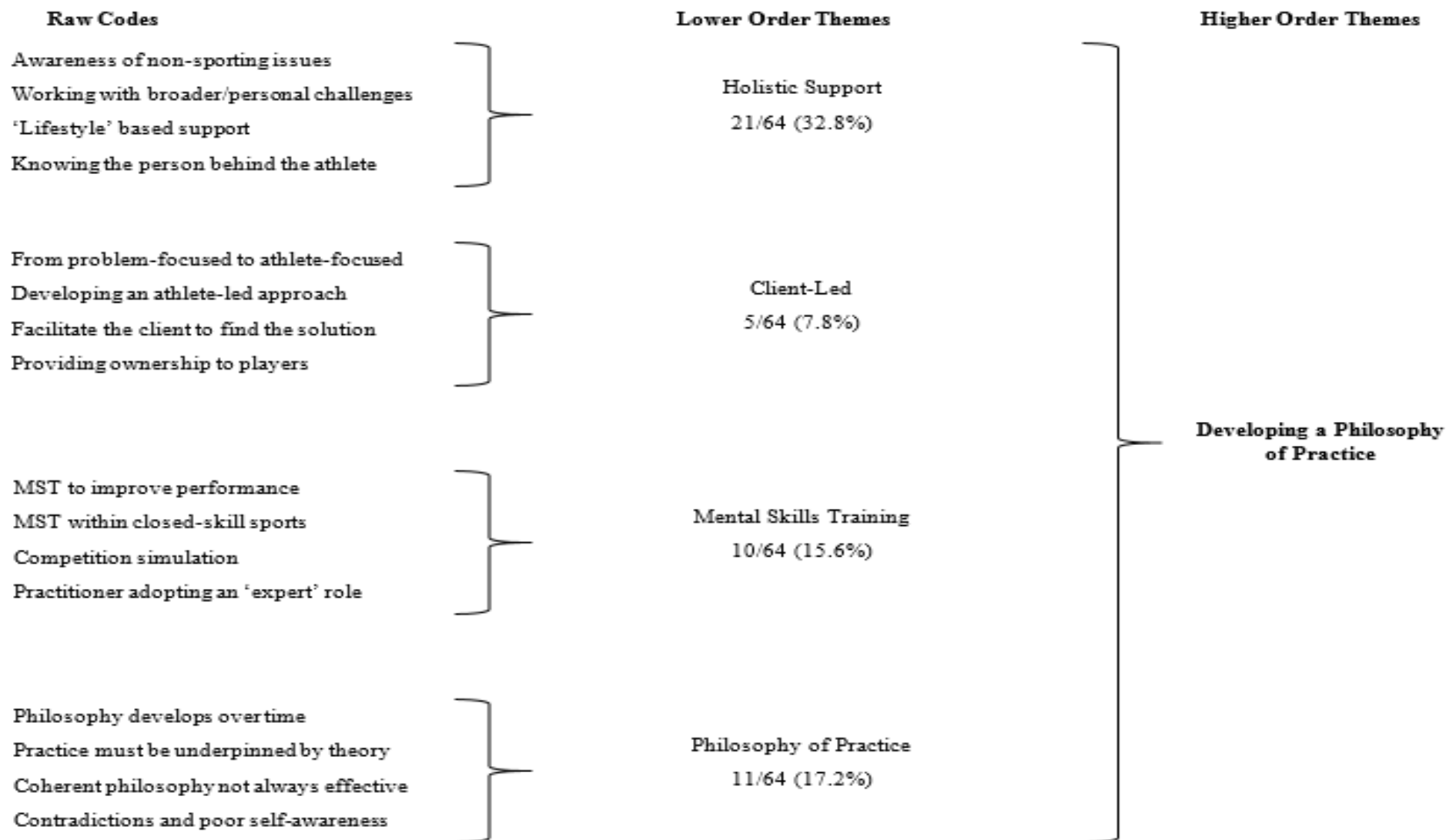


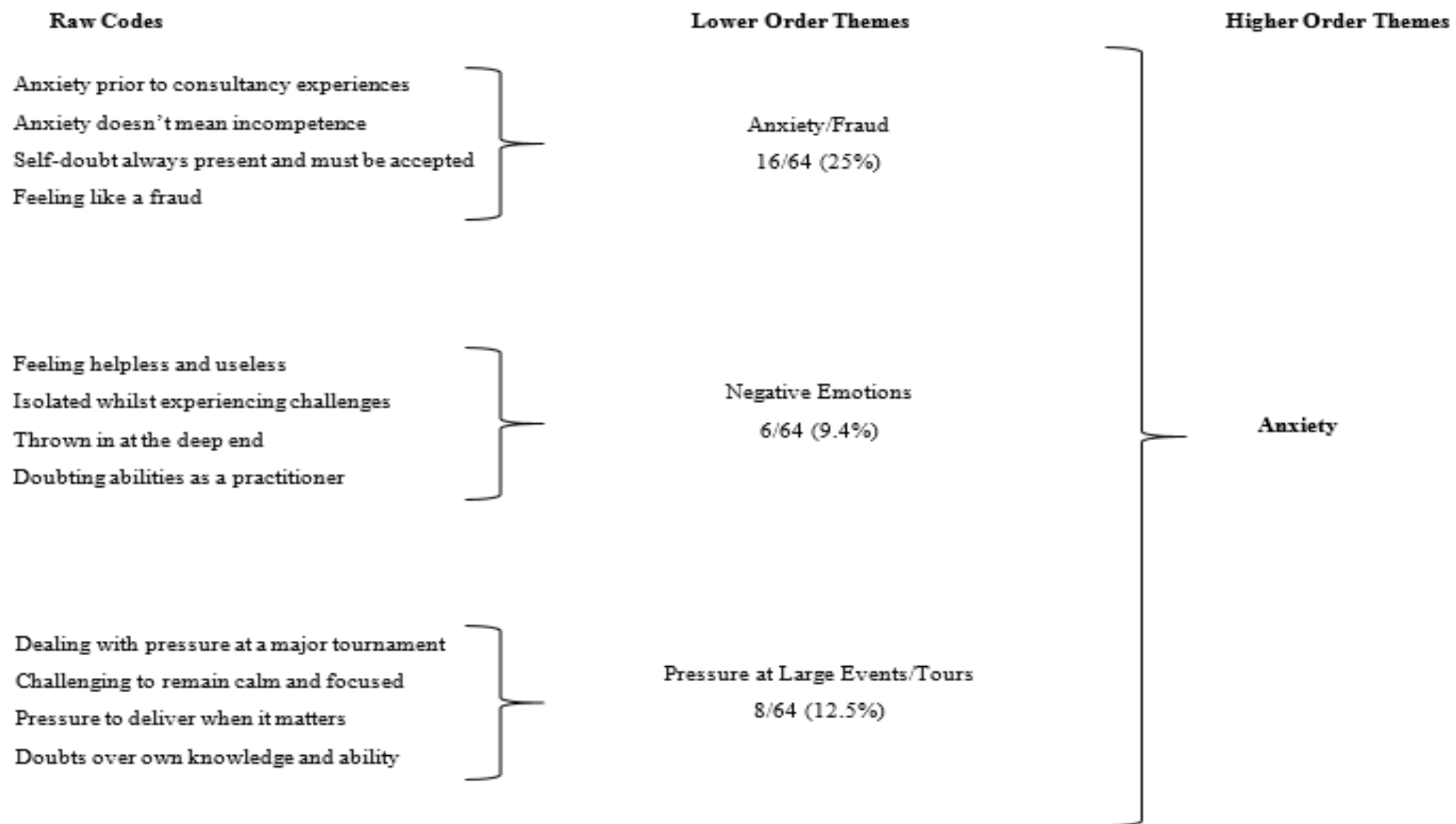
Figure 2. Thematic content analysis of the reflective/autobiographical accounts

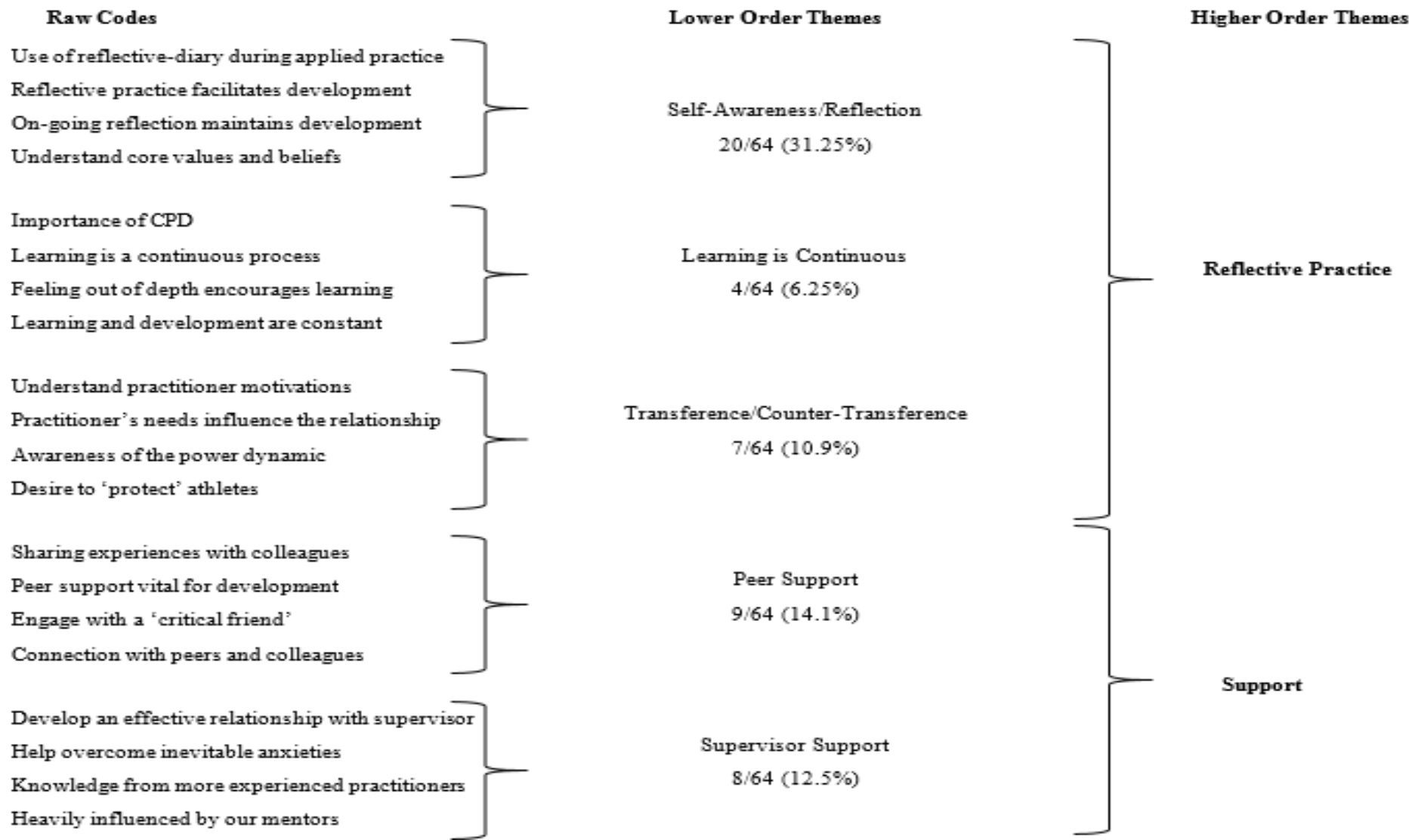


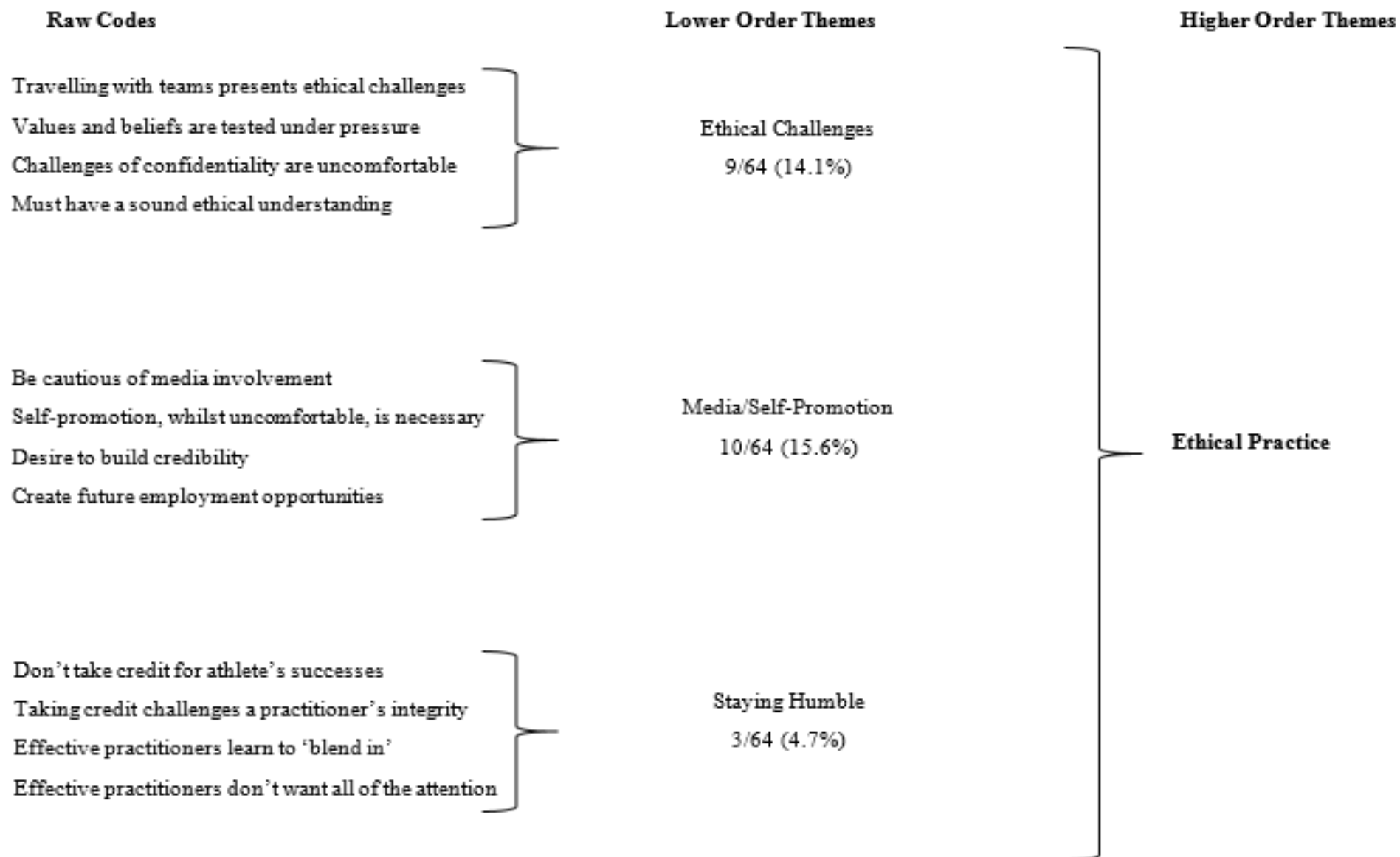


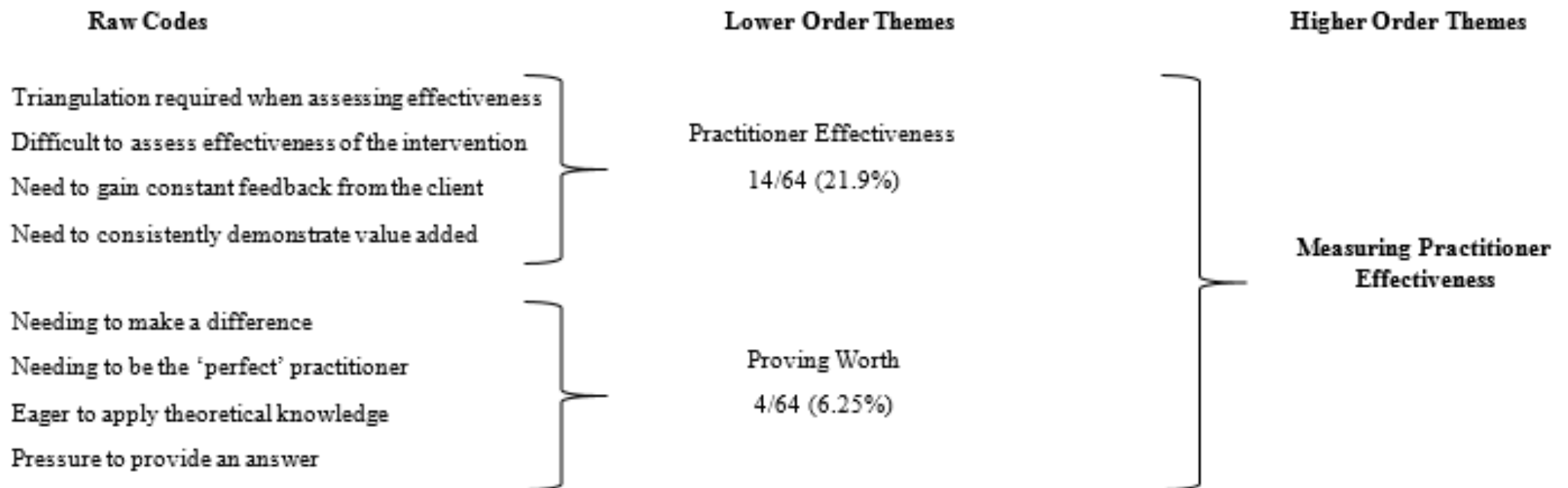
Practitioner Individualization

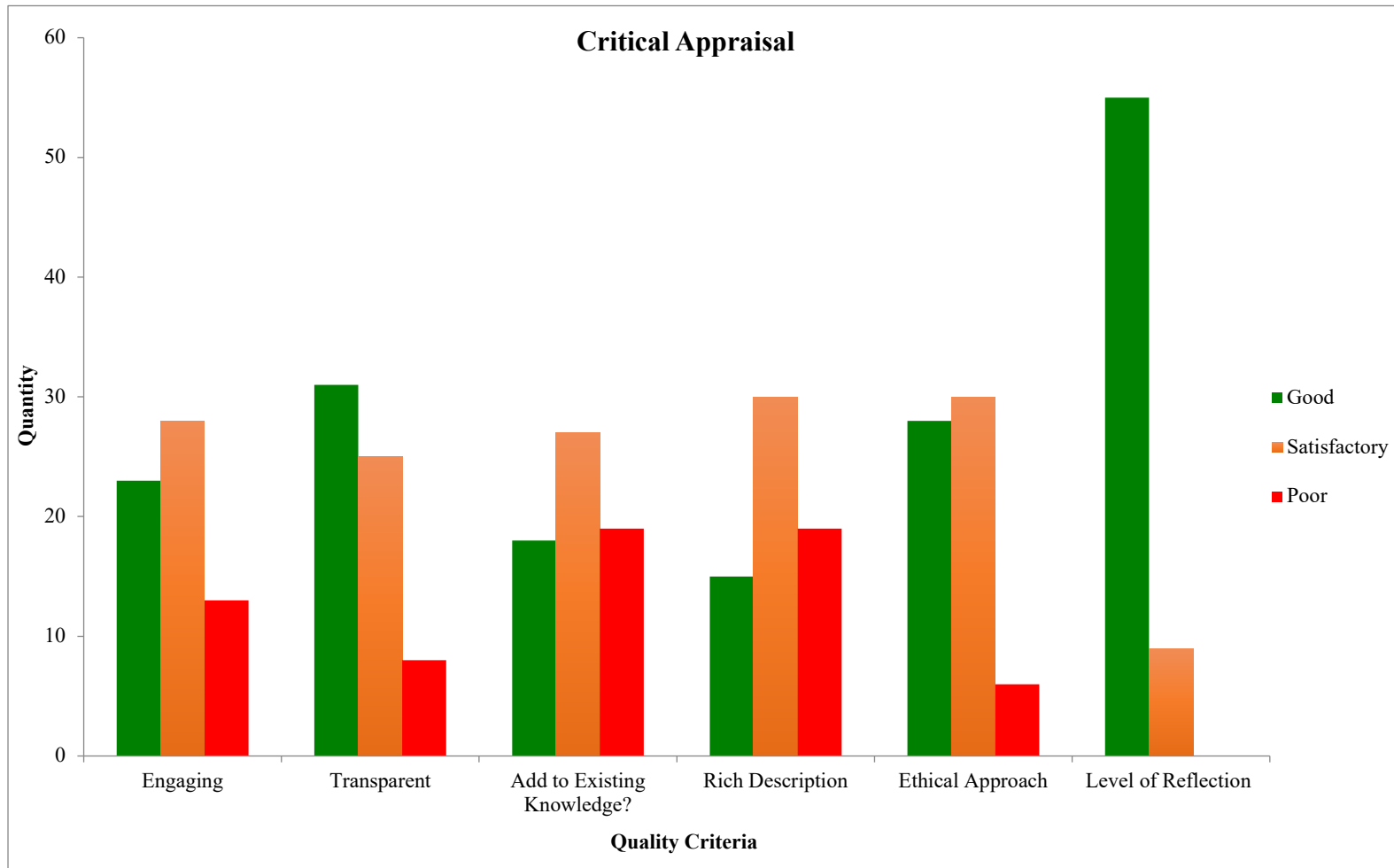












Graph 1. Critical Appraisal

Case Study Raw Codes				Appendix: Table 3 Raw codes			
Anderson (2014)							
Heavily influenced by our mentors and supervisors	Focus on MST and performance has limited the field	Relationships are key to applied service delivery	Need an awareness of counter-transference	Over time, personal and professional identities become one	Must consistently reflect on ourselves to improve self-knowledge		
Barker, McCarthy & Harwood (2011)							
Age specific sport psychology support	Challenging to negotiate consultancy fees early in career	Immersion in the environment to develop relationships	Understanding the demands of the sport	Triangulation is required when assessing consultancy effectiveness	Practitioner self-care	Anxiety prior to service-delivery	Reflecting with a colleague is vital for on-going development
Botterill (1990)							
Previous experience in sport, helped to integrate into the environment	Important to develop trust with athletes	Sport has unique demands					
Brooks (2007)							
Multiple Roles	Practitioner self-care	Dealing with the pressure of a major tournament	Importance of communication with support staff				

Bull (1995)							
Advantage to have experience of the sport as a player or coach	Mental Skills Training	Importance of an Introductory/ Education phase	Understanding players needs to shape service delivery	Working on broader challenges such as de-selection	Working with support staff to extend the sport psychology provision - develop relationships	Important to fully integrate yourself as part of the support staff	Importance of adapting service delivery based on clients' feedback
Carr (2007)							
Early stigma and misconceptions regarding sport psychology	Importance of CPD and viewing learning as a continuous process	Must act ethically as practitioners	Limit media coverage to global topics, as opposed to individual cases	Importance of the supervisor in helping us overcome our inevitable anxieties	Peer support vital throughout development process (at any experience level)	Combination of counselling education and sport psychology education essential to effective service delivery	

Cecil (2014)							
Immersion within the sport	Building relationships with coaches	Reflective practice facilitates development	Philosophy of practice develops over time	Important to work with a range of different sports	Learn and develop by engaging with peers	Have to accept the insecurity of full-time applied roles	Important to understand yourself as a practitioner and yourself as a person
Christensen & Aoyagi (2014)							
Importance of peer support for a trainee sport psychologist (empathy)	Immersion important to the integration of the staff (develop relationships)	Attending a large sporting event increased the pressure on the practitioner	Doubts over own knowledge and ability as a practitioner	Importance of supervision during these difficult times	Importance of being genuine and authentic in this competitive environment	Taking on multiple roles (careful of boundary situations)	Taking part in social activities to improve integration
Collins & Cruickshank (2015)							
Be prepared and plan for the unexpected nature of elite sport	Focus on performance preparation rather than outcome	Include all support staff and athletes					

Collins & McCann (2015)							
Little applied opportunities - lecture and applied work part time	Self-doubt regarding ethical boundaries in early stages	Lack of confidence to market and 'sell' services	Used MST because it was safe and 'value for money'	Work not underpinned by a specific philosophical framework	Lack of importance placed on research	Practitioner is the 'instrument'	Shifting philosophy of practice with time (more holistic)
Collins, Evans-Jones & O'Connor (2013)							
Philosophy of practice, must be congruent with own beliefs and values	Sense of being thrown in at the deep end	MST inadequate when dealing with broader challenges	Doubting own ability and feeling like a fraud	Importance of developing relationships with clients	Understanding the person before the athlete	Wearing multiple hats	Blurring boundaries (friend/client)
Cotterill (2012)							
Working through the coaches is essential	Building effective relationships quickly is essential	Reflecting with other practitioners in similar environments accelerates learning					

Cotterill (2017)							
Having buy-in from management is key to the implementation of a programme							
Cox (2014)							
Combining academic and practical career - no life balance	Going on tour (18 hour days) is intensive!	Must immerse yourself within the sport	Limited time with athletes				
Cox et al. (2016)							
Sport Psychologists can work effectively with adolescents by building rapport and understanding the client's needs	Importance of understanding core values and beliefs in developing professional philosophy	Developing the whole person, whilst impacting upon performance	Understand your client	Be adaptable	Blurred identity (SP/Teacher)	Implementing a life skills programme should be reflected in the training pathway of SP	

Cropley et al. (2007)							
Importance of developing relationships with clients	Develop an effective relationship with supervisor	Anxiety accompanies (first) consultancy experiences	Gaining feedback from the client to reassure yourself regarding the work you have conducted	Understand individual differences of your clients	Important to develop effective communication skills as a practitioner	Difficulties in developing an athlete-led approach due to lack of confidence	
Dorfman (1990)							
Use of mental skills to improve performance	Awareness of broader challenges athletes might experience	Importance of caring for the athletes					
Evans and Slater (2014)							
Making psychology sessions practical gets better buy-in from young athletes	Sport psychologists have the responsibility to develop the whole person as well as focus on performance	Support should be tailored to the individual needs of the athlete					

Fifer et al. (2008)							
Importance of building relationships and rapport with clients and understanding their needs	Being genuine as a practitioner	Learning is a continual process	Self-promotion, whilst uncomfortable, is necessary	When promoting yourself, don't make false claims about the impact of your work	Earn the trust and respect of multiple stakeholders	Have a good understanding of the sport you are working in	Understand the social environment and culture
Giges (2014)							
The role itself is a rewarding experience (initially offered services for free)	Referrals are essential in gaining experience	Anxiety to demonstrate competence	Importance of self-awareness as a practitioner	Learning and development is constant			
Gilbourne & Richardson (2006)							
Taking credit for successes or victories can challenge a practitioner's integrity (should be viewed as a weakness)	One-to-one work is often more 'lifestyle' based (not MST)	Trust and demonstrating that you care are key to the development of relationships with clients	The world of professional football is often unpredictable irrational and emotional	Applied sport psychology must have a performance agenda	Our role is to help people not players	Service delivery shouldn't be dominated by the performance agenda	

Godfrey & Winter (2017)							
Align philosophy to service delivery	Peer support improved confidence	Build rapport with athletes	Age appropriate content required	Anxiety prior to service-delivery	Female in a male dominated environment	Didn't integrate effectively into the environment (work with coaches)	Frustrated with the requirement for behaviour management
Gordon (2014)							
Early sporting experiences/passion, informed research and career choices	Change in philosophy when introduced to other experience practitioners	Practitioners should focus on how they can add value - how can we measure impact?	Feedback is key to development	SP run the risk of becoming out-dated if they don't constantly demonstrate their ability to 'add value'	Effective practitioners just 'blend in' and don't want all the attention	Development is on-going and reflection (strengths and weaknesses) is key to this	Immerse yourself within the environment

Haberl & Peterson (2006)							
Travelling with teams presents challenges to ethical boundaries	Integration is key to building relationships for effective service delivery	Informal work is often very effective	Difficult to balance the demands of travelling with a team to a major competition (sleep/exercise)	Ensuring role clarity is established and confidentiality is highlighted is essential	Importance of honesty and authenticity when building relationships	Boundaries can often get blurred between social and professional	Be cautious of the media involvement (with regards to confidentiality and impact on athlete relationship)
Halliwell (1990)							
Use of mental skills to improve performance	No use of psychological testing	Develop trusting relationships with your clients	Using an unstructured approach to workshop delivery	Not taking credit for the athletes' successes	Importance of informal work with players	Finding an ideal work life balance as a practitioner	
Harwood (2008)							
Must understand the psychological demands of the sport	Immersion in order to integrate into the sub-culture of the team	Awareness of dual role (academic/practitioner)					

Henriksen (2015)							
Pressure to deliver when it matters	Practice must be underpinned by theory	Importance of being able to draw on different theoretical approaches to service delivery	Not introducing anything new at the major competition (go over what has already been prepared)	Challenging to remain calm and focused at a major event	Look after the well-being of the athlete, as well as performance	Difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of your work as a sport psychologist	
Hodge (2014)							
Essential to develop relationships and build rapport	Non-linear training pathway	Role of an SP is to provide 'holistic' support					
Holt & Streat (2001)							
Having knowledge of the sport develops credibility and trust	During the intake, attempt to make the client relaxed (body language, jokes, no note-taking etc.)	Doubts surrounding competence	Being yourself is a good way to 'sell' yourself	Contradictions between philosophy and delivery (due to poor self-awareness)	Relationship with the client is key		

Hung et al. (2008)							
Take the time to build a relationship with key stakeholders	Know the sport; especially the psychological demands	Use of multiple approaches (tests and interviews) to understand the needs of the athlete	Use of MST for a closed-skill sport	Stimulating competition environment to create anxiety/ distractions to best prepare athletes for competition	Quantitative methods to evaluate performance of the intervention		
Howell (2017)							
Coaching philosophy underpinned practitioner philosophy	Uncomfortable when charging for consultancy	Link between performance and development	Applied practice needed to be underpinned by developmental psychology	Understanding the client's needs	Being creative and age appropriate	Theoretically informed practice	
Jackson (2006)							
Importance of the relationships with athletes	Technology can help build relationships with athletes	Shift from problem-focused to athlete-focused with more experience	Difficult getting access to the athletes during a major competition	Multiple roles	Practitioner self-care		

Johnson (2017)							
Importance of reflection to the development of an SP	Environmental/ institutional awareness is key	Working as an academic provides practitioners with research and practice opportunities	Don't always choose the role that offers the most money, but that will fulfil you and fits with your life best	Student-athletes identifies lie more closely to the sport (present both clinical and performance challenges)	Choose a career path that has a good fit between the job and the person	Importance of relationships	Clear link between performance and well-being
Jones, Evans & Mullen (2007)							
Coach/SPP role removes feelings of being an 'outsider' (already have relationships with players)	Importance of a mentor/supervisor when facing role conflict	Negative emotional and psychological implications due to increased stress and pressure of a multi-role approach (practitioner well-being)	Covert practice can lead to unethical behaviours	Need to be open and honest with key stakeholders to prevent conflict/ unethical behaviours			
Katz (2006)							
Apprehension and excitement	Use of a reflective diary in applied practice (on tour)	Awareness of any logistical challenges	Important to draw of the knowledge of more experienced practitioners				

Larsen (2017b)							
Importance of making professional philosophy transparent to staff (coaches etc.)	Limited contact time with athletes	Need to make your value known to the MDT	Building relationships with clients	It takes time to build a culture of sport psychology	Build relationships with key cultural influencers	Qualitative/ subjective measures to assess effectiveness of service delivery (but from multiple sources - triangulation)	
Larsen (2017a)							
Coherent philosophy not enough to be effective in a sporting organisation	Must understand the culture/context	Negative perception about SP, which makes it difficult to integrate as part of a organisations culture	Reflection as a practitioner is key to delivering culturally sensitive interventions	Importance of building relationships and trust with clients	Unpredictable nature of professional sport (coaches being fired) puts your job at risk		

Lindsay (2017)							
Early years - imitate a 'simple' model	Anxiety associated with service delivery (feeling of low competence)	Becoming more experienced - challenge own philosophy of practice (low congruence)	Reflection of philosophy leads to increased congruence	Reflection key to development (even when experienced)	More experienced - not only reflect individually, but on the discipline as a whole	Personal and professional selves seem separate to begin with, but become more connected with experience	Must understand the context
Lindsay & Thomas (2014)							
Desire to build credibility	Create future employment opportunities	Potential of becoming a celebrity psychologist	Need to clarify expectations of the media	Desire to 'protect' athletes	Feelings of being a 'fraud'	Having core values and beliefs tested under pressure - ethical perspective	CPD needs to focus on how to work effectively with the media

Lindsay et al. (2007)							
Must accept feelings of anxiety and uncertainty during consultancy	Importance of developing a rapport with clients	Feelings of isolation as a practitioner experiencing challenges in applied practice	Importance of viewing the athlete more broadly as a person	Role of the practitioner is to facilitate the client to find the solution	Importance of authenticity/ congruence in service delivery		
Loehr (1990)							
More experience with a sport, the more effective you can be	Use of psychological tests	Use of mental skills training to improve performance	Working with coaches in order to have more of an impact with players	Need to gain knowledge of other disciplines (physiology, nutrition, biomechanics etc)			
Mace (2014)							
Needed to be adaptable during first applied experiences	Understand individual differences between athletes						

Males (2006)							
Needing to be available on a 24 hour basis	Athletes required support after experiencing stressors (reactive)	Importance of self-care	Importance of building relationships with support staff to reinforce the SP's presence	Multiple roles			
Märgärit (2013)							
Importance of conducting a thorough needs analysis (understand the needs of the client)	Eagerness to apply theoretical knowledge to practice (change the world?)	Building rapport with the client	Feelings of anxiety	Importance of taking an holistic approach	Being authentic as a person and as a practitioner		
McArdle & Barker (2016)							
Previous relationship developed with client in a different role, effect the current relationship? (Dual roles...)	Awareness of potential ethical issues	Need analysis - triangulation	Holistic support (sport/life)	Adapt approach to meet the needs of the client...			

McGregor & Winter (2017)							
Be prepared to deal with situations outside of the expected 'working remit'	Importance of knowing your underpinning philosophy	Limited time with athletes	When travelling with a squad, it's important to establish professional boundaries	Must have an awareness of work that falls outside of sound ethical practice	Importance of informal conversations in building relationships and offering support	Viewing the athlete as a person and dealing with 'non-performance' challenges	Professional self-care is essential
Mellalieu (2017)							
Reflections key to practitioner development	Knowledge of the sport allows the practitioner to locate himself as an insider	Make yourself visible in order to engage in informal support to athletes	Misunderstanding or preconceptions about the role of an SP in professional rugby	Use game footage in initial sessions to build trust and rapport with the athletes	Performance and well-being	Must understand the culture you are working within - identify gatekeepers	Importance of a 'critical friend' to support development as a practitioner
Moran (2014)							
Passionate about sport	Psychology of sport, not sport psychology	Connection with peers and colleagues essential to development	Experiences contributes towards the development of a professional identity	Must work closely with the management team before providing psychological support to athletes			

Moyle (2015)							
Big events (Olympics) add pressure to both the athlete and the practitioner	Facilitate the support team to negotiate potential challenges	Be adaptable, flexible, empathic and trustworthy (limited time with athletes)	Have a clear understanding of sound ethical practice	Personal care (well-being) essential for the practitioner	Facilitate communication to positively contribute towards the team culture	Importance of providing support to non-selected athletes	Awareness of the athlete as a person and the broader challenges that accompany this (education/ careers etc.)
Neff (1990)							
Mental skills training not sufficient	Discussing personal challenges can also improve performance	Developing good relationships with clients	Delivering to key stakeholders within an organisation	Players and coaches' opinions as judgement of effectiveness	Challenges of role conflict (coach/SPP)	Must understand the culture of an organisation	
Orlick (1989)							
Listening to the needs and caring for the client	Vital to have experience at elite level sport to be effective	Awareness of non-sport performance issues					
Pattison & McInerney (2016)							
Understand the culture in which you are situated	Title of 'Sport Psychologist' can create separation from the players	Must understand the needs of the people you are supporting	Build relationships with key stakeholders and athletes	Role clarity	Contact time with players can be challenging		

Pepitas (2014)							
Early passion for sport	Importance of a holistic approach when working with student-athletes	There has been a shift from solely performance focus, to more counselling based approach	Relationships with the athlete is essential				
Rhodius (2006)							
Importance of 'down-time' when on tour	Managing logistical issues relating to the event	Lack of access/contact time with athletes	Feelings of helplessness and uselessness	Practitioner self-care			
Ross (2015)							
Females perceived to have less sporting knowledge than men	Sport is often dominated by males, which can make it difficult for women	Reflection is key for development	Self-awareness can allow you to overcome barriers in applied practice				

Rowley, Earle & Gilbourne (2012)							
Very excited to start first applied experience - may not have anticipated initial challenges	Found it difficult to find the time to deliver the psychological interventions around the players' busy schedules	Importance of being adaptable	Difficult to engage with athletes when not embedded within the environment (player buy-in)	Providing more ownership to the players gets more buy-in	Being around the club more - increase in players voluntarily engaging	Feel the need to provide an 'answer' in a 1-1 situation	
Stambulova & Schinke (2017)							
Importance of understanding cultures and subcultures when designing an intervention	Understanding the culture improves the client-practitioner relationship	identity of an individual is rooted in their context/culture	Importance of becoming 'cultural insiders' to relate more closely with clients	Important to identity cultural leaders who are able to change the culture			
Symes (2014)							
First applied experiences are very challenging (peer support is vital)	Learn to rely less on control and allow the client to take the lead	Get to know the sport and psychological demands, whilst working with the MDT	Must understand the athlete in the context of their whole life (holistic)	Developing relationships is key	Having a consistent presence is key	Multiple roles at big events	Practitioner self-care is key

Timson (2006)							
Lack of contact time with athletes in order to build relationships	Take on multiple roles (driving cars etc.)	Anxiety when supporting an athlete so close to the Olympics	Needs analysis, evidence-based practice and understanding of the context are vital	Importance of sharing experiences with a colleague	Difficult to assess effectiveness of the intervention	Conflicts between an organisational role and a 1-1 role	Practitioner self-care!
Tod (2007)							
Important to understand your motivations for working with a client (meeting own needs or clients?)	Concerns regarding having something tangible to 'offer'	Need an awareness of transference and countertransference	Awareness of the power dynamic between practitioner and client				

Tod (2008)							
Create a shared working alliance goal	Athlete buy-in as a result of the practitioner participating in the sport	Initially developed an expert role as a result of delivering MST	Feedback from the client reinforced perceived successes of the intervention	Practitioner-client relationships changed with time - began to discuss more sensitive topics	Masculine culture may have prevented the client from showing weakness	Importance of being open as a practitioner to promote honesty in the client (reveal certain information about yourself)	Developing a close relationship with a client can bring up dual-relationship challenges (friend vs client)
Tod (2014)							
Anxiety accompanied early applied experiences (self-doubt), which creates a desire for learning	Counter-transference present (not aware of it)	Blurred boundaries between practitioner and client	Be mindful of the context in which you work	Challenges to confidentiality are uncomfortable	Learning from peers, mentors and friends is essential (on-going reflection)	Self-doubt and anxiety is always present and must be accepted	Being more relaxed around clients and not feeling the need to separate 'personal' and 'professional'

Tonn & Harmison (2004)							
Supervisor helps move past initial anxiety regarding service delivery	Pressure to find a 'quick-fix'	Focused very much on the intervention delivery itself (top of the pyramid)	Important to get the support of the coaching staff	Travelling to away games - can build relationships with athletes	Being present and available to athletes	Having knowledge of the sport (as a coach) can create confusion in relation to role clarity	Develop self-awareness as a practitioner (reflection key to development)
Weinberg (2014)							
Not interested in research - but first publication provided confidence	Research/Teaching/applied practice (combined)	Important to take an ethical approach (fosters trust)	Need to be assertive about getting your name 'out there' and getting work	Sometimes you may need to provide support for free	Coach and athlete feedback are essential for on-going development	Be patient at big events (Olympics) and adopt multiple roles	Take business courses as you will likely be developing a small business
Williams & Andersen (2012)							
Feelings of anxiety and being a fraud	Struggles to establish a professional identity	Need to fix everyone and be a 'perfect' psychologist	Wearing many hats: having lots of roles within the team	Blurring boundaries (social and professional)			

Woodcock, Richards & Mugford (2008)							
Anxiety prior to workshop delivery	Need to portray competence to supervisor (despite anxiety)	Anxiety doesn't mean incompetence	Importance of developing self-awareness	Needing to make a difference as a neophyte practitioner	Needing constant feedback from athletes on the effectiveness of service-delivery	Need to know the person, not just the athlete (within social context)	

Table 4: Critical Appraisal

Study	Engaging	Transparent	Adds to existing knowledge	Rich Description	Ethical Approach	Level of Reflection
Anderson (2014)	3	2	2	2	3	3
Barker, McCarthy & Harwood (2011)	2	3	2	3	3	3
Botterill (1990)	1	1	1	1	1	3
Brooks (2007)	2	2	1	1	2	3
Bull (1995)	2	3	2	3	3	3
Carr (2007)	2	2	2	1	3	3
Cecil (2014)	3	2	2	2	2	3
Christensen & Aoyagi (2014)	2	3	2	2	3	3

Collins & Cruickshank (2015)	2	3	2	2	1	2
Collins & McCann (2015)	3	3	3	2	3	3
Collins, Evans-Jones & O'Connor (2013)	2	3	2	3	3	3
Cotterill (2012)	2	3	2	3	2	3
Cotterill (2017)	1	2	1	2	1	2
Cox (2014)	2	2	2	2	2	3
Cox et al. (2016)	2	3	2	2	2	3
Cropley et al. (2007)	2	3	1	3	2	3
Dorfman (1990)	1	1	1	1	2	3
Evans and Slater (2014)	1	2	2	2	2	3
Fifer et al. (2008)	2	2	1	1	2	2

Giges (2014)	3	2	2	2	2	3
Gilbourne & Richardson (2006)	3	3	3	3	3	3
Godfrey & Winter (2017)	1	2	1	1	2	3
Gordon (2014)	2	3	3	2	2	3
Haberi & Peterson (2006)	2	2	3	2	3	3
Halliwell (1990)	2	2	1	1	2	3
Harwood (2008)	1	2	1	2	2	3
Henriksen (2015)	3	3	3	3	2	2
Hodge (2014)	2	2	1	2	2	3
Holt & Streat (2001)	3	3	2	3	3	3
Howell (2017)	2	3	2	2	3	3
Hung et al. (2008)	1	2	2	1	2	2
Jackson (2006)	2	2	1	1	2	3

Johnson (2017)	3	3	2	2	3	3
Jones, Evans & Mullen (2007)	2	3	2	2	2	3
Katz (2006)	1	1	1	1	2	3
Larsen (2017b)	2	3	2	2	2	3
Larsen (2017a)	3	3	3	3	3	3
Lindsay (2017)	3	3	3	2	3	3
Lindsay & Thomas (2014)	3	3	3	3	3	3
Lindsay et al. (2007)	3	3	3	3	3	3
Loehr (1990)	1	1	1	1	1	3
Mace (2014)	3	1	1	1	2	3
Males (2006)	2	2	2	1	2	3
Märgärit (2013)	1	2	1	1	2	2
McArdle & Barker (2016)	1	2	1	1	3	3

McGregor & Winter (2017)	3	3	3	3	3	3
Mellalieu (2017)	2	2	2	2	3	3
Moran (2014)	3	3	3	2	2	3
Moyle (2015)	2	1	2	1	2	2
Neff (1990)	2	1	1	1	1	3
Orlick (1989)	1	1	1	1	2	3
Pattison & McInerney (2016)	1	2	2	2	2	2
Pepitas (2014)	2	2	2	2	3	3
Rhodus (2006)	3	3	2	2	3	3
Ross (2015)	1	2	3	2	2	3
Rowley, Earle & Gilbourne (2012)	3	3	2	3	3	3
Stambulova & Schinke (2017)	2	2	2	1	1	2
Symes (2014)	3	3	3	3	2	3
Timson (2006)	3	3	3	2	3	3

Tod (2007)	3	2	3	2	3	3
Tod (2008)	3	3	3	2	2	3
Tod (2014)	3	3	3	2	3	3
Tonn & Harmison (2004)	2	3	1	2	3	3
Weinberg (2014)	2	2	1	1	3	3
Williams & Andersen (2012)	3	3	3	3	3	3
Woodcock, Richards & Mugford (2008)	2	3	2	2	3	3

Table 5: ENTREQ framework

Item	Description	Page
Aim	State the research question the synthesis addresses.	6
Approach to Searching	Indicate whether the search was pre-planned (comprehensive search strategies to seek all available studies) or iterative (to seek all available concepts until theoretical saturation is achieved).	7
Data Sources	Describe the data sources used (electronic databases, grey literature databases, relevant organizational websites, experts, information specialists, generic websites, hand searching, reference lists) and when the searches were conducted; provide the rationale for the data searches conducted.	7
Electronic Search Strategy	Describe the literature search (e.g. provide the electronic search strategies with population terms, clinical or health related terms, experiential or social phenomena related terms, filters for qualitative research and search limits).	7
Data Extraction	Indicate which sections of the primary studies were analyzed and how were the data extracted from the primary studies?	8
Number of Reviewers	Identify who was involved in coding and analysis.	8
Inclusion Criteria	Specify the inclusion/exclusion criteria.	8
Study Screening Methods	Describe the process of study screening and sifting.	8

Study Selection Results	Identify the number of studies screened and provide reasons for study exclusion.	8
Synthesis Methodology	Identify the synthesis methodology or theoretical framework, which underpins the synthesis, and describe the rationale for chose of methodology.	9
Coding	Describe the process of coding for data.	10
Derivation of Themes	Explain whether the process of deriving the themes or constructs was inductive or deductive.	10
Study Comparison	Describe how were comparisons made within and across studies.	11
Rationale for Appraisal	Describe the rationale and approach used to appraise and included studies or selected findings, assessment of reports, assessment of content, and utility of findings.	11/12
Appraisal Items	State the tools, frameworks and criteria used to appraise the studies or selected findings.	12
Appraisal Process	Indicate whether the appraisal was conducted independently by more than one reviewer and if consensus was required.	12
Study Characteristics	Present the characteristics of the included studies.	13
Appraisal Results	Present results of the quality assessment and indicate which articles if any, were weighted/excluded based on the assessment and give the rationale.	17
Synthesis Output	Present, rich, compelling and useful results that go beyond a summary of the primary studies.	18-20
Quotations	Present quotations from the primary studies to illustrate themes/constructs, and identify whether the quotations were participant's quotations or the author's interpretation.	Figure 2.
Software	State the computer software used, if any.	N/A

Empirical Paper 1

Use of Video-Analysis Feedback within a Six-Month Coach Education Programme at a Professional Football Club

Abstract

This research outlines how a neophyte sport psychology practitioner (SPP), working alongside a professional football coach, utilised video-analysis feedback within a six-month coach education programme at an elite level professional football club. Video-analysis feedback was primarily utilised to improve the coach's self-awareness in relation to his coaching practice. The intervention was also designed to support the integration of a psychosocial focus within the coaching context. Reflective accounts from both the neophyte SPP and the coach are provided. The reflections provide an insight into the efficacy of the intervention as well as presenting some of the challenges of delivering an intervention, such as this, within a professional football club. The use of video-analysis feedback provided the coach with an opportunity to reflect upon his coaching practice and as a result improve self-awareness of his coaching philosophy, especially in relation to the environment created within the coaching context and relationships developed with players.

Keywords (technology, development, reflection, coaching)

The use of video-analysis in sport has grown significantly in the last decade (Mackenzie & Cushion, 2013) and has been recognised as integral, not only for the development of the players, but also for the purpose of coach education (Groom, Cushion & Nelson, 2011; Nelson & Groom, 2012). However, despite this, the use of video-analysis as a tool for coaches' development remains unclear (Barlett, 2001) and research investigating performance analysis for this purpose requires much more attention (Reeves & Roberts, 2013). Historically the purpose of performance analysis feedback has been to reduce the coaching process down into measurable behaviours (Partington, Cushion, Cope & Harvey, 2015), as opposed to considering it as a whole. As a result, coaches are not encouraged to reflect on how they as an individual impact upon the coaching context. Breaking the coaching process down into measurable behaviours, fails to highlight the importance of the social interactions that occur between the coach and their players

(Cushion, 2007). Furthermore, it is apparent that coaches' attitudes towards performance analysis, for the purposes of self-reflection, are divided. Whilst some coaches actively seek feedback from others, and are willing to adapt their coaching philosophies, others refuse to 'buy-in' to the process, and as a result, fail to progress and develop (Reeves & Roberts, 2013).

Given the high-pressured environment created within professional football academies and considering the high turnover of staff (Partington, et al., 2015) coaches may choose to use 'safer', more traditional, tried and tested methods within their coaching practices in order to successfully demonstrate their expertise (Cushion, Ford & Williams, 2012). However, in order for coaches to have the best chance of producing players capable of playing within the Premier League - the pinnacle of English football, it is essential they continuously adapt and develop their coaching practices over time. This can only be achieved by encouraging coaches to reflect (Cushion, Harvey, Muir & Nelson, 2012), understand their current thoughts and behaviours (Harvey, Cushion & Massa-Gonzalez, 2010) and as a result prevent the culture of professional football from becoming stagnant (Abraham, Collins & Martindale, 2006). By engaging in reflective practice, coaches are able to develop self-awareness and as a result better understand and change their current behaviours (Leduc, Culver, & Werthner, 2012). In that sense, this research outlines how video-analysis feedback was utilised within a 6-month coach education programme in order to encourage reflection and increase the self-awareness of a coach at a professional football club. In addition to this, the intervention was designed to support the integration of a psychosocial focus within the coaching context. Reflective accounts from the perspective of both the sport psychology practitioner (SPP) and the coach are highlighted to provide an insight into the challenges of delivering an intervention, such as this, within a professional football club.

Coaching and Self-Awareness

It has been reported that coaches often lack self-awareness regarding their coaching practice and philosophy (Lyle & Cushion, 2010). Research has found that coaches regularly highlight the importance of developing the 'whole player', with particular emphasis placed on developing the ability of their players to make decisions and be creative (Wright & Forrest, 2007). Despite this, their coaching practices often do not align with their beliefs and values (Partington & Cushion, 2013). In actuality, coaches often do

not provide their players with the opportunity to explore and make decisions within their coaching sessions. Furthermore, coaches often rely more on instruction as opposed to providing their players with the opportunity to ask and answer questions. Coaches that do ask questions, very rarely encourage their players to develop a level of critical thinking, due to the nature of the questions being asked and the demands they place on their players for a quick response (Cope, Partington, Cushion & Harvey, 2016). Integrating video-analysis within the coaching context has been found to encourage self-reflection and as a result challenge coaches to closely consider their coaching philosophy and practice as a whole (Groom, Cushion & Nelson, 2011).

Given that coaching is a complex interplay between thought and action, it is essential for any coach education programme to acknowledge the interaction between observable behaviours and the cognitive process that precedes it (Cushion et al., 2012). Video-analysis feedback provides practitioners and coaches with a platform to achieve this. Coaches are able to view their coaching behaviours and critically reflect on these behaviours, whilst explaining their decisions. If facilitated within a supportive environment, video-analysis feedback can encourage reflection, increase self-awareness and have a direct impact on coaching practice. Video-analysis can also provide coaches with a greater awareness of the nature of the coach-athlete relationship (Groom et al., 2011), encouraging them to reflect and consider how they interact with their players (Cushion & Jones, 2006) to implement a more player centred approach. Furthermore, it can also highlight the importance that trust and respect have in creating a positive learning environment (Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2009). Partington et al. (2015) investigated the impact video-feedback had on the reflection and coaching practices of five English youth coaches. This individual longitudinal approach provided the coaches with an opportunity to significantly change their coaching behaviours in areas such as instruction, questioning and feedback as a result of their increased self-awareness in relation to their coaching practice. Clearly then, video-analysis used for the purpose of coach development has the ability to increase self-awareness and ultimately enhance learning and development.

Coaching Context

It has been suggested that coaches value the developmental opportunities they are presented with in their day-to-day work more than the opportunities provided to them whilst engaged in formal coach education (Werthner & Trudel, 2006). Whilst these coach

education programmes are essential for the development of elite coaches, they are often criticised for lacking authenticity regarding the context in which they are delivered (Mallett et al., 2009) and for not considering the challenges most important to each individual coach (Nelson, Cushion & Potrac, 2006). Coaches are rarely given the opportunity to learn and develop within their own club's environment and as a result coaching courses may fail to foster long-lasting change. On the other hand, everyday learning experiences can often be overlooked due to the increasing demands placed on elite coaches working within professional football. When these learning opportunities are recognised, they are often limited in direction and rarely include constructive feedback (Mallett, Trudel, Lyle & Rynne, 2009). Nevertheless, these challenges can be overcome by providing coaches with the appropriate support and resources to ensure that their development is consistently prioritised. In that sense, it could be argued that SPP are uniquely placed to provide coaches with this support and it has been suggested that the use of video feedback can 'bridge the gap' between themselves and the coach (Ives, Straub & Shelley, 2002). Furthermore, SPP are able to recognise the importance of viewing the coaching process holistically and on an individual basis (Partington & Cushion, 2013). Hence, this 6-month coach education programme was designed and delivered by the SPP, ensuring the views and needs of the coach were considered within the broad and unique environment that existed at the club.

Research Context

This intervention took place at an English, Category One, Premier League Academy. The Premier League is the pinnacle of professional football in England and is recognised as one of the best leagues on the global platform. The ultimate aim of football academies across the globe is to produce individuals capable of playing first team professional football (Relvas et al., 2010; The Premier League Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP), 2011). In order to successfully achieve this, academy programmes provide specialised support in areas such as; coaching, sport science, physiotherapy, performance analysis and sport psychology. The structure of these academies ensures that this professional support is delivered across three distinct phases; the Foundation Phase (under 5 to under 11), the Youth development Phase (under 12 to under 16) and the Professional Development Phase (under 17 to under 21) (EPPP, 2011). This intervention was delivered to one of the coaches within the Youth Development Phase of the academy structure.

The Coach

At the time the intervention took place, the coach (author three), was coaching the U12's group within the Youth Development Phase of the academy. Jamie holds the F.A. level 4 (UEFA A licence), Advanced Youth Award and has an undergraduate degree in 'Sport Leisure and Management'. He had 12 years of coaching experience within professional football and at the time of the intervention had been coaching at the current club for one year.

Neophyte Sport Psychology Practitioner

At the time the intervention took place, I (author one), aged 22, was in the final stages of completing my MSc in Sport Psychology. I held the F.A. level 3 (UEFA B) coaching qualification, all three Youth Modules and had six years experience of coaching football at the grassroots level. The placement at the club lasted for six months and was part of my MSc programme. During my time at the club, my supervisor (author four) facilitated the placement and supported the delivery of the intervention. The delivery of psychological support was in its infancy at the club and this intervention was designed to highlight the importance of delivering psychological interventions within the coaching context, to reinforce a hands-on performance-orientated perspective, as opposed to a classroom based delivery approach. The reflections presented are designed to provide an insight into my development over the course of a six-month period and the efficacy of the intervention itself.

The Intervention

The primary aim of the intervention was to increase Jamie's self-awareness in relation to his coaching practice and encourage him to critically reflect upon his coaching philosophy in relation to his practical delivery. The secondary aim of the intervention was to enhance Jamie's ability to integrate a psychosocial focus within the coaching context delivered over a six-month period. A focus on the psychosocial development of youth players has been largely ignored (Harwood, Barker and Anderson, 2015) and so the 5Cs (Confidence, Commitment, Communication, Concentration and Control) (Harwood, 2008), were utilised to ensure the desired aims of the intervention were met. Performance analysis equipment was utilised to capture the coaching sessions that Jamie delivered with a group of players within the Youth Development Phase (12-16) of the academy and an online platform was created to store and access this video footage. The intervention consisted of

four key steps that are outlined below. Collectively, all four steps were designed to meet both the primary and secondary aims of the intervention.

Step 1: Coach and Player Observation

To ensure the intervention met the individual needs of the coach, I spent the first four weeks observing Jamie, both on and off the pitch, in order to better understand him as both a person and a coach. This also provided me with an opportunity to observe the players in both training and in games. Jamie, who actively viewed me as an extension of the ‘coaching team’, was keen to get my views on both his delivery and the players’ development needs. Therefore, we discussed and agreed upon individual targets for each of the players in relation to one aspect of the 5Cs. The players were then made aware of these targets and encouraged to focus on this aspect of their development over the next six weeks. After each six-week cycle, both Jamie and myself, with involvement from each player, made a decision, as to whether the player should retain this target or be given a different psychosocial focus. This step was essential to the success of the intervention, as it encouraged Jamie to focus on the holistic needs of his players and better understand the importance a psychosocial focus could have on the long-term development of youth players - in line with his coaching philosophy. Moreover, it provided me with an opportunity to observe Jamie’s delivery and begin to build a relationship with him, which would be essential to the success of the intervention moving forwards (Giges, Pepitas & Vernacchia, 2004).

Step 2: Integrating the 5Cs

Each element of the 5Cs framework were integrated alongside an aspect of the club’s coaching philosophy that was deemed to be a ‘best fit’. Confidence was combined with ‘Playing Out from The Back’, Communication was combined with ‘Playing Through Midfield’, Control was combined with ‘Playing in the Final Third’, Concentration was combined with ‘Transition’ and Commitment was combined with ‘Defending Principles’. In a six-week cycle, this allowed each psychological topic to be coached and ensured that every individual within the group had an opportunity to develop all areas of the 5Cs, as well as focus on their own target area. Within the *Appendix* there are examples of coaching sessions that were used as part of this six-month intervention. The five coaching sessions

highlight how each of the 5C's were integrated alongside the technical/tactical focus. In addition to this, they provide examples of interventions used to develop these psychosocial qualities in the players. The sixth week was dedicated to game related practices, allowing the players to demonstrate their understanding of the topics that had been delivered in the weeks prior.

Step 3: Capturing the Coaching Sessions

After the initial four-week observation period, all of the coaching sessions were then recorded. We utilised video-analysis equipment and the video and audio footage produced were edited to highlight aspects of the coaching session that demonstrated 'best practice'. This edited footage focused on a number of aspects: the use of psychosocial interventions within the coaching session, the players' responses to these challenges, the environment Jamie created within the coaching context and the interactions and relationships he had and was able to build with his players. This video footage became the foundation of the intervention and was regularly used to facilitate debate and discussion. Moreover, this video footage was uploaded onto an online platform, where all coaches within the academy could access it for educational purposes, regarding 'best practice' of how to integrate psychosocial interventions within their coaching practice. After accessing this online platform, a number of other coaches requested the same video-analysis feedback from their own sessions, giving the education programme the potential to extend beyond one coach in isolation and have more of an impact on an organisational level.

Step 4: Reflection

Jamie and I then dedicated time together to review the video footage and reflect on what went well, as well as identify areas that could be improved. Initially these reflections followed a rigid structure in line with the cyclical process of action research (Knowles, Gilbourne, Borrie & Nevill, 2001). Action research is often associated with changes to context specific practice, as it encourages practitioners to plan, observe and reflect upon their current behaviours. Reflecting on current practices provides practitioners with an opportunity to explore good practice, as well as identifying areas that require change. Furthermore, if done as part of a group, practitioners are able to create new understanding, which can potentially have an impact upon their practice (Knowles et al., 2001). Jamie and I were able to dedicate time after each session to discuss our views of the days coaching sessions. During these sessions, we would both watch the footage together and then I

would provide Jamie with an opportunity to express his thoughts, before offering my own. We would often discuss his beliefs and values regarding his coaching philosophy, the long-term development and progression of his players and elements that needed to change for the following day. As these sessions became common practice, they became more flexible in structure and would often extend beyond the coaching context and include our thoughts in relation to the culture of professional football and youth development as a whole.

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is an integral part of learning and development as it provides individuals with an opportunity to better understand themselves as both people and practitioners (Anderson, Knowles & Gilbourne, 2004) within the context in which they are situated (Nesti, Littlewood, O'Halloran, Eubank and Richardson, 2012). Furthermore, the development of self-awareness allows an individual to recognise and understand their own beliefs and values (Thompson & Pascal, 2012) and critically challenge these values in relation to their current practices (Knowles et al., 2001). However, the voice of the neophyte practitioner (Tonn & Harmison, 2004) is not well reflected within the literature. Despite recent attempts to fill this gap (Christensen & Aoyagi, 2015; Jones, Evans & Mullen, 2007; Rowley, Earle & Gilbourne, 2012; Williams & Andersen, 2012), there remains a lack of understanding regarding the diverse challenges a neophyte practitioner might experience within professional practice (Holt & Streat, 2001), especially when working alongside a professional coach. In that sense, the following sections include the reflections from the coach and neophyte SPP, written from a first-person perspective. These reflective accounts give an insight into the efficacy of the work as well as highlighting some of the challenges of applied sport psychology delivery within professional football.

Coach's Reflections

Prior to this six-month journey, given my extensive coaching experience within a variety of professional football academies, I felt I already had a strong sense of who I was as a coach and of my coaching philosophy. I am a strong advocate that the role of an academy coach is to facilitate the long-term holistic development of players and people. I aspire to create the right environment for my players, which fosters a positive coach-athlete relationship (Groom et al., 2011), prioritises development over performance and puts the

player at the centre of everything that I do (Cushion & Jones, 2006). However, at some of the previous professional football clubs that I have worked, the coaching curriculum had been dominated by a technical and tactical focus. Whilst these areas are essential for the development of professional footballers, I felt as though the biggest areas in football were being missed – the social and psychological corners. The ‘Advanced Youth Award’ was the first course that moved away from the more traditional style of coaching and whilst I felt this was a step in the right direction, I wanted to place even more emphasis on the social and psychological corners of development within my everyday coaching (Werthner & Trudel, 2006). By utilising video-analysis equipment within my coaching practice at the club, I was able to see the connection I had with my players, as well as observe how integrating a psychosocial focus was positively contributing towards their development. It also provided me with the time and structure to reflect on my own coaching philosophy and practice, taking more of a long-term approach in relation to my own development and the development of my players. The questions posed to me and the different perspective this provided, encouraged me to try new things and take more risks within my coaching practice. Too often, because of the pressure of academy football, coaches are afraid to try new things (Cushion, Ford & Williams, 2012; Partington, et al., 2015). However, despite this pressure, it is vital to have a growth mind-set and be open to trying new things, in order to progress and develop as a coach (Abraham, Collins & Martindale, 2006). I believe that some coaches might have viewed a SPP with a camera as a threat. However, over the course of this six-month programme, Nick and I were able to build a strong professional relationship, based on trust and respect (Giges, Pepitas & Vernacchia, 2004), which gave me the confidence to adapt and develop upon my coaching practice. Nick became an integral part of the ‘coaching team’ and so successfully overcame the stereotypical view that the SPP wears a suit and tie, sits in an office and asks you how you are feeling!

The reflective process that we engaged in whilst using the video-analysis equipment was effective in highlighting the strengths of my coaching delivery, as well as identifying aspects that needed to be adapted and changed (Knowles et al., 2001). Furthermore, by engaging in this process, I was able to see if my coaching philosophy transferred into the coaching context. Having every coaching session recorded, over a six-month period, essentially leaves you with ‘nowhere to hide’. Therefore, this process made me aware of aspects of my coaching that I was not aware of before, such as the nature of the relationships I developed with my players and the environment I created for my players to

learn in (Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2009). Moreover, the intervention itself acted as a vehicle for me to build stronger relationships with my players, which is central to my coaching philosophy and practice. It also encouraged me to ask more questions of myself, in relation to the long-term development of my players. Why were these sessions important? How did this approach align with my coaching philosophy? Gladly, overall, my coaching behaviours reinforced my coaching philosophy and gave me confidence that I was able to implement my values and beliefs in the coaching context on a regularly basis. On the occasions where there were contradictions between my philosophy and my coaching behaviours, the video footage clearly highlighted them and the opportunity I had to reflect on these moments, ensured they could be adapted the following day. Ultimately, I strongly believe that this intervention had a positive impact on my coaching. I was able to improve my self-awareness in relation to my coaching philosophy and practice, integrate a psychosocial focus within my sessions and as a result, focus on the holistic development of my players. The final game of the season, which marked the end of the six-month journey, resulted in our biggest win, against a very good academy team. However, more importantly, we were able to see noticeable progression and development in both the players and myself as a coach.

SPP's Reflections

In the days leading up to the start of the placement, I was filled with two strong but contradictory feelings: confidence and anxiety. Given my coaching qualifications and experience, combined with my theoretical understanding of sport psychology literature, I had a strong sense of confidence in my ability to successfully meet the demands of the placement (Woodcock, Richards & Mugford, 2008). Furthermore, given the quality of my training up until this point, I had clear expectations of the potential challenges I would likely be presented with within this elite environment. However, I was also experiencing anxiety, common for neophyte practitioners engaging in applied practice (Tonn & Harmison, 2004; Collins, Evans-Jones & O'Connor, 2013). This was my first opportunity to transfer my knowledge into a practical setting and given my ambitions as a practitioner, I had begun to attach a huge amount of importance to this experience. Whilst my supervisor had made his expectations clear in relation to the delivery of the intervention, I still had ambitions to 'change the world' (Christensen & Aoyogi, 2015). The delivery of sport psychology services was in its infancy at the club and from my perspective; this

placement gave me my first opportunity to ‘prove’ myself as a practitioner (Andersen &, 2007). Despite this and with the cautionary words of my supervisor still in the forefront of my mind, I was very aware that before I could successfully achieve anything, I first had to understand the environment in which I would be situated (Nesti et al., 2012). I approached the beginning of the placement in the knowledge that I needed to take my time, understand the culture of the club and build strong relationships with key stakeholders in order to provide a solid foundation for the development of the intervention.

It was in these early stages of the intervention that I began to truly understand and appreciate the importance of my coaching background. Whilst observation is a key element of an applied SPP’s role (Larsen, 2017), essentially I was being asked to take on the role of an assistant coach within this context. Jamie made it very clear from the start that he wanted me alongside him, on the grass, to act as another set of eyes for his group of players, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses and contributing towards their overall holistic development. Therefore, it was essential for me to be adaptable (Collins et al., 2013), whilst also establishing and developing a clear practitioner identity (Tonn & Harmison, 2004). Whilst undertaking multiple roles within an applied setting is becoming more common within applied practice (Jones, Evans & Mullen, 2007), it did begin to have an impact on my ability to find a balance between my personal and professional lives (Williams & Andersen, 2012). Furthermore, whilst I was comfortable at this point to take on this flexible coach/SPP role, I did experience a strong sense of anxiety when providing Jamie with my view of his players’ development needs. Despite my early confidence stemming from my coaching background, the pressure I was putting myself under to ‘succeed’ within this elite environment was causing me to second-guess myself (Aoyagi & Portenga, 2014). It was essential for me, especially in these early stages, to develop a strong working relationship with Jamie to ensure the success of the intervention and because of this I began to doubt my ability as a practitioner to provide Jamie with any information that would be useful in contributing towards his and his players’ development. Jamie had a vast amount of experience coaching at a professional level and my knowledge and experiences in comparison to his left me feeling fraudulent (Andersen & Stevens, 2007). However, despite the self-doubt I was experiencing (Williams & Andersen, 2012), I was able to maintain a level of honesty in my assessment, which I firmly believe contributed towards the start of what would be a strong working alliance (Collins, et al., 2013) based on trust and respect (Giges, Pepitas & Vernacchia, 2004).

The more time I spent with Jamie, the more it was becoming apparent that we had very similar beliefs and values in relation to how we felt the culture and environment of professional football should 'look' and it wasn't long before the critical discussions we were having about the intervention, extended to the 'failings' of professional football as a whole. Jamie was and still is a very forward-thinking and open-minded individual, with a clear vision and determination to improve and develop as a coach. As a young aspiring neophyte practitioner, I could strongly relate to this approach of personal development and could see a number of similar qualities in myself. This connection, on both a personal and professional level, gave Jamie and me the opportunity to share our thoughts in a safe, critical and constructive way. It was during these quiet moments of reflection and discussion, which often involved my supervisor, that for the first time in my professional career I experienced a true sense of congruence (Lindsay, Breckon, Thomas & Maynard, 2007).

However, in complete contrast to this feeling of congruence, was the feeling that on some levels, the placement outcomes had failed to meet my own high expectations. Upon reflection, it became apparent to me that these two strong competing feelings stemmed from the same source: my developing philosophy as an applied practitioner (Poczwadowski, Sherman & Ravizza, 2004). As many neophyte practitioners do, I took inspiration from my supervisors, which undoubtedly had an influence on the development of my philosophy of practice as an applied practitioner (Tod, 2007). Both of my supervisors were strong advocates of the organisational approach a SPP can adopt in order to positively affect the culture of professional sporting organisations. Having had an opportunity to work closely with them and watch how this approach translates into professional practice, I too had aspirations to work from this organisational perspective.

However, despite the fact that the intervention had been a success in achieving its primary and secondary aims, I deemed myself to have had very little impact on the environment of the club. I had worked hard, not only facilitating reflection and supporting the integration of a psychosocial focus within the coaching context, but on creating an online platform that other coaches could use as a developmental tool. As the six-month period was coming to an end, I could count on one hand the number of coaches that had accessed that online platform. My supervisor's input was crucial at this point (Holt & Streat, 2001) in helping me overcome these feelings of failure and inadequacy

(Christensen & Aoyagi, 2015) and encouraging me to focus on the many positive outcomes of the intervention.

Delivering this intervention, as a neophyte practitioner within the often-volatile environment of professional football, was an extremely challenging and rewarding experience, which undoubtedly contributed towards my on-going development as a practitioner. Upon reflection, this applied experience, in such a short period, exposed me to situations that helped shape my philosophy of practice, challenged my identity as a practitioner and highlighted the importance of understanding the culture of a professional sporting organisation. Initially, it was perhaps my naivety in relation to the organisational culture of the club and my unrealistic expectations about the outcome of the intervention, which contributed towards feelings of failure and inadequacy. I soon came to realise, in line with the experiences of other SPP that having a professional philosophy is not enough in applied practice and the role of a SPP is to understand how this philosophy can adapt and fit into the wider context (Larson, 2017). At this point in my career and in such a short space of time, it was beyond my capabilities as a neophyte practitioner to change the culture of the football club. However, I believe I was able to create smaller significant changes within the boundaries of the designed intervention. By integrating video-analysis feedback, particularly within the early stages, I was able to build strong relationships (Ives et al., 2002) with key stakeholders, which gave me a platform to engage in critical discussion throughout my time at the club. Combining my coaching experience with my understanding on sport psychology literature allowed me to develop a fluid practitioner identity within this context. The multiple roles I adopted throughout my time at the club ensured the aims of the intervention were met; Jamie was provided with an opportunity to increase his self-awareness in relation to his coaching practice, a psychosocial focus was successfully integrated within the coaching context and the holistic development of the players was considered.

Conclusion

The primary aim of this six-month coach education programme was to improve the self-awareness of the coach by utilising video-analysis feedback, within the coaching context, to encourage reflection upon his coaching philosophy. In addition to this, the secondary aim of the intervention was to integrate a psychosocial focus within the coaching context, in order to focus on the holistic long-term development of the players. As highlighted in the above reflections, both the SPP and the coach reflected positively on

the efficacy of the intervention, believing it to have been successful in meeting the primary and secondary aims within the six-month period. Key to the success of the intervention, discussed by both practitioners, was the professional relationship developed between the SPP and the coach. It is becoming more common, within applied sport psychology practice, for the SPP to work collaboratively with the coach (Sharp & Hodge, 2013), as opposed to working directly with the athlete. In order for this work to be effective, the SPP must take the time to understand the individual needs of the coach and focus on building a strong professional relationship (Giges, Pepitas & Vernacchia, 2004). The SPP must be flexible in their approach to the consultancy experience and needs to demonstrate an ability to be able to embed themselves within the culture of the club (Sharp & Hodge, 2013). The use of technology throughout this intervention, not only provided the SPP with the opportunity to achieve this, but also was integral in facilitating the reflective process. Rather than breaking the coaching process down into measurable behaviours, this intervention encouraged the coach to reflect on the video-analysis feedback as a whole, considering the influence they had on the environment coaching process. The structure of the reflections (Knowles et al., 2001), which were facilitated by the SPP, ensured that the coach had the opportunity to explain their coaching behaviours and as a result this intervention was able to closely consider the interaction between coaching behaviours and the decision making process (Cushion et al., 2012).

In this new and advanced technological age, SPPs should strongly consider the use of video-analysis equipment within their applied practice with coaches. Whilst integrating technology within applied practice can be time-consuming, it acts as a vehicle to be able to build strong relationships (Ives, Straub & Shelley, 2002) and is perhaps one method of providing ‘proof’ that the SPP is positively impacting on development and performance within the sporting organisation. The development of coach education programmes should be developed within the context in which they will be delivered and utilise the video-analysis feedback to view the coaching process as a whole. Ultimately, this approach to applied sport psychology support can be extremely effective and is often well received within elite sporting environments.

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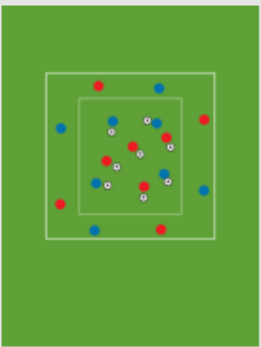
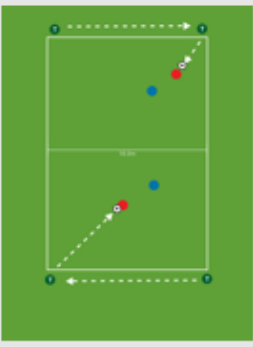


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Appendix

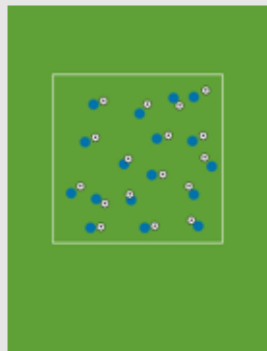
Playing out from the back and Confidence				
Learning Objective: To keep the ball safe side when turning To keep the ball safe side when dribbling with both feet against pressure To demonstrate confidence under pressure				
Technical 1) lift eyes in possession 2) receive back foot	Psychological 1) Confidence	<u>Physical</u> 1) Tempo 2) Size of Area / Rest	<u>Social</u> 1) Teamwork 2) Encouragement	<u>Tactical</u> 1) Team Shape 2) Rotations / Space
				

<p>Technical Unopposed Turning Learning objectives: 1) To keep the ball safe side when turning 2) Type of turn (Set turns: Step Over, Drag back, Stop Turn) 3) End Product (Pass to inside player)</p> <p>Before Phase: What do elite dribblers do? Be confident to try new skills</p> <p>During Phase: Lift eyes where is space to play into. Communication with player that you are going to work with. Turning skill</p> <p>After Phase: What did you do well? Turning skill what skills did you select?</p> <p>Session description: Inside players start with a ball each Outside players without a ball Inside players dribble out to swap positions with outside players, turn and pass to player that they swapped with.</p>	<p>Turning 1v1 Learning objectives: 1) To keep the ball safe side when turning 2) Type of turn (Set turns: Step Over, Drag back, Stop Turn) 3) End product final pass</p> <p>Before Phase: How can you hide the ball? Be confident to try new skills</p> <p>During Phase: Communication Turning skill</p> <p>After Phase: What did you do well? Turning skill what skills did you select?</p> <p>Session description: Both feeders play square first then play into red. Red must then turn and play a pass in to the opposite feeder. Feeder plays square. Defenders stay in their half attacking players move from half to half</p>	<p>Turning Boxes 7v7 Learning objectives: 1) To keep the ball safe side when turning 2) Type of turn (Set turns: Step Over, Drag back, Stop Turn) 3) End Product (Pass to inside player)</p> <p>Before Phase: How can you hide the ball? Be confident to try new skills</p> <p>During Phase: Lift eyes where is space to play into. Communication with player that you are going to work with. Turning skill</p> <p>After Phase: What did you do well? To lift eyes to recognize space Turning skill what skills did you select?</p> <p>Session description: Normal game except to score a goal you must complete a turn in a box. The smaller the box the greater the reward?</p>	<p>SSG Arsenal Football Learning objectives: 1) Encourage players to have a forward thinking mentality. 2) Recognise space. (Drive / Pass) 3) Receiving skills (back Foot)</p> <p>Before Phase: Try to support team mates so that they can play forwards.</p> <p>During Phase: How many touches do you need to play forward? Decision making (Risk Taker) Pass selection (weight) Dribble (keep ball safe side)</p> <p>After Phase: Support play Communication</p> <p>Session description: 7v7 SSG Arsenal Football 2teams of 7 playing normal football, however the rules are that any backwards or side wards passes can only be in 1 touch. If a player has more than 1 touch they must play forwards.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Confidence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players are encouraged to identify role models at the start of the session who demonstrate high levels of confidence • The coach provides consistent praise to both effort and achievement • Each individual player is encouraged to set themselves a target to achieve for the session • Coach attempts to create a 'no fear of failure' environment, by celebrating individuals that try new things and make mistakes
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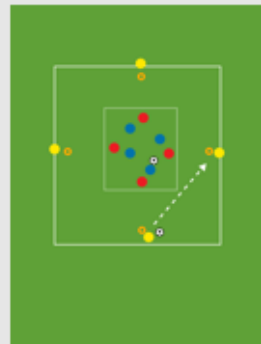
Playing Through Midfield and Communication

Learning Objective: To make a run to create space for partner
 To be able to rotate/interchange to receive
Demonstrate effective communication

Technical
 1) Distances in possession
 2) Weaker foot challenges



Psychological
 1) Communication



Physical
 1) Movement to create space
 2) Size of Area / Rest



Social
 1) Teamwork
 2) Encouragement



Tactical
 1) Overloads
 2) Team shape

Ball Familiarity / Functional and conditioning

<p>Diamond Play around</p> <p>Learning objectives: 1) Back foot receiving / Both feet 2) To play in limited touches 3) Receiving skills</p> <p>Before Phase: How can you find space for yourself Body shape to receive (Open)</p> <p>During Phase: How many touches do you need to move the ball on? Pass selection (weight) Passing techniques Receiving players trigger to move of the cone</p> <p>After Phase: Communication Speed to follow pass / rotate</p> <p>Session description: Player moves the ball around the outside of the diamond. (Progression 2 balls) Middle square possession link play every 4 minutes the groups rotate.</p>	<p>Midfield Combination</p> <p>Learning objectives: 1) Movement to receive in a diamond 2) Weight of pass (detail of pass) 3) Supporting Run</p> <p>Before Phase: Where is your space before you receive? Scanning? Do we only scan of one shoulder? What are we scanning for?</p> <p>During Phase: What can help you? Who can help you? Movement after pass</p> <p>After Phase: What did you do well? Did you manage to use all receiving skills?</p> <p>Session description: Red plays into yellow diamond. Yellow diamond combines and plays through into final third. Blue then play through yellow diamond. Progression all yellows must touch the ball quick play combinations, rotation before next attack, 3rd man run to support front players.</p>	<p>3 Zone Game</p> <p>Learning objectives: 1) Scan before receiving 2) Recognise space to drive into 3) Keep ball safe side</p> <p>Before Phase: How can you find space for yourself?</p> <p>During Phase: How many touches do you need to play forward? Decision making (Risk Taker) RWTB (keep ball safe side)</p> <p>After Phase: Support play Communication</p> <p>Session description: 3 Zone Game Play through thirds GK starts the play Players can pass into next zone or safety zone. If ball is played into safety zone player is Unopposed for 3 seconds.</p>	<p><u>Communication</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whiteboard used at the start of the session to highlight the different types of communication and why they are important • Multiple balls used at times within the sessions to create 'chaos' and encourage more detailed communication • 'Silent Soccer' to further highlight the importance of communication
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Playing in the Final Third and Control

Learning Objective: To be able to shoot accurately with the instep and laces from 10-15m with both feet under pressure
 To use a variety of shots accurately with a high level of success
 To maintain emotional control throughout the session, under pressure

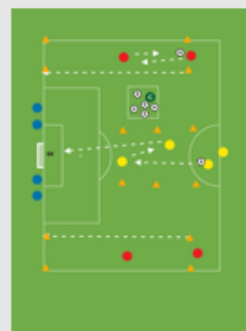
Technical
 1) Distances in attacking situations
 2) Weaker foot challenges



Psychological
 1) Control



Physical
 1) Movement to create space
 2) Size of Area / Rest



Social
 1) Teamwork
 2) Encouragement



Tactical
 1) Overloads
 2) Team shape

Functional and Conditioning

Transition Waves

Learning objectives:

- 1) Movement to get free
- 2) Detail of space in front
- 3) Recognize overload
- 4) Transition (nearest man closes the ball down)

Before Phase:

How big can we make the space?

During Phase:

Body shape to play forward
Where is the overload?

After Phase:

What did you do well?
To lift eyes to recognize space

Session Description:

Green plays against yellow. When green score red drive out, yellow switch with red and green react to the transition quickly.

If red score then they will play against blue. Green would switch with blue.

Progression:

Each team can be timed in possession. Score will be kept, every goal gets a point.

(work as a team one player switching off could cost the team, which could result in lots of running and pressing)

DNA 3 Ball Finishing

Learning objectives:

- 1) To be able to shoot accurately with the instep and laces 10-15 yards out with both feet under pressure.
- 2) To use a variety of shots
- 3) To have accuracy with a high level of shots

Before Phase:

Correct body position

During Phase:

Can you accurately shoot at goal?
What shooting techniques could you use?

After Phase:

Reactions / follow up
Movement to receive a new ball

Session description:

Yellow will shoot first in the middle. Then from the right first red will supply a cross into the goal area. Blue defenders will match the amount of yellow attackers.

3rd ball will be played in by the coach.

As soon as 3rd ball has been played run back and start again each team will get 3 minutes to score as many goals as they can.

Shooting Wars

Learning objectives:

- 1) To be able to shoot accurately with the instep and laces 10-15 with both feet under pressure
- 2) To use a variety of shots accurately with a high level of success
- 3) To recognize where and when to use an overload

Before Phase:

Think about different shooting techniques

During Phase:

Accuracy
Movement after first shot
Rebounds
Shot selection

After Phase:

Support play
Communication

Session description:

Two teams players are locked into 2 zones. Double goals are scored from back zone or from a rebound of GK.

Players are rotated every 4 minutes.

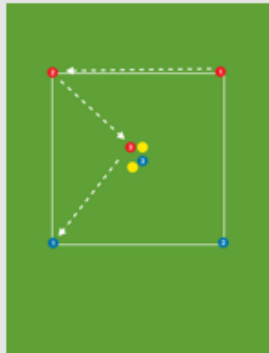
Control

- Whiteboard used at the start of the session to identify positive and negative emotions associated with performance
- Competition is created between groups in an attempt to create pressure situations
- The pace of the session, leads to mistakes, which tests the players ability to overcome adversity
- Players set challenging, individual goals (number of goals to score) at the start of the session

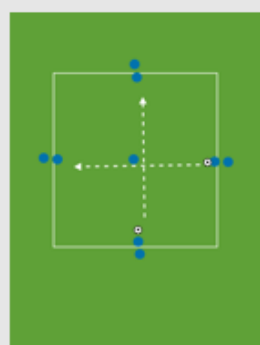
Transitions and Concentration

Learning Objective: Movement with and without the ball
 Receiving skills in transition from defense to attack
Ability to identify key triggers for the transition

Technical
 1) Distances in attacking situations
 2) Weaker foot challenges



Psychological
 1) **Concentration**



Physical
 1) Speed of recovery runs
 2) Size of Area / Rest



Social
 1) Teamwork
 2) Encouragement

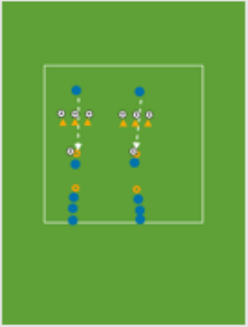




Tactical
 1) Overloads
 2) Team shape

<p>Figure 8 Passing</p> <p>Learning objectives: 1) Detail of pass 2) Receiving skills 3) Weight and Accuracy 4) Passing Channels</p> <p>Before Phase: What passing techniques will you use?</p> <p>During Phase: How many touches do you need to play quickly and accurately? Weight and accuracy of pass.</p> <p>After Phase: Support play Communication</p> <p>Session description: Figure 8 Passing 1 passes to 2, 2 passes to 3. 3 will then punch pass to opposite colour. Players will change sides after set time so that they can work on weaker foot. Progression: different type of pass. Chip, lofted, driven,</p>	<p>Sweat Box</p> <p>Learning objectives: 1) React quickly to transition defending 2) Get close to the radar 3) Hard to beat in a 1v1 situation</p> <p>Before Phase: What do elite defenders do? Be confident!</p> <p>During Phase: Desire not be beaten! Brave</p> <p>After Phase: What did you do well? How did you hold the attacking player up?</p> <p>Session description: First player runs with the ball if he beats the middle man, a player from the side will then attack. Middle man must be switched on and show concentration.</p>	<p>Square Transition</p> <p>Learning objectives: 1) Quick Transition 2) Security behind ball 3) Recovery Runs</p> <p>Before Phase: Which teams break quickly?</p> <p>During Phase: Quick reactions Where am I on the pitch?</p> <p>After Phase: End product. Recognition of overloads in possession. Recovery runs win the ball back out of possession</p> <p>Session description: Blue make at least 10 passes if they do they can break out and score. If red intercept they look to link up with red an yellow to create an 8v4 against blue. On the 12th pass blue or yellow can have a shot at goal Blue will hunt as a four to win possession back. If blue win possession they get the chance to score.</p>	<p>SSG 4v4 Transition Game</p> <p>Learning objectives: 1) Recovery runs 2) Desire 3) Work Ethic</p> <p>Before Phase: How can you find space for yourself?</p> <p>During Phase: Team strategy? When driving out with the ball recognition of overloads</p> <p>After Phase: Support play Communication</p> <p>Session description: 4v4 game on a small pitch with GK's As soon as a goal is scored then the scorer must go and switch with a man on the outside. Players on the outside can be used as bounce players. If numbers are not correct for 4v4 then extra players can be added to play in wide areas. Players can be rotated every 4minutes</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Concentration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently encourages the player to focus his attention both on and off the ball (scanning) • In each session, there were aspects that could distract the player and so they had to recognise and attend to the correct cues at the right time • Game related practices require the players to focus on aspects specific to their position • The 'chaos' created within the sessions, means that players have to respond quickly to transitions and mistakes made • Bibs removed at times to further encourage players to scan and be aware of their environment
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Defending and Commitment

Learning Objective: To be patient when defending in 1v1 situations
 To mirror opponents feet
 To maintain effort throughout the session, despite fatigue, failure or mistakes

Technical 1) Be patient 2) Mirror feet	Psychological 1) Commitment	<u>Physical</u> 1) Pressing 2) Size of Area / Rest	<u>Social</u> 1) Teamwork 2) Encouragement	<u>Tactical</u> 1) Team Shape 2) 1 goes we all go
				

<p>Heading skittles</p> <p>Learning objectives: 1) Work your feet to get in line to head the ball 2) To use arms, neck, shoulders to head through the ball with your forehead 3) To show a mentality to head the ball in free play.</p> <p>Before Phase: What do elite players do when they Head the ball?</p> <p>During Phase: Encourage attacking headers, concentrate on heading the ball down.</p> <p>After Phase: What part of your head made contact with the ball?</p> <p>Session description: One player will be standing behind the balls he will feed the ball to a player to head down to try and knock a ball off. Relay game first team to knock all balls off wins.</p>	<p>3v3 or 4v4 Heading</p> <p>Learning objectives: 1) Work your feet to get in line to head the ball 2) To use arms, neck, shoulders to head through the ball with your forehead 3) To show a mentality to head the ball in free play.</p> <p>Before Phase: What do elite players do when they Head the ball?</p> <p>During Phase: Encourage attacking headers, concentrate on heading the ball down. Which is the best goal to score in?</p> <p>After Phase: What did you do well? What part of your head made contact with the ball?</p> <p>Session description: One team will start with the ball as a team they will try and move the ball up the pitch. To score you can score through the cones or into the goal. Players will come up with their scoring system for this.</p>	<p>Defensive Awareness</p> <p>Learning objectives: 1) Pressing lines and shapes (Nike Tick) 2) Distances 3) Adjust as ball moves 4) Drop on kicking foot going back</p> <p>Before Phase: What do elite defenders do? Be confident!</p> <p>During Phase: Commitment not be beaten!</p> <p>After Phase: What did you do well?</p> <p>Session description: Practice starts with ball fed into 4v2 by T player. Can blue retain possession in end zone. If blue make 3 passes they can decide to either break out and run through a gate or clip a ball into one of the three boxes. Defenders must be ready to either intercept attacking player or drop to intercept lofted passes. If red intercepts they can play back into end zone or make long passes into the goal.</p>	<p>SSG Defending Outnumbered</p> <p>Learning objectives: 1) Team shape 2) Recognize space 3) Recognize overload situations</p> <p>Before Phase: How can you find space for yourself?</p> <p>During Phase: When you have the extra player how can you use the overload? When you don't have the extra player what will your team shape be?</p> <p>After Phase: Support play Communication</p> <p>Individual challenges set throughout the session by the coach focusing on the individual players targets and key learning objectives.</p> <p>Session description: One team plays with 1 less player to encourage consistent commitment, despite adversity</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Commitment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players' effort is consistently rewarded throughout the session • Individual players are set specific and challenging targets within the session to encourage persistent effort • Mistakes are acknowledged as an opportunity to learn • Role models are identified so the players know what commitment 'looks like'
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Empirical Paper 2

The Person Behind the Practitioner: Stories of Critical Moments Contributing to the Development of Applied Sport Psychology Practitioners

Abstract

This study explored the stories of critical moments experienced by applied sport psychology practitioners. Participants were in different stages of their development (trainee, neophyte, and experienced) and were asked to tell a story about a critical moment in their career that had had a significant contribution to their development as applied sport psychology practitioners. Narrative analysis was used as the method of data analysis, which allowed the primary researcher to understand the narrative structure (how were the stories being told?) and narrative features (what was being said?). The dominant narrative structure was consistent with the ‘Re-birth’ plot and provided an insight into the experiences that contributed towards the development of a coherent practitioner identity. There was one consistent narrative feature, which supported this narrative structure: *Over Time there Becomes Less of a Distinction Between the Individual as Person and the Individual as Practitioner*. However, practitioners at different stages of their development demonstrated they were at distinct points of this practitioner individuation process. For example, trainees hadn’t yet developed a coherent and congruent philosophy of practice. Whereas, the neophyte practitioners had, and this was influencing the applied roles they were choosing to engage in. Quotes are provided that highlight the unique experiences of each participant. The article also includes recommendations for future research, such as the use of narrative analysis to explore alternative narrative structures, the investigation of successful and unsuccessful consultancy experiences, and the use of quantitative methods to measure the quantity of critical moments and how they contribute towards practitioner effectiveness.

Keywords: practitioner individuation, identity, applied sport psychology, narrative analysis

Applied sport psychology practitioners are the key instrument to successful service-delivery within elite sporting environments (Poczwadowski, 2017). Consequently, the development of competence as an applied practitioner is directly related to the person behind the practitioner (Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011). Practitioners that demonstrate

high levels of self-knowledge in relation to their core values and beliefs are more likely to develop a congruent philosophy of practice (Lindsay, Breckon, Thomas, & Maynard, 2007), a coherent professional identity, (Tod, Hutter & Eubank, 2017) and demonstrate authenticity in their applied careers.

Recently, McEwan and Tod (2015) have highlighted the similarities between the training and development of counselling psychologists and sport and exercise psychologists. Theories of counsellor development (Carlsson, 2012; Carlsson, Norberg, Schubert, & Sandell, 2011; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2013; Stoltenberg & McNeill, 2009; Worthington, 1987) could provide us with a framework to help us better understand the interaction between person and practitioner and how this development occurs over time. For example, Ronnestad and Skovholt (2013), who adopted a life-span perspective on counsellor development, found that optimal practitioner development involves the integration of the personal self into the professional self. This integration ensures there is an increasing consistency between the practitioners' values and beliefs (and development of a congruent philosophy of practice) and their personality as individuals. Furthermore, with experience, practitioners are more likely to engage in professional roles where they can act freely and naturally; demonstrating an enhanced alignment between them and their environment. This alignment between practitioner (core values and beliefs) and the environment (the role they choose to engage in) has been described as practitioner individuation (McEwan, Tod, & Eubank, 2019). McEwan, Tod, and Eubank (2019) explored practitioner individuation in trainee and experienced sport psychology practitioners. They found that the trainee practitioners were still attempting to find a method of working that fit with their own view of the world and were more likely to change their approach to fit the role. Whereas, the experienced practitioners seemed to have found a way of working that allowed them to be a personal and professional hybrid of themselves and were more likely to adjust the role to fit their professional identities. Practitioners, as they gain experience over time, are more likely to develop a philosophy of practice that is congruent with their own values and beliefs (Tod, Anderson, & Marchant, 2009). There becomes a clear overlap between the consultant as person and the consultant as practitioner (Poczwardowski, 2017). This merging of the self has been found to occur in a number of practitioners immediately following formal training and education (Lindsay et al. 2007; Tod & Bond, 2010) where the practitioner begins to align their professional practice with their beliefs about themselves and human beings in general. As practitioner

individuation occurs, practitioners start to develop an enhanced sense of confidence and learn to trust their own professional approach to practice (Tod, Anderson, & Marchant, 2011). This process takes time and experience, during which the practitioner is exposed to a variety of personal and professional challenges (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2013). It also involves the practitioner negotiating a fit between themselves and the environment in which they are situated, as they attempt to find meaning and purpose in their professional lives (Tod, Hutter & Eubank, 2017). Champ's (2018) ethnographical account of practitioner identity development perfectly highlights the dynamic and ongoing process of practitioner individuation. As a female trainee practitioner working in the masculine environment of professional football, she experienced a significant change in identity over time. The development of a practitioner identity started with an attempt to integrate as part of the organisation; "*I sought to work with, and alongside those individuals who I valued as people*" (p.166) and ended with her behaving in a way that was more authentic to who she was and the values she held. By acting authentically, she had to distance herself from the cultural values that she no longer agreed with; "*I was now my own person separate from the organisation, things had changed, and I had changed*" (p.169). These honest and insightful reflections into her own practitioner individuation journey are some of the few reflections from applied sport psychology practitioners that place practitioner identity as a central focus of the practitioner development literature.

Whilst the collection of studies exploring the development of sport psychologists has grown in recent years (Fogaca, Zizzi, & Andersen, 2018; Johnson & Andersen, 2019), there seems to be a lack of research that focuses on the person behind the practitioner. Recent attempts to fill this gap have explored the characteristics of applied sport psychology practitioners (Woolway & Harwood, 2018) or have focused on the skills and experiences of applied practitioners (Hutter, Oldenhof-Veldman, Pijpers, & Oudejans, 2017). However, few studies within the practitioner development literature have explored practitioner individuation or practitioner identity development over time (Tod, Hutter, & Eubank, 2017). Furthermore, most of the practitioner development literature to date has focused on trainees or experienced practitioners (Tod, Anderson, & Marchant, 2011). There is a lack of research that has explored the development of newly qualified practitioners (Fortin-Guichard, Boudreault, Gagnon, & Trottier, 2018). By including practitioners in different stages of their development (trainee, neophyte, and experienced) we will be better positioned to identify the key challenges practitioners experience as they

progress throughout their career (McEwan, Tod, & Eubank, 2019; Tod, Anderson, & Marchant, 2011) and provide a more in-depth insight into the optimal development of sport psychology practitioners over time.

Understanding the practitioner individuation process and how this develops as an individual's career progresses could also help inform and improve the learning and education pathways for applied sport psychology practitioners (Hutter et al., 2017). Improving the training and development of applied sport psychology practitioners could; enhance trainee experiences, contribute towards the optimal development of competent practitioners, improve client outcomes, and grow the reputation of the discipline as a whole (McEwan & Tod, 2015). Furthermore, because the practitioner individuation process is dynamic and occurs over a long period of time, better understanding this process can contribute towards the life-long learning of applied practitioners.

The purpose of this study is to explore stories, told by applied sport psychology practitioners, of critical moments that have contributed towards their overall development. The specific aims of the study are; a) to understand *how* applied sport psychology practitioners tell their stories about these critical moments and b) to understand what are the features of those stories that reflect why those critical moments contribute to professional development. Given that identity can be represented through the stories people tell about themselves (Tod, Hutter, & Eubank, 2017) a narrative approach to data analysis will be utilised to better understand *how* the stories are told and *what* is being discussed (Smith & Sparkes, 2009a). The data analysis process will be outlined in the following section.

Method

To enhance transparency, the following study has been conducted in line with the COREQ framework (Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig, 2007). A table, outlining these guidelines, can be found in the Appendix (Table 3).

Philosophical Assumptions

To achieve the primary purpose of the research, the current study was situated within an interpretivist paradigm (Sparkes & Smith, 2013). Our narrative analysis (Smith & Sparkes, 2009a) is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, informed by ontological relativism and epistemological constructivism, which allowed the primary researcher to adopt an approach to data collection and analysis that fully captured the participants'

experiences (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Creswell, 2003). Understanding the participants' experiences and acknowledging the co-construction of meaning between participant and the research team allowed for a more in-depth understanding of the topic under investigation (Yilmaz, 2013). For example, conducting a narrative analysis on the interview transcripts allowed the research team to understand how the participants perceived their reality and made sense of the world through the stories they told (Jowett & Frost, 2007). Furthermore, by understanding the structure or plot of the stories and identifying narrative features underpinning these plots, the research team were able to shift between the narrative (how is the story being told?) and the product of the story (what is being said?) (Smith & Sparkes, 2009a) to achieve the primary purpose of the research.

Participants

The participants were placed into three distinct categories based on their differing development stages. These stages were designed to allow the research team to identify narratives features that were unique to each stage of practitioner development and to align with the development stages identified by Rønnestad and Skovholt (2013) (Table 1).

A total of 13 participants took part in the research (five trainee, five neophyte, and three experienced practitioners). The trainee practitioners ranged between 24 and 32 years of age ($M = 28.6$ years). Four of the participants were enrolled on the BPS Stage Two pathway and one was enrolled on the BASES training pathway. The neophyte practitioners ranged between 27 and 37 years of age ($M = 30.4$ years) and had been qualified between 12 months and 42 months ($M = 24$ months). Three of the participants were BPS chartered Sport and Exercise Psychologists and two were BASES chartered Sport and Exercise Scientists (Psychology). The trainee and neophyte practitioners adopted a range of applied roles at the time of the interview, including; working in professional youth football, supporting Olympic athletes, and owning their own private practices. The experienced practitioners ranged from 36 to 52 years of age ($M = 44.0$ years). One of the participants was BPS accredited, one was BASES accredited and one participant was dual-accredited. All of the experienced practitioners worked at a higher education institute, as well as engaging in applied practice with sports such as; gymnastics, swimming, and football.

Data Saturation

The original sample size was designed to be 15 (five participants at each stage of development) to ensure there was an equal spread of participants to represent each of the stages of development. However, as the research progressed, the research team decided to use the principle of data saturation to determine the sample size (Patton, 2002). This was because, towards the end of the data analysis process, as new subjects were added, there were no changes to the results. Hence, no more participants were required.

Procedure

The study received ethical approval from the University Research Ethics Committee at Liverpool John Moores University. The participants were then recruited using a purposeful sampling technique (Sparkes & Smith, 2013) to identify individuals who had extensive applied sport psychology experience, ensuring the findings would be transferrable to other individuals in similar contexts (Patton, 2002). The primary researcher emailed all potential participants and arranged the interviews at a time and place (e.g. Skype, Liverpool John Moores University) that suited each participant. Three participants in the experienced category declined the offer to take part in the interview because of their busy schedules. The participants that agreed to take part in the study attended one interview, during which they were asked to tell the primary author three stories. The stories under investigation for the purposes of this study were about a critical moment they had experienced that had had an impact on them as an applied sport psychology practitioner. Only the primary author and the participant were present at the interview. The interviews lasted between 46 and 89 minutes ($M = 66$ minutes), were audio recorded using Dictaphone and transcribed verbatim. The opening question was purposefully broad to allow the participant to direct the interview and tell a story about their development that was significant and meaningful to them (Smith, 2010). Each participant was provided with this question in advance of the interview to allow them time to reflect on their response. The primary researcher had no pre-planned prompts and adopted the position of active listener throughout the interview (no notes were made during the interview), encouraging the participants to tell their story and on occasion prompting to ensure clarity of meaning (Carless & Douglas, 2009). Transcriptions were returned to each participant upon request for use as a reflective prompt (not for each participant to provide feedback on the transcriptions (Smith & McGannon, 2018)).

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data began with the primary author reading and re-reading the transcripts and immersing himself in the participants' stories to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perspective. Narrative analysis of the data began by identifying the beginning, middle, and end of each story within the dataset to ensure each participant had told a complete story. The primary author then followed the LOCK principle (Bell, 2004) to better understand the structure of the participants' stories. This process involved identifying the Lead Character(s), highlighting the Objective/Obstacle of the story, searching for the Conflict/Consequence, and finally understanding the Knock-Out Conclusion (or ending) to the story. Finally, the primary author re-read all the transcriptions again and drew on literary theory to connect each story or narrative with one of the seven basic plots identified by Booker (2004). For example, the 'Re-birth' plot underpinned the majority of the participants' stories. This plot can be understood in five distinct stages; a) the main character starts the story incomplete in some way and falls under a 'dark shadow', b) the shadow over the main character begins to grow, c) the darkness reveals its true effect and completely takes hold of the main character, d) the main character battles with this darkness, and finally, e) the main character emerges from the struggle and is reborn. Throughout the narrative analysis process the primary author adopted the stance of story analyst; identifying narrative segments within the stories being told and making initial links between these segments and the existing practitioner development literature (Sparkes, 2005). This allowed the research team to add an extra layer of analysis to the stories under investigation and further acknowledged the ontological and epistemological stance adopted throughout this study (Smith & Sparkes, 2006). The final stage involved the primary author looking for narrative features that underpinned the identified plots. The primary author also explored connections between the participants' stories that would allow for meaning to be constructed across participants' experiences and a more in-depth perspective to be provided.

Credibility

The credibility of the research project was established by adopting a non-foundational approach (Sparkes & Smith, 2013). This was achieved by first exploring the values (Smith, 1993) of the primary researcher that would contribute towards the rigor of

the research study. A number of values were identified: *interesting, honest, innovative, expressive, and meaningful*, which were then aligned to five key criteria: *engaging, transparent, novel, rich description, and reflective* (Table 2). The design of the study met these values/criteria in a number of ways. Engagement of the reader was achieved through the use of narrative analysis, allowing the primary researcher to adopt an engaging writing style by representing the participants' narratives. Transparency and rich description have been achieved by providing quotes directly from the interviews to highlight key narrative features and by providing detail about the methods used throughout the study. Innovation has been assured given that this research design is novel; adding to existing knowledge in the area (both theoretically and from a practical perspective). Finally, the primary researcher and research team consistently acknowledged how their own experiences as applied practitioners contributed towards the co-construction of the narrative features within the stories.

Primary Author. The primary author was three months away from completing a Professional Doctorate in Sport and Exercise Psychology at the time the research was conducted. Alongside studying for the Professional Doctorate, he was also a Lecturer of Sport Psychology and worked as an applied sport psychology practitioner in professional sport. He had extensive experience of conducting qualitative research and had received training during his studies on qualitative data collection and analysis processes. To ensure transparency, the primary author reflected on his own applied experiences prior to commencement of the interview process, specifically focusing on the key critical moments he had experienced throughout his applied career that were significant to his development. This allowed the primary researcher to become aware of his own biases when entering into the interviews with each participant. The primary researcher was also sure to express the reasons for researching this topic to the participants (to contribute towards the future development of applied sport psychology practitioners). The primary researcher only had a relationship with the trainee practitioners, who were in the same stage of development as him. Relationships were not established with the neophyte and experienced practitioners prior to the commencement of the data collection.

Results

The results section will be split into two sub-sections: a) the narrative structure of the participants' stories will be identified and examples will be provided, b) narrative features underpinning this narrative structure will be discussed and direct quotes from the participants' interviews will be included.

Narrative Structure

Ten of the 13 stories told followed a narrative structure best represented by the 'Re-birth' plot. For example, *Neophyte 1*'s story began with him working for an organisation where he had very little freedom over his practice philosophy. He experienced a sense of inauthenticity within this environment and the tension between his approach to practice and the approach of the organisation continued to grow. He then decided to quit his role within the organisation and set up his own private practice. Whilst this was not without its challenges (worries about paying the mortgage and providing for a wife and two young children), the practitioner experienced a sense of authenticity for the first time in his professional career, as he was able to adopt an approach to practice that was congruent with his own core values and beliefs. The practitioner was re-born and experienced a merging of who he is as a person and who he was as a practitioner. Another good example of the 'Re-birth' plot was demonstrated by *Trainee 4*'s story. She began her story by reflecting on her personal traits and characteristics as a person. She felt as though others perceived her to be 'awkward', 'cold', and 'uncaring'; traits that do not transfer well into a career as a Sport and Exercise Psychologist. However, when her family unexpectedly experienced multiple deaths in a short space of time, she instinctively took charge of the situation and cared for all family members. Through this critical moment she was able to reveal her true self. She was re-born and able to reveal herself as a caring individual. She was then able to transfer this caring nature into her applied consultancy with her clients, contributing towards her effectiveness and development as an applied sport psychology practitioner.

Narrative Features

Once the structure of each story had been established, the research team identified narrative features from each participants' stories that underpinned and reinforced the 'Re-Birth' plot. One prominent narrative feature was evident throughout the transcripts; *Over*

Time there Becomes Less of a Distinction Between the Individual as Person and the Individual as Practitioner. This narrative feature, which represents the on-going practitioner individuation process and the participants' search for a professional identity, was discussed by practitioners in all stages of development. However, practitioners in different stages of development were clearly at unique and distinct stages of this practitioner individuation process, which will be represented in the sub-sections below.

Trainee Practitioners. For the majority of the trainee practitioners, a distinction still existed between how they viewed themselves as a person and how they viewed themselves as a practitioner. However, most individuals had recognised this as something they wanted to change as they progressed throughout their training:

The thing I'm finding really hard at the minute, and I'm planning on taking this to supervision, is I'm trying to work out how to be professional and how to be authentic as a person. For me, I want to try and find a nice sweet spot between practitioner and person and the sooner the better! That's something at the minute that I've been finding quite conflicted. (**Trainee 2**)

This distinction between person and practitioner caused some of the trainees to experience a sense of inauthenticity within their applied roles:

There have been times, particularly earlier on in my role, where I was maybe playing more of a role and when you're doing that, you're being inauthentic and it's like wearing clothes that don't fit, it just doesn't feel right (**Trainee 1**)

The trainee practitioners were beginning to explore how they as both people and practitioners fit into their environment (applied roles). With a distinction still existing between the person and practitioner, individuals at this stage of development were experiencing a certain level of inauthenticity when engaging in applied practice. However, as the trainees progressed with their training, there was an acknowledgement that this distinction between person and practitioner was beginning to reduce; they were starting the 're-birth' process:

I think they're linking up [*person and practitioner*]...so I made a joke to [*supervisor*] last year and I was like, oh it's just so weird because I'm so different

as a person and as a practitioner, because as a person, I'm more controlled and calculated, but as I'm growing as a practitioner I'm becoming less like that as a person, which then also transfers into my consultancy, so I think they're joining up
(Trainee 4)

In an attempt to reduce the distinction between person and practitioner, the trainee practitioners seemed to first reflect upon their core values and beliefs and then on how these values influenced their applied practice and the development of a congruent philosophy of practice:

So, I think the biggest thing is just not giving up on anyone and treating everyone fairly...so I would go into a consultation with an Olympic athlete exactly the same way as I would do with a national level athlete who is about to lose funding, like there's no difference in my manner, there might be a difference in the actual type of work, but there's no difference in my manner as a person and the level of commitment and dedication that I would give to that person. **(Trainee 3)**

Know yourself, so actually know yourself, know your values, so in the sport psychology world, get to know that core values level of the philosophy and know who you are, because having that means you can develop a clear philosophy of practice and that has been the biggest thing that has contributed towards my development, because, it's not actually my development as a practitioner that I'm talking about, it's me as a person **(Trainee 2)**

By reflecting on their core values and beliefs, the trainee practitioners were beginning to develop a congruent philosophy of practice, which was positively influencing the practitioner individuation process by helping them understand how their approach translated into practice. One of the trainee practitioners, whilst discussing his critical moment, reflected on his transition out of sport as an athlete, which resulted in a loss of identity. This experience demonstrated that this particular individual had experienced the 're-birth' process twice already in his personal and professional life; contributing towards the development of a more coherent professional identity:

You can't separate them and I think that's what I learnt, when I reflect back on gaining that knowledge of what I went through as an athlete I'm quite sure of the person who I am, who I want to be, who I aspire to be on a daily basis and what's interesting is, I feel I could go into any sporting environment, any academic environment and not necessarily change who I am, you know, be confident with who I am and just be content with that environment (**Trainee 5**)

This participant seemed to show he had progressed further along the individuation process by demonstrating high levels of self-awareness regarding his own identity and how this fit into his professional practice. This progress may have been due to his age (oldest of the trainees), his proximity to finishing the BASES training pathway (near completion), or his variety of challenging life experiences (being released from a professional football club). His narrative was more aligned to the neophyte practitioners' experiences.

Neophyte Practitioners. For the neophyte practitioners, gaining chartership through their respective training pathways marked a continuation of the practitioner individuation process. Most individuals in this stage of development discussed how the person and practitioner were becoming more closely aligned with time and experience and it was evident that most individuals were further along the practitioner individuation process in comparison to the trainee practitioners:

Practicing psychology is an expression of myself, it's an expression of myself and I think the practitioner has to be sown into who I am as a person. I think if you try and split the two, I wonder if others will see you as fraudulent and if you start splitting them out it can eat into your values and what you think is important in life (**Neophyte 2**)

If you were to overlay person and practitioner, it would be pretty close...there are still times, when you have to do something that's maybe a little outside of that, whether that's for financial reasons or whatever, but that's just life isn't it, but 100%, that practitioner and that person are very very close now... (**Neophyte 1**)

By discussing their applied practice as an expression of themselves, the neophyte practitioners were demonstrating a closer alignment between their values and their approach to applied practice. This merging of the person and practitioner seemed to increase the neophyte practitioners' confidence in their abilities as applied practitioners and was also beginning to make each individual question how their own approach to practice fit with the environment (and the role) they were currently in. One participant decided to stop working in his current applied role and set up his own private practice. This allowed him to demonstrate more congruence and authenticity in his professional practice:

You feel more confident and you feel much more congruent, because they [*clients*] are just expecting you, they're not expecting a business or something that they've seen someone else do... so you're not having to live up to the expectations of the style and the approach of someone else, you're just being you, you have no choice, but to be authentic really and if people are going to buy-in to it, they're going to buy into what I do... if I'm genuine and I come out of a meeting and was very very honest and true to myself, whether you get the work or not, it's easier to accept

(Neophyte 1)

Another practitioner was also considering leaving their current applied role, because of an incident that had occurred, which had made her question whether her own values and beliefs were aligned with the culture of the sport itself:

What really got to me was... how normal this was for him, he was sick, got himself together, and went and played at the age of eight... and I came home and rang my mum and said... what industry are we working in when kids the age of eight are sick and feeling like that's just what they have to do to be a footballer and I just thought, god, can I continue to work in this industry? I just thought, what are we doing? What are we actually doing? **(Neophyte 5)**

Similarly, to the trainee practitioners, the neophyte practitioners were attempting to negotiate a fit between their own values and beliefs and the values of the environment they were situated in. However, instead of changing their approach to practice to fit the role,

they were more likely to find a role that allowed them to be more authentic as a practitioner.

Whilst discussing their practitioner individuation journeys, the neophyte practitioners also reflected on the personal challenges they had experienced in recent years (death of family and friends, relationship break-ups, and having children) and how this had contributed towards their development and approach as applied sport psychology practitioners. These personal challenges seemed to give them a new perspective on their life and careers, by making the participants reflect on their core values and beliefs and what was important to them as people:

So, it took me a while to figure out, but for a long time and I admit this freely, I have put my wife second in my ambitions. I always said she was top of my list, but she wasn't, but now with what we've been through [*losing a child and a close friend in a very short space of time*] I understand where I really have to put my time and effort and it's into building a personal life, because you can create like a paper mâché house, you think... I have a home, I have a wife, I have a car, so I take that for granted, so I can really focus on my career, but the house will just disintegrate and all you'll be left with is a hollowed out shell, so we have to careful not to put the career at the top of the list...for me anyway...I'm becoming a happier, better human being, for not doing that. What really needs my attention, what really is important to me, is the stuff that goes on when I close the door at night, that's the stuff that will really rip you in half, it won't be because some young athlete decides that they don't want to work with you anymore and I suppose there's a part of me that, if I have to...if I have to walk away from it all, in terms of my PhD or as a psychologist and never use it and I walk away for personal reasons, then I'm happy to do that and that's a strange thing to say after putting in that much work, because I started to realise that the bigger stuff, like my relationship with my wife now does come first, I do believe that, but it's taken me a long time to get there **(Neophyte 2)** It got to the point where I would be leaving the house at 5 o'clock in the morning and not getting home until 10 o'clock at night and that was six days a week, so obviously that has a major impact on you and your relationship... eventually we got divorced and it makes you question everything...is this really all worth it? With time I came to understand that the personal stuff was more important, and it

actually doesn't have to come at the detriment of your career, it actually makes you a better practitioner if anything (**Neophyte 4**)

Both of these neophyte practitioners' stories provide strong support for the 'Re-birth' plot. Their personal and professional identities had been shaped by experiencing these challenging critical moments.

Despite most of the neophyte practitioners demonstrating progression in the practitioner individuation process in comparison to the trainee practitioners, one of the neophyte practitioners discussed the distinction between practitioner and person increasing with time because of a negative professional experience. Her narrative still represented the 'Re-birth' plot, but could possibly best be described as an 'Incomplete Re-birth' as she had not yet become the person she wanted to be in an applied capacity:

There has become one yeah [*a distinction between person and practitioner*]...I think before all this happened no...I think me as a practitioner was me as a person, whereas I think now no, I engage in role play and I act, to be seen as the professional practitioner as opposed to me as a person and I actually think me as a person is a better practitioner than me the practitioner. I've think I've gone from somebody who's quite care free, quite open, had a laugh and find it really easy to get good relationships with people, to someone who is quite distant and takes time and doesn't trust very easy and it takes me a while to figure things out. I am rigid and I am more intense... I try to stick to the book a lot more (**Neophyte 3**)

This unique story of an increasing distinction between person and practitioner highlights the individual nature of practitioner development and reinforces practitioner individuation as a process that takes place across the life-span of a practitioner's career.

Experienced Practitioners. Practitioners in the experienced category, continued to demonstrate progression throughout the practitioner individuation process. Each participant in this stage of development was able to reflect on a merging of the person and practitioner as they progressed throughout their careers:

I absolutely think that that [*merging of person and practitioner*] becomes more and more evident over time...and I think that's one of the biggest challenges within applied practice. I remember saying to someone years and years ago, you've got to be a chameleon to be effective and I don't know how they interpreted that [*laughter*], but what I was trying to communicate is the fact that you have to flex to the client, but I think the way I would describe it now, compared to then, is that...whilst maintaining your own personal qualities and preferences, you have to flex to meet you clients' needs, but the amount of flex you need to give can take you too far away from who you are... so that shift over time...I think I'm more aware of the connectiveness between me as a person and me as a professional... **(Experienced 1)**

10 years ago when I first started training, there probably was a difference [*between person and practitioner*], but what I realised is, I probably wasn't being congruent to who I was...and it felt really forced at times and thinking about those experiences now, you think, well actually, that's not who I am, it's never been who I am, so I suppose from there and talking about those personal experiences, it very quickly became evident that actually who you are as a practitioner, is who you are as a person or should be who you are as a person... **(Experienced 2)**

The experienced practitioners also seemed to have very high levels of self-awareness in relation to how their philosophy of practice was a representation of their core values and how this had been influenced by key critical moments throughout their lives:

Philosophy is not necessarily about the way you practice, it's more about who you are as an individual... it's about the values you hold and values for me are fundamental to what I do. All of those experiences I've had as a child, firstly led me into sport psychology as a profession, but I think more importantly, informed me of the fact that those other elements are more important, so those life experiences are important to how I practice now **(Experienced 2)**

Just like the neophyte practitioners, the experienced practitioners were using their awareness of their approach to practice and reflecting on whether or not it fit with their applied roles. One participant, just like some of the neophyte practitioners, left her role, because her approach didn't fit with the culture of the sport:

The work was difficult, because of the personalities in the system and the culture, the actual working one to one with the athletes was fine, but you just felt you were constantly battling against the system in a way, so I left and I don't see myself working with an organisation in that sense again, I think I'm better suited or I can choose to work with individual athletes, I wouldn't necessarily work with a governing body again I don't think...(Experienced 3)

However, one distinction between the neophyte and experienced practitioners was that the experienced practitioners were at a stage in their career where they were more inclined to discuss their role in the development of other practitioners:

I mean philosophy, you can very quickly be taught philosophy and I think we probably do it the wrong way round actually, we teach philosophy, but I actually don't know if teaching philosophy is the right thing...people need to discover philosophy...what I mean by that is, based upon your experiences, you have an understanding of the world and what it is and what you know and then you should start to think about how that then informs what you do (Experienced 2)

I feel that that is a great contribution that you can make to...any industry, any profession, to train the next generation...and I hope that that's what I can do, I hope I am part of doing that anyway, already...but, that's really the heart of what I do now (Experienced 1)

Given their roles with higher education institutes, the experienced practitioners seemed to be experiencing a second re-birth. The first saw the merging of the person and practitioner earlier in their careers, and the second, was beginning to see them transition from applied practitioners to supervisors and mentors.

Discussion

The present study explored stories of critical moments that contributed towards the development of applied sport psychology practitioners. After analysing the narrative structure, the majority (10/13) of the stories were best represented by the 'Re-birth' plot. Furthermore, the consistent narrative feature underpinning this 'Re-birth plot,

highlighted a merging of the person and practitioner over time. Practitioners in different stages of development were at distinct points of this practitioner individuation process. The results of this study advance knowledge in a number of ways.

The first way that the results add to existing knowledge is by exploring practitioner individuation and practitioner identity development, through the use of narrative analysis. By using narrative analysis, the primary researcher was able to explore and understand each of participant's identities and how experiencing these critical moments throughout their personal and professional lives, changed their view of the world (Jowett & Frost, 2007). Furthermore, this approach to the data analysis process placed practitioner identity development as a central focus of the study. This was achieved in the knowledge that the stories people tell, provide meaning to their lived experiences (Smith & Sparkes, 2009a). Furthermore, human beings lead storied lives (Sarbin, 1986) and these stories provide a lens into our identities as individuals (Smith & Sparkes, 2009b). Moreover, stories help individuals understand themselves (Smith, 2010) and reveal how we are influenced through our social and cultural settings (Frank, 1995). Therefore, by understanding what practitioners experience and how they tell their stories, we are in a better position to understand how our dominant narrative contributes towards who we are and how we develop as applied sport psychology practitioners. For example, the participants' narratives were largely consistent with the 'Re-birth' plot. This suggests that, as practitioners experience critical moments throughout their careers, they are forced to consider who they are and who they want to be (Nesti et al., 2012). Hence, these critical moments are integral to the development of a coherent and authentic practitioner identity (Tod, Hutter & Eubank, 2017).

Another way this research is novel, is by providing an insight into how the practitioner individuation process evolves and develops over time. By including practitioners of differing developmental stages in the data collection process, the research team were able to identify how practitioners' identities evolve as they navigate critical moments throughout their careers. For example, the trainee practitioners were still attempting to understand how their own values and beliefs contributed towards the development of a congruent philosophy of practice (Poczwardowski, Sherman, & Ravizza, 2004). Without fully aligning their values to their philosophy of practice, a distinction between the person and practitioner still existed. This lack of a coherent professional identity seemed to cause them to experience inauthenticity when engaging in applied

practice and meant they were more likely to change their approach to practice, rather than finding an environment that aligned with their core values and beliefs (McEwan, Tod, & Eubank, 2019). On the other hand, the neophyte practitioners demonstrated a closer alignment between their values and philosophy of practice. This seemed to contribute towards a merging of the person and practitioner and allowed them to experience an increased sense of authenticity and confidence (Lindsay et al., 2007). This suggests that the most significant change in the practitioner individuation process occurs towards the end of, or in the years immediately following, the formal education process (Tod & Bond, 2010). By understanding the stories of practitioners in different stages of development, we can highlight unique experiences and tailor support to contribute towards the continuing development of practitioners over time.

The third way these results add to our knowledge, is by supporting and reinforcing Ronnestad and Skovholt's (2013) theory of counsellor development. The first of Ronnestad and Skovholt's (2013) themes highlights that optimal practitioner development involves the merging of the person and the practitioner. The similarities between their findings and the findings of the current study further strengthens the parallels between the development of counselling psychologists and the development of sport psychologists (McEwan & Tod, 2015) and provides us with more confidence that the counselling literature can be used as a suitable framework to understand the optimal development of applied sport psychology practitioners.

Narrative analysis was chosen as the method of data analysis for this study as it provided the research team with an insight into how critical moments influenced the participants' identity development. Whilst one narrative plot consistently emerged across the majority of the participants' stories, it is possible that the participants chose to silence some of their own narratives in an attempt to tell a more meaningful story. By providing the participants with the research question in advance of the interview, the participants had the time to reflect on the stories they would tell. This may have influenced the narrative structure and features presented, as the participants may have wanted to make a significant contribution towards the research findings. Furthermore, it is possible that other narratives exist that could provide us with key information about how practitioners develop as they experience critical moments. However, these narratives may have been marginalised as a result of how the data was collected or because of what they reveal about the individual. Perhaps, these stories weren't as positive or were perceived to provide less of a meaningful

contribution. Nonetheless, they may still be influential in helping us understand the optimal development of applied sport psychology practitioners.

Future research should continue with the use of narrative analysis, in an attempt to investigate and explore some of these alternative narratives. Furthermore, more attention could be dedicated to understanding how the context and culture surrounding the development of practitioners, influences the stories that are told. Understanding the cultural construction of these stories, would not only allow for more individualised practitioner support, but would also allow education providers to reflect on the environments they are creating when educating and developing applied sport psychology practitioners. Future research could also use narrative analysis to explore other aspects of practitioner development, such as; stories of supervision, stories of successful/unsuccessful consultancy experiences, and stories of non-optimal practitioner development. Moreover, if a longitudinal approach to the research design was adopted, we would be able to observe how these stories change over time and the impact this had on practitioner development. Finally, there may be value in measuring the frequency at which applied sport psychology practitioners experience critical moments in their careers. This may allow researchers to establish a connection between the quantity of critical moments experienced and the effectiveness of practitioners in an applied setting.

This study explored the stories of critical moments experienced by applied sport psychology practitioners. The results provide a critical insight into the experiences and challenges faced throughout the developmental process and highlight how practitioners evolve along the practitioner individuation process over time. Narrative structure was consistent with the 'Re-birth' plot, which represented the on-going development of a coherent practitioner identity. Narrative features were presented that were unique and distinct to each stage of development (trainee, neophyte, and experienced). Finally, future research was suggested such as: use of narrative analysis to understand alternative narrative structures and themes, exploration of successful and unsuccessful consultancy experiences, and the use of quantitative methods to measure the frequency and impact of critical moments on the development of applied practitioners.

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Stage of Development	Description	Rønnestad & Skovholt (2013)
Trainee	Individuals who were currently enrolled on either the British Psychological Society (BPS) or the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES) training pathways but had not yet achieved accreditation	<i>Beginning Student Advanced Student</i>
Neophyte	Individuals who had achieved accredited status (BPS or BASES) less than five years from the point at which they participated in the interview	<i>Novice Professional</i>
Experienced	Individuals who had achieved accredited status (BPS or BASES) more than five years from the point at which they participated in the interview	<i>Experienced Professional Senior Professional</i>

Table 1. Description of participants' stages of development

Criteria	Description
Engaging	focuses on the writing style of the author and how they represent their participants within the story they are telling to captivate and inform the reader.
Transparency	refers to the level of critical insight the author provides in relation to the lived experiences of his/her participants
Novel	focuses on how the author demonstrates innovation, which directly contributes towards new ideas in research and/or applied practice
Rich Description	focuses on the extent to which the author provides support, through the data they present, which represents the lived experiences of the participants
Reflective	focuses on the extent to which the author reflects on the topic (research question) to achieve the primary aim of the research

Table 2. Description of the criteria underpinning the credibility of the study

Appendix: Table 3 COREQ Framework

Number/Item	Guide Questions/Description	Page Number
Domain 1: Research team and reflexivity		
Personal Characteristics		
1. Interviewer/facilitator	Which author/s conducted the interview or focus group?	8
2. Credentials	What were the researcher’s credentials? eg PhD, MD	10
3. Occupation	What was their occupation at the time of the study?	10
4. Gender	Was the researcher male or female?	10
5. Experience and training	What experience or training did the researcher have?	10
Relationships with participants		
6. Relationship established	Was a relationship established prior to study commencement?	10
7. Participant knowledge of the interviewer	What did the participants know about the researcher? eg personal goals, reasons for doing the research	11
8. Interviewer characteristics	What characteristics were reported about the interviewer/facilitator? eg bias, assumptions, reasons and interests in the research topic	11
Domain 2: study design		
Theoretical framework		
9. Methodological orientation and theory	What methodological orientation was stated to underpin the study? eg grounded theory, discourse analysis, ethnography, phenomenology, content analysis	6, 7, 8, 9
Participant selection		
10. Sampling	How were participants selected? eg purposive, convenience, consecutive, snowball	8
11. Method of approach	How were participants approached? eg face-to-face, telephone, mail, email	8
12. Sample size	How many participants were in the study?	7
13. Non-participation	How many people refused to participate or dropped out? Reasons?	8

Setting

14. Setting of data collection	Where was the data collected? eg home, clinic, workplace.	8
15. Presence of non-participants	Was anyone else present besides the participants and researchers?	8
16. Description of sample	What are the important characteristics of the sample? eg demographic data, date	7, 8

Data Collection

17. Interview guide	Were questions, prompts, guides provided by the authors? Was it pilot tested?	8
18. Repeat interviews	Were repeat interviews carried out? If yes, how many?	8
19. Audio/visual recording	Did the research use audio or visual recording to collect the data?	8
20. Field notes	Were field notes made during and/or after the interview or focus group?	9
21. Duration	What was the duration of the interview or focus group?	8
22. Data saturation	Was data saturation discussed?	8
23. Transcripts returned	Were transcripts returned to participants for comment and/or correction?	9

Domain 3: analysis and findings

Data analysis

24. Number of data coders	How many data coders coded the data?	9
25. Description of the coding tree	Did authors provide a description of the coding tree?	11
26. Derivation of themes	Were themes identified in advance or derived from the data?	9
27. Software	What software, if applicable, was used to manage the data?	N/A
28. Participant checking	Did participants provide feedback on the findings?	9

Reporting

29. Quotations presented	Were participant quotations presented to illustrate the themes/findings? Was each quotation identified? eg participant number	12-21
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30. Data and findings consistent	Was there consistency between the data presented and the findings?	12-21
31. Clarity of major themes	Were major themes clearly presented in the findings?	11-21
32. Clarity of minor themes	Is there a description of diverse cases or discussion of minor themes?	11-21

Research Commentary

Throughout the following reflection, I'll be discussing my 'research journey'. However, for clarity, I wanted to begin by highlighting that for the purpose of this reflective extract, the research journey refers to two things; a) the process of writing a single research study (from the introduction to the discussion) and b) my journey as a researcher over the course of the last 27 months. I'll also be adding in quotes from my reflective diary to provide an insight into my development as a researcher since beginning the Professional Doctorate.

When starting the Professional Doctorate, I would have, without doubt, evaluated my understanding and knowledge of the research process as one of my weakest areas (when considering all four main competencies). I understood the value of the research process and how it had the potential to add to our knowledge of the field, but I wasn't clear on the steps required to produce a research study worthy of a doctoral level qualification. For example, I would know where I wanted to go or what I wanted the final product to look like (the destination), but I wouldn't know what I needed to do to get there (the journey). I would often approach research the wrong way, by starting the journey without knowing where I was going. For example, what methodology was the research grounded in? What methods would I be using? How would this influence the results? Why had I chosen this approach to the research design? What were the specific aims of the research (beyond the title of the study itself)? Without having the answers to these questions before starting the research, I would often find myself 'back-tracking', hoping to find a study that supported the approach I had already used. For example, if I had used purposeful sampling to recruit my participants, I would then look for a study highlighting the strengths of purposeful sampling, which subsequently supported the use of this method. I didn't consider the strengths and weaknesses of other methods of participant recruitment prior to actually recruiting the participants. I also had a very poor understanding of the different paradigms and consequently, the concepts of ontology and epistemology. In essence, I was capable of reading literature and producing an effective introduction. I could collect and analyse data, as well as highlighting the key findings. But I had a very poor understanding of how to design the method section to ensure the credibility and rigor of the research itself. I also needed to improve my ability at writing an effective discussion. At the start of the Doctorate, I could critically compare my

findings to the existing literature base, but I wasn't as effective at explicitly highlighting how my findings added to knowledge in the subject area.

My lack of understanding of the research process, coupled with my desire to prioritise applied practice at the start of the Doctorate, led to the development of my first study, which in essence could be viewed as a fifth case study. The paper itself still fits the criteria for the Doctorate course (I made sure to check this with Martin before starting!), but I actively avoided considerations about methodology etc. in favour of interviewing one participant and writing a reflective/instructional case study for applied practitioners (Wadsworth et al., 2018). Whilst I was proud of this paper, especially when I finally received the news it had been published, I knew I had taken the easy option. I had produced a paper that I felt bridged the gap between theory and practice, which is something I have always valued:

“Whilst my research portfolio is small, I am proud to be able to say that all of the research I am involved in has a clear link to practice”

However, I hadn't learnt anything about the research process when writing this paper, apart from how challenging it was to navigate the publication process:

“The first study I attempted to publish was a long and challenging experience. I was new to writing research and if I remember correctly, the paper went through nine reviewer feedback cycles before it was eventually accepted for publication.”

It was at this point that I reflected on whether or not I was happy to just 'tick a box' in relation to the research components of Doctorate qualification or whether or not I actually wanted to learn and develop as a researcher! It would have been very easy to justify the 'tick box' approach, given I was doing the Doctorate full-time alongside a full-time academic role. Moreover, I just had my first study published, which was ultimately how the research components would be judged. However, this wasn't me. This wasn't why I had enrolled on the Doctorate. I wanted to grow and develop. Furthermore, I was now an academic member of staff and there was an expectation that I would publish research:

“Recently, I attended a research meeting where, as a department, we were told we needed to be able to produce a minimum of 2.5 journal articles each (not sure how to write half a paper) before REF 2021”

I came to view research as a key competency of the programme and decided I needed to put myself out of my comfort zone and improve my methodological understanding.

I had finally reached the stage of my research journey when I needed to start my systematic review. I knew this was going to be one of the most challenging aspects of the entire course, but I wasn't ready for how much this assessment would take me out of my comfort zone:

“Conducting a systematic review has been, without a doubt, the hardest component of the entire Professional Doctorate”

However, by fully engaging in this assessment, I had no choice but to enhance my methodological knowledge. Fortunately, I had David Tod as a supervisor; the king of systematic reviews! I hadn't really engaged much with my supervisors at this point. Perhaps, quite naively, I felt I could get through the Doctorate with minimal support. I was very wrong. I had never felt as out of my depth as I did when I was conducting the systematic review. Support was going to be essential to me conducting a systematic review worthy of the programme:

“Being part of a research team also meant I had a better chance of being supported as I conducted the systematic review and I knew this support would be essential to me completing this assessment to a high standard”

I saw David weekly. What struck me at first was how much knowledge he had of the research process. I never expected to know as much as him when I started the meetings, but I certainly didn't expect to feel like an undergraduate student again! The gap in our knowledge was huge and if I wanted to justify my position in this world (academia) I knew I needed to close this gap! I had a lot of work to do!

To conduct a systematic review to a good standard, it is essential that you have a clear and coherent approach to the method. Without a clear structure and guide, which

provides the reader with an insight into how the review was conducted, the overall rigor of the paper is reduced. I could no longer start the research journey without knowing where I was going; I would undoubtedly get lost along the way! The foundation of any research paper comes from understanding the concepts of ontology and epistemology. I didn't understand these two concepts. However, I have come to understand (perhaps still at a basic level) that ontology refers to our beliefs about the nature of reality and epistemology is our belief about how knowledge can be understood and captured. What I hadn't considered before, was just how much a researcher's beliefs about these two concepts could change the research process. I didn't realise that to conduct doctoral level research, the researcher had to understand their values and beliefs and how this would impact the research process. I'd only ever considered this from an applied perspective; how my values influenced my philosophy of practice (Poczwardowski, Sherman, & Ravizza, 2004). However, for the first time, I was beginning to understand how my values had and would influence my approach to research as well. For example, I don't believe in one objective reality. I believe that people perceive reality subjectively and so multiple realities exist. From a practical perspective, this means I take the time to understand the individual's lived experience, ensuring my support meets their unique needs. From a research perspective, it means I subscribe to ontological relativism (the belief that multiple realities exist). As a result of this subjective view of reality, I don't believe that objective knowledge exists for us to 'measure'. I believe that knowledge is co-constructed between people and their environment. From a practical perspective, this means that I must consider the environment I'm in with my client and how this might influence my approach to practice before engaging in one-to-one support. From a research perspective, this means I subscribe to epistemological constructivism (the idea that knowledge is constructed between participant and researcher). I now finally had the base to my research pyramid (Figure 1.)

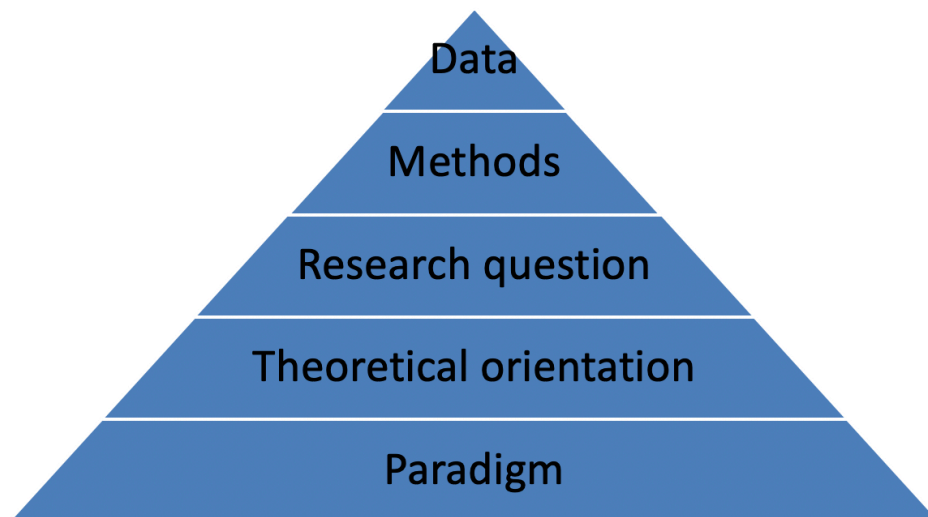


Figure 1. Research Pyramid (source David Tod).

Understanding the foundations of my research pyramid was just as important to my development as a researcher, as understanding how my core values and beliefs influenced the development of my philosophy of practice as an applied practitioner. It gave me a map to navigate the research journey and reach my destination! It also allowed me to demonstrate rigor in how I approached the research process. I became to understand that the credibility of my research, if approaching it from a non-foundational approach (Smith & Sparkes, 2013), was also influenced by my values and beliefs. For example, I could now highlight to the reader that, as a researcher, I valued honesty throughout the research process. I could then align this value (Smith, 1993) to a key research criterion (Smith & Deemer, 2000). Now the value of honesty, became the criteria of transparency. The final step was to consider how I could achieve transparency to the reader to increase the credibility of the research findings. This would be achieved by providing raw data (quotes) from the interviews to demonstrate where the key findings had originated from. Now, not only did I understand how my research paradigm influenced my theoretical orientation, but I was beginning to understand how this influenced the methods I would use to answer the research question and how, by highlighting my own beliefs, I could increase the rigor of the research itself. Furthermore, as a researcher, I was no longer adopting an author-evacuated writing style, but I was beginning to understand how my values (and opinions/experiences) were

contributing to the end product. The research, to a certain degree, was a representation of my values and beliefs. With this foundation in place, I no longer felt lost when navigating the research process. Furthermore, this foundation allowed me to demonstrate more creativity in my writing style:

“what really appealed to me from this workshop was one key message; understand the rules, so you can begin to break them. I’ve come to refer to this a ‘structured creativity’. The blueprint gives me a structure, but I am free to break the ‘rules’ of writing within this structure.”

By the time I had finished my first study and the systematic review, I had only ever used thematic content analysis (Braun, Clarke, & Weate, 2016) as a method to analyse my data. I had used this, simply because it was a method I knew and understood. Furthermore, there were clear steps provided that I could follow. It was safe. However, as I began to think about my third and final study, I no longer felt the need to stay safe. My understanding of the research process had developed dramatically, and I was now in a much better place to be able to challenge and stretch myself as a researcher. Just as I understood how my research paradigm aligned with my philosophy of practice, I was now beginning to think about how the methods I used as a researcher would better align with my approach to applied practice. As an applied practitioner, I am very client-led and take the time to listen to my clients’ stories to better understand their lived experiences. Therefore, I began to wonder what was stopping me taking this approach to research as well? For my final study, I decided to move away from the more traditional, semi-structured interview/thematic content analysis approach and replace it by encouraging my participants to tell me stories about critical moments in their careers:

“This approach to writing and research is so far away from the approach I adopted when I first started the course and marks my development as a researcher. I want to continue to challenge myself as a researcher, by adopting new methods and continuously practicing the writing process. Each time I engage in research, I learn something new about the process.”

Just like a one-to-one session with a client, I approached each interview with one pre-prepared question. I wanted to allow each participant to take ownership of the interview and tell me a story about their career that was meaningful to them (Smith, 2010). I simply adopted the role of active listener throughout the interview and responded to their stories with questions to clarify a deeper meaning to their narratives (Carless & Douglas, 2009). Analysing the data from a narrative perspective (Sparkes, 2005) was fascinating. In fact, I was now really enjoying the research process. I had progressed from someone who had started the Doctorate by ‘ticking boxes’, to someone who was passionately engaging with the research process. I would go as far to say that my final empirical study was one of the most enjoyable aspects of the entire Doctorate course:

“my last study (on practitioner individuation) has been the most enjoyable piece of research I have conducted!”

As I came towards the end of the Professional Doctorate, I finally felt as though I had the skills and knowledge to be able to conduct research at a doctoral level. I was also beginning to see more publication success, with the publication of my second (Wadsworth, 2019) and third papers (Wadsworth, Paszkowec, & Eubank, in draft). Whilst my first study had taken nine attempts to successfully achieve publication, my second study ‘only’ needed five attempts. By the time I arrived at my third study, I only needed one review before it was accepted. Needless to say, my confidence in my own abilities as a researcher has improved massively. I no longer felt like the student in the research team, but a valued member of the group; someone who was capable of adding genuine value to the discussions we were having:

“I very recently presented this idea to the research group and received some very positive feedback! Each member of the group understood the key findings and felt the diagram represented the research well. I was also able to answer all the questions the group had about the research and this has improved my confidence for the final conference presentation. I have progressed as a researcher from producing bricks, to building walls, and now to building a complete structure.”

My development as a researcher over the past two years has been significant. Now, not only do I value the theory/practice link, but I feel I am actively contributing towards it. Conducting and publishing research has become a key component of my overall identity as a practitioner. I have experienced a merging on myself as applied practitioner, researcher, and teacher. Each of these three components of my identity now complement one another. Research has also become more of a central focus for me. I haven't finished the Professional Doctorate (yet) and already have a list of research projects I plan to start when I do gain accreditation:

I have conducted research into improving the self-awareness of coaches in professional football, I've provided reflective accounts of my own applied consultancy experiences (case studies), I've researched the reflective accounts of other practitioners, I'm currently researching the practitioner individuation process, I'm involved in a study exploring the use of psychology in the rehabilitation process, and I'm also interested in the transition/dual-career experiences of professional athletes. I have a diverse range of research interests.

I am also passionate about continuing my development as a researcher by beginning to supervise others. I have already been invited to become a member of the supervisory team for a PhD being conducted at the University of Bolton. Furthermore, I would like to contribute towards the Professional Doctorate, by supporting current and future candidates with their research projects. Continuing with the analogy used throughout this reflection; the journey has only just begun!

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Meta Reflection

Before starting this meta-reflection, I took some time to better understand the meta-reflective process (Thorpe & Garside, 2017). A reflection designed to highlight (and reflect on) my entire professional practice journey, at first, seemed like a huge task. I was not sure where to start. Logically, I decided to return to my reflective diary and create a reflective commentary document (see Appendix). To create this document, I re-read all of the reflective entries under the ethics and consultancy competencies (as well as my practice log) and wrote a reflective commentary on key aspects of each reflection (I engaged in a similar process when writing the Teaching Diary and Research Commentary for the other two competency areas). This allowed me to add an extra layer to my reflections and eventually gave me a structure to this meta-reflection. I also decided to return to the reflective practice literature itself (Anderson, Knowles, & Gilbourne, 2004) and reacquainted myself with the concept of 'reflective levels' (Knowles & Gilbourne, 2010). Knowles and Gilbourne (2010) suggested that engaging in reflective practice at a 'critical' level (asking yourself the question; what does this all mean?) can be particularly useful for practitioners who are coming towards the end of their formal training. To engage in reflective practice at this critical level, an individual must first understand themselves (and their experiences), before they can understand the significance of their experiences in relation to the wider context. Therefore, the purpose of this meta-reflection is to; a) reflect upon my own reflections and add an extra layer of understanding (and commentary) to my own experiences, b) begin to situate my own journey within the wider context of the discipline of Sport and Exercise Psychology itself, and c) to critically compare my own experiences and understanding with the commonly held values and beliefs within field of Sport and Exercise Psychology. I will attempt to achieve these three aims by engaging in the following process (Risner, 2002); a) reading and re-reading my own initial reflections and highlighting any significant aspects of these diary entries, b) 'zooming-in' on particular narratives/themes, which highlight critical moments throughout my developmental journey as a practitioner, and c) 'zooming-out' to allow each of these reflective narratives to 'speak again', helping me situate them within the wider context of the discipline as a whole.

One of the first observations I made when re-reading my reflective diary, was actually in relation to the 'reflective levels' briefly mentioned above. The vast majority of my reflections have been at a 'practical' level (focusing on personal meaning; what does

this experience mean to me?) (Knowles & Gilbourne, 2010). For example, one of my very first consultancy reflections (29/06/17), just three weeks after I had started the Professional Doctorate, focuses entirely on my identity as a practitioner:

“it is impossible to separate the person behind the practitioner, as these two aspects of my identities share my core characteristics”

This deeply meaningful and personal reflection highlights the battle I was having with myself at the start of my professional training journey, in an attempt to better understand; who am I? This reflection also marked the start of my self-exploration journey. By predominantly reflecting at a practical level over the last 27 months, I have consistently challenged myself to better understand my own values and beliefs as a practitioner and how they contribute towards effective applied practice in a variety of settings. In fact, I consistently reflected on my values and beliefs across all four major competencies (ethics, consultancy, research, and dissemination). Reflecting at this level was essential for my development and was exactly what I needed to ensure I was developing optimally as both a person and practitioner. Not long after this first ‘practitioner identity’ reflection, I reflected again on the same topic (07/07/17) and it is clear to see there had already been a significant change in how I viewed myself and consequently my role as a Sport and Exercise Psychologist:

“I have struggled to find a sense of authenticity with regards my identity, because I felt I could never allow myself to be ‘completely consumed’ by a role. However, being a Sport Psychologist is who I am, and I believe it’ll always be who I am.”

Developing this understanding of my own identity was the first, and possibly the most significant critical moment, I had experienced on my developmental journey. Developing a clear understanding of who I was (and fully accepting this version of myself) allowed me to begin focusing my attention to the development of the necessary competencies required to become an effective practitioner (and ultimately attempt to pass the Professional Doctorate!). It also provided me with a better understanding of my own philosophical foundations. Upon reflection, it is not surprising that a lot of my reflective diary focuses on personal meaning. Trainee practitioners are still in a stage of development where they need

to first understand the base of their philosophical pyramid (Poczwardowski, Sherman, & Ravizza, 2004) before they can develop a coherent and congruent philosophy of practice (Lindsay, Breckon, Thomas, & Maynard, 2007; Poczwardowski, 2017). Furthermore, it is not uncommon for practitioners to shift their focus from internal (values and beliefs) to external (theories and models etc.) and back again (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2013). Moreover, it is possible I was reflecting at this internal (practical) level (exploring my own beliefs about the world and what this all meant for me), because I had already engaged in extensive ‘technical’ reflections (what could I have done differently in that situation?) whilst engaged in a full-time applied role (West Bromwich Albion F.C.) prior to starting the Doctorate programme. Therefore, the logical next step for me, as I continued my professional development, was to add more depth to my reflective practice by reflecting at a more practical level. That is not to say that reflecting at a practical level is in anyway ‘better’ than reflecting at a technical level, just that reflecting at this practical level was what I needed at this particular time.

However, the process of adding this depth to my reflections and experiencing an initial ‘break through’ (regarding my practitioner identity) was not the end of my internal focus. I continued to reflect at this level on a variety of different occasions, especially in relation to the development of my philosophy of practice. For example, in my first reflection, directly related to my philosophy of practice (Philosophical Underpinnings (Counselling vs MST): 19/07/17), I began to explore whether or not a focus on mental skills training aligned with my own approach to practice:

“As I saw it, there were two possible interventions that I could utilise with SH. One focused on the perfectionist traits and pre-race anxiety and the other focused on a more counselling based approach where I would attempt to guide him through the critical moment he was experiencing:

I continued to reflect on this (Pressure to Provide a Solution: 07/11/17) as I progressed throughout the programme, by discussing the concept of pressure and incongruence:

“his daughter had a competition in December, which seemed to imply that he was looking for a ‘solution’ sooner rather than later.”

It actually wasn't until very recently (Coherent and Congruent Philosophy of Practice (ABC²) 26/08/19) that I eventually 'discovered' an approach to practice that I could clearly articulate, and which aligned with my own beliefs and values:

“Whilst I understand congruence isn't stable and is something that a practitioner must continuously reflect on as they progress throughout their career, I feel I am the closest I have ever been to achieving it.”

Looking back on the amount of time it has taken me to develop this philosophy of practice is frustrating. Frustrating because reflecting at the bottom of the pyramid (Poczwadowski, Sherman, & Ravizza, 2004) for so long, has taken me away from reflecting more about what actually makes applied Sport Psychologist effective (the technical level).

Could/should I have developed a philosophy of practice sooner? Was it my supervisor's role to ensure I did this earlier in my development journey? The way Sport and Exercise Psychologists are trained, typically starts with us learning about the theory (undergraduate and Stage One) and then attempting to apply this theory with athletes and teams (Stage Two). However, without a clear understanding of how this theory applies to us (the key instrument of service delivery (Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011)), is the theory of any use? Would it not be better for education provides/supervisors to facilitate our understanding about ourselves; helping us understand our values and experiences and how they might impact our applied practice? Trainees would then be much better positioned to reflect on how their values and beliefs align to their philosophy of practice (McEwan, Tod, & Eubank, 2019). So, rather than teaching theory-to-person, teaching person-to-theory. Maybe if this is how I had approached the development of my philosophy of practice, I would have had more time to reflect on increasing my effectiveness in an applied setting. For example, in one of my ethical reflections (Countertransference and Dependency: 21/02/19) I conclude with the comment:

“Evaluating a more measurable aim in this situation may have reduced the creation of such a reactive service and allowed me to be more confident that I was positively impacting TC and not creating a dependency.”

When re-reading this statement, my initial meta-reflection comment/commentary was:

“Reflecting back on this, I actually believe that the creation of better and more specific aims to the consultancy process is still a weakness of mine. I have a tendency to skip this stage of the consultancy process and get straight into the intervention. I think I need to take more time understanding the needs of the client, before officially starting the ‘intervention’. I also think I need to do more work on differentiating the needs analysis from the intervention itself, because both can seem the same (essentially, I am listening to their experiences and asking critical and challenging question). Does there need to be an added layer to the counselling? I feel more engagement in continued professional development (CPD), which focuses on counselling approaches will help me clarify this.”

This meta-reflective commentary perfectly highlights the point I am trying to make; that too much time spent reflecting at a practical level (internally) has taken me away from the more technical reflections (what does effective practice ‘look like’?). Should the above reflection really be a reflection I am having at this stage in my development? Surely, as someone coming towards the end of a Professional Doctorate, I should be able to differentiate between the needs analysis stage and intervention more clearly. On the other hand, perhaps I am being too idealistic (and possibly too harsh on myself) here; no one would attend University solely to learn about themselves before any theory was introduced! Furthermore, discovering my philosophy of practice was the most significant moment of my training to date:

“I also feel in a much better position to be able to answer the question; ‘what is my philosophy of practice?’”

“Despite my frustrations about how long it took for me to develop a coherent philosophy of practice. Was this always going to be the end point? Was this the end point for everyone? Was this in fact the purpose of Stage Two training?” (meta-commentary).

After this, everything began to make sense and I had the ability to understand how my approach (and my identity) overlapped into the different competency areas (applied practitioner, researcher, and teacher). Perhaps I need to view this journey as a necessary part of my development, rather than being frustrated that I did not reach my destination sooner. With hindsight, once you have developed a coherent and congruent philosophy of practice, it is so easy to ask yourself the question; why did that take so long? However,

without the necessary experiences, challenges, and setbacks along the way, I might not have been so confident in my approach to practice now. Furthermore, my career has only just begun, and I have plenty of time to reflect on what makes a Sport and Exercise Psychologist effective. I also need to remind myself that finishing the Professional Doctorate does not mean I have to have all the answers. Engaging in CPD is arguably more important than ever, now that I am so close to gaining accreditation! However, reflecting on the time it took me to develop a philosophy of practice does raise questions about how I would approach supervision if provided the opportunity. Is it possible to use my own journey/struggles in developing a philosophy of practice to speed up the process for others? Or would this undermine their journey and lead to an inferior and perhaps superficial final ‘product’? In a way, the struggle and battle to develop a comprehensive philosophy of practice, almost feels like an initiation into the chartered status club! Maybe supervisors could speed up the process, but would the discovery be as significant? All I know, is that I would not change anything about the last 27 months in relation to the development of my philosophy of practice and I would more than likely view my role as a supervision to oversee my trainees’ own journey/struggle.

Another key meta-reflection I had when re-reading my reflective diary and practice log, was in relation to how much time I had dedicated to each of the four competency areas. I have spent 365 hours (14%) of my time on Ethics/CPD, 744 hours (29%) on Consultancy, 578 hours (22%) on Research, and 889 hours (35%) on Dissemination. It is not surprising that most of my time has been spent teaching, because this is my primary job (Lecturer of Sport Psychology). I have needed to spend time learning how to be a better lecturer, because this is the role I engage in on a daily basis. However, evidently, this has taken me away from engaging in more consultancy. In all honesty, my lack of consultancy had been a source of anxiety for me over the last 32 months:

“Whilst the role change has been largely positive for my development as a practitioner (I now have time to read, conduct research, reflect, and improve as a teacher/disseminator), I don’t feel I have been exposed to as many experiences as an applied practitioner as I did when I was working in professional football on a full-time basis.”

How can I become an effective practitioner if I am not dedicating more time to applied consultancy? Furthermore, was my anxiety stemming from the commonly held belief (or

my perception that this belief exists) within the Sport Psychology field, that research and dissemination are not as important (or at least not discussed as much) as applied practice? I certainly experienced a shift in how people viewed/behaved around me when I moved from full-time applied practice to full-time academic. All of a sudden, I received less phone calls from other applied practitioners and I was no longer invited to give guest lectures. It almost felt as though, without the kit and the badge, I no longer had anything meaningful to offer. I believe that there is a culture within the field of Sport Psychology, from a selection of individuals, that if you are not engaged in a full-time role, you cannot be an effective applied practitioner. Furthermore, the term 'pracademic' (individual in a full-time academic role who also engages in applied practice) is seemed to be used in a derogatory sense. However, I believe it should be viewed as a compliment in many ways. By engaging in my academic role and applied practice, I have been able to demonstrate an awareness of my developmental needs and engaged in activities to meet and improve these competency areas. I believe I am now at a stage in my career, where my ability to research and disseminate is equal to my ability to engage with clients in an applied setting. Overall, I feel more complete as a practitioner, because of my focus and engagement in research and dissemination over the last 32 months. For me, an effective (or complete) practitioner, should be able to engage in (write and publish) research, disseminate this research in different contexts and situations, and utilise the literature base to engage in applied practice within professional sport. I now feel competent enough to be able to do this. Furthermore, it has been essential for me to engage in more meaningful applied practice whilst on this course. By meaningful, I mean; a) taking the time to fully understand the client's needs, b) building a relationship with my clients to create a foundation for the work conducted, c) utilising the sport psychology literature to develop a clear intervention for the client, d) engaging in reflective practice throughout the consultancy process, and e) gaining feedback from each client to ensure I am meeting the aims of the intervention and constantly improving and developing as a practitioner. When engaged in full-time practice, I would not always categorise my contact with my clients as meaningful. Hence, by being more selective of the clients I have engaged with whilst on the Professional Doctorate, I believe I've actually developed more as a practitioner than I would have if I'd have doubled/tripled/quadrupled my contact time (but not had the time to engage meaningfully and fully with the consultancy process). I am hugely proud of my consultancy and teaching case studies for a number of reasons. Firstly, they demonstrate the diversity I have

developed throughout my training, which was one of my key areas of focus when starting the Professional Doctorate (I did not want to be viewed solely as a football psychologist):

“I also want to be able to demonstrate more diversity in my training as an applied sport psychology practitioner and setting up my own private practice was the perfect opportunity to work in different sporting environments and with a variety of athletes.”

Secondly, I wanted/needed to evaluate whether or not my approach to practice would translate into a number of different environments, with a variety of athletes. I have since worked with athletes from; triathlon, golf, wrestling, swimming, rugby-league, gymnastics, and football and these experiences have been fundamental to the development of my philosophy of practice:

“However, I have had a number of clients recently that have caused me to re-think and be critical of this rigid approach”. [to practice]

Thirdly, I have had the chance to re-engage with the sport psychology literature. This has allowed me to better how my own experiences compare with the experiences of other practitioners, provided context and understanding to my reflective practice, and allowed me to provide a better and more comprehensive service to my clients. I have learnt more from the consultancy hours whilst on the Professional Doctorate, than I did when full-time at West Bromwich Albion F.C. (despite engaging in more than double the consultancy hours in half the amount of time whilst at the club). Having said that, with the time I will ‘get back’ from finally completing the Professional Doctorate, I am now keen to engage in more applied practice. I put pen to paper for the role at Burnley F.C. and have already added 375 hours to the consultancy competency. These meaningful applied experiences have provided me with a better understanding of myself and my philosophy of practice, allowing me to re-engage in the applied world of sport psychology as a new and improved practitioner:

“I also initially remember viewing this [starting at Burnley F.C.] as an opportunity to make up for my ‘failures’ at West Bromwich Albion F.C.”

I no longer view my time at West Bromwich Albion F.C. as a failure, but as a step in my developmental journey. My next step, as I reflect now, is to ensure I take what I have learnt from this Professional Doctorate into my new role. There is something nicely symbolic that my journey on the Doctorate should start and end with me working in professional football. It is a perfect opportunity to understand and demonstrate what I have learnt throughout the course.

I would like to think that, in addition to finally developing a congruent philosophy of practice, I've also learnt two other, equally significant lessons throughout my journey on the Doctorate: 1.) the importance of self-care when engaging in professional practice and 2.) what it really means to be authentic. For me, I have come to understand that both of these two aspects are interconnected with one another. When I started the course, I had just been through a divorce from my wife and was the lowest I had ever been in my life. This situation was created because of my inability to look after myself and the people around me:

“I found the courage to quit my job at the club, but in the months that followed it became apparent that my relationship had reached a point where it couldn't be saved.”

This approach to my career and my life as a whole could not continue and so I needed to learn how to manage my time more effectively. In essence, I needed to learn how to say no. I also needed to understand how I could be more authentic in applied settings, because constantly being inauthentic was exhausting:

“Also, now I am more secure in my approach to practice, I can maintain authenticity, whilst working in an elite sporting culture and I now no longer have to ‘wear a mask’”

Whilst this does not necessarily have a ‘tangible’ output (like being able to articulate my philosophy of practice) it is a huge development for me as both a person and practitioner. It is particularly significant to me, given how I started the Professional Doctorate. Just getting to the end of the course would have been an accomplishment back then, but to have finished as I have is something I am immensely proud of. It is a lesson that transcends the development of the key competencies and one that will stay with me for the rest of my life:

“I just need to ensure I don’t allow it to consume my life. I need to maintain my current self-care habits (going to the gym, doing yoga, walking the dog, seeing friends and family), because self-care helps us as practitioners be more like the person we want to be, more of the time”

I am in a happy relationship, I see my friends and family regularly, I have a job I enjoy, I am looking after myself mentally and physically and this for me, it just as, if not more important, than my entire development over the last 27 months. To be able to end the Professional Doctorate in a better place, both professionally and personally, is all I could ever have asked for. I have enjoyed every minute of the last 27 months and look forward to what my future career holds for me!

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Appendix

Reflective Commentary:

Practice Log:

Ethics/CPD:

- Began to reflect on my identity very early
- Started the doctorate after a critical moment that completely challenged my identity and left me suffering with depression
- Needed to understand this experience: explored vocational literature/practitioner development literature
- CPD = A lot of reading (didn't get chance to do this in my previous role) and now had to because of the academic role (feeling out of my depth to begin with)
- Began reading literature on how to conduct a systematic review 6 days into the programme. I didn't finish until almost 18 months into the programme (shows how much I struggled with this component)
- Broad range of reading (large variety of topics)
- First CPD = PgCert
- Very little sport psychology related CPD (felt I was getting all the information I needed from supervision/reading)
- Four months into the programme: experiences with clients began to direct my reading and give me focus (e.g. gymnastics)
- Very little engagement with supervisors (my own decision)
- More engagement with peers (actively dissociated with Mark Nesti, because I didn't want to be seen to 'copy' him) felt I needed to test my philosophy without his influence (ensure it was fully my own)

Consultancy:

- Very early on: tried to engage with Salford City F.C., but lacked the skills to negotiate my role and pay and with very little guidance took a step away (actually think it was too early to get back into football after the detrimental impact it had had on my life) I only thought this is what I wanted (more about how I wanted to be perceived by others)

- Started to demonstrate more diversity in my training (triathlon, gymnastics, golf, rugby-league etc.)
- Consultancy ended with me negotiating a contract in football (marked my progression in all areas of my life)
- Hours = 236 (mostly 1-1) only just more than reading (192), which shows how much I needed the time to understand my experiences and to engage fully with the literature (and also reflect)

Reflective Commentary:

Ethics/CPD:

Case for referral? (12/06/18)

Nonetheless, I chose to meet with TC a second time, primarily because I didn't feel his case was grounds for a referral at this point and I was comfortable continuing with our sessions, whilst keeping his well-being at the forefront of my mind.

Personally, I feel I made the right decision not to refer and felt largely comfortable in my decision (except when reading the text

Was this naive of me at the time? To be so comfortable to meet with TC despite his past history of depression? Or does this demonstrate the progression of the field that a trainee practitioner, comfortable in the knowledge that his philosophy focuses on performance and well-being, is happy to engage with this type of client? Reviewer 2 (when attempting to publish this case study) immediately stated he would refer in the same situation. This difference in approach potentially highlights that a review of the guidelines needs to occur, but also highlights the individual differences (and approaches) within the field

I am strongly considering enrolling on addition clinical training following successful completion of this professional doctorate.

I have now come to realise that this isn't actually required; the role of a Sport Psychologist is beginning to expand to cover smaller mental health challenges and engaging in clinical training isn't going to make me a better practitioner within my current scope of practice

Blurring Personal and Professional Boundaries (12/07/18)

I am feeling confident and competent as a practitioner and as a result

Why was this one consultancy experience, with one client, having such a positive impact on my development? A lot of my reflections are based around my sessions with him. I

would describe the overall experience as my most successful to date. Why? I was able to fully engage and delivery my philosophy of practice (authentically/congruently)

However, I have mixed feelings regarding whether or not I should be concerned by this text (asking me to play table tennis)

I had to continually reflect upon whether the personal/professional boundary was becoming blurred. In this case, I don't believe that they were blurred to an extent that should concern me. Yes, TC had used the word friendship to describe our relationship, but I now understand that this was a difference in language used to describe the relationship. The relationship has and will always be a professional one and I would much rather be on the boundary of a personal/professional relationship with a client, than be ineffective as an applied practitioner.

I'm shocked I was so unsure about how to feel about this text; it was clear the boundaries had become blurred and there is a difference between a professional relationship (and authenticity within a session) and becoming friends with your client. However, I have experienced a merging of person and practitioner (practitioner individuation), so it isn't always easy to see when the boundaries have become blurred. Perhaps texting my clients so regularly needs to stop? The example before (mental health) and this one, were both initiated by texts. You can't see a person when they text, so it's difficult to know how they are truly feeling. This can lead to assumptions (and potentially exaggerated emotions). I also need to stop being so black/white with my approach to these situations "*I would much rather be on the boundary of a personal/professional relationship with a client, than be ineffective as an applied practitioner.*" Ensuring there are boundaries with my clients does not mean I'm going to automatically be ineffective; it isn't one or the other! When looking through my reflections I tend to start with quite a rigid outlook (perhaps because I want to demonstrate I'm sure of my answer), but usually soften my position (become more flexible in my approach). Perhaps, because I realise not every situation can be 'answered' the same way

Charging Private Clients and 'Measuring' Effectiveness (19/12/18)

This contradicts the reason I started this profession in the first place, which was ultimately to support, develop, and care for people.

For example, would the conclusions drawn from the current reflection have been different if I relied on the income earned from my private clients as my only salary?

However, money is also a reason I do what I do; I am extrinsically motivated (contradict one another) and I feel as though my academic position is preventing me from really understanding how I would feel about this if I left my job and ran my business full-time. Is this ever something I want to do? I think I value the ‘safety’ an academic job provides too much

Didn't charge a client because their challenges "didn't seem to be impacting too much upon their well-being (Gymnastics)"

This is wrong; this was because the parents were paying for the service. I was trying to create a formula that fit all of my clients here and when this case didn't, I ignored the real reason I didn't charge for the consultancy. This again highlights the rigid position I seem to always adopt (at least initially).

This entire reflection highlights how as a practitioner, you need to develop skills not just discipline specific (negotiating prices, accessing, and convincing clients to use your services, creating, and selling a service). These aspects aren't taught on the courses and during training

Working congruently with my own values and beliefs is more important to me than earning money!

Again, is this too much of a purist viewpoint? Would I think this way if I needed the money? Or does this genuinely highlight my progression as a practitioner (practitioner individuation) that I am beginning to explore opportunities that align with my belief system. After all, I'm sure there are jobs that align with my beliefs, that also pay good money!

Countertransference and Dependency (21/02/19)

Evaluating a more measurable aim in this situation may have reduced the creation of such a reactive service and allowed me to be more confident that I was positively impacting TC and not creating a dependency.

Reflecting back on this, I actually believe that the creation of better and more specific aims to the consultancy process is a weakness of mine. I have a tendency to skip this stage of the consultancy process and get straight into the intervention. I think I need to take more time understanding the needs of the client, before starting the ‘intervention’. I also think I need to do more work on differentiating the needs analysis from the intervention itself, because both can seem the same (I'm listening to their experiences and asking critical and

challenging question). Does there need to be an added layer to the counselling? I feel more engagement in CPD, which focuses on counselling approaches will help me clarify this.

Consultancy:

Agreed Goals and Role Expectations (from full-time to part-time) (13/06/17)

One discussion that didn't take place (that I was hoping would) was a discussion regarding my fees

'Hoping would' but never actually instigated or asked for! I talk a lot of about my high levels of confidence throughout this reflection (*I need to ensure that I maintain the confidence I demonstrated here*), but I actually think that this was a mask to hide my insecurities. This was very close to the start of the Doctorate (little experience) and my divorce (very bad place), so I don't think I was actually ready, both professionally and personally, for this meeting to take place. I think this is the reason the role at Salford never fully developed. I don't think I actually wanted it to! Football had had such a detrimental impact on my life and here I was trying to get back into it a week after starting the programme!

Also, the title of the reflection is, agreed goals and role expectations and I actually left the meeting having not established any role clarity or with any understanding about what they wanted me to deliver/achieve at the club. My own ambition was to impact the culture. But, this wasn't a specific aim and highlights what I suggested before about not setting specific/'measurable' aims to my consultancy. Fast-forward to Burnley, where I've now written my own job description (clear difference in my approach to a very similar situation)

Practitioner Identity (29/06/17)

It became clear very early in my career that being a Sport Psychologist (in training) was not simply something that you could 'turn off and on'. For me, it is impossible to separate the person behind the practitioner, as these two aspects of my identities share my core characteristics

I was already trying to make sense of my past experiences here. I had started the Doctorate in quite a bad place personally and this meeting provided me with the perfect chance to reflect on what this meant for me.

I myself, without realising it, developed a one-dimensional identity

At this point of my development I had a very limited understanding of myself as a professional. This almost feels like I'm reading someone else's work!

I have struggled to find a sense of authenticity with regards my identity, because I felt I could never allow myself to be 'completely consumed' by a role. However, being a Sport Psychologist is who I am and I believe it'll always be who I am

This was one of the most significant moments in my professional development. Feeling a sense of calm and certainty here, gave me the perfect foundations to engage with the course

Philosophical Underpinnings (Counselling vs MST) (19/07/17)

the status as 'lecturer' naturally creates a gap between me and my students. On the other hand, when providing sport psychology support to an athlete, I certainly don't want to be viewed as the 'expert', but as a someone that can help guide and support the individual who is taking responsibility for their own development

I'm not quite seeing the overlap between my two roles here. I am viewing my academic role and practitioner role as separate, perhaps as a result of not fully understanding my core values and beliefs enough yet!

Reading the work of Collins, Evans-Jones and O'Connor (2013) has made me realise that my experiences of consultancy are very different to theirs. I have always been comfortable with working with the person behind the athlete (Friesen & Orlick, 2010) and less comfortable providing solutions to 'problems'

At a broader and more 'critical' level of reflection, I think this point, demonstrates a shift in the professional development of Sport and Exercise Psychologists. However, one aspect that we need to be mindful of, is not just teaching practitioners to be active listeners. They have to have some substance as well (mix of counselling and mental skills training).

If I was so relieved that he had chosen the second option, how comfortable would I have been as a practitioner if he had asked me to develop a goal-setting intervention for him? I categorically didn't believe that this was the right intervention for this individual in this moment.

This perhaps suggests that I knew my philosophy of practice a lot sooner than I realised! I just needed the confidence to stand by it in applied situations. This confidence developed as I was faced with my applied experiences; allowing me to 'test' my approach to practice.

Pressure to provide a solution (Elite Gymnast) (07/11/17)

which seemed to imply that he was looking for a 'solution' sooner rather than later.

If faced with this situation now, knowing that the father was looking for a quick-fix, would I turn the opportunity down? In this situation (just like I would now), I should have spent more time explaining my philosophy of practice. I didn't do that here, because I valued the experience (and the money) too much. I'm not sure how ethical this decision was to begin the consultancy process, knowing that the father's expectations didn't align with how I would be approaching the support for his daughter.

Perhaps because of the anxiety I was experiencing regarding working with this new client (because I perceived I might be asked to provide a 'solution' to the problem) and in order to be prepared for the possible challenges that might arise from the initial intake and needs analysis, I read a number of journal articles related to gymnasts experiencing mental blocks and the psychological skills that they utilised in order to overcome them.

Even considering the use of mental skills here (at the time) demonstrates to me that I still hadn't developed enough confidence in my approach to practice

I contacted my supervisor (MN) who confirmed that MST would be inappropriate for someone experiencing such broad challenges (which I had expected).

This was the one and only time I ask Mark for support during the first year of the programme. I actively distanced myself from him, because I wanted to be sure that my approach to practice was just an exact replica of his approach.

Performance and Well-Being Continuum (20/12/18)

I have worked with a number of clients, who have presented with a variety of different challenges, affecting both their well-being and performance; providing with me further opportunities to reflect upon my philosophy of practice.

Not only reflect but gain more confidence that my approach actually worked in an applied setting! In hindsight, I wish I would have dedicated more time earlier in the course to gaining more clients. Engaging in more applied practice, would have given me more confidence in myself and my philosophy of practice and allowed me to engage in reflections about other aspects of my development.

‘Nick Wadsworth Sport Psychology Limited’ (20/02/19)

I also fundamentally disagree with those practitioners (most of the time individuals that aren’t actually chartered practitioners) posting the names of their clients as a demonstration of their own abilities.

I am beginning to engage in ‘critical’ reflection here, by highlighting how my own beliefs and approaches doesn’t align with some practitioners within the field.

Do I go against my own values to increase the chances that the business will be a success?

It’s slightly frustrating that I’m still asking questions like this. I know now that going against my own values isn’t an option, so why waste time wondering about it? I could have potentially developed a lot more if I’d have understood this earlier

Burnley F.C. (22/07/19)

“My primary aim here isn’t to be a millionaire, my aim is to improve and develop as a practitioner, help people, and continue doing the job I love for as long as I possibly can.” However, I’m reflecting on the potential salary for a number of reasons. Firstly, because I think it’s important for me to recognise that money is important to me

I’m already beginning to meta-reflect here and add an extra layer of reflective commentary, which I think marks my development as a reflective and self-aware practitioner. It’s good to be able to read my reflections and see a logical and interconnected journey. A lot of my reflections are related to one another (I often refer to each of them as I write the next) and I believe this shows my progress throughout the course.

Role Clarity (21/08/19)

At the end of the meeting, JP asked if I would want the chance to write my own job description.

If you consider this reflection in relation to the first (Salford F.C.) it demonstrates how far I’ve come. Being able to negotiate my salary and write my own job description, in comparison to being too scared to even bring up the topic at the very start of my development.

Coherent and congruent philosophy of practice (ABC²) (26/08/19)

I also feel in a much better position to be able to answer the question; ‘*what is my philosophy of practice?*’

Despite my frustrations about how long it took for me to develop a coherent philosophy of practice. Was this always going to be the end point? Was this the end point for everyone? Was this in fact the purpose of Stage Two training? Rather than being frustrated, I should be content and proud that I have such a good understanding of my own approach

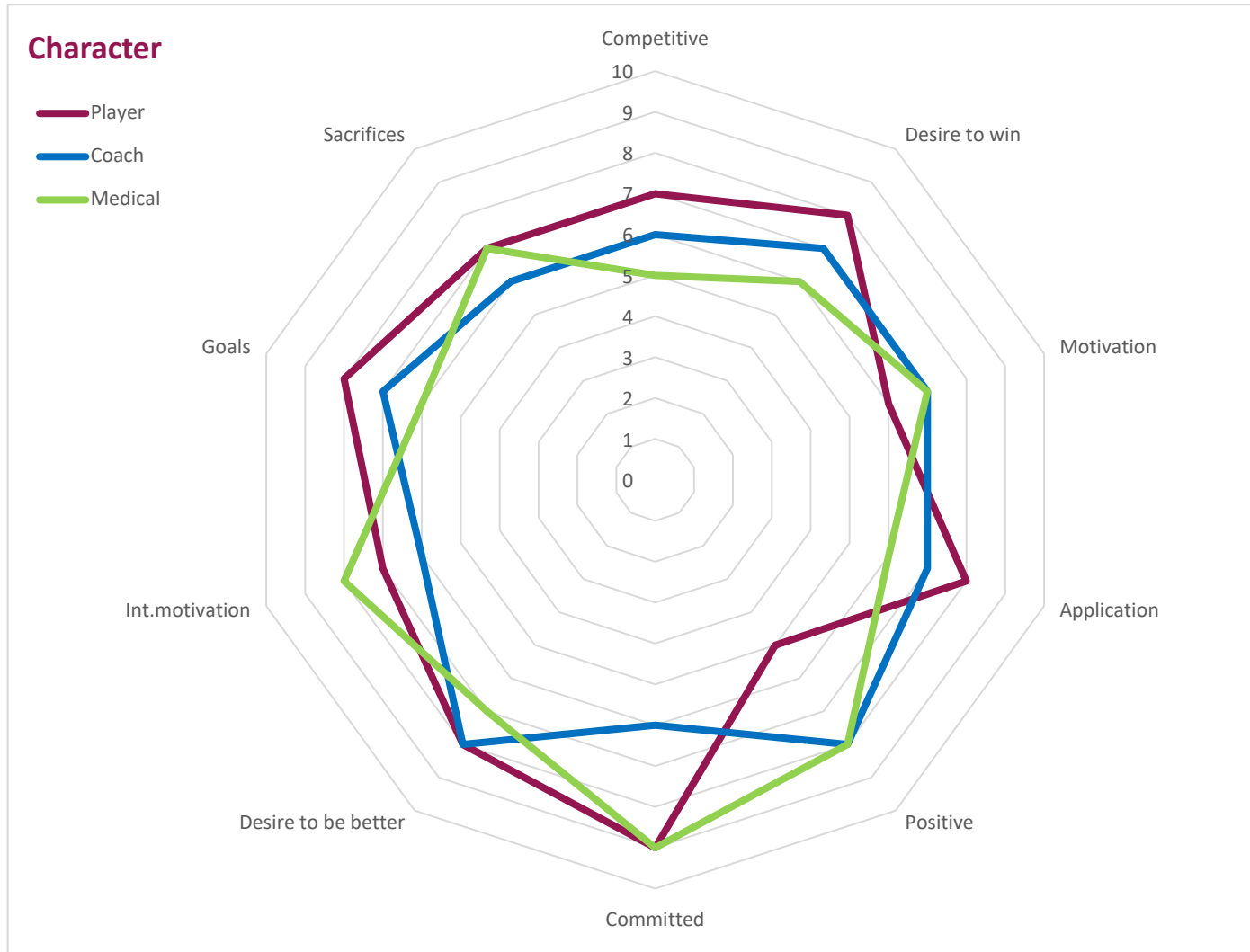
Appendices

Sample of work from Burnley FC:

Performance Profiling (template)

		Player	Coach	Medical
	Character:			
Competitive	I am highly competitive during training and games	7	6	5
Desire to win	I have a desire to win	8	7	6
Motivation	I am highly motivated in all situations (training/gym/matches)	6	7	7
Application	I consistently apply myself in training and games	8	7	6
Positive	I have an infectious positive attitude	5	8	8
Committed	I am highly committed (willing to go the extra mile) in everything that I do	9	6	9
Desire to be better	I have an intense desire to be better than others	8	8	7

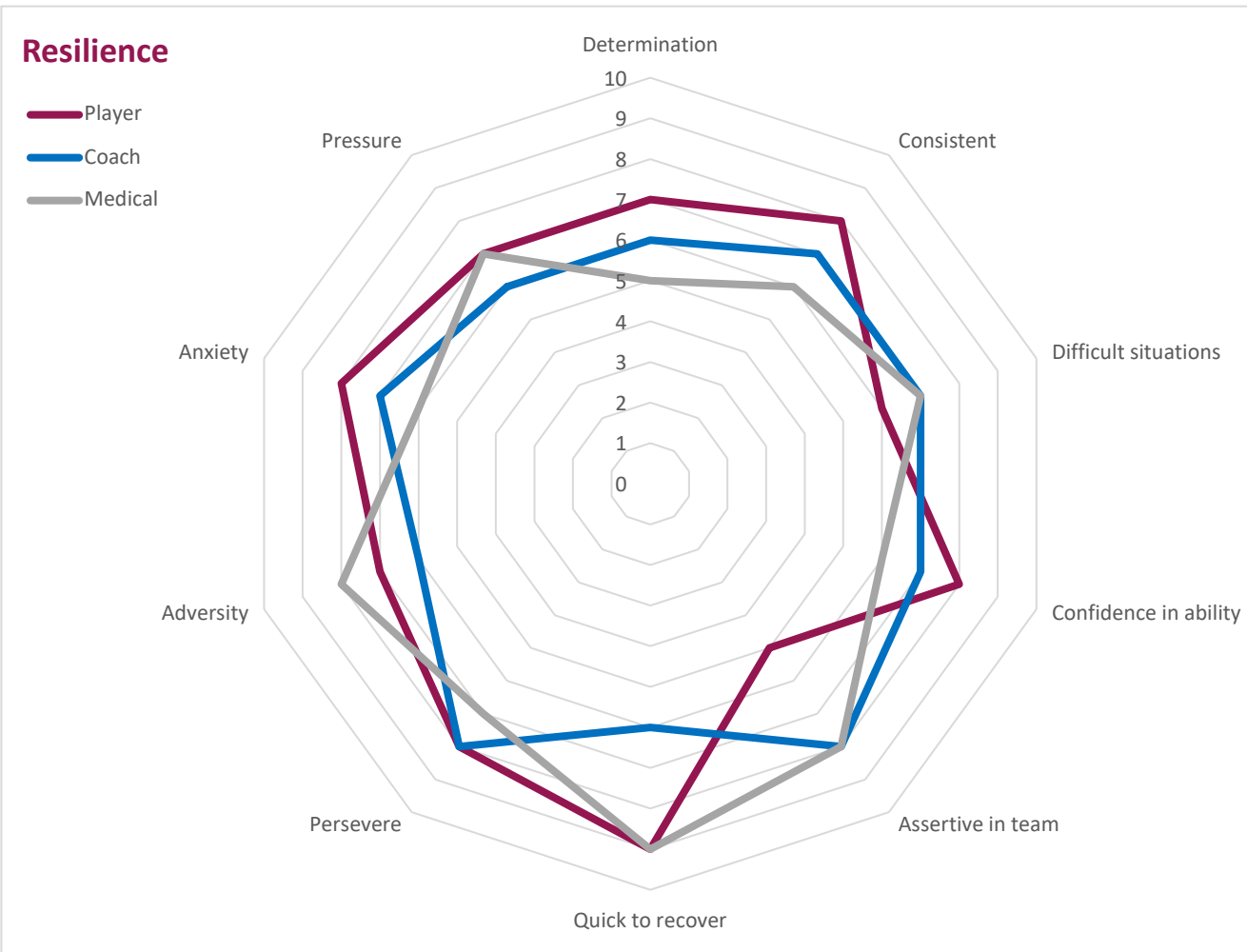
	Int.motivation	I have internal motivation to succeed	7	6	8
)	Goals	I am able to constantly work towards achieving my goals	8	7	6
	Sacrifices	I am willing to make sacrifices to maximise chances of success	7	6	7



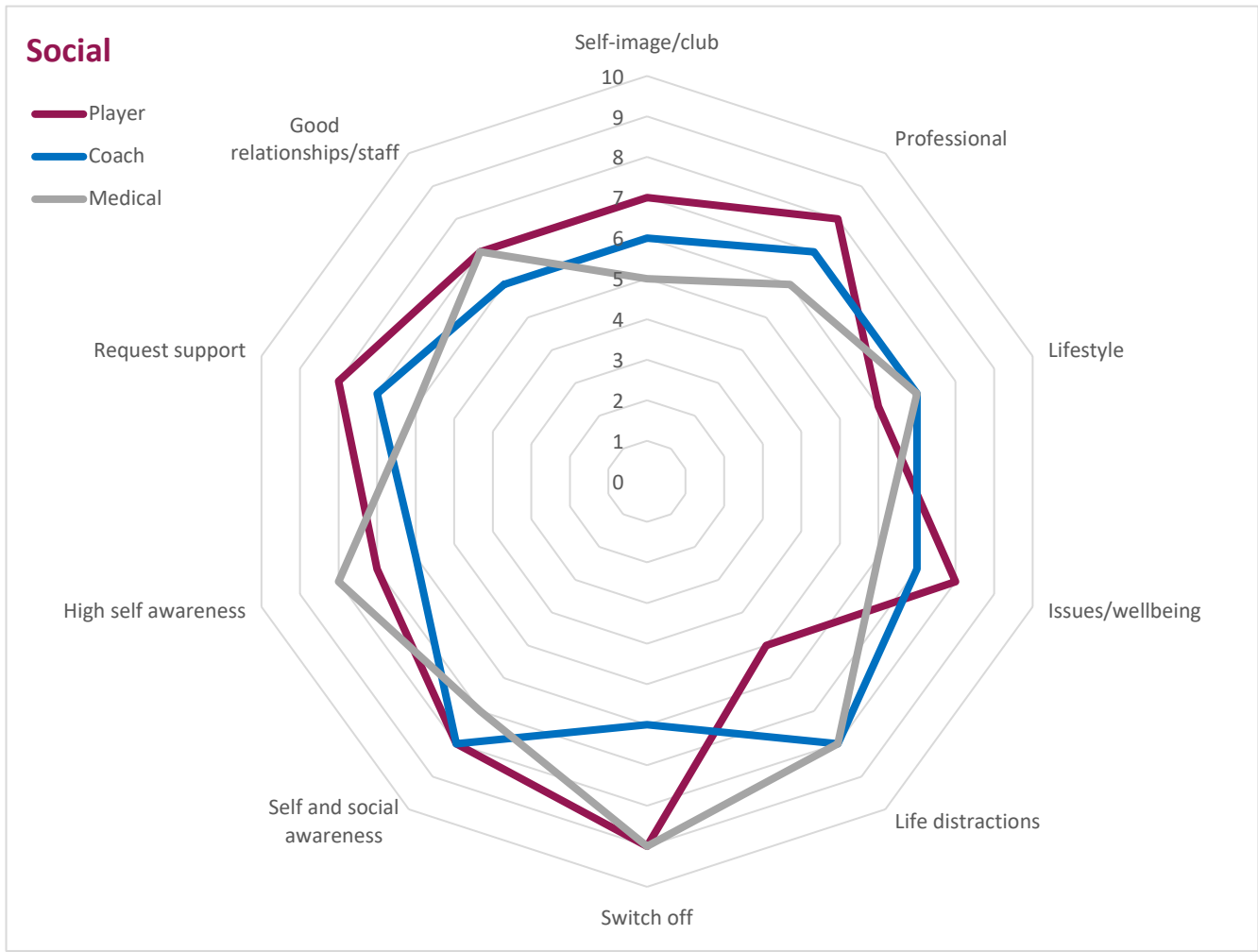
	Learner:	Player	Coach	Medical
Ownership	I take responsibility and ownership for my performances, learning, and development	7	6	5
Self-regulation	I have the ability to self-regulate (manage my own emotions)	8	7	6
Learning	I have a desire to learn and improve	6	7	7
Knowledge	I am highly receptive to knowledge	8	7	6
Coachable	I am highly coachable	5	8	8
Decisions	I have an excellent game understanding and am able to make quick and effective decisions	9	6	9
Concentration/training	I am able to maintain my concentration during training	8	8	7
Concentration when tired	I am able to maintain my concentration at the end of a game (when fatigued)	7	6	8
Mistakes	I am able to put errors and mistakes to one side	8	7	6
Challenges	I am able to take responsibility when dealing with my own setbacks/challenges	7	6	7



	Resilience:	Player	Coach	Medical
Determination	I am highly determined and focused	7	6	5
Consistent	I am consistent in effort and performance	8	7	6
Difficult situations	I have the discipline needed to deal with difficult situations	6	7	7
Confidence in ability	Confidence in own ability/technique, especially when stepping up a level	8	7	6
Assertive in team	I am able to be assertive in a team situation	5	8	8
Quick to recover	I have the ability to overcome setbacks and mistakes (recovering quickly)	9	6	9
Persevere	I have the ability to persevere, even when things are going wrong	8	8	7
Adversity	I possess courage to confront adversity	7	6	8
Anxiety	I accept that competition anxiety is inevitable and know how to cope with it	8	7	6
Pressure	I thrive on the pressure of competition	7	6	7



	Social:	Player	Coach	Medical
Self-image/club	As both a player and a person I positively contribute towards my own self-image and the image of the club as a whole	7	6	5
Professional	I conduct myself in a professional manner at all times	8	7	6
Lifestyle	I have good knowledge and awareness of appropriate lifestyle management	6	7	7
Issues/wellbeing	I have an appropriate education and understanding of broader issues outside of football that might impact my well-being and performance	8	7	6
Life distractions	I have the ability to remain fully focused in the face of personal life distractions	5	8	8
Switch off	I am able to switch off from football when away from the club	9	6	9
Self and social awareness	I have an awareness of myself, others, and the environment (self-awareness & social awareness)	8	8	7
High self awareness	I have high levels of self-awareness (strengths and weaknesses)	7	6	8
Request support	I am able to ask for support at critical moments	8	7	6
Good relationships/staff	I am able to build good relationships with staff at the club	7	6	7



One-to-One Report (Template):

Name:	
Age Group:	
Date:	
Session Type:	Intake/Needs Analysis/Intervention
Session Notes:	
Action Plan:	



Parent Workshop (Programme Introduction):



Sport Psychology Programme

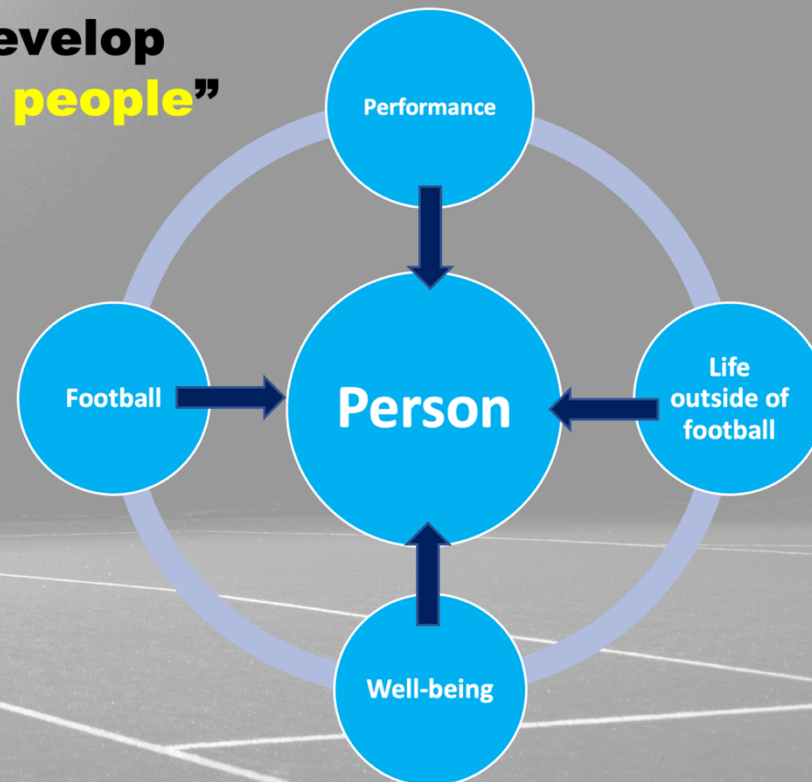
Club Philosophy

Sport Psychology Programme



“Working together to develop better players and better people”

ABC²



ABC²

Sport Psychology Programme



Affect (emotions)

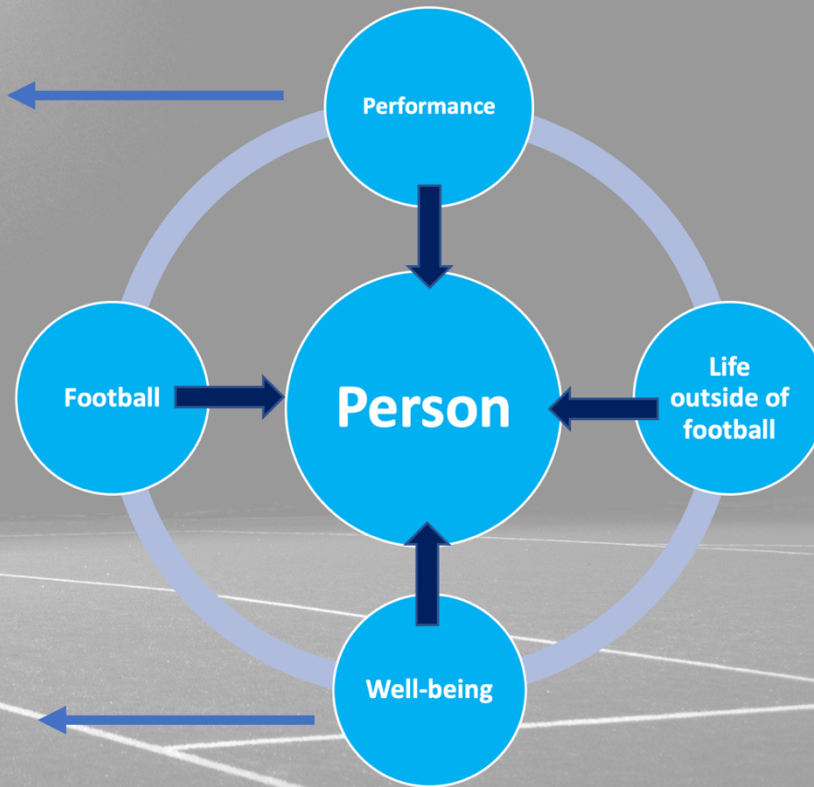
Behaviour

Consequences

Authenticity

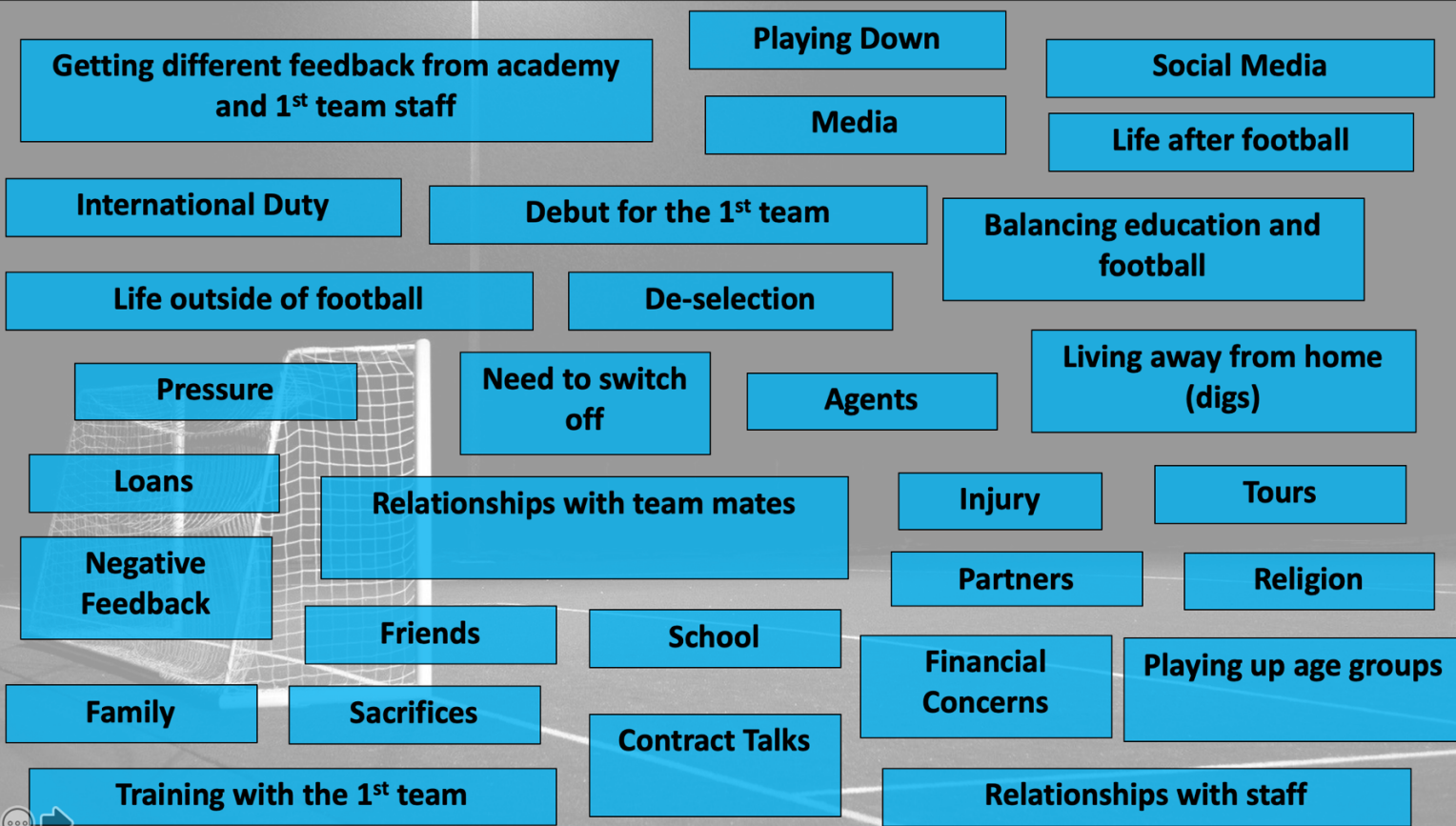
Balance

Control



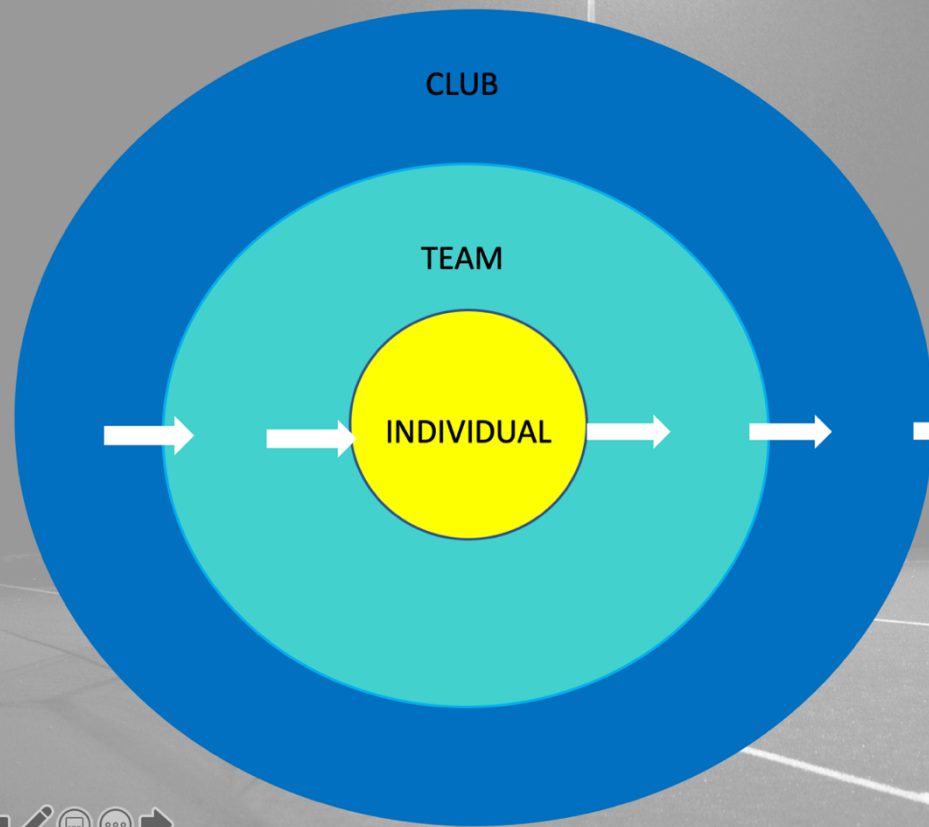
Critical Moments

Sport Psychology Programme



Environment

Sport Psychology Programme



Does your son have an exclusive football identity?



Sample of work from the University of Bolton:

Lecture Example (HE4):

SPORT AND EXERCISE
PSYCHOLOGY

 University
of Bolton

Teaching Intensive, Research Informed

SPS4003
FOUNDATIONS OF SPORT & EXERCISE PSYCHOLOGY
Confidence and Self-Efficacy

NICK WADSWORTH | 26.02.2019

LEARNING OUTCOMES

CONFIDENCE

- 1** TO CRITICALLY EXPLORE AND COMPARE THE DEFINITION OF SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SELF-EFFICACY
- 2** TO CRITICALLY EXPLORE TWO THEORIES OF SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SELF-EFFICACY AND RESEARCH IN ELITE ATHLETES
- 3** TO APPLY OUR THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING OF CONFIDENCE TO REAL-WORLD CASE STUDIES
- 4** TO CRITICALLY EXPLORE THE MEASUREMENT OF CONFIDENCE AND FOCUS ON POTENTIAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

EMPLOYABILITY LIFE SKILLS



CONFIDENCE CONFIDENCE

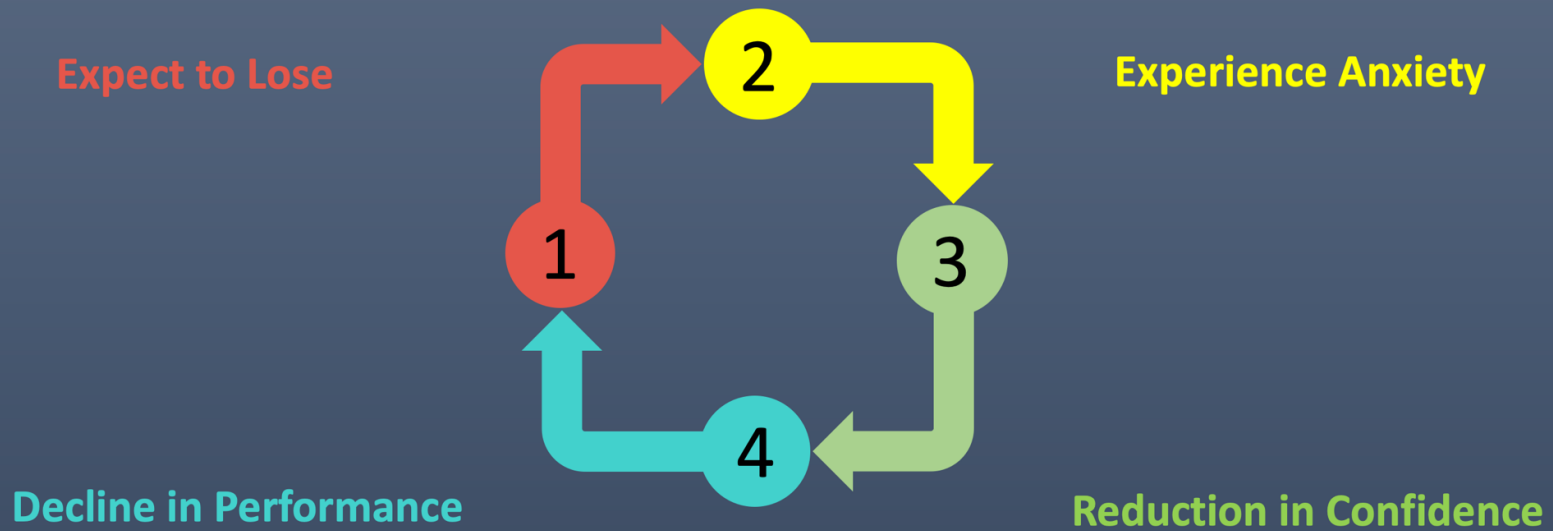
MOST IMPORTANT PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTRIBUTE



(Bull et al., 2005, Jones, Hanton & Conaughton, 2002, 2007, Vealey & Chase)



SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY CONFIDENCE



(Weinberg & Gould, 2007)

DEFINITION
CONFIDENCE

A SET OF ENDURING, YET MALLEABLE POSITIVE BELIEFS THAT PROTECT AGAINST THE ONGOING PSYCHOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH COMPETITIVE SPORT

(Thomas, Lane & Kingston, 2011)

DEFINITION SELF-CONFIDENCE



**THE BELIEF OR DEGREE OF CERTAINTY INDIVIDUALS POSSESS
ABOUT THEIR ABILITY TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN SPORT**



(Vealey, 1986 p.222)



DEFINITION SELF-EFFICACY

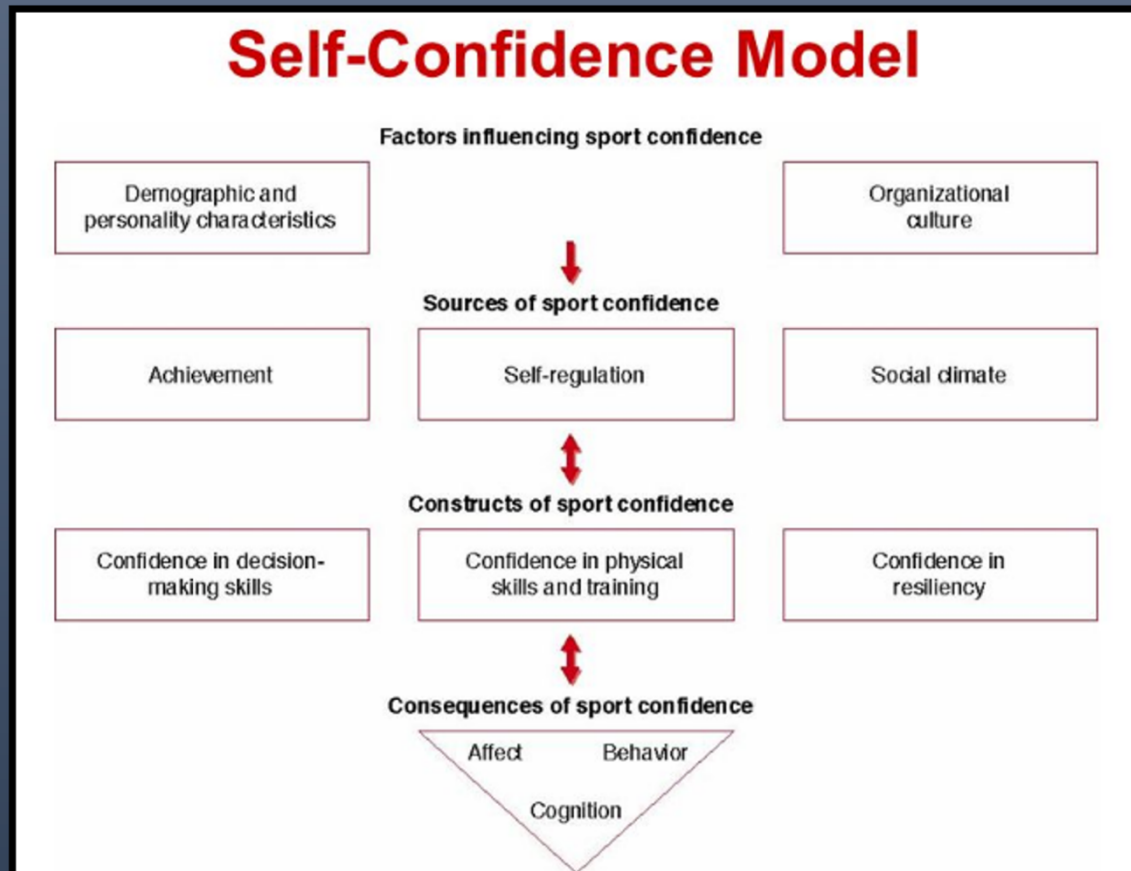
“
PEOPLE’S JUDGEMENTS OF THEIR CAPABILITIES TO
ORGANISE AND EXECUTE COURSES OF ACTION
REQUIRED TO ATTAIN DESIGNATED TYPES OF
PERFORMANCES
”

(Bandura, 1986 p.222)

VEALEY'S MODEL CONFIDENCE

(Vealey & Chase, 2008)

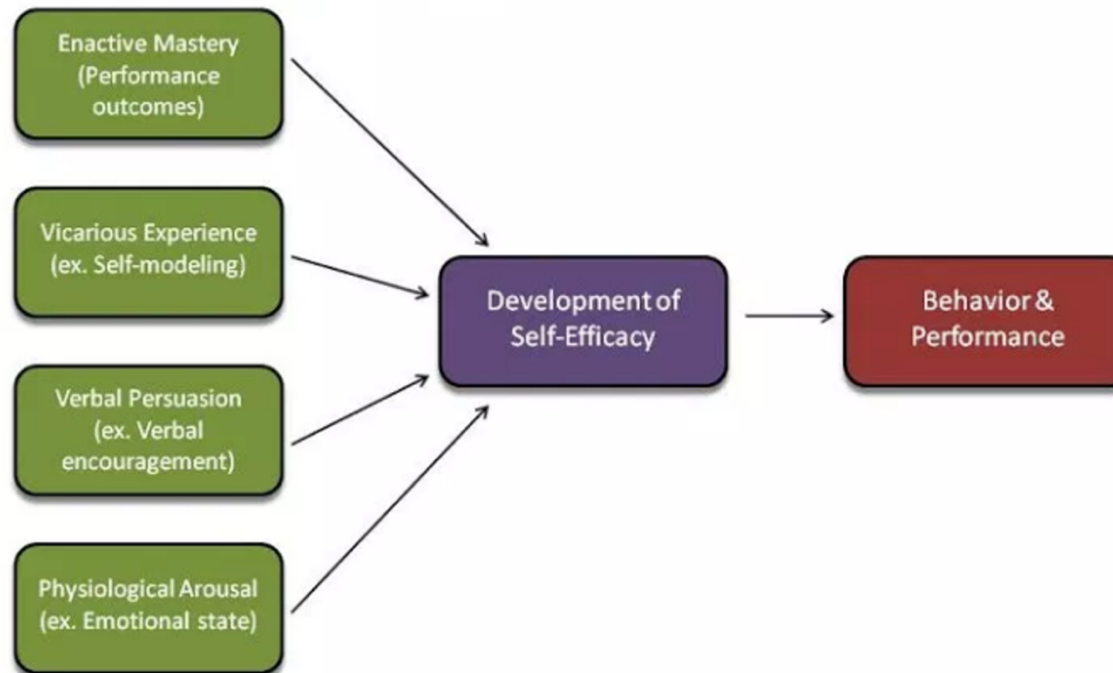
Self-Confidence Model



BANDURA'S MODEL CONFIDENCE

(Bandura, 1986)

Sources of Self-Efficacy



SOURCES OF CONFIDENCE

CONFIDENCE

(Hays et al., 2007)

Table 1
Sources of Sport Confidence Identified by Successful World Class Sport Performers

Source of confidence	Number of athletes Citing Source (N = 14)	Total% of athletes
Preparation	14 (7/7)	100%
Physical Preparation	14 (7/7)	100%
Mental Preparation	11 (7/4)	76%
Holistic Preparation	8 (5/3)	57%
Performance Accomplishments	14 (7/7)	100%
Competition Accomplishments	14 (7/7)	100%
Training Accomplishments	5 (5/2)	50%
Coaching	13 (7/6)	93%
Belief in Coach to establish appropriate training program	7 (5/2)	50%
Athlete Handling	4 (4/0)	29%
Support Staff	4 (3/1)	29%
Social Support	6 (0/6)	43%
Advice	4 (3/1)	29%
Social Support	8 (4/4)	57%
Innate Factors	7 (5/2)	50%
Experience	6 (3/3)	43%
Competitive Advantage	5 (0/5)	36%
Trust	2 (2/0)	14%
Self Awareness	2 (0/2)	14%
Athlete Specific Factors	7	50%

Note: Numbers in parentheses are (M/F).

SOURCES OF CONFIDENCE

CONFIDENCE

(Hays et al., 2007)



Preparation

“If you fully prepare to the best of your abilities and you leave no stone unturned, you have ultimate confidence when you go into a game that you’ve done everything you can possibly do to win ... once you’ve got no excuses then you do go out there onto the pitch knowing that you’re gonna win”.

Coach:

“My coach is a very big source of confidence. He doesn’t praise very much so when he does you know it means something, but I think he’s on to the fact now that I’m not that confident so he blows a bit of air up my backside every now and again”.

“I think I had a very good relationship with my coach at the time and he gave me confidence ... I didn’t question what we were doing, I just bought into the program, I bought into my coach’s ability to make me perform”.

SOURCES OF CONFIDENCE

CONFIDENCE

(Hays et al., 2007)

Innate Quality

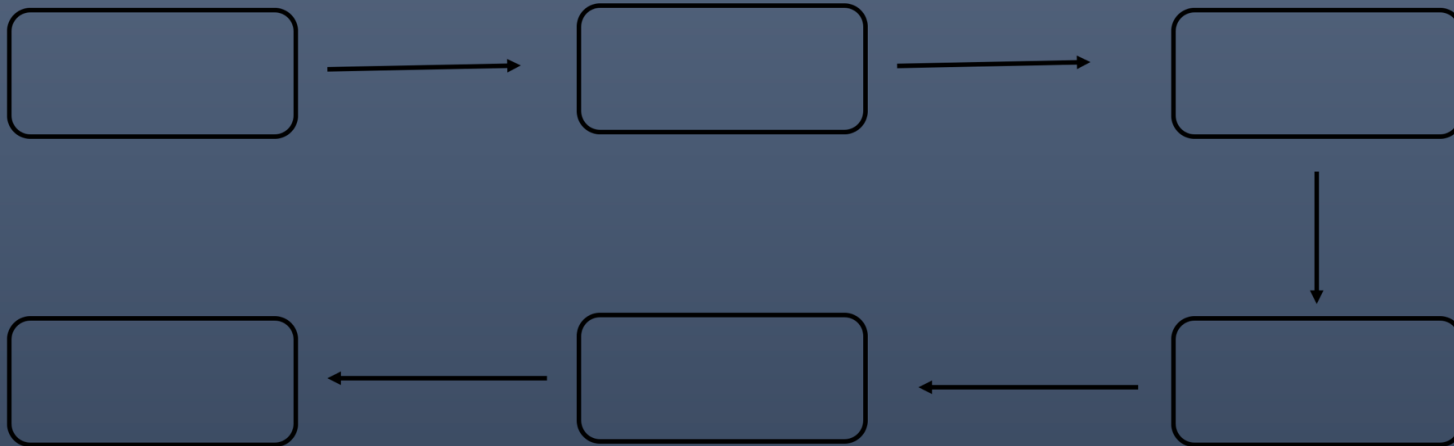
“I think I had the ability to block things out and that’s important. I would be more nervous two to three weeks before a major event than I was the day before or the day of, something used to click in and I could cope with it. There’s not many people who can do it ... I think it’s something you can train, I think it’s something you can develop and improve, but I think it’s something that you are born with, I think it’s a gift, I really believe that ... some people have just got that mindset to be stronger, mentally”.

Experience/Resilience

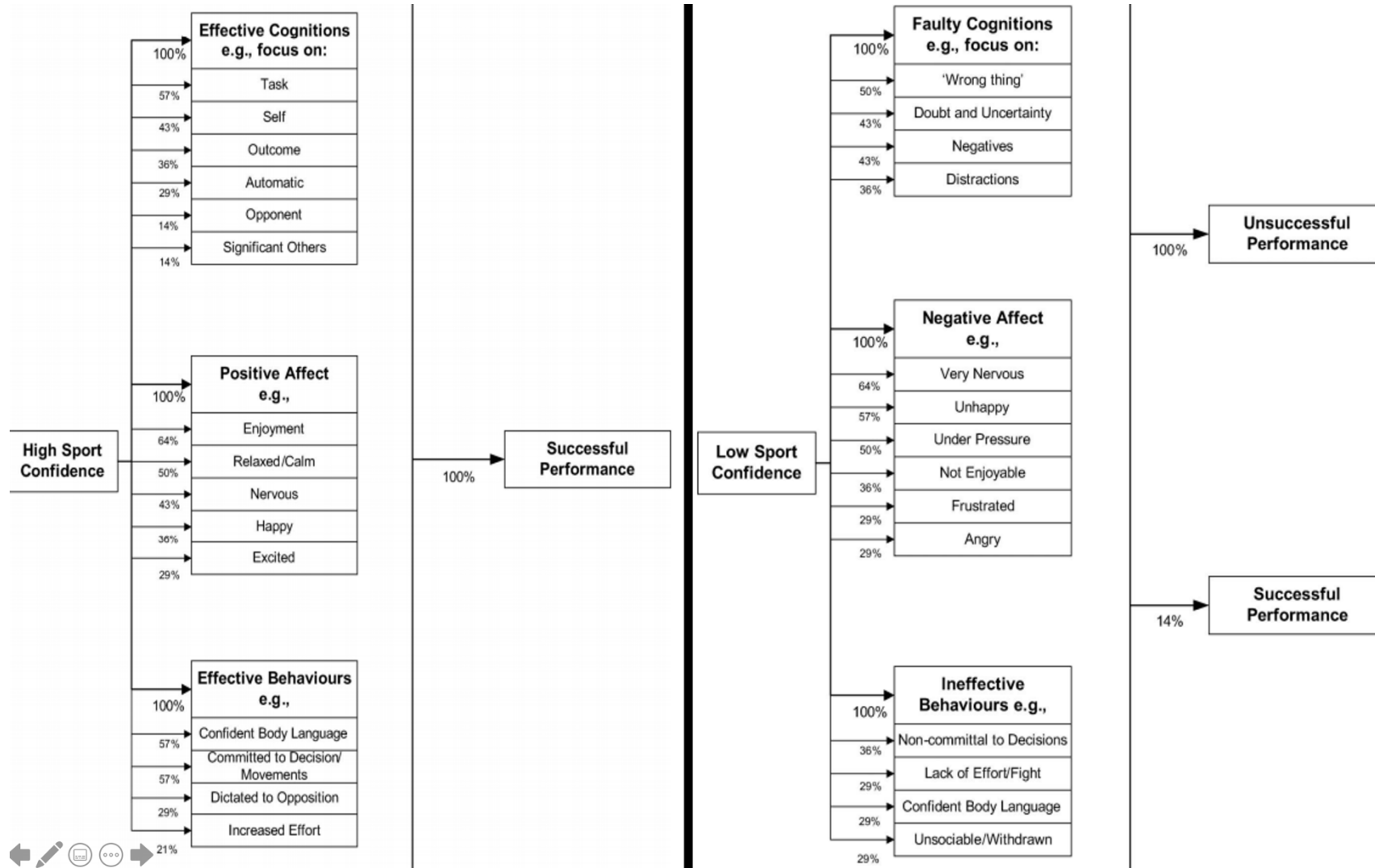
I’d been so low so everywhere I looked it was just positive; everywhere I looked it was just better than it was before. I was just climbing that hill, or mountain, whatever you wanna think of it as, and I was just going up and up and up ... what pushes you back makes you stronger and that made me so much more confident and so much stronger as an athlete mentally.

PERFORMANCE CONFIDENCE

INCREASED CONFIDENCE



PERFORMANCE INCREASE



PERFORMANCE CONFIDENCE

(Hays et al., 2009)

Cognitions/Focus

“just concentrating on each game and not getting too excited about what the outcomes would be at the end”

“Me! And that was it. I ignored everyone else, I was just following my routines, being aware of the crowd but not being distracted by it, not thinking “Oh who’s doing what? Where am I? What’s the scoreboard saying?” All the kind of distractions which I was distracted by before. Just focusing on me and what I was doing”.

PERFORMANCE CONFIDENCE

(Hays et al., 2009)

Affect

“I just feel very relaxed, very happy with myself and happy with how my preparation has gone . . . you never know what’s going to happen the next day but you’re confident that you can perform at a level that meets your expectation”.

“I find I get good nerves and bad nerves . . . Bad nerves is like I say the panic, the anxiety, the worry, and once that door’s open then all the other stuff flies in . . . And then the good nerves is the stuff where you feel indestructible . . . And it’s like they’re in there and they’re making you go to the toilet all the time but they just feel good. . . it’s just enjoyment, excitement, and belief”.

PERFORMANCE CONFIDENCE

(Hays et al., 2009)

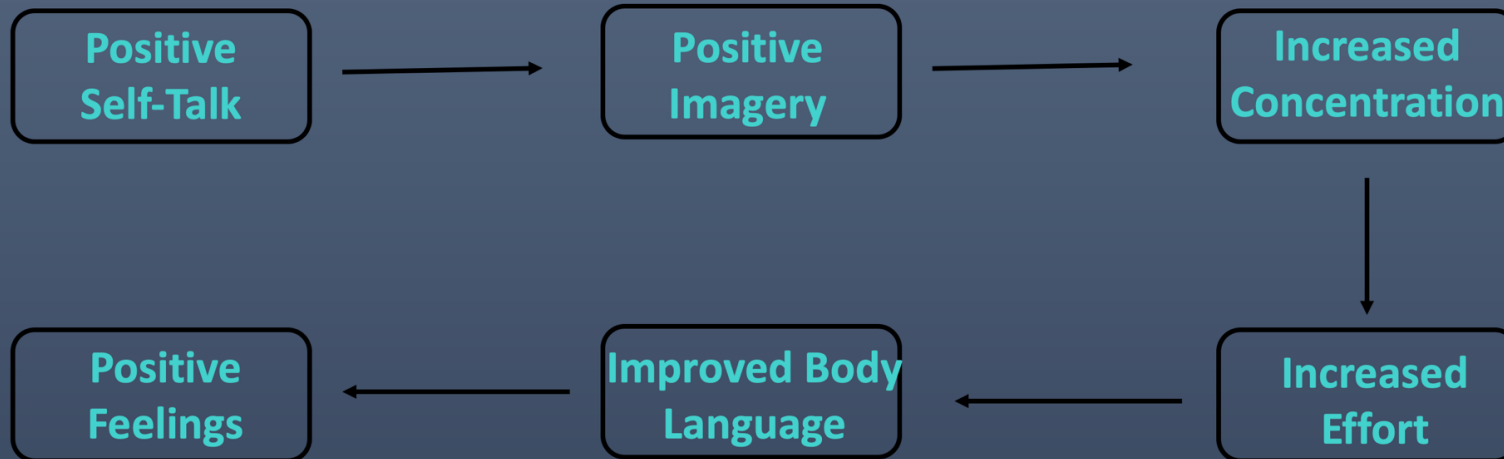
Body Language

“When you are a favourite for something people tend to watch you, I was always aware that there would be a few people out there who thought they had a real chance, who would be watching me to see psychologically how I was coping with issues, even queuing up for my tea in the morning in the village, sitting down, whether you were confident, whether you were relaxed. And I think you have to fill the room, you have to dominate your space, you have to dominate the track, you have to walk out there onto a track and really basically what you want to get people to think when you walk out there is “actually today I’m running for second, I can’t beat him”, “I can’t beat her””.

RESEARCH IN ELITE ATHLETES

CONFIDENCE

INCREASED CONFIDENCE



PERFORMANCE INCREASE

PERFORMANCE CONFIDENCE

(Hays et al., 2009)

Flow

I got into this what we call a flow state and I think with probably anyone you speak to who's been in a flow state it's quite difficult to describe what was going on when it was happening, because the whole point is that it's so automatic you don't think about anything, it just like happens. I just felt really confident in what I was doing and whenever I'm confident I get this really warm feeling in my stomach, like I was like really strong and just warm and just at the same time really relaxed. . .

CHALLENGES TO CONFIDENCE

CONFIDENCE

Getting different feedback from
academy and 1st team staff

Playing Down

Social Media

Media

Life after football

International Duty

Debut for the 1st team

Balancing education
and football

Life outside of football

De-selection

Pressure

Need to
switch off

Agents

Living away from
home (digs)

Loans

Relationships with team
mates

Injury

Tours

Negative
Feedback

Girlfriends

Religion

Friends

School

Financial
Concerns

Playing up age
groups

Family

Sacrifices

Contract
Talks

Relationships with staff

Training with the 1st team

CASE STUDY

CONFIDENCE



CASE STUDY CONFIDENCE

1. WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

2. HOW MIGHT THE ATHLETE'S AGE AFFECT THE SITUATION?

3. WILL THE SPORT IMPACT THE SITUATION?

4. HOW CAN YOU HELP?

QUESTIONS CONFIDENCE



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