

Professional Doctorate in Sport and Exercise Psychology Portfolio

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A portfolio submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Liverpool John Moores University for the degree of Professional Doctorate in Sport and Exercise Psychology

March 2024

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Abstract

This portfolio offers an account of my experiences and developmental activity across my time on the Professional Doctorate in Sport and Exercise Psychology at Liverpool John Moores University. Through the combination of various ethical, consultancy, research, and teaching experiences, this portfolio intends to meet BPS stage 2 requirements and standards outlined by HCPC.

The three ensuing applied case studies illustrate some of my work across three different sporting contexts. Having initially been contacted to offer psychological support to a young football player, case study 1 discusses how the decision was made to work with his father instead. Case study 2 focuses on support provided to a young cricketer who was playing for a county cricket club, and case study 3 illustrates my work with a rugby player who was struggling with nausea prior to performance. Having drawn upon different approaches to inform such consultancy experiences, these studies go some way in illustrating my journey as I worked towards developing a congruent philosophy of practice.

With the majority of my applied work being in talent development environment, the systematic review in this portfolio synthesises papers which explore athlete's perceptions of talent development pathways in the UK. Moving away from performance focus, empirical paper 1 and 2 focus on how rowing can be used as a vehicle to promote positive youth development and teach skills which can be utilised beyond the sporting context. The implications this research can have on applied practice and future scholarly activity is discussed in each.

Finally, the research and reflective practice commentaries which conclude this portfolio summarise my learnings across the 3 year period and end by looking ahead to future plans and ambitions.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the 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

To my Mum and Dad, while you may not have always understood what sport psychology is and what I was talking about, thank you for showing an interest. You have always encouraged me to follow my dreams and supported me in whatever path I have chosen. For that I cannot thank you enough.

To my brother Liam, you have always been a role model to me. Your determination and work ethic is inspiring and without you paving the way, I'm unsure whether I would have got this far.

To my girlfriend Gabby who has been with me from the very start of this journey. Nine years later and we are both nearly there. Although you say you haven't done anything to help, believe me you have. To put it simply, thank you for looking after me all this time. I'm sorry work has often taken over and I haven't always been present.

To my nans, grandads, and other friends and family. I apologise for moving so far away and not seeing you as much as I would have liked. Thank you for making it feel as though we have never been apart.

Finally, to my supervisors Professor Joanne Butt, Dr Nick Wadsworth, and Dr David Tod. I will always be grateful for the support and guidance you have provided. You are all an inspiration.

Practice Log of Training

| Ethics and Professional Standards (incl. CPD) | | | | | |
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| Client details | Location | Date(s) | Nature of the activity | Contact Hours | Placement Host details (if applicable) |
| n/a | Home (via Zoom) | 23/02/2021 | Meeting with Jackie Hargreaves regarding research into engaging individuals with mental illness in physical exercise | 30 minutes | |
| n/a | Home (via Zoom) | 17/03/2021 | Meeting with Ahmed Jerome Romain regarding engaging individuals with severe mental illness in physical exercise | 30 minutes | |
| n/a | Home (via Zoom) | 30/03/2021 | Meeting with Erica Hateley for Systematic Review/Research Advice within Mersey Care | 45 minutes | |
| n/a | Online | 08/04/2021-09/06/2021 | CBT Essentials | 18 hours | Association for Psychological Therapies |
| n/a | Online | 17/05/21-28/05/21 | Mental Health First Aid | 8 hours | Mental Health First Aid England |
| n/a | Private study room @ Aldham Robarts library (via Zoom) | 22/06/2021 | Meeting with Florence Kinnafick regarding physical exercise in secure settings | 30 minutes | |

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| n/a | Online | 01/07/2021 | Secrets of a Practitioner. The Ultimate Survival Guide Workshop. Presented by Chantal Duarte | 3 hours | |
| Carl Allen Associates | Home (via Zoom) | 12/09/2021 | Discussion around career goals, ambitions and how this aligns with my personal philosophy. Utilising LinkedIn to my benefit. | 50 minutes | |
| Carl Allen Associates | Home (via Zoom) | 17/09/2021 | Run through of business proposals to Mersey Care/Ashworth Hospital and Steven Gerrard Academy | 40 minutes | |
| LJMU Teaching and Learning Academy | Home (via Zoom) | 29/09/2021-06/10/2021 | 3i's Information, Ideas and Insights Programme | ? | LJMU |
| Carl Allen Associates | Home (via Zoom) | 07/10/2021 | Career and business planning | 50 minutes | |
| Carl Allen Associates | Home (via Zoom) | 13/10/2021 | Discussion around what I want to be remembered for and how this informs my practice | 30 minutes | |
| Carl Allen Associates | Home (via Zoom) | 25/10/2021 | Creating of my own business | 45 minutes | |
| Stephen Smith | Home (via Zoom) | 04/11/2021 | Creating an Exercise Psychology role at Ashworth Hospital | 30 minutes | |
| Carl Allen Associates | Home (via Zoom) | 30/12/2021 | Update on progress and quarterly planning for upcoming year | 35 minutes | |

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| Strive2Thrive | Home (via Zoom) | 21/10/2021 | Acceptance and Commitment Training for High Performance | 7 hours | Strive2Thrive |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 25/01/2021 | Sat in on Qualified Sport and Exercise Psychologist conducting 1:1 consultancy | 2 hours | |
| Carl Allen Associates | Home (via Zoom) | 29/01/2022 | Business planning | 40 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Home | 15/02/2022 | Peer support group | 2 hours | |
| n/a | Home | 09/06/2022 | Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (2-day course) | 14 hours | SDS Seminars/ Workshops |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Home (via Zoom) | 15/06/2022 | Group reflection | 70 minutes | |
| n/a | Home (via Zoom) | 19/09/2022 | Zoom call with Nicholas Holt regarding research in Positive Youth Development | 40 minutes | |
| n/a | Home (via Zoom) | 17/10/2022 | Discussion with Danny Ransom regarding possible work with Sale Sharks Women's Team | 30 minutes | |
| James Higgins | Manchester | 20/10/2022 | Meeting with sports agent to discuss possible work together | 120 minutes | |
| n/a | University of Bolton | 28/10/2022 | Discussion with supervisor regarding an ethical challenge | 45 minutes | |
| n/a | Home | 03/11/2022 | Solution-Focused Brief Therapy Course (2-day course) | 14 hours | SDS Seminars/ Workshops |

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| Sale Sharks | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 08/11/2022 | 2 nd discussion with Danny Ransom and club doctor regarding possible work with Sale Sharks Women's Team | 60 minutes | |
| James Higgins | Liverpool | 09/11/2022 | Meeting with sports agent to discuss possible work together | 60 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 03/02/2023 | Discussion with Danny Ransom and Assistant Academy Manager regarding work with Sale Sharks Academy | 60 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 23/02/2023 | Shadowing psychologist at Sale Sharks observing a MDT meeting | 120 minutes | |
| Carl Allen Associates | Home (via Zoom) | 11/04/20223 | Career and business planning | 70 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 11/05/2023 | Psychology programme planning with MDT team | 180 minutes | |
| James Higgins | Manchester | 06/06/2023 | Meeting with sports agent to discuss business plan | 120 minutes | |
| University of Bolton | Uni of Bolton Campus | 13/06/2023 | BPS Accreditation Day | 6 hours | |
| James Higgins | Home (via Zoom) | 17/07/2023 | Meeting with sports agent to discuss business plan | 60 minutes | |
| James Higgins | Manchester | 16/08/2023 | A day with football agent to plan business model | 180 minutes | |
| Amy Thiessen | Home (via Zoom) | 18/08/2023 | Meeting with voice coach | 45 minutes | |

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| Sale Sharks | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 31/08/2023 | Psychology team review meeting | 120 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 28/09/2023 | Psychology team review meeting | 120 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Home (via Zoom) | 02/10/2023 | Psychology season review | 60 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 26/10/2023 | Psychology team review meeting | 120 minutes | |
| Carl Allen | (Home via Zoom) | 08/11/2023 | Career and business planning | 60 minutes | |
| James Higgins | Liverpool | 14/11/2023 | Developing sports agency business plan | 120 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 23/11/2023 | Psychology team review meeting | 120 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 23/11/2023 | Motivational interviewing workshop | 60 minutes | |
| British Psychological Society (BPS) | Edinburgh | 28/11/2023-29/11/2023 | Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology Annual Conference (DSEP) | 2 days | |
| English Cricket Board (ECB) | St George's Park | 12/12/2023-13/12/2023 | ECB Annual Conference | 2 days | |
| Sale Sharks | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 14/12/2023 | Psychology team review meeting | 120 minutes | |

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| Sale Sharks | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 14/12/2023 | Motivational interviewing workshop | 45 minutes | |
| n/a | Home (via Zoom) | 16/12/2024 | Discussion with supervisor regarding ethical challenges | 40 minutes | |
| Manchester United | Carrington Training Complex | 20/02/2024 | Observing psychologists at Man Utd Academy | 1 day | |
| Sale Sharks | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 22/02/2024 | Psychology team review meeting | 60 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 28/03/2024 | Psychology team review meeting | 120 minutes | |

| Consultancy | | | | | |
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| Client details | Location | Date(s) | Nature of the activity | Contact Hours | Placement Host details (if applicable) |
| Liverpool Feds First Team | Home (Zoom) | 04/01/2021 | Mid-season review with manager | 30 mins | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team | Home (WhatsApp) | 21/01/2021 | Wellbeing check-in | 1 day | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team | Home (Zoom) | 24/01/2021 | COVID planning with coaches | 30 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (MP) | Home (Phone call) | 31.01.2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (MP) | Home (via Zoom) | 22/04/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 1 hour | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (MP) | Home (via Zoom) | 29/04/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 35 minutes | |

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| Liverpool Feds First Team (MP) | Home (via Zoom) | 10/05/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (MP) | Home (via Zoom) | 10/06/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (MP) | Private study room @ Aldham Robarts library (via Zoom) | 17/06/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 45 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (MP) | Private study room @ Aldham Robarts library (via Zoom) | 24/06/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (MP) | Home (via Zoom) | 06/07/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (LD) | Home (via Zoom) | 06/07/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (MP) | Private study room @ Aldham | 22/07/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 50 minutes | |

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| | Robarts library (via Zoom) | | | | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (MP) | Home (via Zoom) | 26/07/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Private Client (JS) | Home (phone call) | 26/07/2021 | Introductory phone call | 10 minutes | |
| Private client (JS) | Football at Simpsons Football Hub | 28/07/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 1 hour | |
| Private Client (JS) | Restaurant in Liverpool City Centre | 06/08/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 1 hour | |
| Private Client (JS) | Football at Simpsons Football Hub | 12/08/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 1 hour | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (MP) | Home (via Zoom) | 13/08/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 45 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (LD) | Home (via Zoom) | 13/08/2021 | Season planning | 30 minutes | |
| Private client (JS) | Client's house | 20/08/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 75 minutes | |
| LLS/Steven Gerrard Academy | LLS HQ | 31/08/2021 | Focus group before 3 players travel to Alicante on 1-year football scholarship | 75 minutes | |

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| Private Client (JS) | Arcains Arcade | 03/09/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 150 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (MP) | Home (via Zoom) | 15/09/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 45 minutes | |
| Private Client (JS) | Belle Vale Football | 26/09/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 60 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (LD) | Home (via Zoom) | 29/09/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (LA) | Jericho Lane Football Hub | 3/09/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Private Client (JS) | Pizza Express Liverpool One | 02/10/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 120 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (CF) | Jericho Lane Football Hub | 28/10/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 45 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (MP) | Home (via Zoom) | 28/10/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (LD) | Home (via Zoom) | 03/11/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 45 minutes | |

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| Liverpool Feds First Team (LA) | Jericho Lane Football Hub | 04/11/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (CF) | Coffee shop | 24/11/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 60 minutes | |
| Private Client (JS) | Client's house | 28/11/2021 | 1:1 Consultancy | 60 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (MP) | Home (via Zoom) | 04/01/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Private Client (JS) | Lane 7 Sports Venue | 09/01/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 60 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (LD) | Home (via Zoom) | 12/01/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 45 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 18/01/2022 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Private Client (JS) | Belle Vale Football Pitches | 22/01/2022 | Behavioural observation | 60 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 25/01/2022 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |

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| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 01/02/2022 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Private client (JS) | Client's house | 06/02/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 08/02/2022 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Private Client (RS) | Home (via Phone call) | 10/02/2022 | Intervention (chat regarding how to support his son playing football) | 25 minutes | |
| Private Client (JS) | Simpsons Football Hub | 12/02/2022 | Behavioural observation | 60 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 15/02/2022 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds First Team (LD) | Home (via Zoom) | 17/02/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 22/02/2022 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds | Jericho Lane Football Hub | 24/02/2022 | Staff discussion planning for season run-in | 45 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 01/03/2022 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |

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| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 10/03/2022 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 15/03/2022 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 22/03/2022 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 29/03/2022 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 05/04/2022 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 12/04/2022 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Private Client (JS) | Phone call | 21/04/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 15 minutes | |
| Private Client (JS) | Client's house | 01/05/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 25 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Southport and Birkdale Cricket Club | 10/05/2022 | 50 over match – individual and group chats | 8 hours | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Monton Cricket Club | 24/05/2022 | 45 over match – individual and group chats | 8 hours | |

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| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Bootle Cricket Club | 30/05/2022 | Individual and group chats | 3 hours | |
| Private Client (JS) | Sefton Park | 12/06/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 60 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Ormskirk Cricket Club | 14/06/2022 | Individual and group chats | 8 hours | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Highfield Cricket Club | 23/06/2022 | Individual and group chats | 8 hours | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Leigh Cricket Club | 27/06/2022 | Individual and group chats | 8 hours | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Southport and Birkdale Cricket Club | 28/07/2022 | Individual and group chats | 8 hours | |
| Private client (RS) | Sefton Park | 14/08/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 70 minutes | |
| Private Client (RS) | Sefton Park | 04/09/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Highfield Cricket Club | 13/09/2022 | 50 over match - Individual and group chats | 8 hours | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Southport and Birkdale Cricket Club | 15/09/2022 | 40 over match - Individual and group chats | 8 hours | |
| Private Client (JS) | Sefton Park | 24/09/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |

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| Steven Gerrard Academy (TS) | Home (via Zoom) | 27/09/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 35 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 29/09/2022 | Winter planning | 50 minutes | |
| Steven Gerrard Academy (TS) | Home (via Zoom) | 18/10/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 60 minutes | |
| Private Client (RS) | Sefton Park | 23/10/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Steven Gerrard Academy (TS) | Home (via Zoom) | 25/10/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 60 minutes | |
| Steven Gerrard Academy (TS) | Home (via Zoom) | 01/11/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 60 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 17/11/2022 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 22/11/2022 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 24/11/2022 | Introduction to Sport Psychology | 35 minutes | |

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| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 29/11/2022 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (CB) | Home (via Zoom) | 02/12/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 45 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (LD) | Home (via Zoom) | 02/12/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 50 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 06/12/2022 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (LP) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 08/12/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 50 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 13/12/2022 | Group discussion – needs analysis | 120 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 15/12/2022 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (SL) | Home (via Zoom) | 19/12/2022 | 1:1 Consultancy | 60 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (KH) | Home (via Zoom) | 06/01/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 10/01/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 12/01/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 120 minutes | |

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| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 17/01/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (CB) | Home (via Zoom) | 18/01/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 60 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (KH) | Home (via Zoom) | 19/01/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 60 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 26/01/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 120 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 31/01/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 07/02/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 09/02/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 120 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (KH) | Home (via Zoom) | 10/02/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 14/02/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (IR) | Home (via Zoom) | 17/02/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |

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| Sale Sharks Women | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 23/02/2023 | Group discussion – needs analysis | 45 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 28/02/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (LD) | Home (via Zoom) | 02/03/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 60 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 07/03/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 14/03/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 21/03/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 23/03/2023 | Group consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 28/03/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 30/03/2023 | Group consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 30/03/2023 | Group consultancy | 40 minutes | |

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| Lancashire County Cricket Club (IR) | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 03/04/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 04/04/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 06/04/2023 | Group consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 06/04/2023 | Group consultancy | 45 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 06/04/2023 | Group Discussion (Multidisciplinary meeting) | 60 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 11/04/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (MM) | Home (via Zoom) | 12/04/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 13/04/2023 | Group consultancy | 45 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (AM) | Home (via Zoom) | 25/04/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |

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| Sale Sharks (WR) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 27/04/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks (PB) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 27/04/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Private Client (LG) | Home (via Zoom) | 27/04/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Private Client (RS) | Liverpool | 29/04/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 75 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (FW) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 02/05/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (AI) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 04/05/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 45 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (HT) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 11/05/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (AW) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 11/05/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 50 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Bowdon Cricket Club | 17/05/2023 | 50 over match - Individual and group chats | 8 hours | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (FR) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 18/05/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 45 minutes | |

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| Sale Sharks Women (MW) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 18/05/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (EV) | Home (via Zoom) | 22/05/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (LP) | Home (via Zoom) | 24/05/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (MM) | Home (via Zoom) | 24/05/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Roe Green Cricket Club | 05/06/2023 | 50 over match - Individual and group chats | 8 hours | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (IR) | Home (via Zoom) | 15/06/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Eccles Cricket Club | 19/06/2023 | 50 over match - Individual and group chats | 8 hours | |
| Private Client (LH) | Home (via Zoom) | 04/07/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Home (via Zoom) | 05/07/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |

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| (LP) | | | | | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 06/07/2023 | Group consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 06/07/2023 | Group consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (FR) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 06/07/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (JL) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 20/07/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (AG) | Home (via Zoom) | 21/07/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (FR, MA, JP) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 26/07/2023 | Group discussion (Multidisciplinary team) | 60 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Sefton Cricket Club | 26/07/2023 | 50 over match - Individual and group chats | 8 hours | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (JP) | Home (via Zoom) | 02/08/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 45 minutes | |

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| Private Client (LG) | Home (via Zoom) | 02/08/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Eccles Cricket Club | 04/08/2023 | 50 over match - Individual and group chats | 8 hours | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 10/08/2023 | Group consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (RM) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 10/08/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (AP) | Phone call | 10/08/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 25 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (SF) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 10/08/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (JP) | Home (via Zoom) | 11/08/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (JL) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 17/08/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks (Women's Leadership Group) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 22/08/2023 | Group Consultancy | 20 minutes | |

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| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Neston Cricket Club | 23/08/2023 | 50 over match - Individual and group chats | 8 hours | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (AW) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 24/08/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Grappenhall Cricket Club | 29/08/2023 | 50 over match - Individual and group chats | 8 hours | |
| Private Client (LG) | Home (via Zoom) | 06/08/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 35 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks (Women's Leadership Group) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 07/09/2023 | Group Consultancy | 25 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (RM) | Home (via Zoom) | 08/09/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Private Client (JS) | Home (via Zoom) | 12/09/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 14/09/2023 | Group Consultancy | 2 x 45 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (TH) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 14/09/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |

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| Sale Sharks Women (SF) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 14/09/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (KF) | Home (via Zoom) | 18/09/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 15 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women(EI) | Home (via Zoom) | 18/09/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 21/09/2023 | Group consultancy | 50 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks (NS) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 21/09/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks (MM)) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 21/09/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 60 minutes | |
| Private Client (LG) | Home (via Zoom) | 27/09/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (HT) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 28/09/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 50 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (CB) | Home (via Zoom) | 03/10/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (LP) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 10/10/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |

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| Sale Sharks Women (ER) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 10/10/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 50 minutes | |
| Private Client (LG) | Home (via Zoom) | 11/10/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 25 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (JL) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 12/10/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 60 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks (Women's Leadership Group) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 12/10/2023 | Group consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (EI) | Home (via Zoom) | 17/10/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 60 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 19/10/2023 | Group Consultancy | 45 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (NS, ML) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 19/10/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (ER) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 19/10/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks (Women's Leadership Group) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 19/10/2023 | Group consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 19/10/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |

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| Academy (OR) | | | | | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (FR) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 26/10/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (EC) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 26/10/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (SJ) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 26/10/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (WA) | Home (via Zoom) | 01/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (RM) | Home (via Zoom) | 01/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (AB) | Home (via Zoom) | 01/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (LP) | Home (via Zoom) | 01/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |

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| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (FC) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 02/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 07/11/2023 | Group workshop | 30 minutes | |
| Private Client (LG) | Home (via Zoom) | 08/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 09/11/2023 | Group discussion (Multidisciplinary Team) | 75 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (FR) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 09/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (EC) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 09/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 25 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (ER) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 09/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (HT) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 09/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 14/11/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |

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| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (WW) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 16/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 25 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 16/11/2023 | Group consultancy | 60 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (CE) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 16/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (WB) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 16/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 70 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (MB) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 16/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Private Client (BF) | Home (via Zoom) | 20/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 21/02/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 120 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (JM) | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 21/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 25 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (KF) | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 21/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 25 minutes | |

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| Lancashire County Cricket Club (RF) | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 21/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (CF) | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 21/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 35 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (HT) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 22/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (TR) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 22/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (EI) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 22/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 22/11/2023 | Group Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (HT) | Home (via Zoom) | 27/11/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 25 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 28/11/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 05/12/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |

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| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 12/12/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 14/12/2023 | Group Consultancy | 2 x 45 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (AJ, KM, MA, LD) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 14/12/2024 | Group discussion (Multidisciplinary team) | 60 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 14/12/2023 | Group Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 19/12/2023 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 120 minutes | |
| Private Client (BF) | Home (via Zoom) | 20/12/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (GW) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 04/01/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (CB) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 04/01/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 09/01/2024 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (ML) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 11/01/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |

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| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 16/01/2024 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (RT) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 18/01/2023 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (AW) | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 21/01/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (NW) | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 21/01/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 23/01/2024 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (OR) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 25/01/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (AB) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 25/01/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (TH) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 25/01/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Private client (OC) | Home (via Zoom) | 25/01/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |

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| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 30/01/2024 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (JB) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 01/02/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 01/02/2024 | Group consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 06/02/2024 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Private Client (LG) | Home (via Zoom) | 07/02/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (JB) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 08/02/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (EC) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 08/02/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (GW) | Home (via Zoom) | 09/02/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (CB) | Home (via Zoom) | 13/02/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 50 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 13/02/2024 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |

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| Lancashire County Cricket Club (JP) | Home (via Zoom) | 16/02/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 50 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (WA) | Home (via Zoom) | 19/02/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 20/02/2024 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women | Home (via Zoom) | 22/02/2024 | Group Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (EW) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 22/02/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 27/02/2024 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (AA) | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 27/02/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 20 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's Academy (AW) | Home (via Zoom) | 29/02/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Men's | Home (via Zoom) | 29/02/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |

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| Academy (WW) | | | | | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (AW) | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 01/03/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 05/03/2024 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (IR) | Home (via Zoom) | 06/03/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 40 minutes | |
| Private Client (SC) | Home (via Zoom) | 08/03/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 12/03/2024 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 120 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (ED) | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 12/03/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 25 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (LH) | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 12/03/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (CC) | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 12/03/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 25 minutes | |

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| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 19/03/2024 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 120 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (TB) | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 19/03/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (HP) | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 12/03/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 35 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club (AY) | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 12/03/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 25 minutes | |
| Private Client (BF) | Home (via Zoom) | 21/03/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Sale Sharks Women (NM) | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 21/03/2024 | 1:1 Consultancy | 30 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 26/03/2024 | Training session and 1:1 chats | 240 minutes | |

| Research | | | | | |
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| Client details | Location | Date(s) | Nature of the activity | Contact Hours | Placement Host details (if applicable) |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 12/02/2021 | Introductory meeting between LJMU and WRC | 40 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| n/a | Home (via Zoom) | 22/02/2021 | Meeting with supervisor regarding WRC project | 30 minutes | |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Liverpool Victoria Rowing Club | 26/03/2021 | Observation of rowing programme | 60 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Warrington Rowing Club | 01/04/2021 | Observation of rowing programme | 60 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 12/04/2021 | Discussing intended outcomes for the research with relevant stakeholders | 30 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 19/04/2021 | Discussing intended outcomes for the research with relevant stakeholders | 30 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 25/05/2021 | Logic model discussion | 50 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 13/07/2021 | Ethics update | 30 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 13/10/2021 | Discussion regarding interview contacts | 30 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| n/a | Home (via Zoom) | 14/10/2021 | Meeting with supervisor regarding interview preparation | 30 minutes | |

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| RI | Home (via Zoom) | 24/11/2021 | Interview | 50 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| NP | Home (via Zoom) | 01/12/2021 | Interview | 45 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| MT | Home (via Zoom) | 01/12/2021 | Interview | 40 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 12/01/2022 | Initial interviews feedback | 45 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| JP | Home (via Zoom) | 23/12/2021 | Interview | 50 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| JJ | Warrington Rowing Club | 20/01/2022 | Interview | 30 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Warrington Rowing Club | 20/01/2022 | Observation of rowing programme | 60 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| n/a | Home (via Zoom) | 03/02/2022 | Meeting with supervisor to discuss headteacher interview guide | 20 minutes | |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Birchwood Leisure Centre | 10/02/2022 | Observation of indoor rowing competition observation | 120 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 24/02/2022 | Presentation of current findings to Rowing Club Trustees | 10 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 21/03/2022 | Interview | 35 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 21/03/2022 | Interview | 30 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 22/03/2022 | Interview | 30 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 23/03/2022 | Interview | 30 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |

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| Warrington Rowing club | Home (via Zoom) | 29/03/2022 | Interview | 30 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 05/04/2022 | Interview | 40 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Warrington Rowing Club | 04/05/2022 | Introducing research project with students | 60 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Warrington Rowing Club | 05/05/2022 | Introducing research project with students | 60 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Warrington Rowing Club | 11/05/2022 | Student focus group | 25 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Warrington Rowing Club | 11/05/2022 | Student focus group | 25 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Warrington Rowing Club | 12/05/2022 | Student focus group | 25 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Warrington Rowing Club | 12/05/2022 | Student focus group | 25 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 18/05/2022 | Interview | 30 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 19/05/2022 | Interview | 45 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 20/05/2022 | Interview | 35 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 20/05/2022 | Interview | 40 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 20/05/2022 | Focus group discussion of findings | 25 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Warrington rowing Club | 22/06/2022 | Interview | 40 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |

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| Warrington Rowing Club | Liverpool Victoria Rowing Club | 01/07/2022 | Student focus group | 30 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 14/07/2022 | Focus group discussion of findings | 30 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 21/07/2022 | Focus group discussion of findings | 20 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 21/07/2022 | Consultation with stakeholders from WRC and Henley Royal Regatta Trust | 45 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 04/08/2022 | Chat with Rachel Hooper from British Rowing | 30 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 18/04/2022 | Chat with Rachel Hooper from British Rowing | 25 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Northwich Rowing Club | 24/08/2022 | Coach education programme proposal | 45 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 25/08/2022 | Consultation with stakeholders from WRC and Henley Royal Regatta Trust | 75 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| n/a | Home (via Zoom) | 19/09/2022 | Chat with Nicholas Holt regarding PYD research | 40 minutes | |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 29/09/2022 | Consultation with stakeholders from WRC and Henley Royal Regatta Trust | 40 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Warrington Rowing Club | 24/10/2022 | Discussion regarding next steps for research | 60 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 02/11/2022 | Coach education programme (session 1) | 60 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 03/11/2022 | Coach education programme (session 1) | 60 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |

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| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 04/01/2023 | Coach education programme (session 2) | 60 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 05/01/2023 | Coach education programme (session 2) | 60 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| n/a | Home (via Zoom) | 03/02/2023 | Meeting with LJMU librarian regarding systematic review | 45 minutes | |
| n/a | Home (via Zoom) | 09/02/2023 | Meeting with supervisor regarding systematic review | 60 minutes | |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 08/03/2023 | Coach education programme (session 3) | 60 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| n/a | Home (via Zoom) | 17/03/2023 | Meeting with supervisor regarding systematic review | 60 minutes | |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Warrington Rowing Club | 24/03/2023 | Planning next phase of research | 45 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | TCAT | 31/03/2023 | Planning next phase of research | 45 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| n/a | Home (via Zoom) | 18/04/2023 | Meeting with supervisor regarding systematic review | | |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 19/04/2023 | Coach education programme (session 4) | 60 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| n/a | Home (via Zoom) | 19/05/2023 | Meeting with supervisor regarding systematic review | 50 minutes | |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 18/07/2023 | Interview | 40 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 18/07/2023 | Interview | 45 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 19/07/2023 | Interview | 35 minutes | Warrington Rowing Club |
| n/a | Home (via Zoom) | 31/07/2023 | Meeting with supervisor to discuss second empirical paper | 30 minutes | |

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| n/a | Home | 24/10/2023 | Systematic Review submitted to International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology | 180 minutes | |
| n/a | Home | 19/11/2023 | Case Study 1 submitted to Case Studies in Sport and Exercise Psychology | 180 minutes | |
| n/a | Home | 20/11/2023 | Empirical Paper 1 submitted to Psychology of Sport and Exercise | 180 minutes | |
| n/a | Home | 15/01/2024 | Meeting with supervisor to discuss Case Study 1 revisions | 30 minutes | |
| n/a | Home | 16/01/2024 | Case Study 1 revisions | 5 hours | |
| n/a | | 16/02/2024 | Meeting with supervisor to discuss Empirical Paper 1 revisions | 40 minutes | |

| Dissemination | | | | | |
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| Client details | Location | Date(s) | Nature of the activity | Contact Hours | Placement Host details (if applicable) |
| Barking and Dagenham Schools Improvement Partnership | Home (Zoom) | 09/12/2020 | Psychology Pathways Careers Event | 15 minutes | |
| Liverpool Feds | Home (Zoom) | 12/01/2021 | Anxiety in Sport workshop | 30 minutes | |
| Ark Schools | Home (Microsoft Teams) | 23/03/2021 | Sport and Exercise Professional Pathways Q&A | 45 minutes | Inspiring the future |
| Kensington Aldridge Academy | Home (Google Meet) | 25/03/2021 | Psychology Society presentation | 30 minutes | Inspiring the future |
| Mersey Care Board of Directors | Home (via Zoom) | 14/09/2021 | Exercise Psychology pitch to Joe Rafferty (Chief Executive of Mersey Care) | 20 minutes | |
| Steven Gerrard Academy | Home (via Zoom) | 16/09/2021 | Business proposal (Well-being programme for International Academy) | 30 minutes | |
| Liverpool John Moores Level 5 Sports Coaching | Student Life Building | 25/10/2021 | Doing Needs Analysis workshop | 120 minutes | |

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| Liverpool Feds | Jericho Lane Football Hub | 02/12/2021 | Leadership discussion | 45 minutes | |
| Loughborough College | Home (via Zoom) | 01/03/2022 - 29/04/2022 | Lectures and Seminars | 60 hours | |
| Loughborough College | Home (via Zoom) | 15/02/2022 - 23/09/2022 | Dissertation supervision | 15 hours | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 10/04/2022 | Safety Net mental health platform workshop | 480 minutes | |
| Barnsley College | Home (via Zoom) | 26/04/2022 | Psychology Careers Event | 60 minutes | |
| Inspiring the future | Home (via Zoom) | 18/05/2022 | Psychology careers mentor | 25 minutes | |
| University of Bolton | Campus | 19/09/2022-16/12/2022 | Lectures and seminars | 50 hours | |
| University of Bolton | Campus | 19/09/2022-16/12/2022 | Student supervision | 5 hours | |
| British Rowing | Home (via Zoom) | 28/09/2022 | British Rowing Coaching Week | 60 minutes | British Rowing |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 07/10/2022 | Rocking the Boat Conference 2022 | 60 minutes | Henley Royal Regatta Charitable Trust |
| Liverpool John Moores University | Home (via Zoom) | 31/10/2022-16/12/2022 | Student placement supervision | 5 hours | |
| North Chadderton School | North Chadderton School | 05/12/2022 | Psychology careers talk | 45 minutes | |

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| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 22/01/2023 | Sport Psychology introduction | 240 minutes | |
| University of Bolton | Campus | 23/01/2023 – 15/05/2023 | Lectures and seminars | 86 hours | |
| University of Bolton | Campus | 23/01/2023 – 12/06/2023 | Student supervision | 8 hours | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 05/03/2023 | Parenting in sport workshop | 120 minutes | |
| University of Bolton | Campus | 25/09/2023 – 22/03/2024 | Lectures and seminars | 60 hours | |
| University of Bolton | Campus | 25/09/2023 – 22/03/2024 | Student supervision | 6 hours | |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Home (via Zoom) | 06/10/2023 | Rocking the Boat Conference 2023 | 60 minutes | Henley Royal Regatta Charitable Trust |
| Warrington Rowing Club | Mere Court Hotel | 17/11/2023 | Annual Dinner – Presenting research findings | 20 minutes | |
| BPS DSEP 2023 | Edinburgh | 29/11/2023 | Presenting a reflection on my work at Lancashire County Cricket Club | 15 minutes | |
| Liverpool John Moores University | Student Life Building | 02/02/2024 | Applied Practice Event | 45 minutes | |
| Lancashire County Cricket Club | Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground | 12/02/2024 | Parenting in sport workshop | 120 minutes | |

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| Sale Sharks | Sale Sharks Training Ground | 28/03/2024 | Psychological responses to injury workshop | 120 minutes | |
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Reflective Practice Diary

Ethics and Professional Standards

Trying to implement Exercise Psychology at Ashworth Hospital

Date: 03/03/2021

In this piece I reflect on my time so far trying to engage individuals in physical activity at Ashworth which is a high-secure psychiatric hospital. Given my interests and career ambitions I have been keen to get as many as the patients engaged in exercise as possible. This however has been met with some resistance from other staff and what seems broader organisational and systemic issues. Me trying to do this seems to be going against the grain of the culture at Ashworth where it seems medication is the first line of therapy and exercise is somewhat ignored or undervalued, an observation shared by Rogers et al. (2021). An instance comes to mind where I have taken a patient on the bike machine and a colleague has commented on my actions asking what I am doing that for. I feel it is ironic given that we are in a healthcare setting and yet staff are reluctant to improve the physical health of patients of whom a lot are extremely obese, due to the fact they are so restricted and haven't much opportunity to do any physical activity. Of course, some patients don't want to do physical exercise and the antipsychotic medication doesn't help as it is highly sedative, but that is where us staff need to intervene and try to convince them to exercise as I feel it can be a therapy in itself. Due to the volatile nature of the environment however I have even heard staff say "give him that chocolate bar, I don't care if he gets fat, the fatter he is the slower he is and the quicker he gets tired when we're restraining him".

Exercise doesn't seem to be the thing they necessarily do at Ashworth, in spite of initiatives claiming they want to improve the health of their patients etc which all seem a

farce or a tick box exercise to get more funding. We do have gym staff at Ashworth however even those don't seem to be the best at motivating patients to exercise and often come onto the ward offering gym sessions but are happy to accept no as an answer. I am unaware if any of those are trained or have any understanding of behaviour change. Perhaps I could support them in this, perhaps something similar to the work of Cormac et al. (2008). Another thing I have noticed is the gym staff don't seem to have built a relationship with any of the patients on my ward in particular. Therefore, it is understandable that when offered an activity session the patients say no. If I suffered from schizophrenia and was paranoid I wouldn't want to go to the gym with someone I don't even know. Something else I have noticed is the unhealthy eating habits I have seen from staff on the ward whom often bring in cakes, sweets and chocolate for other staff. Staff are not in the best physical conditions themselves and do not seem to be interested in exercising, unlike myself. If they don't value it themselves and have no enthusiasm for being active, then the likelihood of them advocating for the patients to exercise is nil. Moreover, if patients see staff eating rubbish then this reflects back on to the patients who think it is acceptable to eat rubbish.

When talking to a staff member recently about implementing more physical activity on the wards, one of whom has significant power within the service and has scope to influence the culture, their response was "it may impact my nursing responsibilities" thus suggesting that I shouldn't be trying to encourage exercise with the patients because it takes me away from other more important jobs that need to be done on the ward. In fact, doing more physical activity with the patients will probably tire them out which in turn makes it an easier role for other staff as all the patients will be asleep or relaxing rather than looking for other things to do or becoming aggressive.

In sum, I feel there is a strange culture at Ashworth which is reluctant to increase levels of physical activity. There are very few meaningful activities on offer at Ashworth and physical exercise is one that is relatively cheap in cost. The site has a gym, swimming pool, astro turf pitch, running track, football pitch, a bowls green and yet I have rarely seen these being used. Exercise can increase mood, perceived quality of life, and of course physical health (Hargreaves et al., 2017) yet staff whom have a vital role in promoting and initiating physical activity seem reluctant to do so. In spite of this, it isn't going to deter me away from trying to engage the patients in physical activity. This situation has afforded me greater awareness of the power cultures can have in a workplace and how I am left to decide whether to conform to the culture or stay true to what I believe in and therefore continuing to pursue my goals irrespective of pressures put on me. I recognise that continuing to promote physical activity in this setting probably won't put my job at risk however other settings for example a sports club may put more pressure on me to conform to their culture and exclude those who go against the grain. This is something I may encounter later on in my career and will again offer a situation where I will have a difficult decision to make.

Secondment at Ashworth Hospital

Date: 03/06/2021

Further to my above reflection, in my role at Ashworth Hospital I have recently been seconded onto a different department called the PIPs (Positive intervention Programme). This department works specifically with patients in long-term segregation in the hospital, those who have been deemed of greater risk to themselves and others. What has been interesting in my first few weeks is the emphasis placed on this department to get the patients more physically active. Unlike when I was on the wards and, as discussed in

reflection 1 where I speak of the reluctance from staff members to engage the patients in physical activity, this team/department seem to place more value on doing exercise.

The team of 6 I work with consists of males in their 20s and 30s whom similar to myself have a passion for keeping fit. This is reflected in the work we do whereby we strive to make sure we take as many patients as we can to the gym, astro turf or running track throughout the day. What is evident is the passion everyone within the team has in doing physical exercise which as a result, despite working some of the most dangerous patients in the hospital, most of the interactions we have are extremely positive. Patients enjoy the sessions more because we all get involved.

Emphasis is also placed on building a great working relationship with the patients, connecting with them on a level beyond the surface. Us as a team take an interest in the patient and talk to them as humans, something which they appreciate and something which a growing body of evidence consistently highlights as integral in regard to engaging this population in exercise (Mateo-Urdiales et al., 2020; Quirk et al., 2020; Rogers et al., 2021). Our enthusiasm for keeping fit reflects back on to the patients and through this relational security we build with patients, I believe we are able to help them on their recovery and are the ones they often seek out in times of crisis. The patients seem to see us as role models and doing the exercises with them keeps them motivated. Positive feedback is also a major component of the work which is done to try and build the self-esteem of these individuals. Overall, it has been interesting to work on a different department, see a different side to the hospital and see that a department, albeit an extremely small one is trying to make a difference and engage the patients in exercise.

One thing I have noticed is that none of the team have any qualifications in sport science or psychology but seem really good at motivating the patients and getting them to

take up a session even if they don't want to. They are good negotiators and use their language to great effect to facilitate patients to change their behaviour. I plan to try and get on the negotiator course the hospital offers and I am also keen to engage in some motivational interviewing training which should help in me motivating patients to exercise, something I currently struggle with and something I therefore need to develop when practicing as a Sport and Exercise Psychologist in the future. As a final point, a key learning point from this experience is just the importance of building positive relationships regardless of what context I work in.

Mum not knowing about our work

Date: 27/08/21

The dad of the young individual I have been preparing to do some work with has recently disclosed that the child's mother isn't aware that he reached out to me seeking psychological support for their son. He revealed there is a chance she may oppose the child seeing myself. The dad has mentioned that him and the child's mum have split up and can sometimes argue regarding the child's care. In line with BPS guidelines, all of my clients sign a consent form before commencement of psychology support and with individuals under 18 years of age consent is gathered from a suitable representative (usually a guardian or representative). Nothing is said however in regard to whether consent needs to be from both or just one parents.

In attempt of overcoming this issue I set up a meeting with my supervisor to discuss my options. Similar to myself, my supervisor had never encountered this issue either. In terms of moving forward what we decided is that it would be sufficient for the father to sign the consent form. I will however speak to him and recommend that he speak to the mother to tell her that he has reached out to myself to help their son which ethically, I think, is the

correct procedure to follow. I am not obliged to tell the mother myself however by having this conversation, if the mother ever finds out and complains to myself, whether the father has told her or not I have covered my back but advising the father to tell her.

Development of a professional self

Date: 15/09/2021

As I progress, I find myself given more conscious thought to how I act in public. I want to feel and be seen as more professional and I suppose this aligns with my natural maturation as a person as well as my journey into a career as a Sport and Exercise Psychologist.

I remember my mum always saying to me as a kid be nice to your peers in school as one day they could be your boss. Whilst I did acknowledge that lesson to a degree at the time, I suppose that is a lesson that is coming to the fore again at this stage of my life. Although I was never a naughty kid I suppose I can be quite cheeky, enjoy getting involved in banter and am quite extroverted. To a degree I have always been conscious of how people perceive me, driven by typical goals of a young lad growing up I wanted to be liked, to be seen as the coolest, best at football and wanted to look good. Whilst Rogers (1959), suggests this may be damaging to psychological well-being, to some degree, and in the career I am looking to pursue, I think I ought to be conscious of how I am perceived by others. Where the distinction lies however is not allowing others' perception of me impact my own self-worth/esteem. When younger I probably lacked a filter and wouldn't always consider what I was saying, where I was and who was around me when I was saying it. A reflection of my maturation and growing up I suppose, I am becoming more conscious of what I am saying and evaluating whether it is appropriate depending on where I am and who I am with. I have

recently heard stories of people getting sacked or disciplined due to being overheard in public disparaging their workplace.

Now when in public I have found myself more conscious of who is around me, where I am as I think I could be walking down the street and someone I walk past could be a future client or manager and if I therefore am acting unprofessionally, being rude to retail assistants or say something stupid for example this could impact me later down the line. Although this may sound dramatic to some, I can think of 2 relevant examples over the past year which go some way in illustrating my point:

1. The first and most recent was at the Liverpool vs. Man City match. I was not in my normal seat and was therefore sat next to people whom I didn't know. A passionate Liverpool fan, I get involved in the singing in the ground. I did not speak to any of those around me during the game apart from hugging the lady next to me when we scored. After the game I received a friend request from what turned out to be the lady who was sat next to me. I had never seen her before, did not say a word during the game but somehow she had managed to find me on Facebook (which baffled me in itself!). What was even more crazy is the lady was a Trainee Sport Psychologist herself. Instantly I began to question whether I said or did anything I shouldn't have. Thankfully I hadn't, however I dread to think what she would have thought of me if I had been shouting at the referee or players for example. How would that have impacted her perception of me, especially as someone who wants to be a Psychologist? Would that have been professional? Would she hire me? All of these questions were racing through my head and made me realise how important it is I do not put my reputation into jeopardy. Personally, if I were to see a psychologist myself

I would want them to be professional which is why I am now giving my actions more conscious thought.

2. The second example is during a night out with a group of people from work.

Thankfully I hadn't had half as much to drink my colleagues. We were in a bar in town and a few of them started getting louder and louder the more drunk they got. I stayed sat down and didn't get involved. I ended up talking to a group of people on the table next to us who turned out to be a group of women's football players (who play for a team in the division above the team who I currently volunteer with). The girls were laughing and sniggering at the people from my work as admittedly they began to embarrass themselves. I have never been so glad I wasn't drunk. I began to imagine how embarrassing it would have been if I was as drunk as them and was dancing and acting foolishly. Admittedly I recognise at some points in our lives we need to let our hair down however reflecting on this situation I began to imagine if I applied for a job or went to work at that girl's football team what their perceptions of me would be. If they had seen me dancing and acting like that how would it have impacted my credibility as their psychologist. Would I have got the job in the first place? Would they want to open and confide in me? Would they think I was a professional?

In sum, I think this reflection as I say previously shows my maturation as a person but also demonstrates the early forming's of my identity as a Sport and Exercise Psychologist (Tod et al., 2020). I want to be seen as a professional and am glad I am learning the lesson that for this career I need to think about my overall identity and how I act even in the times when I am Scott the everyday person.

Securing paid work

Date 12/10/2021

The Steven Gerrard Academy is a company who I have known for years, they have followed my journey from undergraduate through to where I am now. In a recent discussion they have said how they are interested in using my services to offer psychological support to the athletes on their International programme. Aged between 16-19, these athletes have come to Liverpool from all around the globe to play and train at a high level (with the hope of becoming professionals) but also to gain qualifications to enable them to go to university. With a lot of them so far away from home and in an intense environment where all they live and breathe is football, there is a chance their psychological well-being may be impacted if not appropriately managed (Richardson et al., 2012)

A few weeks back I spoke to the director of the company who said he was keen for me to get started so I went away and put a proposal together (which took me hours) and later presented to a stakeholder within the company about a psychology programme I put together for the players. I also broke down how much it would cost for me to implement the programme.

Since this I have had one conversation with the individual I presented to who reiterated their desire to have me on board. He has said he spoke to the director who also affirmed this. They have also said they are keen to engage the players in activities/workshops in the evenings to which I had an idea of perhaps introducing something like 'Well-being Wednesdays' where I offer psychology drop-in sessions for the lads to come and talk to me regarding any issues/concerns/needs. The stumbling block however seems to be payment. I get the sense they don't want to pay me. I've a good relationship with the stakeholder and he has revealed they do not have a budget per se, rather they often get someone in to provide a service and a few months down the line

assess whether it is working and whether to continue with the service. I therefore need to prove my worth however this may be difficult because it will take time for me to build a relationship with the players first of all and it is only once I have done this that the players will probably begin to open up to me (Sharp & Hodge, 2011). Also, with the stigma around psychology and the lads all living in the same accommodation, some may be reluctant to be seen talking a psychologist (Wahto, Swift & Whipple, 2016). In all, this makes it hard for me to prove my worth to the business early on.

My task now is to think how I can overcome these issues. In terms of my options I could remain firm and say I want to be paid. I could drop how much I am charging. I could change how I see the psychology programme aligning with their current programme. I could scrap the idea altogether. In regard to building a relationship with the players and gaining access I could do a workshop with them introducing them to psychology and how I could help their performance and/or wellbeing, all with the intention of breaking down those initial barriers. I could produce a leaflet or send a message to the players outlining who I am and how I can help and take a more relaxed approach, putting ownership on them to message me if they need help. Are they likely to do this though? I suppose they would if I could sell it well enough? Perhaps linking it to their aspirations and aligning with the message the company really drives about being professional and being the best version of themselves. With a lot of them perhaps never speaking to a Sport Psychologist before and therefore not knowing how one can help them I suppose it would be useful to inform them of the things I can help them with in terms performance-related topics such as confidence, anxiety, injury, de-selection but also general well-being. Would this best be delivered via a WhatsApp message to their whole group chat or via an individual 1:1 message? If I implemented it this way how would I calculate how much to charge? This also probably

raises the question who the client is? Do I charge the player themselves or the company? As I type and think it is becoming clear my easy option would be to offer my services for free just to gain more applied experience and the access to players. I don't want to do this however as I want to start earning money from this career and can't carry on offering my services for free. That is what I have done with Liverpool Feds Women's Team as it makes it easier and there is less pressure on me to deliver results and prove my worth, but I know deep down that is the road I don't want to go down. If I say I am going to charge the players I have got no hope as they aren't working and can therefore not afford it. I need to be paid from the business and my best bet is to pursue the idea of offering drop-in 1:1 session on a set day and time and week perhaps. If money really is an issue maybe I can drop my expected pay slightly just to secure the work as it is a company I want to work for and who do have a lot of contacts for me to possibly use.

Discussing this with my peers on the doctorate course it is clear the issue of being paid, offering services and proving worth is prevalent and one faced not just by trainee practitioners but a lot of sport psychologists. There is no right or wrong answer here but I suppose the task for me weighing up what makes most sense for me in this context and attempting to answer the questions above.

Still trying to implement Exercise Psychology at Ashworth Hospital

Date: 05/12/2021

As I have discussed earlier on in this reflective diary, I have been keen to try and create some work for myself as an Exercise Psychologist within the high-secure psychiatric hospital I am currently working. To this point I have faced a number of challenges and what feel as though barriers put in front of me. From my perspective, it feels as though the company I am working for is resistant to change or innovative ideas and as I have mentioned

before, for pockets of individuals within the organisation (unfortunately those with power) exercise goes against the grain of what is typically done at Ashworth Hospital.

Still persistent however to try and make use of my time here, in September I was sent an open invite to join a virtual call with the CEO of Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust which oversees the running of Ashworth Hospital. I had exhausted all other avenues in regard to people directly working at Ashworth Hospital who may be able to help me in my pursuit of implementing some Exercise Psychology work so thought this may be a good opportunity to put forward my ideas to the 'big boss'. I did this and he, as well as everybody else on the call seemed interested in the idea. He told me to send him over a two-page document outlining where I feel I could benefit the service, which I did.

Fast forward a couple of months and I was informed to schedule a meeting with the head of psychology at Ashworth Hospital. I thought this was my breakthrough! If the CEO of organization was interested in this I believed he may have cascaded the message to the broader team at Ashworth to listen to what I had to say and take me more seriously (how wrong was I!).

I had the meeting but was completely shut down once again. I prepared well, even delivering a session to my peers and tutor on the Professional Doctorate course to ask for their help in regard to how I should prepare for the meeting. In spite of this, the first thing the head of psychology did when I sat down was make explicit how he was not pleased with how I approached the situation. He told me how a message from the CEO (about my proposal) had landed on his desk out of nowhere, which created a sense of panic as he had never heard of me and thought I was practicing illegally at the hospital. How it had been phrased was that I was already practicing as an Exercise Psychologist (which I hadn't been) despite not being employed by the hospital as a psychologist. From that point of view I can

appreciate why he may have been annoyed. Despite my line manager clearing this up before my meeting with him however, I feel he was still not best pleased with me. The events of the situation got his back up immediately and only made it harder for me to try and convince him of my idea. He told me he had read my proposal but was still not convinced of the idea. In his own words he used the analogy of it being like someone coming to me and telling me “here is a rocket ship, you must buy this rocket ship as it is the best rocket ship that will take you to space. But you are thinking, I don’t want to go to space”? I didn’t believe this was an accurate representation of the situation at all. Our conversation lasted around half an hour which mainly consisted of him telling me how he had no idea what Exercise Psychology is and that my proposal had holes in and therefore I did not do a good enough job of convincing him that it would work.

I have waited a few days before doing this reflection to try and be as rational as possible. At this juncture, admittedly I am a bit deflated. I have spoken to so many people within the organisation about how I see exercise psychology fitting within the service the hospital offers and yet it seems those who work ‘on the shop floor’ and therefore spend the most time with patients feel it would be a good idea. However, the stumbling block is when I discuss this with those with some degree of power within the hospital (apart from the CEO ironically) as it falls on death ears or I am not taken seriously. Again, this is yet another indication of an organisational and systemic issue I have faced, something which I could do with some guidance on. Despite some insight from Eubank et al. (2014) in large I feel this topic is somewhat neglected from the literature. At the moment I feel stuck, I have tried everything to make use of my time at Ashworth Hospital and feel like now I am in a position where I can either choose to carry on or consider other options. I am swaying towards the latter!

Working with Carl, starting my own business

Date: 02/02/2022

For the past few months I have begun having a few one-to-one chats with a business consultant (Carl). Carl sits next to us at Anfield so we already have a good informal relationship but aware of the career I was looking to pursue he recently reached out offering to help me more from a professional, business side of things. I agreed of course and went into our conversation open-minded not really knowing what to expect.

We initially began talking about my story and why I wanted to pursue a career in this field before discussing career ambitions, something which was quite helpful as a reflective tool. A few months down the line he helped me to start my own private consultancy business, giving me a few pointers in relation to how to market myself. We then looked at my career from a financial point of view, thinking about how to make a living within this field as well as then looking at aims and objectives for the next quarter.

He has recently taken on some work abroad which has increased his workload meaning for the moment we have had to stop our conversations, however just in the short space of time we have been talking I feel it have benefitted greatly from talking to someone who has no ties to the field of Sport and Exercise Psychology. To me he has offered fresh insight and has helped me become more, what I would say, professional or business savvy. The things Carl has introduced me to/made me aware of, are things which we haven't necessarily been taught in school and definitely not on my pathway at university to becoming a sport psychologist. Unquestionably however they are things we could do with learning or discussing at an early date, particularly as a lot of my peers on the professional doctorate course have similarly set up their own consultancy businesses.

Before me and Carl started talking I probably had my blinkers on. Being so focused on finished this Doctorate course, everything I ever read or watched on TV was sport related. On reflection, this experience has highlighted to me the importance of diversity in regard to who we interact and network with. We can learn so much from other disciplines thus moving forward I am certainly going to diversify who I network with and speak to. Huntley and Kentzer (2013) and Wadsworth et al. (2021) discuss the importance of support systems for trainee practitioners, however this is related to others currently within the same field such as supervisors or peers on the same pathway. There is no reference however to the utilisation of support systems from other aspects of life, a potential avenue for future research perhaps!

Finishing the Prof Doc

Date: 15/09/2022

Recently I've begun considering my career and aspirations beyond finishing the professional doctorate course (which was surprisingly daunting). For the past 7 years my primary motivation has been to become fully qualified as a Sport and Exercise Psychologist. That has been my driving force and whilst I am enjoying the job and trying to enjoy the process, for the most part all I have dreamt of since embarking on this journey is the tangible reward of finishing and earning chartership. On reflection I would say however that I have become blinkered and have not considered what my career looks like post qualification. I have begun to question what will motivate me once I finish and what next thing is that I want to achieve? One of my values and something that is important is feeling like I am constantly growing. If I ever feel stuck or like I am stagnating then I can often feel frustrated and therefore I need to constantly challenge myself and take on difficult tasks. My journey and progression in education has allowed me to live in accordance to this so far. What I think

scared me as I began to consider my career post qualification is what I will do next to allow me to feel as a though I am still growing. Whilst I don't have the answers at the moment, I plan to begin forming an idea of what I want my career and life to look like post qualification. To do this, on top of reflecting on myself and my values and aspirations I will also talk to my supervisors, peers and close family members.

Engaging in practitioner self-care

Date: 01/04/2023

As I have discussed in earlier reflections, I feel I've been massively committed to finishing my qualification and becoming a Sport and Exercise Psychologist. I have always said to my friends and family that living in Liverpool, away from my friends and family in London, suits me as I have no distractions up here. I live with my girlfriend who is training to become a Forensic Psychologist and therefore I feel we have kept each other going on our journeys. In recent months I have taken on a lot more work, as has my girlfriend which has meant our evenings and weekends are often spent working on our laptops. I've noticed that a lot of the time, despite being in each other's presence we barely talk to each other or if we do we are not present as we are preoccupied with work. I've started to feel as though my life has become monotonous and solely centred around my identity as the Sport and Exercise Psychologist. This identity foreclosure I believe is burning me out and may be the reason I am finding myself feeling a bit moody and easily agitated. As I've consulted the literature, I'm reassured to see this is something which is commonly experienced by sport psychologists (McCormack et al., 2015). Research does discuss the importance of practitioners proactively engage in self-care (Martin et al., 2022) however it isn't something I have never considered.

In the last few days I have started to reflect on my identity again, what is important to me, and what may have led to these feelings. My initial thoughts were that in previous

years going to watch Liverpool Football Club has been my outlet and the thing I have looked forward to each weekend, however and as silly as it sounds, we've been playing rubbish this season which has taken the fun out of watching them. I then went through the role pie exercise with myself and began to list my many identities and reflected on how much time I was allocating to each (psychologist, family member, friend, boyfriend, Liverpool fan, athlete, gym-goer). Just doing this exercise has helped me realise that I invest very little effort and time into being a good boyfriend, friend to my mates back home, a good brother, son, grandson, nephew, cousin, and athlete myself. I have been so committed to achieving one of my goals that I have neglected most other, very important parts of my life. It is understandable why I've started feeling a bit moody and burnt out!

As I've reflected on this experience, whilst becoming a Sport and Exercise Psychologist remains massively important to me, to actually help me become a better practitioner it is crucial I actively engage in self-care (Martin et al., 2022) and invest in Scott as the person not just the practitioner. Us as psychologists have a responsibility to manage and maintain one's own fitness to practice (HPC, 2007) and I am glad I have encountered this difficult moment now and have been able to take a step back and reflect on it. Giving myself permission to allocate time to things I enjoy doing almost feels like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders. Previously I have felt guilty for taking a break away from work however I would certainly say I'm now more aware of the importance of this and have greater appreciation for the need to consider my own self-care and work-life balance.

Attending the BPS DSEP conference

Date: 04/12/2023

Last week I attended and presented at the annual BPS DSEP conference. This was the first conference I had ever attended and therefore going into it I wasn't sure what to expect,

but was hopeful I would come away with (a) ideas to apply to my own consultancy work, (b) ideas for research, and (c) some new connections. Despite purposefully writing this reflection a week after the conference having given myself the time to process thoughts and speak to supervisors/peers post-conference, my feelings are maintained in that for me the conference was underwhelming. I feel guilty and somewhat arrogant for saying this but everything I heard across the two days I was already aware of or had considered previously. Whilst trying not to discredit speakers as the talks were still interesting and well-presented, I didn't come away with anything that I could implement in my own practice. I also found it quite cliquy and therefore despite being someone who finds it easier to connect and build a rapport with people, conversations felt forced, transactional, and eventually I found myself not wanting to engage with people.

Using this opportunity to reflect on the above experience there are a couple of things I'd like to focus on in greater depth. First, and this being something I discuss in an earlier reflection, in my journey toward becoming a Sport and Exercise Psychologist I feel as though I became quite blinkered. On a day-to-day basis most of the individuals I interact with are either working in sport or psychology. As such, there reached a point last year where I felt my ideas and approach to working was quite conventional. I was following a similar path to my peers on the prof doc and was only reading articles which were sport psychology focused. It was only when I started talking to a peer who works as a business consultant and has no involvement in sport or psychology that I realised the value in diversifying who I interacted with. His perspective on sport and psychology was different to my own and therefore our conversations offered the opportunity to think about the work I was doing from an alternate perspective. Regarding the BPS conference and potentially explaining why I came away disappointed, I feel as a division we may have become guilty of having the

blinkers on. I want to stress that by no means was the conference bad but on reflection, and in terms of where I am at in my journey, I am looking for innovative ways to develop as a practitioner and I didn't think there was anything fresh or innovative for me to think about.

The second point I want to reflect on is me not enjoying the conversations I was having. As I try to make sense of the experience I believe some of this feeling may come from a place of insecurity. As I allude to above, I have probably been in my own bubble the past few years as I've tried to build a career in this field. I feel I have a supportive network around me and each year have gained more working opportunities which have supported my development. When starting my undergraduate degree however I remember sitting in the lecture theatre on the very first day and questioning how I was ever going to get a job when this many people in my university as well as universities across the country were studying the same degree as me. Despite that initial overwhelming across the three years of my undergraduate degree I made it my mission to gain experiences which stood me out above my peers. Comparing this to my experience at the BPS conference, it was probably the first time for a while that I have felt like a small fish in a big pond again. Seeing how many people are already qualified or training to become Sport and Exercise Psychologists was quite humbling. Whether helpful or not, it is likely I perceived those present at the conference as competition and it is unsurprising therefore that I felt uncomfortable talking to people. Having afforded myself this opportunity to reflect, attending this conference if anything has reignited the fire in my belly to continue pushing myself out of my comfort zone and seeking opportunities which stand me out amongst other practitioners.

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Consultancy

First one-to-one consultancy

Date: 30/04/2021

I have just conducted my first ever consultancy session with a client. The session took place over zoom and lasted 34 minutes. Consultancy with this individual initiated after they reached out seeking my help regarding wanting to improve the mental side of their game. Me and this individual know each other because I am working voluntarily for the club she plays for. The client did not specify one thing they wanted to work on but broadly spoke of wanting to improve their mentality. For this reason, it was agreed we would begin to start meeting weekly to try and achieve this goal.

The topic of the session was on controlling the controllables. This was decided after I spoke to my supervisor about how to structure the upcoming sessions. The client agreed with my understanding of her situation was accurate in that she has high internal expectations of herself and is a bit of a perfectionist when it comes to playing football. As a result, it is common for her to suffer from nerves prior to matches. She has the belief, to which I agree, that she is a good player however she can often lack confidence in herself, which has been heightened since leaving/being dropped from a football team in the highest division. The focus of this first session therefore first do some psychoeducation regarding why she feels nerves before a game and then how nerves can impact a sporting performance. We then discussed some examples where her nerves had impacted her performance to bring that psychoeducation to life. Next, we did a control mapping exercise where she was encouraged to think of things she can control in football and things she cannot control. This was done to reiterate the fact that football can be extremely unpredictable and that we cannot control everything in a football match. It was therefore

intended that by doing the control mapping it would help her to become more cognisant of what she should be focusing on during games and reinforce the knowledge that focusing on threat-related/irrelevant stimuli often only serve to become more nerves because as humans we like to feel in control. By focusing on things that we are in control of in football this has scope to alleviate some of the worries she may have and possibly increase her confidence and motivation going into matches.

I did not give much thought to the consultancy session until the day before due to other work responsibilities. As I began to prepare for the session the day before a growing sense of nervousness began, a common experience for trainee practitioners (Tod, 2007) which is somewhat reassuring knowing others are in the same position. This remained right up to the commencement of the session. Within the session I seemed to be able to relax a bit more which came to my surprise although there was still some tension present. Immediately after the session I felt happy and was proud of myself. Throughout my journey, having my first one-to-one consultancy was something I have always been anxious about, dreaded and seemed to have 'bigged up' in my head and so I am glad I have now done it and am proud my myself for pushing myself to do it. After the session I also felt happy because I felt the session went well.

One of the positives were that she seemed amenable, receptive and engaged in the session. This may be due to me building a relationship with the client and showing I care/am invested in her which as Keegan (2015) suggests can often be more important than the intervention itself. Obviously, we are still developing our relationship but at the minute it seems as though we are on the right lines, I feel like she can relate to me but also trusts me.

The fact the session was meaningful in the sense that it linked to something that she struggles with but also that I explicitly said how the session was tailored to her needs I think

benefitted the session. Doing so, although she may not have realised, may have also showed the client that I care and that I am listening to what she has said and her individualised needs.

Using an activity from Perry (2019) ensured the work I was doing was evidence-based but also reassured me that the session would be productive, and the client would have something tangible to take out the session. Nonetheless I do appreciate that doing an activity does not necessarily always have to occur and sometimes just having a session which is solely a conversation with the client is feasible. The session was very structured and I think had the client deviated away from the session plan and not stuck to what I would class as the topic of the session I think I would have struggled in terms of what to say where to go from there. I think I was quite conscious of keeping the conversation on topic, and this stems, I believe, from the stage I am at in my development and not feeling like I have the knowledge/ability/skillset to go in to a session with it being fully client-led and unstructured because I have a fair of not knowing what to say (Tod et al., 2011). I feel at the moment I am very limited in what I know and therefore at the moment like to structure my sessions and probably be more practitioner-led because that is where I feel most comfortable. In the future however, I would prefer to be more client-led and not have to structure my sessions so intricately but rather let the client take it as they please. At the moment I feel like my sessions are client-led in the sense that it is her needs I have identified in the needs analysis/case formulation that are forming the topic of the session but then within the session I am more practitioner-led and adopting more of an expert role and psycho-educating her/telling her what she needs to do rather than the answers coming from her.

Reflecting on this consultancy, what is most important is remembering where I am in my journey and not putting too much pressure on myself to be perfect. Yes, I want to be

good at my job but understand it will take time to reach this. I appreciate at the minute my sessions are practitioner-led because that is where I feel most comfortable however over time I will challenge myself in allowing clients to lead the session as I want to push myself out of my comfort zone.

One year with the Feds - learning the importance of relationships, but is that enough?

Date: 15/07/2021

I started volunteering at Liverpool Feds at a point in my career where I had just finished my master's course and during the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of my own competence as a practicing Sport Psychologist I didn't know what I could offer. I had deliberately chucked myself into the deep end which did petrify me, and all I had in mind was that I could perhaps deliver some workshops to the group which I had some experience of previously. At this point I had never done a work 1:1 consultancy session with anyone and was not aware of how I want to practice (a path I am still tussling with today).

Reflecting on the past year it has been difficult because I have not been able to attend many training sessions or matches due to my other work commitments. This, as well as the 3 COVID lockdowns have hindered my ability to get to know the girls. I feel I have struggled to get to know the girls and still to this day find it awkward around them, as though I am not fully integrated into the squad. Recently I have been able to attend more training sessions and matches and feel as though the more I attend the more comfortable I become around them and the more comfortable they feel around me. I am increasingly recognising how important it is to be present at matches and training sessions. I have also been playing with the girls in training which I feel has helped me get to know the girls a bit more and allow them to get to know me. I find when I haven't been training or to a match in a while I go back a few steps and it gets awkward again, so I need to make sure I keep

attending sessions. Something I did and still slightly struggle with is how I represent myself when in the team environment and almost getting the balance right between maintain a professional stance but also letting my guard down and being involved in the banter. This is something I am still navigating, and I am sure the more I am in the environment the more comfortable I will get with this, I just have to remember to maintain the balance as I do not want to impact my credibility.

In all, something this first year has taught me, something which I previously did not place as much importance on was building relationships with the athletes. I feel being present at training and in the dugout at matches, having little conversations and messaging the girls privately to check-in starts that conversation, lets them know I am willing to help and helps them feel more comfortable around me. Literature within the area confirms my experiences, consistently highlighting the importance of building relationships with athletes (Tod & Andersen, 2012; Tod et al., 2019).

When I started working at the Feds I hadn't yet read Keegan (2015) becoming a sport psychologist book. Since reading it I feel I have a better understanding of the consultancy process in terms of knowing to go through the order of intake, needs analysis, case formulation, choosing an intervention, planning the intervention, delivery and monitoring. This knowledge has without doubt helped in my approach to doing 1:1 work with some of the players. When starting with the Feds I didn't properly do an intake or needs analysis and didn't specifically ask what was expected of me which is probably why I went into the role not doing much. Next time I go into a club I am going to have conversations with different stakeholders to see what is needed to give me something tangible to work with. I will also reach out to players or do an introductory workshop to introduce myself and tell them what sport psychology is because I don't think the girls at the Feds properly know what it is and

what I can offer which may be another reason for their reluctance to reach out. Moreover, reflecting on the past year it has also become increasingly apparent that rather than doing a sole needs analysis at the start, a needs analysis is more something which needs to be utilised continuously.

Overall, the past year has definitely been a learning curve but main thing I have taken onboard is how important it is to build relationships and to facilitate that I obviously need to be present around the training/match environment. Moreover, I have also learnt the importance of continuously conducting needs analysis due to ever-changing environment that is sport.

My beliefs and values

Date: 05/06/2022

As I'm having more experience working one-to-one with athletes, I have still found myself not comfortable or happy with how I am practicing. When I first started this course, Poczwardowski, et al. (2004) concept of aligning our core beliefs and values with our preferred theoretical framework was introduced to us and therefore I conducted some reading into the area but I don't believe I truly knew what this meant or valued its importance. As a result, the manner in which I began to practice was not aligned with my core beliefs and values, something the large body of research on the topic consistently highlights the importance of in regard to one's development as a practitioner (Lindsay et al., 2007; McEwan et al., 2019).

As I discuss in my teaching diary, and now I have more applied experience, the importance of reflecting on my beliefs and how this translates into my professional practice has become increasingly apparent. Having the real-life experiences to reflect on, as well as now beginning to read in greater depth the literature surrounding practitioner development

has encouraged and allowed me to consider what my core beliefs and values are. Sitting down and dedicating time to reflect on my beliefs and values seems to have almost been a lightbulb moment as I feel I now have greater clarity in regard to how I want to practice moving forward.

I discuss in reflection 2, up to this point I had come to understand the importance of building relationships with clients (Tod et al., 2019) and was placing greater emphasis on this within my work with athletes however for some reason I still felt lost, nothing seemed to fit and I was, in some instances still struggling to build a rapport with clients, probably because I wasn't being authentic (Lindsay et al. 2007). Looking back now, it was clear that what I was missing the understanding and connection between what I was doing and why I was doing it that way. Reflecting on my values and beliefs of the world and how this then translates into practice however, I feel, addresses this.

The figure below is a pdf I have created which is a representation and outcome of the reflection process I have embarked on.



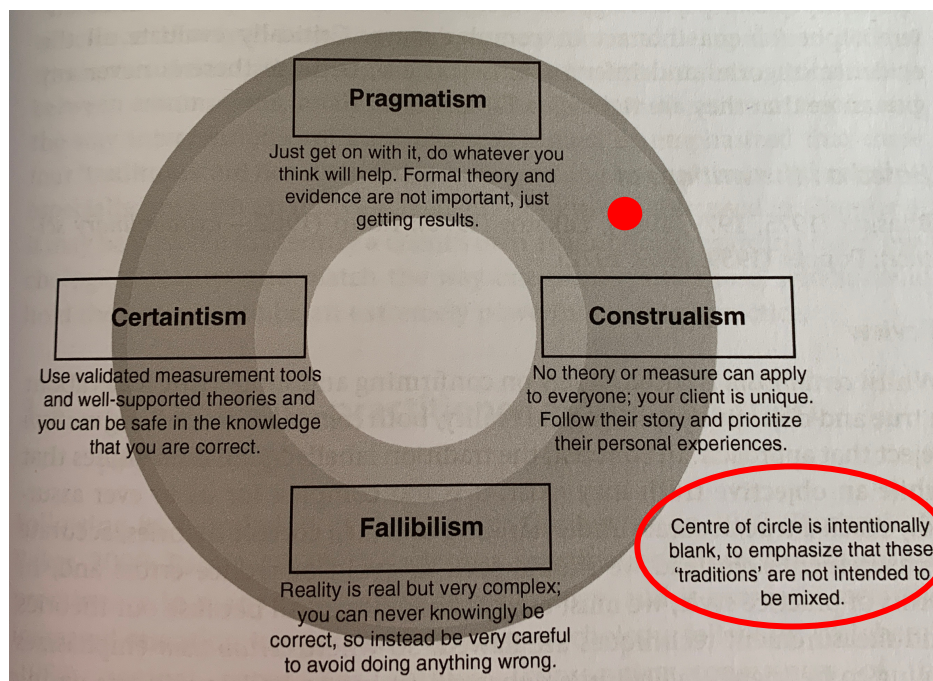
Acceptance and Commitment Therapy course

Date: 15/06/2022

Following on from my previous reflection, at the same time as me beginning to understand the importance of aligning my practice with my beliefs and values, I have also completed a course in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) which I feel couldn't have been timed any better. Prior to doing this course, I would describe my approach to consultancy as messy. I had dabbled in a bit of mental skills training, done a Cognitive Behavioural Course so tried a bit of that and then Existential Therapy caught my eye and so I conducted some reading and tried to implement some of that into my work. Whilst I had done what my tutors had suggested by throwing myself into the deep end and trying out

different approaches to see what resonated best with me, what resulted was an extremely confused, lost and anxiety ridden practitioner, something which my clients could probably pick up on. Whilst I liked some elements of all of these approaches I wasn't sure whether it was acceptable for me to use the bits I liked best from each approach merge them together to create my own method of practice and if this was even acceptable.

Having read Keegan (2015) at the start of this Professional Doctorate course I would have liked to have positioned myself purely as a construalist. Again, with more experience more in the applied field came with it the awareness that this isn't always feasible in every context. As the red dot in picture below demonstrates, I would now place myself somewhere in between construalist and pragmatist.



Parallel to Keegan (2015) explanation of construalism, I believe reality is subjective and knowledge is co-constructed. Moreover, I prefer to be client-led, acknowledging clients as experts of their own lives and viewing consultancy as collaborative as I work alongside

them to navigate their difficulty (Tod et al., 2020). However, and as I mention previously, I am also probably quite eclectic in my work in that I appreciate at times I might have to flex my approach (Wadsworth et al., 2021), depending on the needs of the client and the context we are situated, thus making me more pragmatic. In the book however, Keegan mentions that “these traditions are not intended to be mixed”. Now I have a bit more experience (albeit still not a lot), I disagree with Keegan on this point and so too does an experienced practitioner in Wadsworth et al. (2021):

“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...”

As a trainee I know I can be caught up in wanting to do what is right and sometimes being unsure of what is acceptable in regard to the practice of sport psychology. The practitioner in the above excerpt however describes how it is ok to flex or draw upon different approaches to meet the needs of the client or context. This is reassuring for me as in reading Keegan (2015), I got the sense adopting a ‘pragmatic’ approach was something that is looked down upon.

Principally, this is what ACT does through its borrowing from different theories and traditions. Therefore, going back to the start of this reflection, the ACT course has cleared a lot of things up in my head, the framework makes sense to me and I feel it sits comfortably with how I want to practice. Like my own beliefs, ACT places emphasis on building a

relationship with clients, focusing on a holistic approach to supporting individuals, trying to understand the world from their perspective, working collaboratively and supporting them to grow (Hayes, 2004). The framework is also pragmatic in that sense that encourages practitioners to do what works, again opposing the notion Keegan (2015) puts forward that construalism and pragmatism do not overlap. On reflection, using ACT in my work with athletes moving forward, I feel, will help me to begin practicing authentically, thus supporting me on my journey toward individuation as a practitioner (Tod et al., 2020).

Working with and through parents and coaches

Date: 14/07/2022

At Lancashire I am currently on a 30-day contract (equating roughly to one day a week during pre-season and the competitive season. It goes without saying that I am eager for my work to have an impact at the club, however with my contact time being limited and therefore my ability to build a good rapport with the athletes constrained, I began giving thought to how else I may want to approach my work to maximise the impact I was having.

Recently I was fortunate to have a conversation with a Sport Psychologist currently working at a Premier League football club. In brief, he revealed how in most part his time is spent working alongside the coaches and backroom staff, supporting them to make their practice psychologically informed and therefore working through the staff to impact the players rather than working directly with the players. Whilst I had heard of this way of working previously, fortunately this conversation probably came at the right time in regard to my current situation and was somewhat a lightbulb moment. Previously when learning about this approach I was not conducting any applied work myself, however now being in an applied context I could connect it to directly to what I was doing and begin to consider whether this approach would be feasible at Lancashire.

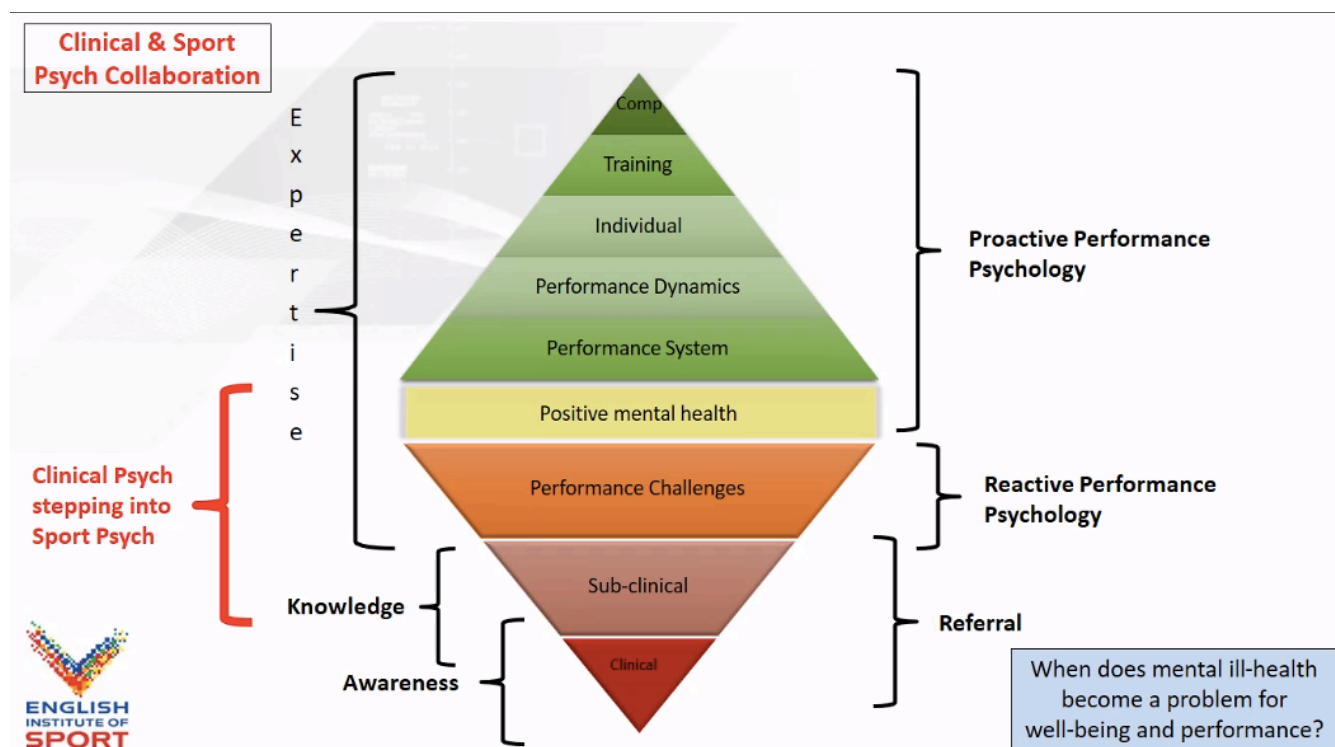
It is plausible to suggest working through the parents/coaches at Lancashire may help to me create a greater impact on the athletes as after all they spend more time with them day-to-day than I am. An issue this does raise however is the topic Eubank et al. (2014) discuss as organisational demands placed on us as applied practitioners. When working with organisations we are often employed to perform certain activities and going against that can be difficult and for myself as a trainee quite daunting. Nonetheless, I plan to speak to the senior psychologist and other relevant stakeholders at Lancashire and put forward the idea of devoting more time to working with and through parents and coaches.

Models of practice

Date: 30/08/2022

In previous reflections I considered how I want to practice and felt as though Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) as a theoretical framework aligned well with my beliefs and values. I then discussed how I may need to flex my approach depending on the needs of clients and the context in which I am situated. Recently in my work at Lancashire Cricket Club I have begun to feel as though ACT may not be a suitable model of practice to draw upon within this context. A lot of the conversations I am having with athletes are brief and are held in and around the training and match environment (on the side of the pitches/changing rooms). It may be due to my own inexperience working through an ACT perspective, however I just haven't felt this model of practice is workable in this context I am working.

As I reflected on this discomfort I was experiencing I thought of the following image which I was introduced to me on one of my CPD sessions at LJMU:



My interpretation of this image is that whilst we need to be cognisant of when to refer clients to Clinical Psychologists, as Sport/Performance Psychologists our work can either be proactive or reactive. Relating this to my own work, what occurred to me is that perhaps ACT is better suited to the reactive, 'Performance Challenges' side of things. In my work at Lancashire Cricket Club however, ACT is not workable at the minute and therefore I may need to draw upon another model of practice to better inform my work and generate more of an impact. In consideration therefore of what may be more workable, I have begun to look into Solution Focused Brief Therapy. Whilst I have conducted some reading into this previously, more recently I have delved into the literature a bit more. Reading Høigaard and Johansen (2004), I am aware this is a model of practice which can be useful in short

conversations to help individuals draw upon their own strengths and guide their behaviour. Moreover, in line with my core beliefs, this method of practice also seeks to help individual build an awareness of their current situation which can then serve to promote growth (Bannink, 2007). My aim is to be as client-led in my approach and to be a facilitator of growth rather than adopting an expert position. Through its use of questioning, I feel SBFT will help me to achieve this and my plan moving forward is to therefore conduct some training in this approach.

Use of questions to facilitate reflection and self-awareness

Date: 27/09/2022

I have been reflecting on a consultancy session I had with an athlete today and despite feeling as though I am becoming more confident as a practitioner, there are still times where I feel like I'm not challenging my clients enough within sessions. I've noticed my sessions becoming more like a psychoeducation session. Despite me wanting to be client-led I have noticed my natural tendency is to adopt the position of an 'expert' and be more directive with clients which I feel is then hindering their opportunity to develop.

To illustrate this point in the session today my client discussed how in the last few games he has "lost his head" during games which has led to him playing poorly, back chatting the referee and subsequently getting sent off/ yellow carded. The individual also spoke about being a bit of a perfectionist, putting pressure on himself to play well and seems to be creating rules for himself by saying he cannot make a bad pass/tackle/header. I found myself formulating as he was talking and could make the link between him imposing perfectionist performance expectations/rules onto himself and then becoming frustrated when this doesn't go to plan in games. Because I could make this link, I then reflected that

back to him to which he agreed was happening. Despite the client agreeing, me coming up with the answer for him didn't sit right with me.

As I've reflected on this and the uncomfortable feeling I had, I think I would have preferred to help my client realise this themselves rather than me telling them. Similar to an experience Lindsay et al. (2007) discuss in regard to practicing authentically, my aim as a practitioner is to be client-led and to try and help build an individual's self-awareness as in doing so individuals are able to grow and develop (Chow & Luzzi, 2019). The example is evidence of me moving away from that. Through the clever use of questioning, if I were able to get him to realise this and come up with the link between his thoughts and its impact on his feelings and behaviour during a game I feel I would have empowered him and helped to develop his self-awareness more so than me just giving him the answer or opinion in regard to his situation. When I've done this in the past, I have found client's respond better and it is almost enlightening when they come up with answers to their difficulties themselves. My aim therefore is to be more consistent in adopting more of a guided discovery approach to my sessions. Rather than teaching clients, I want to be someone who helps them reflect on their thoughts and/or behaviours and find their own solutions.

One of my biggest challenges however, is that reflecting on the conversation I had with the client today, I am struggling even now to think about what questions I would have asked the client. Knowing what questions to ask is a challenge faced by a number of applied practitioners (Padesky, 1993), particularly in the early stages of their career. Reading Padesky (1993) work has also helped me understand how structured and directive I actually am at times with clients. I say I want to be client-led and that I adopt the view that reality is subjective and multiple however too often I am keen to lead them to my definition of the problem is. If I truly want to be client-led and adopt a guided discovery approach, I need to

adopt a position of curiosity, seeking to understand their reality and not getting caught up me asking what I feel are the 'right questions'. I think I also need to relax more!

Whilst this reflection has felt extremely messy to write, it has been helpful to consider how I am practicing and whether this is truly aligning with how I want to practice. reading this literature and giving thought to how I want to practice moving forward has helped. My plan moving forward is certainly to try and relax a bit more in sessions but also practice asking more questions about client's experiences. As I discuss early, I need to remind myself that I am not a teacher, but rather by reflecting client responses and asking questions, me and the client will go on a journey of discovery together. We'll see where we end up!

Embracing the messiness

Date: 08/12/2022

In the previous reflection I discussed my tendency to sometimes become too directive in my sessions with clients despite wanting to be client-led. Moving forward I wanted to try and relax going in sessions and remind myself we were on a pathway of discovery. Through how I interact with the client my aim is to help the client become more self-aware and understanding of their own situations.

Over the past couple of months I have been putting this into practice and it is only when reflecting on my sessions recently that I've realised how far I have come as a practitioner. In the past, to ease my nerves before a consultancy session I would try to plan for sessions and prepare some questions to ask if I get stuck. As I discuss in my first ever reflection in this portfolio, allowing my sessions to be unstructured filled me with dread. Despite wanting to be client-led this ultimately was limiting my ability to achieve such aims. In a recent session with a client I purposely allowed the session to be unstructured. I went in

with no pre-prepared questions and allowed the client to take our conversation in any direction she liked (and she took it in many) to see how I would cope.

To my surprise I felt comfortable in the session. Taking the pressure off myself and not feeling as though I have to give an answer or something tangible for clients to go away with has really helped me. I've noticed the voice in my head which is trying to listen to the client whilst simultaneously thinking of the next thing to say is quietening down. I found it a lot easier to focus on what she had to say. Admittedly there are times where sometimes I reply too quick and would benefit from allowing some silence to help with reflection however on the whole how I behaved as a practitioner sat a lot better with me in this session in comparison to the session I discussed in reflection seven. I asked for some feedback from the client and asked how she found the session to which she said it was useful. She said it helped her process her thoughts as she had never thought about what we had spoken about in that way. It appeared just hearing herself speak her thoughts helped her make sense of her situation (without needing me to come to the conclusion for her). This felt great and I would say I enjoyed embracing the messiness of our conversation. I acknowledge there may be times with different clients where they ask for me provide some direction however the last few months have definitely taught me a lot about how I prefer to work.

As Wadsworth et al. (2021) would describe, it appears reflection seven was a critical moment in my development. Highlighting the importance of reflecting, being able to reflect on that experience and the uncomfortable feelings I had at the time has helped developed my own self-awareness and helped me to understand and begin demonstrating authenticity in my practice (Friesen & Orlick, 2010).

A year on from Reflection 5: Working with and through parents and coaches

Date: 15/07/2023

It has been one year since my reflection after talking to a fellow sport psychologist who discussed his work at a Premier League club. He told me how he spent most of his time working with coaches and the backroom staff, something which was a bit of a lightbulb moment as I felt I was struggling to have an impact in my work at Lancashire County Cricket Club.

In the time that passed I began reading the works of Fletcher and Wagstaff (2009) for example who write about sport psychologists adopting a top-down rather than bottom-up approach when working in organisations. At Lancashire we were bought in to work with the players however in that first year I remember feeling frustrated and as though we weren't having as much impact as we could be. I began thinking about how we could impact the environment around the athlete. What made it difficult is that there doesn't seem to be a desire on the coaches or broader support teams behalf to work with me to inform their practice, something I'm aware a number of sport psychologists encounter (McDougall et al., 2015). This led to me having to reflect on my role and how I want to work as a psychologist. I debated whether it was up to me to open up the channels of communication and whether I should just carry on working with the players. As an early career practitioner this did cause some anxiety and make me question how good I was at my job. The easy option would have been to carry on just working with the players however I knew something needed to change.

I decided to reach out to the coaches and discuss my reflections on the first season. I was honest in our challenges to engage the players in psychology and discussed my findings from the research in that athletes don't exist in a vacuum and are influenced by all of the people around them. This tested my ability to disseminate knowledge to key stakeholders in a manner that they could understand (a key role 4 competency). To my surprise this was

something they agreed with, they related this to parents and discussed the challenges they faced with parents who often got too involved in regard to the young players development. This interested me as across this season I had some interesting conversations with parents regarding them not knowing how best to support their children. Aware of the literature surrounding the importance of coaches, parents and athletes being on the same page in regard to talent development (Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005), I put forward the idea of us as psychologists working closer with the parents in the new season. That was received well and is what we have done this season.

To do this I have made an effort to spend more time getting to know and talking to the parents during practice sessions and matches. We also delivered a short workshop to parents of all age groups (see Reflection 4 in Dissemination Reflective Diary) outlining who we were, how we can help them and their children and what our plan was moving forward. This seemed to land well. I've noticed the parents have had so many questions they'd like answering but often they aren't given the opportunity to air them. They all want to help their children but are often unaware of how to help and what the club expects from them as parents. Across this season I've spent a lot of time having brief conversations with parents offering support in regard to how they can help their children across the pathway. Now we have built relationships with parents and have made ourselves accessible I have also had a number of them contact me to see if I can offer psychological support to their children. Now I think of it, it was probably naïve of us to think the young individuals would reach out to us themselves if they would like support. Having parents on side however has opened doors for us as it has meant we can work through parents to impact and support the young individuals but also the parents are giving us the opportunity to work directly with the players. Personally, I've felt a lot more involved this season, I feel people have seen the value in

having us psychologists around and subsequently have afforded ourselves the opportunity to have a greater impact on the young individuals.

In terms of takeaways and reflections from this period, I think first of all it would have been easy for me a year ago to carry on trying to work just with the players. However, by ignoring the self-doubt and pushing myself to keep improving my work hopefully now we are seeing some of the benefits of this. This example has also shown me the value in networking with other sport psychologists to see how they are working as well as consulting the literature to consider how else to have greater impact on my environments. Whilst we are now building some good relationships with the parents, I feel there is also scope to strengthen our relationships with coaches and other members of the multi-disciplinary team. My plan is to begin considering how else we can develop our service next season, whilst still being cognisant of constraints we are facing due to only being employed to work with the club once a week. In a years' time I plan to reflect on my progress with the club again.

The influences of the environment on one's recovery from injury

Date: 20/07/2023

I have recently began supporting a rugby player who is coming to the end of his rehabilitation from an ACL injury. In the last few months he has signed a professional rugby contract meaning he is now training with the senior players. The junior-senior transition is one of the hardest transitions young athletes will have to make (Stambulova et al., 2009) and so a lot of my work with him so far has been helping him to plan for the next year and consider the challenges he is likely to envisage and trying to prepare him for them before they happen. I was contacted by a coach as concerns have been raised by staff in regard to how much effort this athlete is putting into his gym work. Aware of the need for

stakeholders to be aligned when supporting athlete's through rehab (Arvinen-Barrow & Clement, 2017) I arranged a meeting with the player, physio and S&C coach to discuss the situation and try to formulate a plan moving forward in regard to how support the athlete. What struck me in this conversation was how the athlete discussed the impact other people were having on him in regard to his recovery, despite these individuals having no involvement in his rehab at all.

A number of psychosocial models have been produced to try and explain how athletes respond psychologically to injury, with Wiese-Bjornstal et al. (1998) framework being acknowledged as one of the most comprehensive (Goddard et al., 2021). Whilst I'm aware of the individual factors such as one's perception of the injury and coping strategies which influence their recovery outcomes, until this conversation with the athlete I had never really considered how big an impact the situational factors can have on one's adherence to recovery.

Drew et al. (2019) discuss the importance of athletes receiving social support from coaches, team-mates and sport science staff as they transition into senior sport. At this rugby club however it is common for the senior athletes to give the young athletes a hard time in their first year as they transition into the elite environment. From my conversations with people in the club, I am aware this isn't done to be horrible but rather to test the young athlete's resolve, see how they react when put under pressure and ultimately assess whether they have got what it takes to play at the elite level. This is something the young athlete I have been working with has experienced and due to being injured at the time of signing his professional contract he has felt this has put a bigger target on his back. Comments from players along the lines of "you're not on that physio bed again are you" and being consistently asked by coaching staff when he is going to be available and back playing

he feels is putting more pressure on him. He feels he is struggling to manage expectations and how he is perceived by his team-mates and coaches. He wants to make a good impression and as he is now operating in a performance environment, needs to be back playing and performing in order to earn another contract. This has meant he has at times he has got involved in contact training despite feeling pain in his knee but hasn't said anything to the staff because he wants to prove himself and doesn't want to be taken out of training. Ultimately however this is having a negative impact on his recovery as he is at risk of injuring himself further.

After hearing the player discuss this and shed light on his interactions with senior players and staff, like I said at the start of this reflection it made me realise just how much an impact the culture and the individuals can impact an athlete's rehabilitation (Drew et al., 2019). From the outside, when thinking about an athlete recovering from injury I know I only previously considered the importance of the athlete sticking to the recovery plan designed by the physios and S&C coaches. Working with an athlete who is going through it however, you realise the impact the whole environment has on them, their adherence to the recovery programme and ultimately their recovery outcomes. It is not just about simply sticking to the rehab plan but rather athlete's also have to navigate the complex of milieu of the social environment. This is something I will certainly consider when working to support injured athletes moving forward.

Using a solution-focused approaches with a young athlete

Date: 29/07/2023

Given the brief encounters I often have with athletes in and around the training and match environment (Keegan, 2015), in reflection 6 I mentioned wanting to learn more about solution-focused brief therapy (SBFT) and begin integrating it into my practice. Since then I

bought an introductory SFBT online course and only in the last few months have I got around to completing it. A lot of what I learnt on the course sits well with how I want to practice in regard to working collaboratively with clients and supporting them to use their own strengths to elicit behaviour change (Bannink, 2007). Those who formed the approach also make a good point about not delving too deeply in the client's history or defining what the problem is, as often the development of a solution is not necessarily related to the problem (de Shazer, 1985). This is something which goes against a lot of what I have been taught in my training where we are encouraged to conduct thorough intake and needs analysis (Keegan, 2015). As the course tutor says, and I know from my own experience, often we can get caught up in regard to what the problem is. In SFBT however, our focus is more future orientated and therefore much of the conversations centres on what the client may begin to do differently rather than what has got them to this point.

In one of my interactions with a young cricket player recently I decided to draw upon SFBT and felt it was extremely useful. For context, the client's father and coach reached out to me because they have noticed a dip in the young athlete's recent performances. The athlete was open to talk to me and agreed it may be useful if we had a chat because he has been getting extremely frustrated while bowling recently. He said he has high expectations of himself and is getting annoyed because things haven't been going his way. During matches he says he often blames himself even if a fielder drops a catch or makes a misfield (which are not his fault). As a result of his frustrations during games he described himself as becoming increasingly extremely erratic and says as a result he often starts trying to bowl really quickly which only makes him perform even worse and become even more frustrated. Rather than delving too deeply into this I simply asked how he would like to feel when he's bowling instead of feeling frustrated. He said he would prefer to keep calm. I asked how he

would keep himself calm and he struggled to answer. As a result, I used the 'exceptions question' and asked if there has ever been a time where he has felt calm whilst bowling. He said at the start of the over in most games he feels calm. I asked what he does or did in those moments to keep calm and he said he talks to himself and tells himself where he wants to bowl. He also said he imagines the bowl in his head before doing it. I asked what stops him from doing this consistently and he said as the overs or games passes or as things begin going against him he often forgets to do it and that's when he starts getting frustrated. As he started explaining this I could see a smirk begin to emerge on his face. I felt he had come to the solution himself and so I asked what our plan might be moving forward. We agreed it may be useful if he was more to be more consistent in his strategies and should try using self-talk and visualisation throughout the games. I have not spoken to the athlete again since this conversation however when I saw his coach recently he said young athlete's performances have massively improved.

Despite this conversation only lasting around 20 minutes, I came away from the conversation feeling extremely positive. In the past I probably would have explored his issue in greater depth and may have put myself at risk of over complicating the problem. Simply orientating the client towards solutions and draw upon his own resources got us moving on the right path without me telling him what to do and there being resistance (Bannink, 2007). I appreciate at times and with some clients it may not always be this easy and I may have to work in alternative ways to support my clients however this example has given me confidence in the use of SFBT in my consultancy work in sport.

Flexing my approach

Date: 25/09/2023

In my first year on the Doctorate programme we had a Spotlight session in which we developed our own Spotlight profiles. As part of the first activity, we were given eight cards with adjectives on and were asked to keep the cards which we felt best described ourselves and swap the cards with other people in the room that we felt best described them. We also had to explain to them why we were giving them that specific card. During the activity, one of my tutors gave me a card which had the word 'Cautious/Concerned' on it. As someone I know but haven't worked too closely with, he perceived me from the outside as someone who doesn't go all guns blazing into tasks but perhaps perceives threat and therefore is a bit more reserved/meticulous and someone who likes to weigh up their options first. Initially I was quite shocked at this, particularly as I feel I am someone who is quite extroverted and, in some respects, quite impulsive. I have also never noticed this in myself. That said it was only after gaining more experience working with athletes and in different sporting organisations that I realised what he meant. Despite giving me the card and being able to spin it so that being cautious/concerned can be a good characteristic to have in some contexts, I have come to realise that he was right in what he said but that in some respects it is actually holding me back.

In the spotlight session we spoke about the profile measuring Mindset and Behavioural Style 'Preferences'. Therefore, rather than these being fixed, and whilst I came out as 'Expressively Optimistic' (yellow) which means I am someone who is sociable and likes to share ideas with others, there are times where it is important I recognise in certain contexts I need to flex my approach and be more forceful (red) or logical (blue) in my approach in order to be effective or successful. As a practitioner I aim to be client-led and seek to work alongside clients or organisations in order to facilitate growth. Where I've encountered some difficulty however is that some athletes or sports teams don't know what

they want or areas where they need to develop. As a result, what has often happened is that I have waited for athletes or coaches to tell me what they want to work on or target but that has never happened. I had become so 'concerned' in wanting to be client-led that often I ended up not doing much at all because people haven't been coming to me for support and telling me what to do. At times this led to me feeling quite useless and questioning how good I am as a practitioner. I now recognise that whilst wanting to practice authentically, at times I need to flex how I practice depending on the needs of the clients and the contexts in which I am situated (Wadsworth et al., 2021).

Since recognising this last year, I feel I have been able to take a number of positive steps as rather than being reactive and letting the environment or individual dictate what I do, I have become more proactive in my approach. In my work with the Women's first team at Sale Sharks and the academy at Lancashire County Cricket Club, rather than asking for permission to do certain workshops or projects, I have gone directly to the manager/coaches and told them what I am going to do, why I'm going to do it and when I'm going to do it. I appreciate this may not be the best approach in all contexts however at these two organisations where I have been given a lot of autonomy, I recognise I need to drive the projects and psych delivery and push for things to happen. I am the first (trainee) Sport Psychologist these teams have worked with and therefore we are still figuring out how psychology is best embedded into their programmes. Whilst I still their input, I appreciate coaches/managers are busy and have their own jobs to think about, and therefore I need to be more proactive in driving the psychology delivery. Over the last few months I would say I have been pushing myself out of my comfort zone and in line with the spotlight profiles have recognised I need to tap into a 'forceful' (red) behavioural style a lot more. By virtue of doing so, I do feel I am having greater impact in my role. Players, coaches, and managers now

seem to have a clearer idea of how I can support them and as a result I am now being included in more MDT meetings which is great, and more players are reaching out to me for support.

It is worthy to note that whilst I recognise this way of working may not come naturally to me and slightly deviates from my natural preferences in regard to how I want to behave as a practitioner, being able to flex your approach depending on the situation that presents is an important skill to have as a practitioner (Wadsworth et al., 2021). Furthermore, what it is important to me at present is feeling as though I am being effective in my role. As Lindsay et al. (2007) discuss, I recognise that at some point in the future I may experience some discomfort from practicing in a manner which is not completely aligned with my beliefs and values and therefore when more experienced I may seek working opportunities which afford me the opportunity to work more authentically. As I am seeking to build a career in Sport and Exercise Psychology however, I also recognise it is important to gain experienced in an array of contexts and as I am doing here, reflect on how I like and do not like working as a practitioner.

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Research

What do I want from my research?

Date: 14/10/2021

A reflection before I start the research project with Warrington Youth Rowing Club. I do not want this research to be a pointless exercise and therefore need to consider beforehand how I want the research to align with my broader career goals and ambitions. In terms of where I want to be looking forward a year or two down the line, I am hoping to secure a role in a professional football academy working with athletes from the Foundation Phase up to the Professional Development Phase. My task is to therefore think about how I can use this research project 1) to develop a knowledge base that will aid me in a role within an Academy and 2) make sure the work is applicable or has some relevance to what I would be expected to do in a role in an academy. Knowing this I have looked at 3 job descriptions I have seen and saved for Academy Psychologist roles at Portsmouth FC, Sunderland AFC and Arsenal FC. As outlined in their Key Role and Responsibilities section and therefore some of the work I would be expected to if given the role would be to:

Portsmouth

- *Work collaboratively with multi-disciplinary staff members to shape and influence procedures that support the holistic development of the player*
- *Deliver a full life-skills programme – age appropriate for each phase centred around the development of intelligent players who are problem solvers and decision makers*

Sunderland

- *Deliver a structured programme of Sport Psychology workshops to aid the psychological development of young Academy players*

- *Helping coaches integrate psychological principles into their coaching sessions and by being an active part of on field session delivery*

Arsenal

- *Work to promote the welfare and well-being of the person (player, coach & practitioner) within the academy system*
- *Work closely with coaches and support staff to practically develop resilience and well-being within the training environment to lead to enhanced performance both on and off the field*
- *To support, and help drive an agenda of personal development and contribute to a culture of learning within the football environment*
- *Participate in ad hoc Academy and First Team projects and or applied research across the organisation as appropriate*
- *To deliver a high-quality People Development Programme (psychology, personal development, player care & life skills) at Hale End, to support the development and resilience of our current & future Arsenal players regardless of their sporting success*

Looking at job descriptions, there is clear onus placed on the Psychologist from clubs to not only support performance outcomes but more broadly the young athlete's holistic well-being. The clubs use words such as resilience, culture of learning, personal development, life skills, people development program, intelligent players, problem solvers, decision makers, which are all characteristics the Warrington Rowing Project aims to help develop in the students. Moreover, the clubs also want to me to conduct my own research, something hopefully I can evidence through doing this research paper.

I therefore can try to use this research to evaluate how the current club (Warrington Rowing Club), albeit in a different sport, are trying to achieve similar goals by supporting the

short-, medium- and long-term physical, psychological and social-cultural development of young children. By evaluating the current project and by interviewing coaches, school stakeholders and the students themselves hopefully I am able to grasp what works in achieving this, what perhaps hasn't worked and where improvements can be made to hopefully achieve these intended outcomes. I can then apply this to work in an academy setting.

At the minute this is an extremely broad area to research and I am aware I can get a couple of research papers out of this whole project and then metaphorically speaking pass on the baton to another Prof Doc student when I finish or next year to carry on the research. I think my next task is to therefore narrow it down so I am specifically focusing on one or two things or outcomes? In turn this will help in guiding my interview questions. A title for my first paper could be for example 'A year on the water', looking at how the project has gone in its first year, what things they have done and again evaluating what went well, what didn't and where improvements can be made. But also looking at the physical, psychological and socio-cultural developments in the first year if any?

More specifically perhaps, do I want to focus solely on the development of psychological characteristics e.g. resilience, persistence, confidence, concentration or do I want to look at the development of life/social-cultural skills such as leadership/team-work, communication, respect? By doing so however, does that fit into what Warrington Rowing Club want to get out of the project and research. If not, am I being selfish in doing so?

Amidst other recommendations, Gould and Carson (2008) identify a need to do more longitudinal studies, conduct studies that focus on providing an explanation into the life skill development and sport participation link (how these programmes work), an examination into the transferability of life skills (how the skills can be applied to different areas) and examination research that actually focuses on whether they actually work to justify and

enable further funding. Can my research do any of this. My plan is to speak to David Tod the LIMU lead for the project to see if he has any other ideas.

Working alongside my supervisor

Date: 19/12/2021

Over this first year being involved in research at Warrington Rowing Club it has been helpful to work under the supervision of my supervisor David Tod. Up to this point the research I had conducted was part of my undergraduate and masters' dissertations and therefore it was up to me to recruit participants etc. Being part of this research project however, which is of course on a bigger scale, it has eye opening to see all the 'nitty gritty' behind the scenes work which needs to happen when organising and initiating a research project.

The things I have found useful to observe has been how he communicates with the different clients and stakeholders to try and understand what they want from us and how we can meet their needs. Also, how he organises and hosts meetings, how he regularly sends emails to keep us all in the loop and up to date in regard to where we are up to with the project. These are all things which go on in the background of a research project but things which I hadn't been exposed to before and therefore hadn't considered why these elements are important to ensure the project progresses.

Moving forward I am going to try and take it upon myself to be more proactive in relation to my involvement in the research project, perhaps emailing stakeholders myself and trying to get the wheels in motion in regard to the project rather than relying on David solely to plan and arrange everything.

Connecting my research to my story and my future goals

Date: 18/12/2022

In my first reflection I considered what type of research I wanted to do and discussed wanting to connect this with my broader aims and ambitions (see Reflection 1). At the time however I was stuck as to what to focus the research on but knew I wanted it to help me secure paid work within a youth sport environment.

As I reflect now and read that passage back, I feel in the time that has passed on my professional doctorate journey I have given a lot more thought to why I wanted to become a Sport and Exercise Psychologist in the first place and can now understand what has driven me to want to work in an elite academy setting. Reflecting on this has helped develop my own self-awareness and piece together my own story. In short, my dream as a child was to become a professional football player however what stopped me from achieving such aims (I believe) was the psychological side of my game. I used to put a lot of pressure on myself to play well and would become extremely nervous before games, which ultimately impacted my performance. In the end I fell out of love with playing and quit. With this understanding I feel my aims to work in youth sport are driven by a motivation to help young individuals who may be experiencing something similar to me. Conducting research in the area of youth development in sport therefore not only benefits me on a personal level to greater understand my own experience but also from a professional point of view as I will have a greater understanding when considering how to support young athletes as an applied practitioner.

Fast forward just over 12 months and I have now completed my first research paper where we have sought to understand what else sport offers young individuals beyond teaching the technical skills of a sport. We researched if and how sport can be used as a vehicle to teach life skills such as communication, leadership, and resilience and whether these skills can be used in contexts away from the sport itself. I feel this is an important area

to research considering the number of young individuals who participate in sport but how few actually make it to the elite level (Webb et al., 2020). I know from my own experience when I quit playing football and knew my dreams of becoming a pro were not going to be realised I questioned what the point of playing for 13 years was. It was only until after that I realised how much the sport gave me in terms of these life skills and therefore I am keen to drive this and maximise what young individuals are getting out of participating in sport.

Inspired by a paper I read by Côté and Hancock (2016), having now completed a paper which has focused on participation and personal development outcomes of sporting involvement, my aim for my next piece of research is to focus on the performance side of sport. Having not made it to the elite level myself, I want to understand in greater depth what it takes to progress through a talent development pathway and become an elite athlete. I am sure developing my understanding of this area and questioning how to support athletes on this journey will further support my aims of working with elite youth sport. Given how competitive it is to secure paid work in sport psychology, over time if I continue conducting research in areas on youth development I feel this will only benefit me in my career goals. My next step is to begin planning the next piece of research.

Doing a systematic review

Date: 19/06/2023

Whilst I wouldn't say it has been the most enjoyable experience, as I reflect on my journey of completing the systematic review, I feel the whole process has contributed massively to my development as an academic. As a researcher and applied practitioner, before completing this work it would be rare when reading a journal article that I would go out of my way to judge the quality of the work. As a result, when initially attempting to examine the research designs/data collection and analysis methods of my studies, I really

struggled be critical. Beyond identifying whether studies had reported certain characteristics or not, I was unsure how to for example determine whether authors had aligned with philosophical assumptions or not, whether retrospective or prospective designs were better and inductive or deductive analysis was better? These were questions I had never considered before, not even when conducting my own research and they therefore highlighted a gap in my own knowledge. I ended up having a number of conversations with my supervisor who was massively helpful. Rather than giving me the answer directly, I appreciated him guiding me toward literature to go away and read which would eventually answer my questions. Although frustrating at times, and despite the amount of holes I got myself into after finding more and more literature around research paradigms to read, I preferred my supervisor approaching supervision in this way as I learnt so much more than I would have done if he would have simply told me the answers.

As I said previously, the questions I began asking when analysing my studies, I had never asked myself when doing my own research. For this reason, the systematic review I feel will massively help me when designing and writing up my own studies in the future. As I began critiquing papers for only conducting interviews when trying to understand lived experience or another due to researchers not being reflective enough in regard to how their own positioning within the research process influenced subsequent findings I almost felt a bit of a hypocrite. I know for certain that a number of the elements of studies I began picking up on and criticising them for, I was not doing myself when conducting research. For this reason, not only has the systematic review helped me with regards to my ability to critique and pick up on the limitations of other studies, I feel having this understanding of what researchers should consider and include in their research will only benefit me moving forward.

Using my research to inform my applied work at Sale

Date: 02/08/2023

Having now completed both my first empirical paper and systematic review, I feel now is a good time to reflect on my research journey so far. In my first few reflections I mention my aim to use my research to (a) help me secure paid work in youth sport settings and (b) inform my applied practice. As I write this reflection I feel extremely fortunate to be working with youth athletes at both Lancashire County Cricket Club and Sale Sharks which are pathways seeking to help develop talented young athletes into elite athletes.

Conducting my own research, which across both studies has focused on each of Côté and Hancock's (2016) 3P's (performance, participation and personal development), has massively helped to inform my own practice as I seek to provide psychological support to the young athletes at both of these clubs. To illustrate this, with both clubs predominantly focusing on developing elite athletes, my systematic review whereby I looked at perceptions of talent development pathways made me more aware of (a) the challenges young athletes face across their journey and (b) the skills they need to develop to better their chances of overcoming obstacles and growing from such experiences. With this knowledge, I have been able to create sessions and have conversations with the young athletes which have been centred upon helping them to develop psycho-behavioural skills which are seen as crucial helping them navigate challenging experiences (MacNamara et al., 2010).

Admittedly, in the settings I work in there isn't as much focus on how sport teaches life skills and develops the person away from the athlete (which is the focus of my first research paper). Given my inexperience as a practitioner, I don't think at the moment I would be confident enough to approach stakeholders and have a conversation around trying to change this. As Chandler et al. (2016) discuss, this is an example of me struggling to

negotiate organisational challenges applied psychologists are often subjected to. Over time however, and as I gain greater credibility in the organisations, my aim is to try and create environments where as organisations we focus on supporting and developing the person as well as elite athletes. On the whole nonetheless, it feels great to be able to conduct research and use a lot of the knowledge I am gaining to inform my own practice.

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Dissemination

Completing the 3i's teaching course

Date: 03/11/2021

I recently completed the 3i's course at Liverpool John Moores University, not knowing what to expect but recognising it was a good CPD opportunity and would potentially open doors for me to teach in higher education if I wanted.

On reflection I really enjoyed the course and as I began to teach more, I found myself overcoming the initial nerves commonly experienced by early career educators (Hayes, 2003) and actually enjoying the experience and feeling comfortable in the role. As a result, I have begun to consider whether a lecturing role would be feasible or suitable as a career. From a personal point of view, this role will provide me the financial assurances I need as I look to buy my first house and start a family, something I can often get caught up in worrying about. At the professional level, this role would force me stay up to date with current knowledge in the discipline which would only help to support me in my consultancy work. As an individual who finds helping others gratifying, supporting the next generation of students I feel fits in with what is important to me as a person and would give me the satisfaction and fulfilment I want in my career. Nonetheless, what is important to me is continuing applied work as this is the reason I wanted to pursue this career to begin with. Also, I feel like I could draw upon this work to inform my teaching sessions and as a student myself, I feel, it is important to be taught by individuals who have experience and/or currently operating within the relevant discipline. Moving forward an option may therefore be to try and secure some paid work lecturing, perhaps not full-time as well as managing my time doing some of my own private consultancy with clubs or individuals.

Beginning work at Loughborough College

Date: 18/03/2022

In the past month, I left my role at Ashworth Hospital, as I felt my pursuits in respect to creating Exercise Psychology work were being ignored (see relevant reflections in Ethics and Professional Standards diary) and having enjoyed the 3i's courses and my initial experiences teaching (as I reflect on above), I decided to seek some paid work as a lecturer. Fortunately, I was offered a Sessional Lecturer in Sport and Exercise Psychology role as Loughborough College teaching on their higher education modules. This is a big risk as my contract is only until the end of August and therefore I may get to the end of the summer and have no paid work. Admittedly I am nervous about this however I felt my endeavours were getting me nowhere at Ashworth and as a lecturer there is scope for progression within the field of academia and potentially still room for me to conduct consultancy work on the side.

Having been at Loughborough for a month now I have had the opportunity to deliver quite a few lectures and seminars. At times I have felt slightly overwhelmed as I have been chucked into the role mid-way through the academic year and am the only lecturer employed to deliver Sport and Exercise Psychology at the institution. Something I hadn't anticipated was how long it takes to plan for and prepare session materials and therefore my whole weeks have been spent designing lectures and seminars. This is especially hard as a lot of the topics I haven't covered for a few years and therefore need to do some of my own reading (which has also been helpful to some degree however!).

Something which has surprised me nonetheless was how at ease I have tended to feel when delivering sessions, much in contrast to how I feel at the minute during a 1:1 with an athlete for example. Whether this is purely an experience thing as I do have more experience coaching and teaching or whether it is because I have presentation slides to help

me through the session, the nervous voice inside my head which is present during consultancy work isn't there. Being relaxed and feeling as though I can be myself I have recognised that I am finding it easier connect and build rapport with students, something I have at times struggled with during applied work. This probably reinforces Lindsay et al. (2007) message of authenticity and suggests that the importance of being authentic extends to all contexts, something I hadn't quite considered previously.

For me, moving through as an undergraduate to postgraduate I struggled bridging the gap between theory and practice and questioned how I would apply the knowledge I was developing in lectures to the real world. By virtue of this, I am passionate about supporting students to navigate this difficulty and definitely feel as though drawing upon my applied work has helped me to bring the sessions to life for students, engage them and hopefully allow them to bridge the theory to practice gap.

Presenting at British Rowing Coaching Week and Rocking the Boat Conference 2022

Date: 08/10/2022

In the last two weeks I've presented the findings of my first research paper to a number of stakeholders working for rowing clubs across the United Kingdom as well as individuals working for British Rowing and Henley Royal Regatta Charitable Trust. This has been a surreal experience as I have never rowed before and yet when presenting my findings to these individuals, of which a number have won numerous Olympic medals in rowing, I've felt there has been a real appetite to hear what I have to say.

In their study to explore the personal qualities of effective sport psychologists, Chandler et al. (2016) discuss the need for practitioners to (a) know the language of the sport they are working in and (b) be able to translate academic knowledge so it can be understood by stakeholders. This particular experience challenged me as our research

project around rowing being used as a sport to teach life skills is something they had never been introduced to before and therefore I had to be able to discuss the aims of the research, what our findings were and the implications it can have on their practice in a way that could be understood by my audience. I also had to do this without feeling like I truly know the sport and the unique sporting words and phrases used in rowing.

As I reflect on the experience, I noticed the way I overcame this was by using self-depreciating humour. Toward the start of my speech I acknowledged my lack of understanding in regard the technical aspects of rowing and made a bit of a joke about it. I felt broke this ice and offered the audience a bit of an insight into the type of person I am (someone who uses an informal and conversational communication approach and someone who likes to add humour into conversations). Until the recent work of Pack et al. (2018), the use of humour in sport psychology practice was something that had not been considered or examined. Findings however reveal the use of humour can help practitioners build stronger working alliances with clients (Pack et al., 2019), something which Tod et al. (2019) suggests is crucial in consultancy outcomes. The feedback I have received from those who listened to me has been positive and whilst I did not use humour throughout my presentations, I feel the use of self-depreciating humour to acknowledge my lack of technical rowing knowledge actually benefitted me on these occasions.

Despite this being a positive example, similar to the practitioners interviewed in Pack et al. (2019) I am cognisant of the dangers self-depreciating humour could potentially have on my practice. I do not want my self-depreciation to overshadow my practice and lead clients to question my credibility or knowledge. I also acknowledge there are times where humour will be inappropriate if clients are talking about sensitive issues for example. It is

important therefore that I evaluate the context and appropriateness of humour in each circumstance (Pack et al., 2018).

In all, I acknowledge the use of humour is a matter of good taste and timing however I do feel through its use I feel I am able to practice more authentically by align my personal self with my professional self (Lindsay et al., 2007). By sharing my own vulnerabilities, I feel this helps me to (a) empower my clients, (b) create a healthy and non-judgemental learning environment, (c) develop stronger working alliances, and (d) positively challenge how sport psychologists are perceived.

Parenting in sport workshop

Date: 06/03/2023

Yesterday I co-delivered a parenting in sport workshop to the parents at Lancashire County Cricket Club. Our aim this season is to work closer with the parents (see Reflection 5 & 9 in Consultancy Reflective Diary) and therefore the aim of our sessions were to introduce ourselves to the parents across each of the age groups and inform them of our plan moving forward.

Despite some informal feedback from parents in the previous season who said they'd be open to working closer with us, before the session I was slightly nervous about how it would go. As I'm not a parent myself, and neither is my colleague (also a trainee on the LJMU prof doc) I didn't want the parents to feel as though we were telling them how to parent. I was keen to make a good impression and therefore knew we needed to strike the balance between highlighting where we could help them and their children without them feeling as though we were overstepping the mark. I knew some would naturally be more sceptical or open to the idea than others but without having some on board I was aware this would affect our plans and how much impact we would have at the club.

At the start of the talk, and to overcome my fears, I used self-depreciating humour again to acknowledge the facts that (a) neither of us were parents, (b) we were not in the session to tell them how to parent, and (c) they knew their children better than we did. By doing so, rather than them being on the back foot, sceptical about what we had to say and feeling as though we may criticise their parenting, instead I felt this empowered the parents. I acknowledged how crucial they are to the talent development process and saying this helped me justify why we wanted to work closer with the parents. I told them we did not want to tell them how to parent as I have no clue how to do that myself but rather with their understanding of their child and with our understanding of sport psychology we could work collaboratively to better support their children. By discussing my own limitations, I felt we were able to create a non-threatening and psychologically safe environment (Pack et al., 2019) and what we found throughout the sessions were parents willing to discuss the challenges they faced supporting their children. Whilst I cannot say whether they would have done this or not anyway, I do feel my honesty and the use of self-depreciating humour helped me again in this situation.

One thing which did stand out to me within the sessions was just how many questions the parents had for us. Literature is consistent in recognising the important role parents have in offering emotional support to young athletes (Harwood et al., 2019) and yet it appeared a lot of the parents struggled knowing how to provide such support. We were asked a number of questions which surrounded knowing what to say to the children and how best to interact with them. Despite us as researchers and practitioners knowing how crucial a role parents have on talent development, the workshops made me realise just how little support and information they are actually given to help young athletes. It was clear parents had their own anxieties around supporting young athletes and therefore they

seemed to appreciate being given a platform to ask questions. This was the first time all the parents had been brought into a room together for a workshop of this kind and they said it was useful to share ideas and simply hear others were experiencing the same thing as them. Whilst the aim of this reflection is not to make sweeping statements as I appreciate not all parents will feel like this, doing the workshop has made me realise just how much more we need to be doing as practitioners to support parents.

Facilitating a discussion

Date: 21/03/2023

In a module I am leading on MSc Applied Sport and Exercise Psychology course, one of our assessments is for the students to deliver a workshop to disseminate psychological knowledge to an audience who pretend to be sports parents or coaches. When outlining the task, I encouraged them to include activities and ask the audience questions so that the session felt like a workshop rather than a lecture. In the sessions however, it became increasingly apparent the students were struggling to facilitate group discussions and did not know how to respond when the audience spoke and answered questions. Students were simply agreeing with what was said and then moving onto the next PowerPoint slide. This led to the sessions feeling slightly disjointed and made me begin reflecting on how I seek to facilitate discussions with and between audience members during workshops.

I decided to consult the literature to try and gather ideas which would help me in my own sessions as well as the students I teach in the future. I struggled to find research which helped me in my aims but did find two papers which provided some guidance (Boice, 1996; Lemoine et al., 2018). What I took from these is that it is a skill to be able to actively listen to what audience members say whilst also being able to think of a question or reply in response to what was said. I know this is something I used to struggle with earlier on in my

journey as a practitioner whereby I would be trying to listen whilst simultaneously planning what would come out of my mouth next. It is only with time that I have got better at this and on reflection therefore I don't think I gave the MSc students enough practice in developing such skills. The literature also recommends those leading workshops being able to paraphrase/summarise back participants' responses or asking for further clarification/elaboration which encourages greater reflection. Again, this is a skill which I try to do in my own sessions but in regard to the MSc students did not attempt to help them to develop. Other strategies include writing participants comments on whiteboards which can be a clever technique used to give the facilitator an opportunity to think of a response and also encouraging others in the room to add to what was said and offer their own ideas/comments. All I feel are viable strategies that can be used to facilitate group discussions within workshops.

Despite me be aware of most of these techniques already, it has been useful for me to look at the literature and from a personal point of view reflect on how I deliver my own workshops and examine whether there are instances where I can utilise them more frequently. From a teaching and student development point of view, reflecting on this has also helped me realise how I almost set the students up to fail by not giving them the opportunity to practice skills such as paraphrasing and asking follow-up questions. Moving forward, I feel better prepared to support students for this assessment next year and will be sure to help them practice the above skills.

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Consultancy Case Study One

Abstract

This article discusses an applied case study with a young footballer and his father. Contacted initially to offer psychological support to the athlete, after conducting his needs analysis the practitioner was left questioning who his client really was. This paper outlines how the practitioner arrived at the decision to work with the father rather than the athlete, before reflecting on how his own experience as a young athlete fuelled his commitment to work with this case. Drawing upon Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, the intervention's aim was to increase the father's psychological flexibility and explore ways he could better support his son. The evaluation suggested working alongside the practitioner helped the father (a) gain clarity in regard to what was important to him as a parent and (b) begin to behave in a manner which was more aligned to his son's needs. By virtue of the changes he observed in his father, the young athlete also discussed the implications this had on his own mindset and performance.

Keywords: young athlete, sports parent, football, acceptance and commitment therapy

Context

The Practitioner

At the time of this case study I was in my first year of the Professional Doctorate in Sport and Exercise Psychology working toward chartership with the British Psychological Society (BPS) and registration with the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC).

Professional Philosophy and Approach

Research has increasingly recognised the importance of sport psychologists working towards congruence and practicing authentically (Lindsay et al., 2007). To achieve this, practitioners are encouraged to reflect on their practice and align one's core beliefs and values to a theoretical orientation (Poczwadowski et al., 2004). My core beliefs centre upon a relativist ontological perspective, acknowledging that there is not one truth, rather reality is subjective and multiple (Lincoln et al., 2011). Adopting a constructivist epistemological view, I believe knowledge is co-constructed and we are influenced by the socio-cultural environment in which we are embedded (Lincoln et al., 2011). As a result of these beliefs, my natural preference for a philosophy of practice would sit within the realm of a construalist paradigm (Keegan, 2015).

With my aim being to work towards growth and seeking to understand the whole person and the world from their perspective, a humanistic approach lends itself well with how I seek to practice (Tod & Eubank, 2020). I believe that (a) developing one's self-awareness is crucial for subsequent learning and growth, (b) each individual is motivated toward growth but also that (c) growth will vary from person to person. To support clients on their journey nonetheless, I strive to follow the conditions outlined by Rogers (1957) such as validating clients' experience and showing empathy which help to build therapeutic relationships. Furthermore, I strive to refrain from offering personal opinions and

suggestions but through the use of reflections and questioning, try and help clients hear and understand themselves and subsequently find their own solutions to the challenges they are encountering (Rogers, 1979).

Whilst the above principles have provided the foundation to my practice, as I have gained more experience in different sporting contexts, I have become increasingly aware of the need to flex how I practice depending on the needs of the clients and the contexts in which I am situated (Wadsworth et al., 2021). This has transpired due to some clients wanting quick fix solutions to use for performance challenges in upcoming competitions. Challenges which include regulating emotions or performing under pressure for example. To this end, rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach (Tod et al., 2017), my approach to service delivery can be described as one which is integrated (Keegan, 2015). As a result, whilst my preference is to utilise a pure Rogerian approach, whilst working with other clients I have drawn upon existential or cognitive-behavioural paradigms. I acknowledge my philosophy of practice is fluid given the stage of development I am at and therefore it is likely to evolve and develop over time (Wadsworth et al., 2021). This case study represents another critical moment in my journey as I strive to practice authentically and in line with my core beliefs and values amidst a number of contextual challenges (Poczwadowski et al., 2004). These challenges include supporting young athletes (Henriksen et al., 2014), working with parents in sport (Lafferty and Triggs, 2014) and managing multiple relationships (McDougall et al., 2015).

The Client

The consultancy had initially begun with me planning to work with a 13-year-old boy named Harry (pseudonym) who was playing for his local grassroots football team as a striker. Since starting to play at the age of five, Harry had trialled with a number of different

professional football teams' academies but had never been offered a contract with their respective academies. At the time of contact nonetheless, I was made aware that academy scouts were frequently attending games to watch players in Harry's grassroots team. Requesting psychological support for his son, Harry's father (Tony) had reached out to me after a peer of mine, who decided not to take on the consultancy due to geographical reasons, passed him my phone number. Now in his 40's, Tony no longer played football but did participate at the semi-professional level before retiring from football.

The Consultancy Process

Intake

During our first phone call, Tony disclosed how he perceived Harry was struggling with confidence whilst playing football. Having played football since he was seven years old, Tony began to compare Harry's performances in the past few months to those in previous years and felt he had noticed a stark contrast in regard to how Harry was performing. More so in matches in comparison to training, Tony believed Harry had begun to play within himself, suggesting he had started taking less risks, was 'playing it easy' and stopped making runs during matches. Tony felt that Harry's confidence impinged on whether he scores in the match or not, and if he is unsuccessful in doing so, his performances decline. Parallel to strategies that have been identified within the literature, Tony recalled some of the different approaches he had used in the build-up to matches to try and help Harry to overcome this difficulty. This included providing direct instructions or initiating informal conversations to try and help Harry feel calm before performing (Tamminen & Holt, 2012). These strategies however were deemed to have had little effect. Concerned about Harry's future sporting prospects if he maintained his current run of form, Tony asked for my help in supporting Harry.

Needs Analysis

Before starting my needs analysis with Harry, consent was gained from Tony and we decided on a non-disclosure agreement meaning anything discussed in mine and Harry's sessions would remain completely confidential. This was something I proposed to Tony, but admittedly was apprehensive about beforehand. I perceived he may want to be kept in the loop with regard to our conversations and felt I lacked experience in knowing how to navigate difficult conversations such as this. Despite my concerns, Tony was amenable and we both hoped this would help Harry to feel more comfortable in opening up and talking to myself. Harry was made aware of this decision and I explained how our conversations would stay between me and him unless there was (a) something which he wanted me to tell his father or (b) whether I felt he or someone else was at risk. Harry said he understood what I meant by this and decided not to ask any questions.

Informal Chats

Taking into account the Harry's biopsychosocial developmental (Kipp, 2018) as well as recommendations from scholars in regard to how to work best with young athletes (Henriksen et al., 2019; Thrower et al., 2023), I decided to adopt an informal and unstructured approach to my needs analysis with Harry. After explaining what sport psychology is and how it can help people; informed by the work of Aoyagi and colleagues (2017), I began to explore (a) his past and how and why he started playing football, (b) what football was like for him at that time, and (c) what his goals were for the future (Aoyagi et al., 2023). In line with my philosophy of practice, I also focused on Harry as a person and therefore made effort to ask about his interests or hobbies outside of football (Thrower et al., 2023). Knowing it would take time to build a rapport, develop trust and consequently provide a space which would allow Harry to feel comfortable in opening up to me, our first

sessions were conducted in social environments where we would chat in amongst activities such as table tennis, football and FIFA on the PlayStation (Sharp & Hodge, 2011). Aware these were activities Harry enjoyed, whilst being sure to maintain professional boundaries, it was hoped that me joining in and playing with him would help to balance the power dynamic between the two of us and allow him to feel comfortable in my presence (Thrower et al., 2023). Wanting Harry to feel safe but also respecting confidentiality, as a collective we agreed to stay in Tony's eye sight but far enough away so that he could not hear our conversations.

Behavioural Observation

As part of my needs analysis we agreed as a group that it would be useful for me to watch Harry play. A method which can help to develop contextual sensitivity and supplement information gained from conversations and interviews (Keegan, 2015), I watched Harry play in three matches. In these I did not see Harry display the behaviours Tony had described in our initial phone call, I do however appreciate that this could have been an anomaly and with Harry being aware that I was present may have behaved differently. Aware of the literature which illustrates the influence parents can have on young athletes in sport (Holt & Knight, 2014) I had also hoped to use this opportunity to observe Tony's own behaviours on match day. On both occasions however, we spent the whole duration of the matches getting to know each other and discussing topics outside of football. As a result, I did not feel I was able to fully concentrate on Harry's behaviours and performances and was also not able to observe Tony's natural behaviour on match days. I had therefore planned to conduct additional observations. As I discuss below however and reflecting what I feel illustrates the messy and complex nature of applied sport psychology, the focus of my consultancy shifted.

Who is the client?

Between sessions Tony would take it upon himself to call me and discuss how he felt Harry was performing in matches. This was not agreed prior to commencing our work and due to my inexperience, wasn't something I had considered discussing with Tony. Nonetheless, whilst these phone calls may have been useful, particularly because monitoring a client's progress is an integral part of the consultancy process (Keegan, 2015), it was over the course of these calls that I began to question who my client really was and whether I was working with the right person. Whilst I believe his behaviour was well-intentioned, I increasingly noticed Tony's comments regarding Harry's performances beginning to concern me. With research illustrating the negative impact parents can have on young individuals sporting experiences (Elliott & Drummond, 2017; Fraser-Thomas et al., 2008) in my next session with Harry I decided to try and unpack how he felt in regard to his father's involvement in his football. Being careful with my choice of words due to not wanting to elicit bias, I asked questions such as: "How is it having your dad come to watch you play?", "Can you think of a time where dad has helped you play well?", "Has there ever been a time where dad may not have been as helpful as you hope?". Harry suggested that whilst he valued his dad's opinion and liked him being present to watch him play, he admitted his dad can sometimes become too involved by telling him what to do and how to play before and after matches, something which he felt can often become irritating. As he spoke, the pitch of Harry's voice lowered and I could see he felt awkward discussing this. I continued tentatively, being cautious not to ask too many questions. Harry revealed how Tony can be a distraction during matches as Harry would find himself looking over to his father and become caught up in thinking about how his dad will react to mistakes or errors during the game. As Tony had highlighted at the start of our consultancy, Harry felt in the last few

months he had begun taking less shots and risks within matches, a behaviour done in the service of not wanting to invoke a negative response from Tony. At the end of our session I asked whether Harry felt it would be beneficial if I spoke to his dad, to which he agreed. Harry was assured again that anything we discussed wouldn't be repeated to Tony.

After reflecting on my conversations with Tony and Harry, moving forward I felt my work would be more impactful if I were to support Tony rather than Harry. Perhaps naively, I did not recognise this at the start of our relationship, yet it became increasingly apparent that the way Tony was behaving was not matching Harry's needs (Knight & Holt, 2014). A challenge which literature suggests is common between parents and their children in youth sporting contexts (Furusa, et al., 2021), a few days after mine and Harry's conversation I phoned Tony to discuss the possibility of me and him working closer in order to support Harry. This was a phone call I was dreading firstly because of my inexperience, secondly because I am not a parent myself, and thirdly because I did not want to breach mine and Harry's confidentiality agreement. To combat such anxieties however, I tried to be as non-directive as possible (Knight & Newport, 2018), I proceeded to explain how I was interested in how Tony felt in his role supporting Harry (rather than directly telling him I felt his behaviours were having a negative impact on Harry). Thankfully, this seemed to land well and Tony was honest in the fact that his actions and how he had been supporting Harry may not have been helpful. He admitted he can often become frustrated with Harry and may have been guilty of showing this frustration on the sideline during matches as well as venting in the car post-match, something which isn't uncommon amongst sporting parents (Tamminen et al., 2017). After briefly outlining the important and influential role parents have in the lives of young athletes (Holt & Knight, 2014), again being careful with my choice of words and trying my best not to sound accusatory, I asked Tony whether he would be

willing to explore different ways of supporting Harry. Fortunately, he was receptive to this and we agreed to start working together.

Having started the consultation with Harry, I felt it was important I made him aware of the outcome of my conversation with Tony. To ease any possible fears and ensure I did not negatively impact my relationship with Harry, I knew it was paramount I reassured him that confidentiality had not been broken in my conversation with Tony (Thrower et al., 2023). On reflection, it may have also been beneficial for me to discuss my next steps in terms of temporarily terminating consultation with Harry whilst on the phone to Tony. Having got so caught up in trying to make sure the phone call went well however, that seemed to slip my mind. Nonetheless, I arranged a zoom call with Harry a few days after to explain the situation and inform him that me and his dad would be working together. I told him we would speak again in a few months to see how or if anything had changed. Harry said he was happy with this.

Reflections Prior to the Development of the Intervention

As I reflected on my interactions with Tony and Harry up to this point, I became increasingly aware the counter-transference which was present, and in some part was influencing my decisions and commitment to supporting Harry by working closer with Tony. A reaction which occurs when clients evoke strong thoughts and feelings in the practitioner (Winstone & Gervis, 2006), counter-transference was occurring because Harry's story was close to home. It was one that I had already lived and one that fuelled my initial desire to become a sport psychologist. I was once in a similar position, a young male who loved football and had some talent to go with it. With this talent, however, came with what I perceived as pressure inadvertently put on me from my father. A father who wanted the best for me but despite pure intentions to nurture my talent, I felt was putting too much

pressure on my shoulders. This led to decreases in performance and eventually dropping out of the sport. Whilst I was not saying this would happen to Harry, as I reflected it became apparent that my own story draws some parallels with the current case study. A story which unfortunately is echoed in an array of youth sport contexts (Dorsch et al., 2015; Gould et al., 2006).

Irrespective of whether therapists or clients recognise its occurrence, transference and counter-transference will be present in most therapies and can either help, hinder or have little effect on the intervention process (Gelso & Hayes, 1998). In this instance, whilst I could not say for certain how much impact it would have had, it without question fuelled my commitment to working with Tony to better help him support Harry. Having been gifted time to reflect on my own playing experience, similar to my feelings towards my own father, I felt compassion towards Tony. I perceived he only wanted to help Harry, however, I felt he was unsure how best to do this. In light of the counter-transference present, I recognised the importance of managing and being reflective in regard to my own thoughts and feelings during the consultancy process (Winstone & Gervis, 2006). Through personal reflections and discussions my supervisor, I dug deeper into my own experience, exploring what type of support I had wanted from my father and trying to distinguish how this may be different to Tony and Harry's context. Whilst my own story drew parallels with that of Tony and Harry's, what became increasingly to me was the need to tailor my support based on their needs rather than what my own were when I was a young athlete.

Case Formulation/Intervention Planning

After using my supervisor as a sounding board to my interpretations of this case (Knowles et al., 2007), I decided to draw upon Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (Hayes et al., 2004) as the theoretical model to inform the intervention. ACT is a growth-

oriented approach which places emphasis on working alongside clients to help them live richer and more meaningful lives (Harris, 2019). Despite moving away from my preference for a pure Rogerian approach, ACT aligns well with my humanistic beliefs due to the emphasis it places on (a) building therapeutic relationships and working collaboratively with clients, (b) developing one's self-awareness in order to facilitate learning and development, and (c) acknowledging the unique nature of humans and their context.

Considered a part of the 3rd wave of cognitive behavioural therapies, ACT aims to cultivate client movement toward psychological flexibility, a process which seeks to "increase one's ability for mindful, values-guided action" (Harris, 2019). A viable avenue in which to help parents in regard to the support of their children (Byrne et al., 2021), rather than trying to reduce unwanted cognitions, emotions or behaviours as is the case in traditional cognitive behavioural therapies, ACT derives from a philosophical framework known as functional contextualism and aims to change an individual's relationship with thoughts, assessing their workability in relation to the context in which it is situated (Hayes et al., 2006).

With reference to the ACT Hexaflex (see Figure 1; Harris, 2019), based on my needs analysis I perceived Tony to be in a state of psychological inflexibility. His behaviour did not appear to be workable in this context and I hypothesised he lacked clarity in regard to what his values were and what was most important to him as Harry's father. Hearing his own, as well as Harry's accounts of how Tony was behaving during and after matches made it plausible to suggest Tony was fusing with thoughts and may benefit from distinguishing between his thinking and noticing self (Harris, 2019). In our first phone call Tony revealed he had sought psychological support for his son due to perceiving a lack of confidence and a drop in recent performances in comparison to previous performances. Tony also sounded

concerned about Harry's future prospects in football if his current form continued, language which to me suggested Tony was becoming conceptualised with the past and feared future (Hayes et al., 2006).

From a performance perspective, I felt Harry, over what seemed to be the last few months, was being increasingly impacted by Tony's behaviour in and around match day. Tony's actions were impacting Harry's ability to focus on the pitch and due to the perceived pressure, were causing him to play within himself and take less risks. Most importantly, and if not appropriately addressed, this has potential to impact Harry's psychological well-being, enjoyment, and involvement in the sport (Knight et al., 2010). The aim of this intervention therefore was to work with Tony, using principles of ACT to increase his psychological flexibility and explore ways in which he can better support Harry.

Having navigated the consultancy up to this point and been give reassurance from my supervisor that I was on track, I felt confident moving into the intervention at this point in the consultancy. This was supported by the relationship I felt I had been able to build with Tony, and how open he had been in regard to his own actions and how receptive he was to work with me. Perhaps it was naivety and the very little prior experience I had to judge it upon, but I was proud of how I acted with integrity and trusted my judgement when the easy option would have been to work with Harry as was initially requested.

Intervention Delivery

With each of the six-core processes (acceptance, contact with the present moment, values, committed action, self-as-context, and defusion) interconnected, there is often overlap when working through an ACT framework (Harris, 2019). This means that whilst I have attempted to write this case study in chronological order of my work with Tony, it is important to note each of the processes were introduced and revisited at various time

points across the consultancy. As a starting point nonetheless, my aim was to initially support Tony in aligning with what was most important to him as Harry's father. By discussing his values, I felt this would set the foundation of our work and support us later on in the consultancy as we began to discuss the remaining core processes (Harris, 2019).

Tony was struggling knowing how to best support Harry and identified two approaches which he predominantly used to try and improve Harry's performance. He termed these 'the carrot' (arm around the shoulder) and 'the stick' (firm, Mr motivator) approach. Exploring this further, I asked Tony why he had chosen to draw upon these two approaches, his response was that these were the only two he knew of. Picking up on the language he used throughout sessions, I noticed our conversations frequently came back to how well Harry was playing. I reflected this observation back to Tony and latterly asked "what is most important to you as Harry's father?". A question it appeared he had never been asked before, he seemed taken back and took a long pause. After some reflection, he said he just wanted Harry to a) be happy and b) become the best version of himself, whether that is in football, school or any other aspect of his life.

As clarity in regard to what was important to Tony became more explicit through our dialogue, in line with ACT principles our conversations shifted toward the workability of previous behaviours (Hayes et al., 2002). We explored whether his interactions with Harry before, during, and after training and matches was a) making Harry happy and b) helping him to become the best version of himself. Tony acknowledged his actions may not have been congruous with his new-found values, nonetheless, emphasis was placed on the notion that his approach was not necessarily wrong and may have been well received by another young athlete (Chin & Hayes, 2017). In the context of supporting Harry however he realised his actions were less workable (Hayes et al., 2006). Whilst he only wanted to facilitate

Harry's development, in his own words Tony suggested he may have become over-involved. On reflection, Tony felt Harry responded best when he adopted 'the carrot' rather than 'the stick' approach on match days. A problem however lay in that these approaches were used interchangeably depending on Tony's perceived importance of the game. He admitted this may have been confusing for Harry and a contributing factor behind the perceived lack of confidence.

Conversations began moving toward providing Tony resources to defuse from thoughts (Harris, 2019). This was pertinent since Tony recounted occasions before we started working together where he had said something to Harry in the heat of the moment which he later regretted. Using the choice point (see Figure 2; Harris, 2019) as a tool to guide our discussions, Tony conceded these actions may not have been workable and if continued would move him away the type of father he wanted to be. I felt Tony was courageous here as it would have been easy for him to defend such actions in avoidance of difficult feelings and emotions. Personally, this made my work a lot easier and satisfied my own anxieties around wanting to be client-led and not wanting to tell Tony how to parent.

Tony was asked to cast his mind back to a time where he had said something to Harry to which he later regretted and to notice and name the emotions experienced. We proceeded to discuss what thoughts, feelings, and emotions showed up and used the hands as thoughts and feelings metaphor to demonstrate how perspective can be blurred when fused with thoughts (see Figure 3; Harris, 2019). Tony recognised, particularly in the context of Harry's football that he can become hooked by thoughts. We reflected on the short-term gains of venting frustration versus the long-term consequences of such behaviours in light of his chosen values. After a few weeks of discussing this and Tony subsequently practicing defusion techniques, Tony felt he was increasingly able to notice and create separation

between himself and the strong emotions and thoughts if and when they did arise. Doing so helped him behave in a manner which he deemed better supported Harry.

Feeling as though he was living in a manner which was more aligned with how he wanted to support Harry, we revisited Tony's previous concerns around Harry's future prospects in football. Time was spent reflecting and re-evaluating such remarks in light of newly-chosen values. Whilst Tony admitted it would be great if Harry was able to pursue a career in the sport, it was acknowledged this was not the be-all and end-all. Tony acknowledged that as long as Harry was happy, he could be too. Rather than getting caught up in thoughts which surrounded where Harry would have ended up if he had played poorly, we began to explore the feasibility of Tony being present in the moment and enjoying watching his son playing football (Hayes et al., 2006).

After recapping previous conversations and discussing any challenges he had faced, eight weeks into our work I was confident Tony was demonstrating increased psychological flexibility. Suggesting he was more aligned with his values, Tony indicated he was behaving in a manner which better supported Harry as he felt increasingly equipped to deal with difficult thoughts and feelings more effectively. Moving forward, Tony was encouraged to continue reflecting on our conversations and putting into practice the skills we had worked on.

Monitoring and Evaluation

My aim in this intervention was to work with Tony to increase his psychological flexibility and help him better support Harry. In light of these aims, to evaluate and monitor the impact of the intervention, I decided to speak to Tony and Harry individually two-weeks after my final session with Tony and then again after three-months. Important that the evaluation was consistent with the manner in which the intervention was delivered (Keegan,

2015), I met with them face-to-face and engaged in informal conversations to gain feedback and gather their perspectives in regard to the impact of the intervention.

Two-weeks post intervention

Tony. Our discussion here predominantly centred upon Tony's claim that our work together had given him clarity. Asked what he meant by this, he discussed feeling as though our work had provided a clearer idea of what type of parent he wanted to be both in sport but also in everyday life. Being encouraged to reflect on what was important to him as a father was an element of our work which he described as a turning point and a question he wished he had been asked or sought to answer earlier on in parenthood. Tony felt he had been able to take positive steps forward and could already begin to see a difference in Harry's mood.

Harry. Aware I had been working close with his dad, I asked Harry how things had been since we last spoke. Harry said he recognised a change in how his dad was interacting with him in the car before and after matches as well as how he was behaving on the side of the pitch. When asked to describe more specifically what was different, Harry discussed his dad always encouraging him to enjoy himself and then after matches giving him praise for what he did well. Harry suggested Tony was also a lot calmer on the side of the pitch and said he could not hear him and he was not as much of a distraction. By virtue of this, Harry said he felt more relaxed and confident going into matches and said he wasn't afraid of making mistakes, as he was previously. Harry said he was enjoying football but did maintain that he had never stopped enjoying it.

Three-months post intervention

Tony. There was an indication that whilst there had been times over the last three months where he found it difficult not to get too caught up with what was happening in

Harry's matches, on the whole he felt he had been able to manage his emotions and thoughts and behave in a manner which Harry benefitted from. In the months that had passed, Tony said he had tried to communicate more openly with Harry and apply what he had learnt to support Harry in managing his own emotions. Tony also suggested he was now noticing other parent's behaviours and found himself trying to help them when they became frustrated on the side of the pitch. Tony believed Harry was enjoying his football a lot more but informed me of some difficulties Harry had been facing recently in school. Whilst this brought about its own challenges, Tony's attempts to talk openly and develop a stronger relationship with Harry was said to be helping him manage this difficult moment.

Harry. On the whole Harry felt things had been ok over the last few months and said his dad was still being supportive. Harry discussed some of the goals he and his dad set together that he was working toward for the rest of the season. These were to remember to enjoy each game, communicate more with team-mates on the pitch, and hit 20 goals for the season. All of which he said he could achieve and were things that motivated him. Harry then drew upon a recent game where despite not scoring he still felt confident and was still trying to talk to team-mates and be a leader for his peers. This he said was in contrast to matches earlier on in the season where if he missed chances or didn't score he would become pre-occupied with how his dad was reacting, subsequently leading him to not taking risks or as many shots.

Practitioner Reflections

First, I feel the feedback provided by Tony and Harry has given me some indication that my work has had an impact. As one of my first experiences providing psychological support, this is important to me given the nerves I experienced in relation to working 1:1 with clients prior to starting the Professional Doctorate. Reading the literature prior to

starting the course, I was aware that experiencing anxiety in regard to doing consultancy work is something a large number of early career practitioners face (Tod, 2007). Gaining positive feedback nonetheless has given me some confidence that I can support the needs of the individuals I work with and be an effective sport psychologist.

As I reflect on this consultancy, whilst I recognise reading Keegan's (2015) book proved a useful tool to outline how and what process to follow when working with a client, I also feel it gave me an unrealistic expectation of doing consultancy work and does not reflect the messiness of such interactions. As a result, this fuelled my self-doubt when encountering challenges, difficult moments, or when I felt my work with Tony and Harry wasn't progressing as Keegan's (2015) model would suggest. This for example is illustrated when after conducting my intake and needs analysis I was left questioning who my client really was. Despite the challenges I faced, I do nonetheless feel I was fortunate in how receptive and open Tony was across my interactions with him. That said, I am not naïve however in thinking this will be case with each of the clients I encounter. As such, of pertinence is the crucial role supervisors have in supporting early career practitioners and being readily available to help them overcome initial self-doubt and complexities across consultancy. As I have strived to achieve in this case study, I also feel it is important scholars and applied practitioners produce research and discuss with trainees what the nature of consultancy work is often like.

Finally, another learning point from this case is the recognition that at times I may need to work with and through stakeholders within individuals' immediate environment in order to facilitate growth (Blom et al., 2013). In this case, rather than agreeing to do what Tony initially asked of me (which was to work solely with Harry), I felt needed to try and create an environment, by working with Tony to better support Harry's development. This is

an idea which aligns with the work of Dorsch and colleagues (2022) who, from a systems perspective, discuss how the context and stakeholders present in sporting contexts can influence athlete's development. Moving forward and if working with a similar case in the future, I would (a) prioritise working closely with parents from the outset of the consultancy, and (b) ensure I thoroughly explore the athlete's relationships with those in their support system, something I forgot to cover in enough depth in my needs analysis with Harry. Applying such learnings to my work with academy players at a county cricket club, I recognise I the need to begin working closer with the parents and coaches of the young athletes in order to have a greater and more positive impact on their development (Blom et al., 2013).

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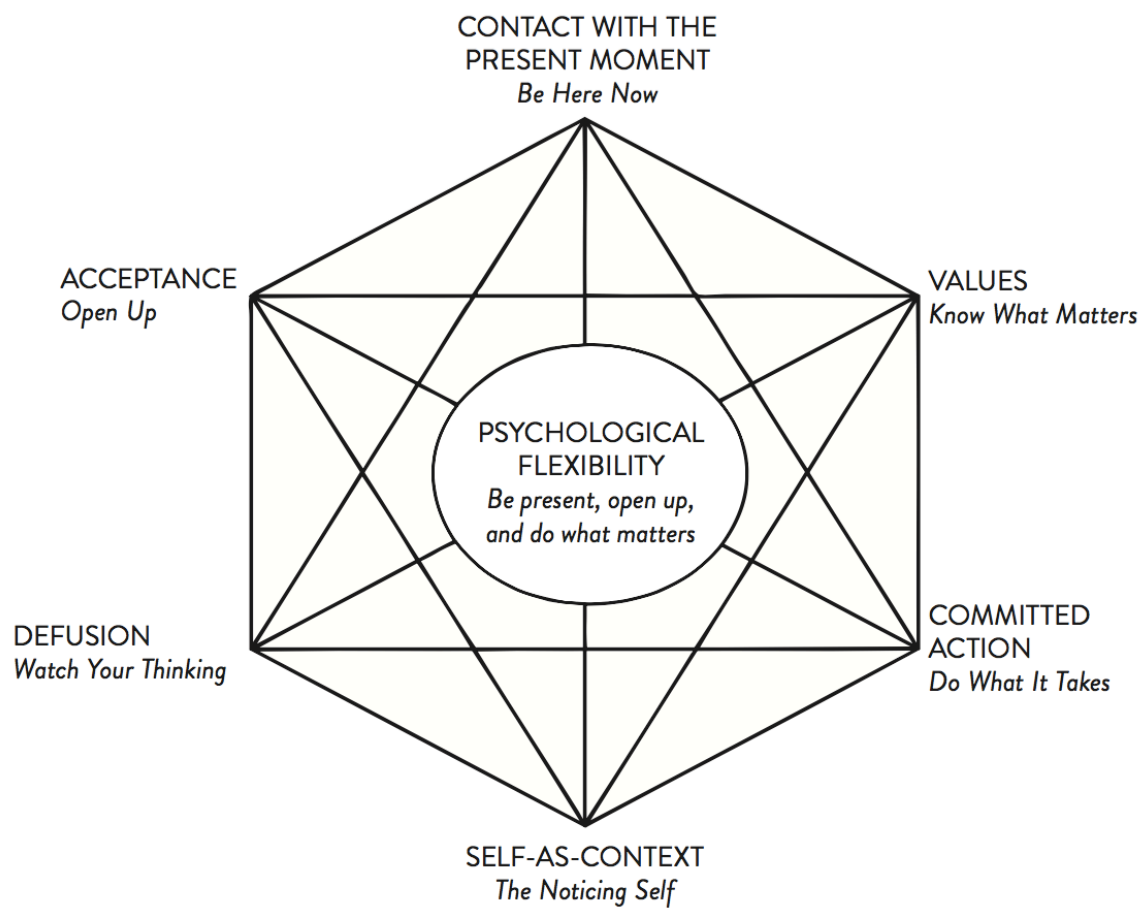
Figure 1*The ACT Hexaflex*

Figure 2

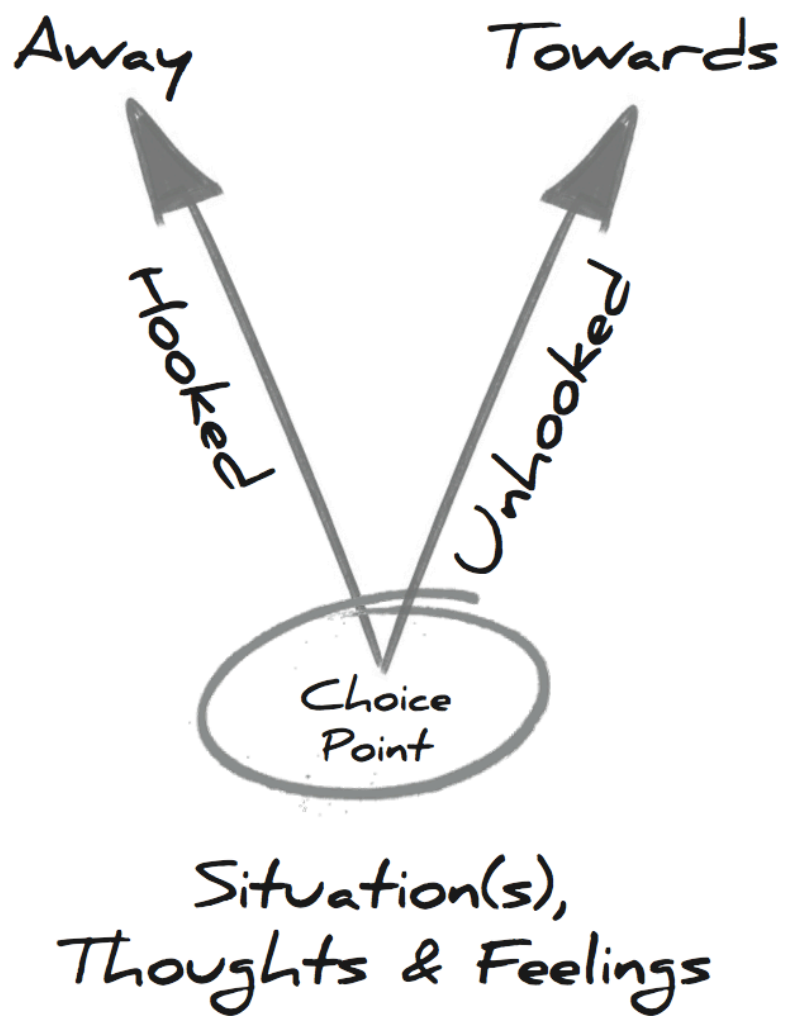
Choice point

Figure 3

Description of the Hands as Thoughts and Feelings Metaphor

THE HANDS AS THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS METAPHOR— EXTENDED VERSION

This exercise is predominantly a metaphor for fusion and defusion. It's evolved from my earlier Hands as Thoughts exercise (Harris, 2009a), and the instructions overlap a lot with the Pushing Away Paper exercise detailed in chapter 9. The script that follows is a generic version, suitable for just about anyone. It's much more powerful if we make it specific to each unique client, so instead of saying things like "all the people you care about," we'd say, for example, "your husband, Michael, and your teenage daughter, Sarah."

When I do this, I usually carry my chair over to the client, and we sit side by side, with our backs to the wall, facing the room, and we both do all the actions simultaneously. You don't have to do it this way, of course; like any exercise in ACT, you can modify and adapt it freely to suit yourself; I've just found it more powerful to do so.

I also like to do two lovely variants on this exercise. One option is to write down some relevant thoughts and feelings on a sheet of paper, and use this instead of one's hands. Another option is to write them down with an indelible all-surface marker on something thin, flexible, and transparent such as bubble wrap, acetate, cellophane, or a clear plastic page protector.

Therapist: (sitting side by side with the client, both facing the room) Imagine that out there in front of you (gesturing to the contents of the room and the far wall) is everything that really matters to you, deep in your heart; everything that makes your life meaningful (or used to, in the past); all the people, places, and activities you love; all your favorite foods and drinks and music and books and movies; all the things you like to do; and all the people you care about and want to spend time with.

But that's not all. Also over there are all the problems and challenges you need to deal with in your life today, such as... (therapist gives some examples based on the client's history, such as "your conflict with your son," "your financial issues," "your health problems," "your court case," "your search for a job," "your chemotherapy for your cancer").

And also over there are all the tasks you need to do on a regular basis to make your life work: shopping, cooking, cleaning, driving, doing your tax return, and so on.

Now, please copy me as we do this exercise. Let's imagine that our hands are our thoughts and feelings, and let's put them together like this. (Therapist places his hands together, side by side, palms upward, as if they are the pages of a book. The client copies him.) Now, let's see what happens when we get hooked by our thoughts. (Therapist slowly raises his hands toward his face, until they are covering his eyes. The client copies him. Both keep their hands over their eyes as the next section of the exercise unfolds.)

Now, notice three things. First, how much are you missing out on right now? How disconnected and disengaged are you from the people and things that matter? If the person you love were right there in front of you, how disconnected would you be? If your favorite movie were playing on a screen over there, how much would you miss out on?

Second, notice how difficult it is to focus your attention on what you need to do. If there's an important task in front of you right now, how hard is it to focus on it? If there's a problem you need to address or a challenge you need to tackle, how hard is it to give it your full attention?

Third, notice how difficult it is, like this, to take action, to do the things that make your life work, such as... (therapist gives some examples based on the client's history, such as "to cook dinner," "to drive your car," "to cuddle your baby," "to type on your computer," "to hug the person you love"). So notice how difficult life is when we're hooked. We're missing out, we're cut off and disconnected, it's hard to focus, and it's hard to do the things that make life work.

Now, let's see what happens as we unhook from our thoughts and feelings. (Therapist now slowly removes his hands from his face and lowers them until they drop into his lap. The client copies him.) So notice what happens as we unhook. What's your view of the room like now? How much easier is it to engage and connect? If your favorite person were in front of you right now, how much more connected would you be? If there were a task you needed to do or a problem you needed to address, how much easier would it be to focus on it, like this? Now move your arms and hands about (therapist gently shakes his arms and hands around; client copies). How much easier is it now to take action: to drive a car, cuddle a baby, cook dinner, type on a computer, hug the person you love? (Therapist mimes these activities as he says them; the client usually will not copy this part, but that doesn't matter.)

Now notice these things (therapist indicates his hands, now once more resting in his lap) haven't disappeared. We haven't chopped them off and gotten rid of them. They're still here. So if there's something useful we can do with them, we can use them. You see, even really painful thoughts and feelings often have useful information that can help us, even if it's just pointing us toward problems we need to address or things we need to do differently, or simply reminding us to be kinder to ourselves. And if there's nothing useful we can do with them, we just let them sit there.

Consultancy Case Study Two

Context

The Practitioner

At the time of this case study I was two years into my training toward becoming a chartered Sport and Exercise Psychologist. I was working part-time for a county cricket club and for 15 months had been offering psychological support to the young athletes on their talent development pathway.

Professional Philosophy and Approach

As a practitioner I see my role as someone who aims to facilitates growth. My intention is to help people develop and overcome difficulties they are facing. Through the adoption of a relativist ontological perspective, I believe each individual has the capacity for growth but acknowledge that it varies from person-to-person and context-to-context (Lincoln et al., 2011). Given such beliefs, I have a preference for a humanistic theoretical orientation. Rather than viewing myself as an expert who offers solutions to clients, I seek to understand the world from their perspective, creating an environment in which they can take responsibility for their own growth (Katz & Keyes, 2020). A person-centred (PC) approach therefore has provided the foundation to my approach to consultancy. I strive to build therapeutic relationships through the demonstration of Rogers' (1957) core conditions and aim to help clients recognise that it is part of the human condition to experience uncomfortable thoughts and feelings (van Deurzen, 2005). That said, by creating an environment in which clients (a) feel safe and free and (b) develop their self-awareness, I aim to help them recognise that it is not the challenge or obstacle which impacts growth but rather their reaction to such events.

Despite my preferences for a pure Rogerian approach to consultancy, over time I have recognised the need to flex how I operate in order to suit the needs of the client or context in which I am working (Wadsworth et al., 2021). Since most of my applied experience has been in youth development environments, I have often felt the need to adopt more of a practitioner-led or cognitive-behavioural approach due to young athletes struggling to reflect on the self or wanting quick-fix solutions to performance challenges. As such, whilst I still have a preference for a humanistic approach to working, I now see myself as an integrated practitioner (Keegan, 2015). Despite this, the current case study marks the first time I was able to draw upon a pure Rogerian approach throughout the consultancy process (Keegan, 2015).

The Client

The client (James - pseudonym) was 13 years old at the time of the consultancy. He was entering his second season as part of the cricket county's performance pathway and since he was representing his age group at county level, this was also the first season James was eligible to play open age senior cricket for his local club. James considered himself a batter and had played the sport since the age of six years old.

Up to this consultancy I hadn't met James or any of his team mates due to me spending most of my time with the older age group squads at the club. As I was to be the designated (trainee) sport psychologist for James' age group in the coming season however, I delivered an introductory workshop to parents and players a month prior to the start of the season. Appreciating this may have been one of the first times any of them have interacted with a sport psychologist, I tried to outline what sport psychology is, how it can help them, as well as boundaries of confidentiality (Keegan, 2015). A few weeks after this session James's father (John) reached out to me via email with some concerns over his son.

The Consultancy Process

As is often the case with sport psychology, the boundaries between this consultancy were blurred (Keegan, 2015). Furthermore, given my preference for a humanistic approach to working, and as such, emphasis not being placed on 'delivering an intervention', the needs analysis, case formulation, intervention, and evaluation often overlapped. That said, I have strived to write this case study however in a manner which reflects the chronology of events.

Intake

Aware of the benefits practitioners can yield by forming positive alliances with the parents of young athletes (Visek et al., 2009), I decided to start this consultancy by speaking to James's father. Having provided his phone number on the initial email, I decided to call him in hope of understanding in greater depth the concerns he had regarding his son. Calling him also enabled me to explore the situation more so than I would have been able to via email or text.

John initially said James's mindset was not where it needed to be. Striving to work with his definition of the problem and to clarify my own understanding (Katz & Keyes, 2020), I asked what he meant by this. Despite him thinking James had prepared well across the winter period, in a recent conversation James told him that he felt unprepared and was feeling some pressure to please both his coaches and team-mates. As a result, he said he was feeling nervous for the first match, comments which left John feeling as though James was lacking in self-belief. The experiencing of nerves and a perceived pressure to perform isn't uncommon amongst young athletes (Kristiansen & Roberts, 2010; Nicholls et al., 2005) and so I was curious to know when this first started, whether there was anything that

happened which may have initiated such feelings, and even if James felt nerves were useful for performance (Ntoumanis & Biddle, 2000).

John told me James was a competitive individual who had always put pressure on himself to do well at anything in life, whether that be in school or playing at his local club. John however wasn't sure whether James had always experienced nerves before competing or whether it was something which had only started to occur recently. Whilst becoming captain the previous season was undoubtedly a proud moment for both, John perceived this may have been the catalyst for a downturn in James' performances and the beginning of him starting to sense some pressure to perform. John felt James was taking the weight of the world on his shoulders and could recall some games where James was harsh in blaming himself for his team's loss. In addition to these challenges on the pitch, during the season there was also a bereavement in the family. This occurred mid-way through a multi-day cricket festival and James was left in the care of other parents whilst his mother and father had to attend to urgent family matters. As could be imagined, the last few months proved to be an extremely difficult period for James and the wider family. Such events, in tandem, were reasons why John felt James may have been struggling.

James told me that he wasn't concerned for the mental wellbeing of his son and that despite how challenging the past few months had been, as a family they were all now in a better place. John made it clear he was seeking my support as he was unsure how else to try and help James regarding his cricket performances. He just wanted James to have fun, however telling him this seemed to have no effect. Furthermore, and whilst James never said this directly, John felt as though James was reluctant to take on board his father's advice due to him never playing cricket himself and therefore lacking a technical understanding of the sport.

I agreed to start working with James and we arranged a time for me to meet with him the following week. For convenience purposes this was to be on Zoom. We both agreed that giving James a space to talk about his experience without fear of it being repeated would be beneficial and therefore we agreed on a non-disclosure statement. As most of my consultancy with young athletes has been parallel to others in that conversations are often brief and only consisting of a single or couple of conversations (Birrer et al., 2012) we agreed to take it conversation-by-conversation rather than agreeing on a set number of sessions.

Needs Analysis

With scholars outlining the importance of practitioners building positive working relationships with clients (Tod et al., 2019), particularly with young athletes (Thrower et al., 2023), my first aim was to establish a rapport with James. I knew that if he were to trust and feel comfortable in opening up to me, I needed to create an environment in which he felt safe. I started the first conversation by explaining why we were talking, outlining what sport psychology is, and how I have tried to help athletes in the past (Keegan, 2015). I was also interested in hearing what his perception of sport psychology was and if he had any previous interactions with a psychologist. James said that he had spoken to a psychologist when he was younger at school as they tried to help him with his sleeping. Whilst he couldn't remember much about that period, he said they "just chatted most of the time" and from what he remembers, it seemed to help. I often start my first session with a client in this manner. Rather than diving straight into the challenges they are facing, by giving clients the opportunity to ask questions, and outlining how I seek to work as a practitioner, I feel it helps them to settle into the session and have clarity in terms of expectations moving forward (Keegan, 2015). Furthermore, I have found beginning the consultancy in this way is useful if, as was this case in example, athletes have been told they will be speaking to me

rather than it completely being their choice. Doing so has helped me gauge their willingness to talk.

Adopting a holistic approach, throughout our work together I sought to adopt the perspective of James being a person first and athlete second (Katz & Hemmings, 2009). Aware of the difficult circumstances of the past few months and cognisant of the interplay between one's personal life, mental-wellbeing and the impact it can have on sporting performance (Giles et al., 2020; O'Neill et al., 2013), rather than just focusing on his cricket, I tried to explore James' interests and life away from sport. I aimed to show enthusiasm and genuine interest in what he had to say, an element of consultancy which is crucial when working with young athletes (Kipp, 2018). Despite such attempts to adopt a holistic view, most of our conversations orientated towards James' experiences in cricket. As he began discussing some of the challenges he was facing, I made sure to validate his experience by demonstrating unconditional positive regard and genuine empathy (Rogers, 1957).

James told me that he wasn't enjoying cricket. Echoing what his father had said previously, James felt as though his confidence had been knocked and that he had begun feeling a lot of pressure to perform. Since becoming captain, he said he felt as though he had something to prove and has got caught up in worrying about what his coaches think of him. Aware that pressure can often be perceived by the actions and words received from external sources (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2008; Dunn et al., 2022), I asked whether there was anything his coaches, team-mates, or parents had said which may have led to him feeling this pressure. James struggled to think of anything and so, trying to adopt a tone of curiosity, I asked if it were possible that the pressure he was feeling was coming from expectations he was imposing on himself. James agreed but expressed some confusion, struggling to grasp why, despite feeling as though he has something to prove, it led to him playing within his

shell. To James, playing in his shell meant refraining from hitting shots he'd normally play and becoming a lot less vocal on the pitch. I felt the urge to give James an answer and could feel myself wanting to make sense of the situation for him. In line my beliefs and preference for a Rogerian approach to practice however, I knew to promote growth and a deeper self-awareness, there was greater value in James piecing together and making sense of this challenge himself (Rogers, 1979). I used the opportunity therefore to offer a summary, giving James the chance to hear back what we had discussed so far.

James was able to draw a connection between the pressure he was putting on himself and this leading to cricket no longer being fun. James also suggested playing within himself may be due to him getting caught up in not wanting to make mistakes in front of coaches. At this stage I felt James was already beginning to make sense of his experience, an integral component of a PC approach (Rogers, 1979). Aware of his age and being conscious not to overcomplicate the situation or challenges he was facing, I tried to orientate James toward what would constitute success in our work together. To my surprise, James said he just wanted to start enjoying cricket again. This therefore steered the focus of our sessions moving forward.

Case Formulation

With James appearing to make sense of his experience in just our first conversation, I felt as though we had already started on a journey of growth (Rogers, 1961). Despite individuals of James' age often struggling with abstract or higher-order thinking (Dumontheil & Blakemore, 2012; Kipp, 2018) James demonstrated an ability to reflect on his thoughts and feelings in relation to the difficulties he was experiencing in a sporting context. By virtue of this, the manner in which I sought to continue working with James moving forward would

be through a PC approach (Rogers, 1951). This therefore sat comfortably with me given my preference for a humanistic way of working.

In this case, growth to James meant having fun whilst playing cricket. By utilising a PC approach, achieving growth meant responsibility was placed on the James, rather than the myself, to work through and overcome the difficulties he was facing (Katz & Keyes, 2020). My aim as the practitioner, and as I aimed to do in the needs analysis, was to create an environment of freedom in which James could begin to explore his current situation and figure out how to make cricket more fun (Rogers, 1961). By building a positive therapeutic relationship and demonstrating Rogers' (1957) core conditions, it is hoped James would develop a better understanding of himself and be more confident to live in a manner which is more authentic (Rogers, 1961). More specifically, rather than (a) acting differently now he is the captain of the team and (b) getting caught up in worrying about coaches' perception of him, the aim is for James to have a more realistic view of himself and how he should and wants to perform given he is in the early stages of a talent development pathway (Williams & MacNamara, 2022). It is hoped James will look less for approval from others and see the journey he is on as an opportunity to develop and improve in spite of barriers and challenges which will inevitably arise (Hayman et al., 2020). By adopting such perspective, cricket should become a hobby which he begins to enjoy again.

Intervention Delivery

The intervention lasted the duration of James' cricket season (April-September) and consisted of four online zoom meetings and a number of brief conversations in-person on the seven days where I attended James' matches. On four occasions I also messaged James' father to check-in and see how they were both doing. Communicating frequently not only

helped me to monitor how James was doing but also helped to maintain my relationship with both and develop a sense of trust (Sharp & Hodge, 2013).

Given the non-linear nature of sport psychology consultancy, this case study would have been messy and repetitive if I simply described, in a step-by-step fashion, what was discussed in each conversation. Due to adopting a PC approach, I followed the clients lead and therefore topics were sometimes discussed and then not revisited (if at all), until later points of the consultancy. For ease of reading therefore, in this section, I have aimed to give a broad overview of what we spoke about. I stress again however that despite the order in which topics are written, this should be not perceived as a completely accurate chronological version of events.

Since he and his father had spoken about the pressure he was putting on himself and the worries surrounding living up to expectations of coaches, I was eager to gain an insight into James's inner dialogue prior to performance. A question I asked was "if I were to be sitting inside your head in the lead up to a game or training session, what thoughts would I be hearing" (Harris, 2019). Whilst he found it difficult to think of specific words, James could recall feelings. He said he felt different when playing for his county compared to when playing for his club. Before club games he said he feels relaxed and can have a laugh with his team-mates, something which helps him perform but is also more enjoyable. When playing for his county however he is consumed by nerves and an uneasy feeling. He later revealed that before going out to bat he can also become fixated on telling himself not to get out, something which as he described previously, led to him not playing his usual game and making silly mistakes. Described in the literature as a dimension of perfectionism, making such errors further exacerbated his worries regarding his coach's perception of him (Frost et al., 1995).

James said he wanted to change how he was feeling before matches and could recognise that the thoughts described above may not have been helpful regarding his performance and enjoyment. As a result, time was spent considering how James would like to feel and if there was anything that would be more useful to focus on in build-up to competition. Music was something which James explained helped him relax and so, trying to keep our conversations engaging, some time was spent discussing the music James liked, considering what would help him relax before games, and finally developing playlists to use prior to competition (Acharya & Morris, 2014). Layering on top of what we eventually began to call his pre-match routine (Rupprecht et al., 2021), we also explored if there was anything James felt would be more useful to concentrate on before games or going out to bat. With a tendency to focus on external stimuli such as coaches' opinions or negative consequences of poor performances, James felt formulating a plan and focusing on his own game would be more beneficial. Identifying what to focus on however was at first a challenge for James and so he leaned on myself to suggest ideas. This had the potential to move me away from my chosen theoretical orientation as I felt the urge to tell him what to do. To navigate this however, I offered some examples of what others I have worked with in the past have tried to focus on before going out to bat. Examples included thinking about what shots they would play or what their scoring options would be in the game. Whilst these were offered as ideas, James was given the autonomy of what to concentrate on but decided he liked the options I put forward.

Whilst a considerable amount of time was spent discussing what James' pre-match routine was, James also wanted to discuss how to develop what he called a positive mindset during matches. He identified that he would often get caught up in telling himself not to get out or not to drop catches but felt the more he said this, the more it actually happened. He

discussed thinking about mistakes long after they had occurred, something which again took the enjoyment out of playing. Over time we explored and were able to create a plan which aimed to help James focus during games. Attempting use his past experiences and as a tool to facilitate future growth (Faull & Cropley, 2009) I asked him to reflect on positive previous performances and whether there was anything he did during the games which helped him to play well. One of James' coaches had told him previously to talk himself through games and as such, when batting for example he would use self-talk to transition between an internal and external focus. James would tell himself what to do or what he needed to focus on in the next action or play. Reflecting on such instances seemed to be a lightbulb moment for James as when playing poorly he recognised he would tell himself what not to do, thoughts which did not seem to be useful. Conversely, in the times that he played well, he would use his thoughts as a guide to talk himself through the game. His task therefore was to become more consistent in doing the latter.

With James becoming captain of the team in the previous season, it appeared these new responsibilities led to James feeling as though he had to start behaving differently and living up to the role of being captain. When asked why he thought he was made captain, reasons included: having built positive relationships with team-mates, being a vocal figure out on the field, and being able to score a lot of runs. Beside the scoring of runs, of interest to me was that the other two were things that he could control and so I pointed this out to him. As discussed in the needs analysis, because of the perceived pressure, James however had moved away from doing these things since becoming captain. As someone who was naturally good at helping people, James felt it would be easy to start being vocal again on the pitch. James was strong in his stance nonetheless that being captain meant he had to lead by example by making an impact on games and returning high scores during his innings.

I felt it was important to validate James's thoughts and feeling here so I agreed that captains are often perceived as individuals who should set the standards and drive the rest of the team forward (Cotterill et al., 2019). Similar to what is discussed above, since James was not in complete control of how many runs he could score however, we began to explore what smaller things he could do to help him score runs. Focusing on the game situation, having a plan, having the right attitude, and batting with intent were elements that were discussed and subsequent targets for games.

Having spoken a lot about the gains and drawbacks of focusing on process and controllables vs. outcomes and uncontrollables (Hermansson & Hodge, 2012), James made an interesting comment in our final online conversation. He said that in the past everything used to be about winning and scoring the most runs and if that didn't happen then it would be a disaster. Now he said, he realises that he is never going to be perfect but that all he can do is try to get better all the time. Similar to what Rogers (1961) describes as "being willing to be a process", James could recognise that he wasn't the finished article but was comfortable with it knowing his county team weren't expecting him to be. Ironically, by adopting such perspective and seeing cricket in this way, James said that his performances had actually improved and he didn't feel as much pressure going into games.

Despite being heavily performance focused, some of our conversations did adopt more of a holistic view of James' life and well-being. There were times where he identified a lack of rest and a busy school schedule beginning to impact his mood and performances on the pitch. I was present at one game towards the back end of the season when James told me this was his 12th match in the space of two weeks. It was no surprise, he told me, that he felt fatigued and didn't play as well as he knew he could in this as well as other games across this period. Given our previous conversations however, and now with what I felt was greater

self-awareness, James showed greater self-compassion. In spite of the poor performances, rather than becoming frustrated with himself, James admitted that a lack of rest may be the cause rather than a lack of ability. In what concluded this consultancy, our chats towards the end of the season focused on what he would do in the off-season to ensure he physically and mentally rested.

Intervention Evaluation

Monitoring through the season

The aim of this intervention was to help James enjoy playing cricket again. I feel the number interactions I had with James with across the season, benefited us as we were able to check-in and reflect on such goals as we progressed. The following paragraphs shed light on some of the feedback I received as we reflected on his progress throughout the season.

At the end of our first conversation I asked James how he felt talking to me about the challenges he was facing. He told me he found it helpful to chat and get things off his chest, especially as he hadn't had a conversation like that. He didn't think the situation would be resolved quickly but hoped that the more conversations we had like that one, he was sure we could work it out. Through the adoption of a PC approach, a feeling of relief is said to transpire within clients as they are freed to open up and begin to hear and understand themselves (Rogers, 1979). Given James' comments in this first session, I was already given some reassurance that I had been able to start building a therapeutic relationship and initiate movement toward growth.

Whilst at one of James's games, he told me that he was playing with less fear. After reflecting on the first three months of the season and our conversations in that time, he told me he was enjoying cricket again. Benefitted by talking to him on match day (Henriksen et al., 2014) and therefore being afforded the opportunity to reflect in action he told me that

he felt calm and ready to play. Feeling relaxed was where James said he needed to be as it enabled him to focus on his own game and not play for other people.

In most of our conversations James seemed in positive spirits. He told me that things were going well and that he now understood where he had gone wrong in previous seasons. Comments such as the ones I discuss above gave me some indication that the work we were doing was having impact and as a result, there were moments in the first few months where I felt it would be reasonable to end our consultancy. Understanding the volatile nature of sport (McDougall et al., 2015) and the complex and non-linear nature of talent development pathways (Taylor et al., 2022), I knew there would inevitably be more difficult moments to come across the season. As such, given the challenges young athletes face on such pathways (Hayman et al., 2020) and the need to provide support that helps them to overcome obstacles (Taylor et al., 2022), we decided against ending the consultancy after only a few months. Rather than formally arranging anymore 1:1 conversations, most of my time was spent from then on attending James's cricket matches and checking-in.

Termination of consultancy

Consistent with the manner in which I approached the intake and needs analysis (Keegan, 2015), to mark the end-point and to terminate the consultancy, I decided to speak to both James and John individually at the end of the season. Again, in these conversations I sought to evaluate whether the intervention had impact and if we had achieved our aim.

James told me that this season had been much more enjoyable than those in previous years. As we reflected on what we discussed in the very first session up until this conversation, James said that he had "just thought a lot more about himself and his cricket". As he had mentioned to me earlier on the consultancy, before this season James had thought he had to be at his best every game and if he wasn't then he would be letting those

around him down. Such thoughts meant James felt pressure to perform, subsequently leading to the enjoyment being taken out of cricket. If this would have continued, it would be plausible to suggest James would be at risk of burning-out (Gustafsson et al., 2018) or losing interest and dropping out of the sport (Crane & Temple, 2015). Through our conversations nonetheless, it appeared James was able to develop more of a realistic expectation of himself (Rogers, 1961). His self-awareness had developed significantly and said he felt greater clearer on what he needed to do and focus on to perform. To his own surprise at the time, James also told me that he had also been voted player of the season, an indication he felt of how well he had done this season.

Whilst what was discussed in mine and James' conversations was never disclosed to John, he told me that from the outside looking in, he felt he'd noticed a difference in James. John told me how James seemed lighter in how he walked and held himself on and off the field, something which stats would never pick up on but something which made a significant difference. From a personal point of view, John felt this season had also been easier for himself as a parent of a young athlete. Despite just wanting his son to enjoy playing, John was at odds with how to help James, particularly as he hadn't played the sport himself. They previously struggled to have a conversation about cricket without James getting defensive or shutting him down. This season however, John felt James was more receptive to having such conversations.

Practitioner Reflections

When my consultancy with James ended for the season, he told me that was eager for us to catch up again when he returned for pre-season. He felt as though we had accomplished a lot and thought it would be useful to continue speaking, even if less frequently, the following year. The fact James said he felt comfortable talking to me and

wanted to continue our conversations the following year, I felt provided further indication of the positive impact of the consultancy.. Despite this, some practitioners I have spoken to in the past have told me that our aim is to make ourselves redundant. Given what occurred in this case study and the context in which I conduct my consultancy work, I however disagree with that statement. For me, challenge and suffering is an inevitable part of being human and therefore at different point in their life individuals may require support to navigate these challenges. Young athletes face a number of obstacles on talent development pathways and whilst I recognise it is important they develop psycho-behavioural skills to overcome such difficulties themselves (Williams & MacNamara, 2022), given the developmental stage of life they are at, there will be occasions where support is required. I believe making myself completely redundant in this context therefore would be counter-intuitive.

As I've reflected on this consultancy, it became increasingly apparent that something which benefitted me was (a) how intelligent James was and (b) how receptive he was to talking. From the onset of our work I felt he was open, was able to articulate the challenges he was experiencing with great detail, demonstrated an exceptional ability to reflect on the self, and then put discussion into action. This only made my job a lot easier and helped me to practice in a manner which suited my preferences. Based on my own experiences of interacting with a number of adolescents involved in sport, I know this case is an anomaly rather than the norm. A population which can often be difficult to engage, it is for this reason that scholars have put effort into producing research which discusses how best to work with young athletes (see Henriksen et al., 2019; Thrower et al., 2023). Whilst I know all of my interactions with young athletes will not be as smooth as this consultancy, I have sought to consider whether there was anything about manner in which I approached

working James which may have contributed to such outcomes. Of most benefit, I believe, was the location of the consultancy delivery. Echoing points made by Henriksen et al. (2014) interacting with James on match day in his sporting environment meant our conversations were a lot more relaxed and informal in nature. Moreover, rather than trying to remember what was discussed in conversations a few days prior, talking before matches meant James was able to put into practice what we had spoken about that day.

It is only when writing and re-reading this case study that I have realised how it reads as though everything went well. Being someone who advocates for research to shed light on practitioners' unsuccessful stories I feel it is important to note the consultancy wasn't as linear as may be perceived. As I have tried to illustrate, there were instances where James felt stuck, struggled to come up with solutions, or where I found it difficult sticking to my PC approach. On the whole however, this consultancy did go well and in just a short space of time James appeared to benefit greatly from our conversations. This undoubtedly makes me feel great. As I am writing however I notice myself feeling guilty for how well it went and am beginning to second-guess and critically examine the dynamics at play. Paulhus (2001) describes social desirability bias as the tendency for individuals to overreport desirable attitudes and behaviours and underreport socially undesirable attributes. Reflecting on this in respect of this case study, apart from our first conversation, James always appeared upbeat and positive in spirits. Whilst this may have genuinely reflected how he was feeling, I feel I may have been naïve to James' perception of me and my role within the club. On match days he would see me interacting with coaches and wearing the same clothes as them. Despite being reassured that anything we discussed would be confidential, it is plausible James perceived me to be part of the coaching team and therefore whether conscious or not, could have been engaging in a form of impression management. In light of

this, my role within the club and relationships with the multi-disciplinary team may need to be a topic I discuss more explicitly with the athletes moving forward.

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Consultancy Case Study Three

Context

The Practitioner and Professional Philosophy

At the time of this case study I was in my third year of the Professional Doctorate in Sport and Exercise Psychology at Liverpool John Moores University. I had been working for a professional rugby club (Harriers – pseudonym) part-time for one-year as a sport psychology consultant, splitting my time between working with the boy's academy squads and women's first team.

As I was nearing the completion of my training toward becoming a chartered Sport and Exercise Psychologist, not only was I more aware of what my beliefs and values were, but also felt I was increasingly able to translate this for use when supporting clients (Poczwardowski et al., 2004). Some of my beliefs and values are that reality is subjective and multiple and that rather than humans existing within a vacuum, we are influenced by the socio-cultural environments in which we are embedded (Lincoln et al., 2011). I believe humans make sense of their lives through stories and that it is one's perception of a situation which is central to how they subsequently manage and overcome such events. I feel every individual has the capacity for growth and to initiate this, as a practitioner I aim to work alongside the clients, developing their awareness of the self and their current situation (Ravizza & Fifer, 2014).

As a result of these preferences, my approach to service delivery can be considered as integrated (Keegan, 2015). Whilst I strive to draw upon humanistic principles to build therapeutic relationship with clients (Rogers, 1957), I have perceived, in some instances, the need to be more practitioner-led due to clients struggling to (a) identify areas for development and/or (b) consider methods to overcome the difficulties they are

encountering. I believe this has particularly been the case given my work is predominantly with younger athletes who are involved in talent development pathways. This is supported by literature whereby scholars have found this population may need to be actively supported in developing psycho-behavioural and meta-cognitive skills (Williams & MacNamara, 2022). As I have deemed a pure Rogerian approach to be unsuitable in some cases, I have subsequently drawn upon a cognitive-behavioural paradigm in which I aim to work alongside clients to facilitate change and work towards growth. With emphasis being placed on collaborative empiricism and interventions targeting cognitive change (Beck, 2011), this orientation aligns well with the beliefs and values I discuss above.

The Client

The individual in this case study (Amy – pseudonym) was a 19-year-old female who had recently signed for Harriers. Amy had started playing rugby at school at the age of 12 before signing for her local rugby club at the age of 13. Playing as a front-row forward (also known as a prop), Amy has since represented her nation at the U18 level and had aspirations of competing in Premiership Women's Rugby, (the league Harriers were playing in and the highest level of the Women's English Rugby Union system), as well as playing for her nation's Senior Women's team. Alongside her sporting career, Amy was studying a full-time degree at a higher education institution in the UK. She reached out to me seeking psychological support in relation to her sporting career.

The Consultancy Process

Intake and Needs Analysis

Our first meeting took place over Zoom and I used the opportunity to ask Amy questions about her life in and out of sport, discuss the challenges she was facing, and explore her goals for our consultancy (Keegan, 2015). As Amy had never spoke to a (trainee)

Sport Psychologist before, I also used this time to explain what the role of a sport psychologist is, how I seek to work as a practitioner, and provide information about confidentiality and my professional training pathway (Keegan, 2015). We decided on a non-disclosure agreement meaning anything discussed in our conversations I would not disclose to anyone at the rugby club.

Amy told me that for the last few years she had been vomiting before rugby matches. An issue which was occurring before matches, Amy explained that she couldn't understand why it was happening. As I explored this further, Amy went on to say that as soon as she wakes up on match day she feels nauseous, a feeling in her stomach which worsens throughout the day as she approaches kick-off. Due to these symptoms, she would often be sick as soon as she wakes up in the morning or at some point before or after the warm-up. Regardless of when it happens, Amy said it impacted her diet and hydration as she struggled to "keep anything down" on the day of the game. She also recognised the negative impact this was having on her performance as there were occasions where she had played and felt low on energy due to not eating. Amy's team-mates were aware of the situation and it had "become a bit of a running joke between her peers". Despite the somatic feelings she experienced prior to matches, as soon as the game starts the symptoms were said to disappear. Asked what would constitute success in regard to our work together, Amy stated she would like to know why this is happening and would like to stop being sick.

Picking up on the language Amy used, I noticed (a) she said she was 'often' sick rather than it being something which occurs before every game, and (b) that it only occurred on match days and not training sessions. She struggled to answer why however this was the case. When asked to reflect on games she wasn't sick and if there was anything we could learn from those instances (De Shazer, et al., 2021), Amy drew upon a recent example where

in a university game she was so busy organising the mini-bus and the team's kit that she had no time to think about the match. Amy was also able to identify that when playing for university, because the standard of competition wasn't very high, she felt a lot more relaxed going into the games and can enjoy the occasion more (Mellalieu et al., 2004). Because of this, Amy was sick less frequently when playing for university.

Since playing for the Harriers would be a step-up in competition level in comparison to where she had played previously, Amy was concerned whether her nausea symptoms would worsen. Curious as to what Amy was specifically concerned about, her response was being sick and not wanting to make mistakes and let team-mates and coaches down. A question used to identify the content of her cognitions, I asked what I would hear if I was inside her head on the day and in the build to the game (Harris, 2019). Whilst this was difficult question to answer due to its hypothetical nature, Amy explained how as a result of the perceived pressure on her to perform, there would probably be some thoughts around needing to playing well and worries surrounding what would happen if she was unsuccessful in doing so. Given everything we had discussed to this point, I began to notice a pattern emerging and asked whether the thoughts she was experiencing could be linked to her being sick. After pausing for a moment to think, she asked what I mean by this, to which I offered my hypothesis that her worrying thoughts may be causing the somatic symptoms. This seemed to land well and Amy explained how despite never seeing it that way, it could be plausible. She had never reflected on what was going on in her head prior to matches and felt getting herself "worked up" by these thoughts may be a contributing factor to her nauseousness.

Case Formulation

From Amy's perspective, our work together was to be a success if I could help her to (a) understand why she was being sick, and (b) stop being sick before rugby matches.

Through our discussions in what constituted my needs analysis, by inviting Amy to reflect on why she believed she was vomiting and to notice her thoughts prior to games, I felt she had already made progress in regard to understanding why she was being sick. By her own admission, she believed her worrying thoughts may be linked to the somatic symptoms of anxiety and the subsequent vomiting before matches. This was something Amy had never considered previously but said made a lot of sense upon reflection.

With buy-in being a crucial component of intervention effectiveness (Sharp et al., 2015), I decided to follow Amy's lead and place her cognitions and thought patterns as the focal point of this intervention. Through our needs analysis, I was confident we had already begun identifying some of Amy's dysfunctional thought patterns, such as "needing to play well", which may have precipitated a feeling of nauseousness and caused her to vomit before rugby matches (Eubank et al. 2020). Through the adoption of a cognitive behavioural therapy (CB) approach, our work would centre upon modifying and re-shaping the rules and automatic assumptions Amy had adopted (Hayes & Hoffman, 2018). In doing so, this would open Amy up to alternative and more realistic expectations for herself in the build-up to rugby matches (Eubank et al., 2020). By initiating such cognitive change, it is hoped this would lead to a change in the somatic symptoms she experiences, subsequently meaning she would no longer vomit prior to competition.

With intentions to build therapeutic relationships with clients and aiming to work alongside them in order to facilitate growth, a CB approach aligns with my core beliefs and values by virtue of the emphasis it places on collaborative empiricism (Kazantzis et al., 2013). An underpinning assumption of a CB approach is that information-processing biases, such as

distorted thinking, play a role in the development and maintenance of psychological difficulties (Carona, 2023). This perspective aligns further with my own beliefs as a practitioner since I believe it is one's perception of a situation which is central to how they subsequently manage and overcome such events.

Intervention Delivery

Across the intervention our conversations followed a similar structure in that we (a) recapped what had been discussed previously, (b) explored how things had been since we last spoke, and (c) summarised what we had discussed and formed a plan regarding next steps (Turner et al., 2020). By virtue of this approach to the consultancy, for ease of reading I have presented this section in a manner which illustrates what was covered session-by-session.

Session 1

With our first few sessions seeming to help Amy make sense of why she was vomiting before performances, I started this session by asking if she had any further thoughts since these initial conversations. Amy maintained that despite this being a problem which had occurred for some time, until our conversation she hadn't personally reflected or taken the opportunity to discuss with someone what was causing her nausea. Somewhat of an epiphany, talking about what was happening benefitted Amy and she shared a similar opinion to myself in that there may be a relationship between her worrying and unhelpful thoughts and symptoms of nausea.

Since the aim of this intervention was to initiate cognitive change, time was spent reflecting on the dysfunctional thinking patterns Amy previously engaged in prior to matches, evaluating their usefulness, and subsequently trying to restructure these into thoughts which were more useful (Turner et al., 2020). Amy recalled thinking before a recent

U18 game that they were “must win games” and that if her team were to be successful, then she “needed to play well”. Feeling as though it was important not to dismiss these thoughts and suggest they were wrong, but instead help her to evaluate their usefulness in light of the context, I asked Amy what the immediate consequences were of her engaging with such thoughts (Harris, 2019). Having let herself “get worked up” by them she told me she was sick in the changing rooms just after the warm-up. By virtue of this insight, I felt we were able to create a level of ambivalence (Eubank et al., 2020) as whilst winning and playing well was still important to Amy, her anecdote reinforced the idea that her pre-match thoughts may not be useful and may be causing the nausea.

Based on the above pre-match thoughts, through the use of Socratic questions such as “what assumptions are you making here?” and “what would the consequences be if you didn’t win?” Amy recognised how high an expectation she was placing on herself, particularly as in team sports there is only so much one player can control and at best influence (Allen et al., 2012). Having created cognitive doubt, Amy was asked what thoughts would be more useful leading into games. She liked the idea of setting goals and felt setting ones that were more in her control would take some of the pressure off (Martens, 1991). Amy wanted to have an impact on games and identified a number of areas in which she could achieve this. Playing as a prop, this included in the scrum, lineouts, rucks, and mauls for example. Admittedly, my lack of rugby knowledge limited me at this point and I relied on Amy to come up with suggestions regarding what goals to set based on these phases of the game. Despite literature suggesting athletes should set performance goals which are specific and measurable (Bird et al., 2024), a difficulty we faced lie in knowing what goals to set or elements of the match to focus on without there being too many. To navigate this, I asked Amy what she looks like at her best on the pitch, her response being that she is loud,

dominant, and aggressive. Rather than setting performance goals, I asked therefore whether it would be possible to use these attributes as goals for upcoming games. After clarifying what she meant by the above characteristics, rather than focusing on needing to win or playing well, Amy's goals moving forward were to (1) communicate consistently through the game, (2) be brave and courageous, and (3) be aggressive but controlled. Conscious she may forget these by gameday, Amy made a note of them in her notebook and said she would remind herself of them the night before and on the morning of the game.

Session 2

In the time since our previous conversation, Amy played in three games, one for her university team and two for Harriers. Indicating how much she was buying into our work together, as well as revisiting her journal to remind herself of the goals we set, she had also taken it upon herself to right down the thoughts she was experiencing and tried to reframe them into phrases which were more positive. Performance wise, Amy was happy with how the games had gone and told me that she wasn't vomited in the university game or the second match for Harriers. Comparatively, in her debut for Harriers she was violently sick. Offering further context, Amy said she was too busy in the build-up to think about the university game and in her second appearance for Harriers she was on the bench and only came on as a replacement in the last few minutes of the game. In what was her debut for Harriers however, from the moment she was told earlier that week that she was going start, a sense of fear engulfed her. Despite writing down her thoughts and goals the night before, an exercise which had previously helped to settle her nerves, she was consumed by worries and a butterfly feeling from the moment she woke that morning. Experiencing thoughts such as "I'm going to get exposed", "Don't mess up", and "I'm not good enough", Amy vomited as soon as the team entered the changing rooms.

Despite her vomiting, Amy felt like some progress had been made in the other two games and setting goals within her control offered greater clarity going into games. Prior to the Harriers debut however she found it difficult to reframe thoughts and “got caught up in the heat of the moment”. As I listened to Amy describing her experience however, the phrase “I’m not good enough” piqued my interest. Such thoughts suggested that rather than being negative automatic thoughts, Amy’s cognitive distortions may actually be deeper routed core beliefs (Beck, 2011). As a result, I sought to explore the beliefs Amy held about herself in greater depth. Being someone who frequently picks out the negative rather than the positive in whatever she does, Amy explained that whilst she aspired to play at the highest level of women’s rugby, she had always doubted whether she could make it. Through her choice of vocabulary, it became increasingly apparent that Amy was dominated by the core belief that she was not good enough. Given the challenges faced in changing these schemas (Wenzel, 2012), despite Amy feeling as though we were moving in the right direction, I knew some time would need to be spent trying to modify these beliefs.

To gauge how much Amy associated with the core belief, I used a scaling question, asking out of 100 (with 100 being the highest), how strongly she believed it to be true (Wenzel, 2012). After giving a response of 70, Amy was asked to reflect on whether there was any evidence which contradicted the belief (Arntz et al., 2018). Time was then spent discussing moments from Amy’s first two appearances for Harriers, performances for her national team, and feedback she had received from coaches, all of which we agreed provided evidence that opposed her views. We agreed repeating this exercise over time and reminding herself of this evidence may be a worthwhile activity to boost her confidence (Dobson & Dobson, 2009; Perry, 2019), particularly in the build-up to games. Indicating some

progression, when asked the same scaling question after this brief exercise, Amy responded with an answer of 60.

By this point we were 30 minutes into the session before Amy apologised and told me she had to leave for a physio appointment. Despite feeling as though we had only just started challenging Amy's core belief, I briefly summarised what we had discussed in this and the previous session and Amy reiterated she was happy with the progress she felt we had made. I explained how in the next session we may revisit and continue our conversation and in the meantime her plan was to continue with the goals we had set previously. Using the notes she had made, Amy planned to remind herself about what we had discussed and felt increasingly equipped to reframe unhelpful thoughts if needed.

Session 3

A month later Amy reached out to me to arrange another meeting. Despite not experiencing as intense cognitive or somatic symptoms as she had done in previous games, Amy was sick before both games she played for Harriers. Frustrated as she struggled to understand why, having been vomiting prior to matches for the last few years, she wondered if her being sick had become a habit. Using Duhigg (2012) as a reference, I showed and described to Amy how habits are formed and reinforced (see Figure 1). Using the habit loop to help Amy make sense of her experience, we felt her being sick was a routine she had developed that was caused by unhelpful thoughts being triggered by the cue that was a rugby match. Rather than being a 'reward' per se, being sick seemed to act as a release of tension and worry for Amy in the build-up to games. In what seemed to help her develop even greater self-awareness, I asked Amy how she would like to proceed with the session, to which she felt it would be useful to reshape her perception of the cue (rugby matches) by continuing to target the core belief previously identified.

Amy told me that she hadn't performed as well as she had hoped in both of the games. Returning to her desire to have an impact, she felt she was avoidant on the pitch and believed minor errors impacted her willingness to want the ball. With the benefit of hindsight, Amy was of the opinion that being sick threw her out of her routine and simply reminding herself of the three goals would have been a useful strategy. Of greater concern for Amy were her thoughts and feelings post-match. With high expectations and a tendency to ruminate on mistakes, performances like these appeared to significantly impact her mood. I asked whether such feelings fuelled the core belief that she wasn't good enough to compete at this level, to which she agreed.

Aware Amy liked using her notebook to jot down thoughts during our conversations and revisit these around match day, I asked her to reflect on what went well and what she would have liked to do differently in the last two games (Chow & Luzzeri, 2019). An activity which aimed to gain evidence that would support the new core belief (Beck, 2011), at first this proved difficult with Amy finding it easier to pick out her faults (Ito et al., 1998). By using a timeline to explore what happened phase-by-phase in the match, Amy eventually was able to talk me through moments where she made line breaks or helped other prop before scrums. After reinforcing how this offered evidence that she had the technical and psychological competence to compete at this level, I felt it was important to try and help Amy rationalise and have perspective of the situation in relation to her age and experience. Similar to previous conversations, we discussed her making mistakes as something which was normal, expected, and important for learning and development (Anshel, 2016). Whilst she understood this, she highlighted how easily that can be forgotten in an environment where emphasis is placed predominantly on performance (McDougall et al., 2015).

Having extracted the positives and not just the negatives from the previous games, Amy felt this was another exercise which may be useful implement moving forward. Aware that emotions can be heightened and perspective be skewed immediately after performances, she felt doing it a day or two after a match would be most beneficial (Chow & Luzzi, 2019). To finish, I recapped Amy's goals before summarising our attempts to challenge her core belief. In the next few weeks Amy had a university and Harriers game that she may have been selected for so we agreed to meet after.

Early Termination

It transpired that the third session I had with Amy ended up being the last. A difficulty experienced by most dual career athletes (Harrison et al., 2022), I was told by a coach that Amy was struggling to balance university whilst also playing for Harriers and therefore decided to leave the club so that she could focus on her studies whilst still playing for the university team. Given the work we had done to this point, I messaged Amy to see if she would be willing to continue our conversations, however she never replied. Despite her telling me that she found our sessions helpful, I wasn't sure whether the lack of a reply indicated otherwise or if there was another reason. As could be expected, terminating the consultancy in this manner nonetheless, was incredibly frustrating.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Since the aim of our work was to help Amy stop being sick, it is clear this intervention did not completely fulfil its aims. That said, Amy expressed a desire to understand why she was being sick and so in that regard, I feel like we were successful to some degree. As sessions progressed, and as we discussed in greater depth the challenges Amy was experiencing, I got the sense that her self-awareness was increasingly growing. We started the consultancy with her having never thought about why she was being sick. As

conversations evolved however, we went from thinking unhelpful automatic thoughts were initiating somatic symptoms and causing her to vomit, through to believing deeper routed core beliefs may be central to the challenges she was facing. Across the consultancy, a considerable amount of time was spent trying to modify and reshape Amy's cognitive distortions and by her own admission, our conversations left her feeling as though we were making progress. Personally, I felt if afforded more time we could have made greater strides in helping her to overcome the difficulties experienced.

If I had reached a point in which I felt we could terminate the consultancy, consistent with the manner in which I approached the intake and needs analysis, to evaluate I would have had a 1:1 discussion with Amy (Keegan, 2015). An approach I have utilised with previous clients, this would have enabled me to gain feedback not only on whether we have achieved our goals but also how Amy found working with me as a practitioner.

As time was spent discussing the cognitive and somatic symptoms Amy was experiencing prior to competition, on reflection it may have also been useful for Amy to have completed the Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (Martens et al., 1990). Doing this (a) at the start of our work together, (b) before her matches, and (c) at end of our consultancy could have afforded greater insight into her experiences, and as we progressed, may have presented somewhat of a correlation between her anxiety symptoms and her vomiting. As someone who prefers speaking 1:1 with clients and therefore have often been reluctant to use psychometrics, this consultancy has changed my perspective and opened my eyes to the value they can add to my consultancy.

Practitioner Reflections

Despite the frustration experienced at not having the opportunity to 'finish' this consultancy, with greater experience working in multiple sporting contexts, I feel this case

study offers an illustration of what sport psychology consultancy is often like. I have found that a lot of my interactions with athletes have been brief and have often only consisted of one or two sessions, much to the contrary of traditional sport psychology literature which portrays 1:1 work with athletes as a linear process consisting of an intake, needs analysis, case formulation, intervention, and evaluation (Keegan, 2015; 2017). As a result, at the start of my training pathway I was naïve in thinking my consultancy would follow suit and unsurprisingly, I felt I was doing something wrong when it didn't. It was only when engaging in wider reading and reflecting on my experiences with supervisors that I appreciated the fast-paced nature of sporting environments often means practitioners are tasked with conducting their needs analysis and delivering an impactful intervention in just one session (Birrer et al., 2012; Britton et al., 2024). Whilst previously I would have perceived this as the athlete not seeing the conversation as useful, research suggests single sessions are a viable avenue in which to help athletes understand and come up with solutions to their difficulties (Pitt et al., 2015). Viewing this case study through that lens, whilst it was frustrating that Amy didn't get back to me after the third session, it is plausible she may have felt my support wasn't no longer required.

As Amy was the first person I had supported who was sick before competitions, there were a number of occasions across this consultancy that my lack of knowledge in this area made me feel out of my depth. To try and navigate this I consulted the literature hoping to develop my own understanding of what was happening and how others had helped athletes presenting with the same challenges. To my surprise however, there was a lack of research which discussed or aimed to explore why, from a psychological perspective, athletes were sick prior to competition. Having spoken to my supervisors about the case, anecdotally I knew it was commonly experienced by athletes and yet the only research I found explored

how anxiety (Wilson et al., 2021), and exercise intensity and duration (Wilson, 2019) can lead to gastrointestinal distress during (rather than prior to) exercise. Fortunately, one of my supervisors had previously utilised a cognitive-behavioural framework to help an athlete who was sick before competition and so I was able to draw upon their knowledge, make sense of Amy's case, and begin to help. Emphasising how important a role supervisors have in trainee practitioner's development, without this support I would have found it even harder to support Amy (Hutter & Pijpers, 2020). With such a significant gap within the literature regarding psychological factors influencing symptoms of nausea in sport, I hope this case study can pique the interest of scholars and initiate an emergence of research on this area.

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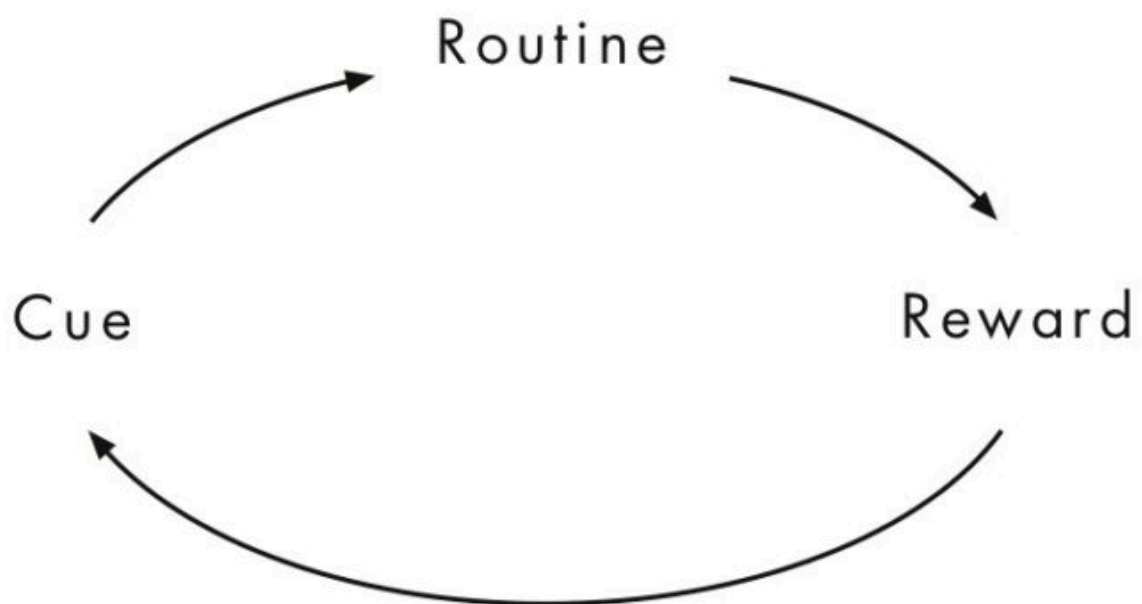
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Figure 1

Image of habit loop shown to Amy to illustrate how habits are formed and reinforced



Consultancy Contract/Report

Client Contract

SWhitfield
Psychology

Consultancy Contract

Name of person taking consent: Scott Whitfield
Telephone: 07947757312
Email: scott.whitfield@live.co.uk

1. I confirm I aware that Scott Whitfield is currently a candidate on Professional Doctorate in Sport and Exercise Psychology course at Liverpool John Moores University which is an approved accreditation route designed to meet BPS Stage 2 requirements and leads to eligibility for registration as a Sport and Exercise Psychologist with the Health and Care Professions (HCPC). I am also aware that he is being supervised by Professor Joanne Butt (j.butt@lmu.ac.uk) and that he is able to use the title of 'Trainee Sport and Exercise Psychologist.'



2. I understand our work is bound by the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct. This means everything discussed will be confidential, unless informed consent is given by myself to disclose information to a third party. I also understand that if the Trainee Sport and Exercise Psychologist feels I may be under threat or harm to myself or others, confidentiality may be breached and this information may be communicated to an external party.



3. I understand that whilst all information will be stored on a password protected laptop, it may be written up, in an anonymised form, for educational purposes. This means that it may be read by a number of people connected with training, including supervisors and assessors. I give my permission for my anonymous data, which does not identify me, to be disseminated in this way.



4. I understand there is no time limit to this contract and that our work will continue for as long as both parties feel is appropriate. I understand the cost of each session is £30 and agree to pay the full amount.



5. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and that these have been answered satisfactorily



Name of client: (name removed to maintain anonymity)
Date: 03/10/22
Signature: (removed to maintain anonymity)

Client Report

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of our work across the four consultancy sessions. I have outlined the intervention aims we agreed at the onset before providing an overview of each session.

Session 1

Having never met before my aim for this session was to try and get to know you and your intentions behind seeking psychological support. I also wanted to share a bit about myself, allowing you to get to know my background from a sporting point of view but also a professional perspective. I disclosed how I like to work as a psychologist and what our sessions would look like moving forward.

You described yourself as a competitive and driven individual who would like to pursue a career as a professional football player. That said, you are keeping your options open and are aware of how competitive the sport is which is why you enrolled with the ***name*** academy which meant you could train and play at a high standard alongside gaining qualifications related to your interests. In regard to why you are seeking psychological support, in the last four matches you have been carded and in the most recent match got sent off for reasons you suggest are due to you losing your head in the heat of the moment. You acknowledged the negative impact this is having on your development as a football player and on your team. Your coach was the person who recommended you sought support from a sport psychologist to see whether it may help you. This was an idea you were open to which is why the coach contacted me.

We explored why you believed you were losing your head in the heat of the moment and you said you hated losing and in the games where you were carded the match wasn't going the way you would have liked. You also mentioned that you had recently been injured

which was an incredibly frustrating period for yourself. You felt you were not able to contribute and being new to the team, were not able to demonstrate your ability. As a result, you said in the last couple of games you may have been too pumped up for the game as you wanted to make up for lost time. You were encouraged to reflect on this, considering what was going on in your head and how you were feeling before and during the game and whether your thoughts and feelings were helpful for performance. You said that usually what goes through your head before games is that you tell yourself every pass, tackle and header had to be perfect during the game. This interested me and I asked you to elaborate on this statement. I asked whether it was helpful and you acknowledged that you have high expectations for yourself but on reflection could notice that the idea of every pass, tackle and header needing to be perfect may be unattainable. We named these thoughts the 'perfection narrative'.

Finally, we explored deeper why you believed you may have become too pumped up in games and why you were losing your head in games. We reflected on everything that had happened up to this point. Putting in context you moving to Alicante, wanting to become pro, wanting to prove yourself, having unrealistic performance expectations, getting injured and since coming back from injury you said you could understand the chain of events and maybe why you ended up getting too pumped for the game and subsequently frustrated when it wasn't going the way you had planned. As a result of our conversation I asked you what you would like to work on in our sessions and what would constitute success. These aims are outlined below.

Intervention aims

1. Learn how to manage emotions your better
2. Learn how to better cope with pressure

Session 2

We started this session by recapping the first session and you were asked whether you had any further thoughts. You maintained you would like us to work on managing emotions better and articulated that from our first discussion you could see that it may be your own actions and behaviours which were creating pressure to perform.

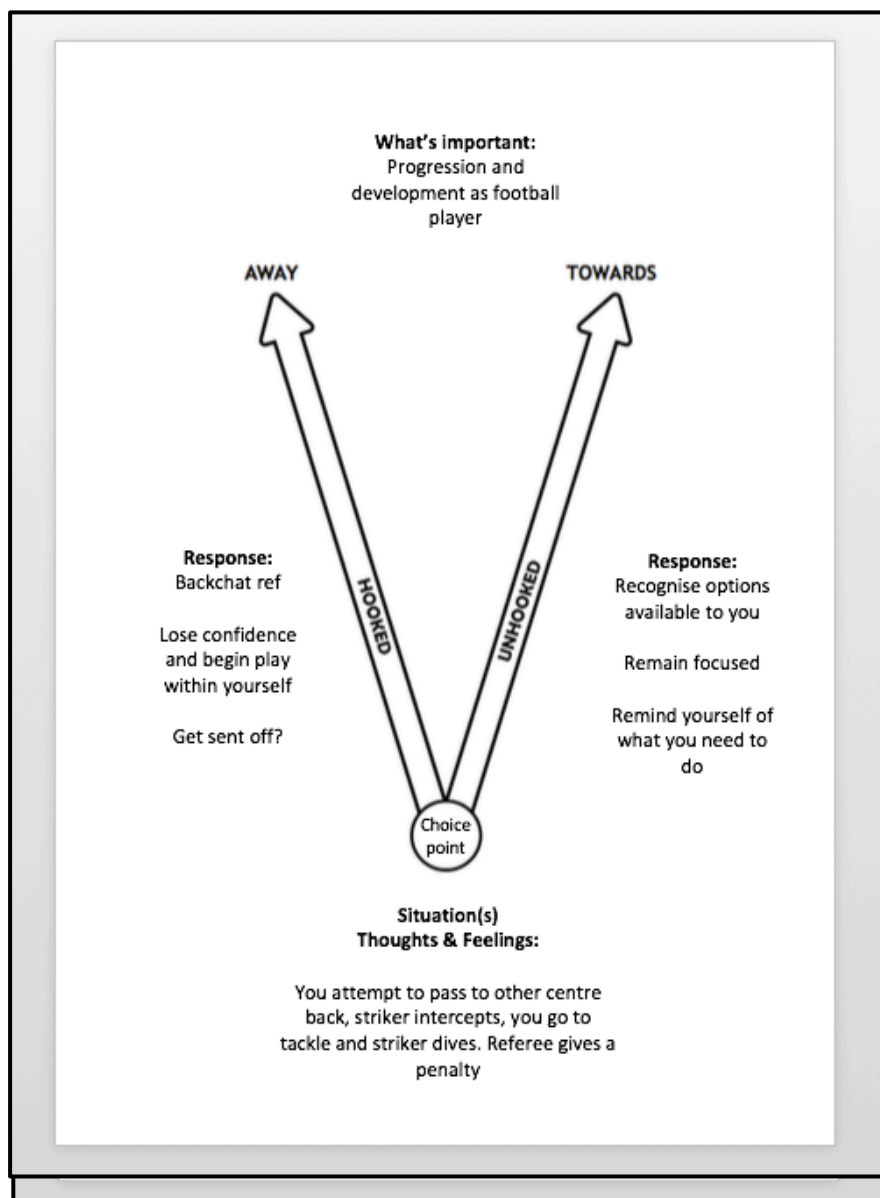
My aim was to increase your psychological flexibility and we started by delving into the 'perfection narrative' and how living by statements like these may have been influencing how you feel and behave going to matches. I outlined my aim was to help you enter a position where you could observe your thoughts without being ruled by them and you were asked to reflect on the statement "thoughts aren't facts". You seemed surprised by this statement and said you had never thought of it like that. To further illustrate the point of unhooking from thoughts we continued by doing the hands as thoughts and feelings exercise and I reinforced the point of being able to look at rather than through thoughts.

At this point you said you struggled to see how this related to your sports performance so I showed you an image of a choice point (see Figure 1). We used the example of the match where you got sent off and you described your thoughts and feelings going into the game. We then identified what was important to you before then how you behaved when you let these thoughts rule you (which led to being sent off) and how you may behave differently if you unhooked from these thoughts. You said this made sense and made the comment that by creating space between ourselves and our thoughts that we were almost taking the power back and could control our actions. You said the choice point could help you see how becoming hooked or unhooked from thoughts could move us away or towards our goals and understood why it was important.

After these exercises I reinforced the idea that you do not always have to act on your thoughts and that in all situations there are choices available to you. Your challenge for this week was to put into practice looking at rather than through thoughts and in the next games or training session try to notice whether your thoughts are helpful or not and whether acting on them moves you closer or away from your goals.

Figure 1

Choice point used to illustrate how becoming hooked or unhooked by thoughts can move us away or towards what is important to us



Session 3

We recapped the previous session and you were asked how the week had been and whether you had any thoughts or questions. During the match on the weekend you said you gave some thought to our discussion. You noticed the 'perfection narrative' playing out in your head again however you were able to recognise that you did not have to act on these and instead tried to remind yourself that it is fine to make mistakes and if you do make a mistake, what is most important is how you react to it. You said this had some positive effect as whilst you still got annoyed at yourself in the game after errors you felt you were better able to keep your cool, you said you felt calmer going into the match and did not feel as much pressure despite playing for an older team. You also didn't get carded which was a bonus!

Following this and to consolidate your ability to defuse from thoughts we did the defusion experiment in which we discussed the difference between the phrases: "I need to be perfect", "I'm having the thought that I need to be perfect", and "I notice I'm having the thought that I'm perfect". This reinforced your idea of taking power back from your thoughts, stepping away from them and being aware of the options available to you when presented with a thought. We discussed how often in life we go on auto-pilot and go about our everyday actions without conscious thought however doing these exercises you said it made you realise how we have control in our lives and how we need to reflect on what we're doing in order to improve.

You decided to share how you used to play golf and how you ended up burning out and quitting. I asked you why this was, a question which you said you had not reflected on before. After some thought I asked whether there were any similarities between your experiences playing golf and football. This almost seemed to be a lightbulb moment in which

you connected the demands you were placing on yourself while playing golf to the 'perfection narrative' that had started in football. This conversation feed into a discussion surrounding the workability of the 'perfection' narrative and we weighed up the short and long-term implications of you living by narrative. We agreed that long-term it may be unhealthy to consistently place the expectation on yourself to always be perfect and that if not managed it could lead to burn out, a lack of enjoyment and/or a lack of development in football.

Following our discussions around the importance of being able to unhook from thoughts I reintroduced the choice point that we looked at last week and we focused on the question at the top of the sheet which is 'what's important'. I explained the importance of self-awareness and having clarity in regard to which direction it is we want to be travelling in. Having this clarity allows us to be more clear in regard to what a 'towards' move is in comparison to an 'away' move. You said you understood this and we finished the session by me sending you over a values sheet. You were encouraged in the next week to consider the 10 things that are most important to you in life. I also sent you the leaves on a stream audio file which helped you practice defusing from thoughts. Over the next week your task was to continue practicing defusing from thoughts in football-related situations as well as everyday situations.

Session 4

We recapped the work we had done so far and caught up on how your week had been. You said you had been able to draw upon the work we had done so far and used what we had spoken about in games. You had noticed a difference in how you have been responding to errors in games. You said our conversations have allowed you to take a step back, see the bigger picture and take perspective of the whole situation. Previously you had

been so focused on each game and trying to live through the perfection narrative whereas now you said you have been able to zoom out and see your development as a long-term thing which has many peaks and troughs. This has meant you have become more accepting of mistakes and have therefore felt less pressure to perform. As a result, you said you have felt more relaxed going into games which is the state you said you need to be in to perform (in comparison to feeling too pumped up like you were when we first started our work). It was great for me to hear this and demonstrated to me that our work was having some effect. It was also great to hear how maturely you spoke about your game and your development from a sporting and psychological point of view.

In the next part of the session we looked at the values sheet which you had completed (see Figure 2). You identified a number of values and said you struggled to narrow these down to 10. We discussed what your definition was for each of the values and discussed how each can help you lead your life and make decisions. We discussed the difference between values and goals and used the compass metaphor to explain how values can be used to help us reach our goals. We then split your values into three categories and discussed how much time you are allocating to each category and how much time you want or need to be allocating to each category (see Figure 3). You said this was helpful to reflect on and something you hadn't considered before. You said this would be useful to think about moving forward as it would support you in achieving your career goals but also realising how to support your mental health.

As we reached the end of the session we reflected on everything we had covered so far and assessed where you were at the start of the consultancy and where you are now. On reflection you said at the start of our sessions you felt really tight and that the perfection narrative made you feel rigid in life. Contrasting that to now, you said you feel like you have

afforded yourself more wiggle room, feel less rigid and that you are allowing yourself to make mistakes. You said you feel more equipped to deal with your thoughts and emotions and now you have the tools to defuse from thoughts. You said you understood how you were being ruled by your thoughts but now have the awareness that the choice is yours in regard to how you deal with thoughts and behave. You said you feel positive about the future. I agreed that there is a massive difference in how you are talking about football and your development and career. I asked whether you feel as though we had met our agreed intervention aims. You said you felt we had and we agreed that you had the tools and resources to manage your emotions moving forward. Whilst this would be our last session, we agreed to stay in touch and re-connect at a later date if you felt necessary.

Figure 2

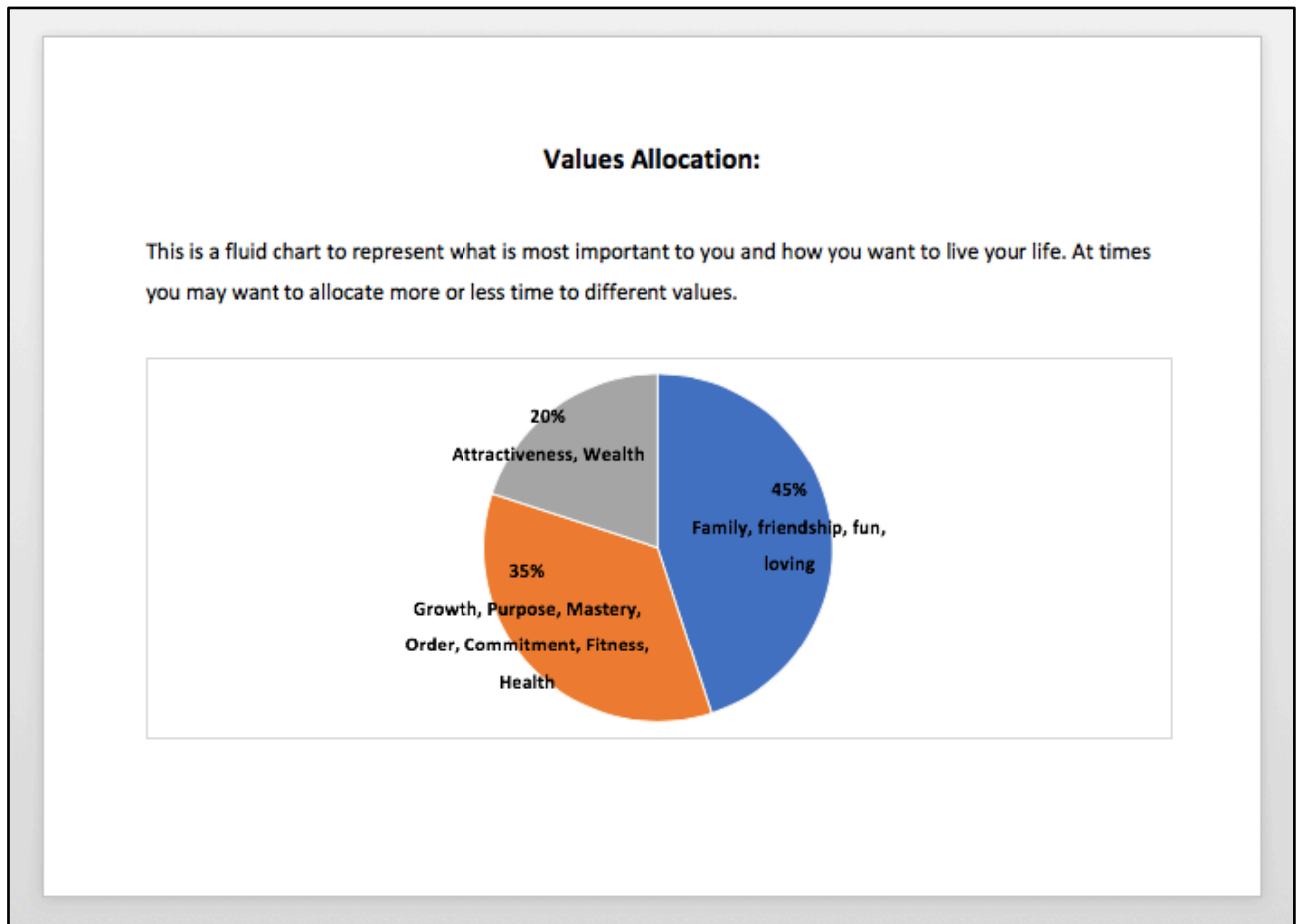
Values sheet used to connect the client with what was important to him

| What I Value Most | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| DUTY to carry out my duties and responsibilities | MINDFULNESS to live conscious and mindful of the present moment | CHALLENGE to take on difficult tasks and problems | TOLERANCE to accept and respect those who differ from me | WORLD PEACE to work to promote peace in the world | NON-CONFORMITY to question and challenge authority and norms |
| WEALTH to have plenty of money | CONTRIBUTION to make a lasting contribution in the world | CHANGE to have a life full of change and variety | COURTESY to be considerate and polite toward others | AUTONOMY (to be self-determined and independent) | MASTERY to be competent in my everyday activities |
| RISK to take risks and chances | PASSION to have deep feelings about ideas, activities, or people | ACHIEVEMENT to have important accomplishments | FUN to play and have fun | INTIMACY to share innermost experiences with others | HUMILITY to be modest and unassuming |
| LOVED to be loved by those close to me | SIMPLICITY to live simply, with minimal needs | MONOGAMY to have one close, loving relationship | PURPOSE to have meaning and direction in my life | SELF CONTROL to be disciplined in my own actions | ACCURACY to be accurate in my opinions and beliefs |
| LOVING to give love to others | SELF-ACCEPTANCE to accept myself as I am | POWER to have control over others | SELF-ESTEEM to feel good about myself | SELF-KNOWLEDGE to have a deep and honest understanding of myself | SERVICE to be of service to others |
| HOPE to maintain an optimistic and positive outlook | MODERATION to avoid excesses and find a middle ground | GROWTH to keep changing and growing | TRADITION to follow respected patterns of the past | SEXUALITY to have an active and satisfying sex life | FAME to be known and recognised |
| HEALTH to be physically well & healthy | ACCEPTANCE to be accepted as I am | PLEASURE to feel good | KNOWLEDGE to learn and contribute valuable knowledge | HELPFULNESS to be helpful to others | ECOLOGY to live in harmony with the environment |
| DEPENDABILITY to be reliable and trustworthy | VIRTUE to live a morally pure and excellent life | RATIONALITY to be guided by reason and logic | COMFORT to have a pleasant and comfortable life | EXCITEMENT to have a life full of thrills and stimulation | SOLITUDE to have time and space where I can be apart from others |
| GENUINENESS to act in a manner that is true to who I am | STABILITY to have a life that stays fairly consistent | FORGIVENESS to be forgiving of others | LEISURE to take time to relax and enjoy | CREATIVITY to have new and original ideas | NURTURANCE to take care of and nurture others |
| HUMOUR to see the humorous side of myself and the world | SAFETY to be safe and secure | ATTRACTIVENESS to be physically attractive | FLEXIBILITY to adjust to new circumstances easily | POPULARITY to be well-liked by many people | FITNESS to be physically fit and strong |
| COMMITMENT to make enduring, meaningful commitments | CARING to take care of others | ROMANCE to have intense, exciting love in my life | REALISM to see and act realistically and practically | FAITHFULNESS to be loyal and true in relationship | BEAUTY to appreciate beauty around me |
| COOPERATION to work collaboratively with others | COMPASSION to feel and act on concern for others | GENEROSITY to give what I have to others | SPIRITUALITY to grow and mature spiritually | RESPONSIBILITY to make and carry out responsible decisions | JUSTICE to promote fair and equal treatment for all |
| HONESTY to be honest and truthful | INDUSTRY to work hard and well at my life tasks | ADVENTURE to have new and exciting experiences | INNER PEACE to experience personal peace | OPENNESS to be open to new experiences, ideas, and options | AUTHORITY to be in charge of and responsible for others |
| FRIENDSHIP to have close, supportive friends | INDEPENDENCE to be free from dependence on others | ORDER to have a life that is well-organised | FAMILY to have a happy, loving family | | |

Miller, W.R., C'abaca, J., Matthews, D.B., & Wilbourne, P.L. (2001) University of New Mexico.

Figure 3

Pie chart created to illustrate to the client how much time he said he wanted to spend on each value



Client Feedback

Due to a busy sporting schedule and the client travelling to the USA which created difficulties gaining feedback, instead of arranging an interview I emailed five questions to the client in attempt of evaluating the intervention. Seeking feedback via email meant the client could provide responses at a time convenient to them. Feedback was received via email two months following our last consultancy session.

1. Did I create an environment where you felt comfortable talking to me and discussing your experience?

I felt very comfortable speaking to you and related with you well in our conversations. It felt like you were genuinely trying to help.

2. During our conversations did you feel listened to and understood?

Yes, I did. I felt as though you were understanding and offered many strategies.

3. Reflecting on our conversations, is there anything you disliked or would have changed?

No, nothing of dislike. Probably would've been better 1 to 1 but obviously that wasn't possible.

4. Did our work help you overcome the presenting difficulties?

There are still aspects where I find challenging but I've learnt to deal with them more easily. I would definitely come back to see you if/when I have more challenges and even though we only had a few sessions it definitely helped me and thank you very much for that. The conversations were very useful and my perspective changed which was one of the things we were working on.

5. Do you feel our work has or will have a lasting impact?

Yes, the things we worked on helped me on the pitch for my second half of the season a lot but also off the pitch and I'm now seeing certain things through a different perspective in different aspects of life.

Teaching and Training Case Study

Teaching Case Study

Context

This case study discusses a four-week programme delivered to Level 6 students in their final year of an undergraduate course (Sport and Exercise Therapy, Sports Science and Sports Coaching) at Loughborough College. My task was to prepare students for an upcoming assignment as part of an 'Advanced Topics in Physical Activity and Health' module. Having voluntarily picked this module as part of their course, students were tasked with forming groups to create a podcast whereby they were to discuss and debate avenues to engage and motivate a population with a non-communicable disease in physical activity.

At the time writing I am currently in my second year of the Professional Doctorate at Liverpool John Moores University working toward chartership with the British Psychological Society (BPS) and registration with the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC). I have been employed by the institution as a Sessional Lecturer in Sport and Exercise Psychology since February 2022. This was my first role within an academic setting having all of my previous work to date being situated within the sport and healthcare sectors.

Identifying Programme Objectives and Group Needs

To understand what was expected of me, I initially organised a meeting with the programme lead to discuss how she felt I could support the students. After the delivering the first five weeks of the module, she was open-minded in regard to the direction in which she wanted me to take the remaining sessions and therefore I was provided the autonomy to design and deliver the content as I pleased. Nonetheless, aware of my previous experience working to support individuals suffering with severe and enduring mental illness,

eating disorders as well as other mental health difficulties, the programme lead did feel the students may benefit from hearing about my experiences, potentially broadening their insight in regard to populations they may wish to discuss as part of their assignment. I was given access to the materials which had already been delivered as part of the module and was later provided the assignment brief (see Figure 1) which outlined their assignment in greater depth.

Striving to provide autonomy where possible, at the end of each week I would seek informal feedback from the students in my sessions, asking them how they found the workshops and how they would like the sessions to move forward in regard to content, taking into account the requirements of the assignment. I also encouraged students to ask questions to clarify their understanding and overcome concerns. Giving them this space permitted students to take control of their own learning as well as help me to assess their needs and tailor my sessions accordingly.

Programme Development and Resources

In regard to structure, I was to deliver a one-hour online lecture via Microsoft Teams on a Monday afternoon followed by a two-hour face-to-face seminar three days later on the Thursday morning. This would last for a duration of four weeks with the assignment being due two weeks after my final session. Given the fact students were expected to discuss current attempts to engage a population with a non-communicable disease in physical activity, the first three weeks would be utilised to introduce different populations they may decide to focus on. As identified by the programme lead, I would strive to draw upon my own experiences of working with different populations in attempt of bringing the sessions to life and making them as engaging and interactive as possible. The students hadn't completed

an assignment of this format (creating a podcast) as part of their studies before thus I would have to factor this into the design of my sessions.

In preparation, the resources required for the sessions would include:

- Sessions plans (see Figure 2) which would help me to plan for and identify the aims of the sessions.
- Visual aids in the form of PowerPoint slides, helping students to follow the session.
- Tasks/worksheets/research articles/videos which would help to involve the students in their own learning and make the sessions interactive and engaging.

Guiding Pedagogical Theory

Being one of my first experiences teaching in a higher education institution, an array of pedagogical literature was utilised to inform the design and implementation of the current programme. My aim was to adopt a learner-centred approach (Attard et al., 2010), categorised by the intent to provide bespoke learning opportunities based on the needs of students and the context in which lessons are situated (Attard et al., 2010). Of critical importance is for educators to involve students in their own learning, ensuring they are active participants (Attard et al., 2010) and acknowledging that they all have a preferred learning style (Honey & Mumford, 1986). A learner-centred approach strives to give students autonomy, an integral component in the delivery of UK university courses (Henri et al., 2018) and an aspect of teaching which has been found to promote learning experiences (Levesque et al., 2004).

In light of its associations with student effort (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004), persistence (Zepke & Leach, 2010) and intellectual development (Halawah, 2006), Hagenauer and Volet (2014) discuss the importance of developing facilitative teach-student relationships in higher education. By virtue of this, I gave some thought in regard to how I

would attempt to build a rapport with the students, especially as I was new to the institution and had never taught these students before. The work of Frisby (2018) provided valuable direction.

As a result of extensive efforts attempting to measure the impact of university courses being delivered online (a by-product of the COVID-19 pandemic), I was afforded an abundance of research to support me given the fact half of my sessions were to be delivered online. Marek et al. (2021), Bruggeman et al. (2021) and Van der Spoel et al. (2021) helped me to appreciate both the opportunities and challenges this would present and were of use when designing the content of my sessions, ensuring they were suitable to online delivery and that I maintained my learner-centred approach.

Programme Delivery and Description of Workshops

Session 1: Physical Activity and Severe Mental Illness (Online Lecture)

In line with recommendations from Frisby (2018), and as I would continue to do with all the sessions, I joined this lecture early with the intention of talking to a few students before the rest of the class joined, an attempt at beginning to build a rapport with some of the students. One student had also joined early so I made an effort to engage in small talk.

The lecture then began with myself introducing who I was and why I would be taking their sessions for the next four weeks. Striving to involve students in their learning, I also mentioned at the start of the session how it would be great if they engaged with the tasks and questions, explicitly mentioning how all points are valid and how it would be nice to hear their perceptions/viewpoints on the topics we would be discussing.

I walked the students through the assignment brief and introduced students to a problem statement highlighting how individuals living with severe mental illness are not meeting physical activity guidelines (outlined by the World Health Organization). Students

were asked to brainstorm and then feed back to the class why they felt this may be the case. Current literature was then utilised to highlight some of the barriers faced by this population. In attempt of bringing the session to life, acknowledging that my previous place of work was novel in that there are only three high-secure psychiatric hospitals in England, I began to discuss my personal experiences trying to engage this population in physical exercise. I discussed some of my own observations and introduced the students to case study of an individual suffering from severe mental illness that I previously supported. Students were given a few minutes to think about how they may attempt to engage this individual in exercise before then being encouraged to feedback their thoughts to the class. The session finished on a cliff-hanger as I disclosed that in the next session I will reveal what I did and students would then be conducting their own research to discuss potential avenues of engaging this population in exercise. Throughout, I was conscious of linking the session to their assignment and how they may want to utilise what we discuss in the sessions for their upcoming podcast.

Session 2: Physical Activity and Severe Mental Illness (Face-to-face Seminar)

Following on from the lecture earlier that week, this session started with me introducing my work at the hospital and my own attempts to engage an individual suffering from severe mental illness in physical activity. I was conscious here of being as honest and as open as possible, thus as well as discussing what worked, I also pointed out my struggles and where I could have improved. I provided students a short video clip of motivational interviewing which was a style of communication I attempted to utilise with the patient. Aware that they had not been introduced to motivational interviewing, the video, I felt, described with great clarity and depth what motivational interviewing is and how it can be utilised to support others toward behaviour change. Keen to involve students in their own

learning, the session continued as we set off on three progressive tasks. Four research articles discussing attempts to engage individuals with severe mental illness in physical activity were provided. Students were tasked with picking one of the papers and, whilst reading, consider what worked and what could be improved in relation to the physical activity intervention. Students were to then arrange themselves into groups and summarise what they had read to their peers. Finally, students were tasked with designing their own intervention in attempt of engaging this specific population in exercise, ensuring it was evidence based and therefore using what they had just read and discussed within their groups. Students were allocated sixty minutes to complete all of the tasks and when designing their own intervention were supported through the use of prompting questions on the PowerPoint slides (see Figure 3) which guided their thought in regard to how they may want to design the intervention. At the end of the sixty minutes three of the students were encouraged to summarise their intervention to the rest of class, those who did were thanked for doing so. The session concluded with me linking the session back to their assignment, illustrating the importance of drawing upon research to inform their podcast and highlighting how what they had read can be discussed in the podcast.

Session 3: Public Health Initiatives (Online Lecture)

This week the focus was shifted to encourage students to consider, on a broader scale, attempts made to engage mass populations in physical activity, thus the focus was on public health initiatives and for this session, Parkrun.

I initiated the session by asking the students if any of them had taken part in Parkrun, informally asking them about their experiences if they had and encouraging them to describe it to their peers. I then began my PowerPoint slides to provide a bit more background information on Parkrun before opening breakout rooms to allow students to

discuss why they believe parkrun has been so successful in engaging individuals across the world in physical exercise. One member of each group then fed back to the class a summary of their discussions. Research was then utilised to illustrate participant's experiences of taking part in Parkrun. I proceeded to discuss how Parkrun seemingly draws upon behaviour change theories and how this has potentially contributed to its success. Encouraging critical thought, students were then asked to individually think of reasons to be cautious in regard to the success of Parkrun and consider ways in which they felt Parkrun could be improved as a public health initiative.

Session 4: Public Health Initiatives (Face-to-face Seminar)

Continuing with the focus of public health initiatives, the ownership was placed on students in this session to take control of their own learning. Where in the previous lecture I provided an example of a public health initiative (Parkrun), the students here were tasked with conducting their own research to find examples of other public health initiatives which had been designed in attempt of engaging mass populations in physical activity. I had some examples to hand if students struggled to find examples, however emphasis was placed on them finding examples themselves because sourcing their own literature and finding their own research is a skill and task they will have to do when completing their assignment. Students were given an hour to find at least two examples of public health initiatives that have been initiated around the world and make notes on what they found. Being present in the class, in comparison to teaching online allowed me to feel as though I could better support students and point them in the right direction if they were struggling. Prompting questions were put onto the PowerPoint slides to guide students thought in relation to what the aims/objectives were of the initiative and how it attempted to achieve its aims. After the allocated time we reconvened as a class and students were provided a space to share their

findings. At all times I was conscious of creating a psychologically safe space and relaxed environment to try and allow students to feel comfortable in talking in front of the class. To do this, and drawing upon Stronge (2018), I validated their points and thanked students when they did voice their opinion. The last task involved a hypothetical scenario whereby students would imagine they had been appointed by the Chief Executive of Public Health England. They were told they had to think of ways in which they would redesign and improve the public health initiatives they had just researched. Students were given 15 minutes to individually brainstorm ideas and then feed back to the class. Again, by having the opportunity to articulate themselves and discuss attempts to engage individuals in exercise it would only serve to benefit the students within the podcast, students were reminded of this.

Session 5: Physical Activity and Eating Disorders (Online Lecture)

Aware of my experience supporting young individuals suffering from eating disorders, some of the feedback I received from students in earlier session was if I could discuss in greater depth the role of physical activity has in the lives of individuals suffering from eating disorders. I began the session with a warning, disclosing to students that this topic may be distressing to some who may perhaps be suffering, previously suffered or know someone that is suffering with an eating disorder. Students were made aware that they can leave the session and that I would be available afterwards to offer support. I proceeded to start the session by hosting a Mentimeter screen share (see Figure 4) which helped me to grasp their current understanding into the topic. I then introduced what eating disorders were, the different types of eating disorders and provided a link from the Beat (the UK's leading eating disorder charity) website. Students were given 5 minutes to pick one eating disorder they were unfamiliar with and read about it. We reconvened as a class and a few

students were asked to summarise what they had learnt. As a class we then discussed why we believed eating disorders developed and I then proceeded to introduce my work at a specialist eating disorder unit working with young female adolescents diagnosed with Anorexia Nervosa. I spoke about my experience and the novel nature in that rather than encouraging physical activity, my role involved managing how much physical activity the patients did to ensure it did not hinder their recovery from their Anorexia. The students were told that in the next session we would be looking at the relationship between physical activity and different eating disorders, considering the question whether individuals suffering from eating disorders should take part in physical activity.

Session 6: Physical Activity and Eating Disorders (Face-to-face Seminar)

Following on from the previous session, the task in this session was for students to discuss and debate whether individuals suffering from eating disorders should engage in physical activity. My goal was to assist students to employ critical thought in relation to a real-life scenario, a competency the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA, 2018) state students should be able to demonstrate when studying psychology related subjects (see Figure 5) and a skill the students would need to demonstrate to gain high marks in the current assignment. To achieve this, I set up a case study whereby students were told they were now working in a specialist eating disorder hospital and were in a meeting to discuss whether the patients should or shouldn't be allowed to engage in physical activity. Two teams were set up, one being a team of dietician's arguing against physical activity and the other being Exercise Psychologists arguing for physical activity to be a part of the patient's rehabilitation. Students were given sixty minutes to form their arguments using research before the debate commenced. After the allotted time I summarised the key points raised by both groups, praising evidence of critical thought and made a final decision based on the

strengths of the team's arguments. To finish this session, I attempted to align and illustrate how the skills they drew upon (sourcing literature, interpreting and critiquing findings and discussing and debating this) are parallel to the skills required when creating their podcasts.

Session 7: Assessment Support (Online Lecture)

The final week of sessions were focused predominantly on helping students to feel confident in what was expected of them within the upcoming assignment and give them a space to address any concerns. To support the session, I constructed PowerPoint slides with screenshots of the assignment brief and attempted to guide students, step-by-step through exactly what was expected of them for this assignment, linking back to what we had discussed in the previous six sessions. I strived to offer further ideas in regard to how they could complete the assignment and encouraged students to ask questions if and when they arose, to which some were raised. The session lasted around 35 minutes and concluded with myself outlining the aim for the next session, of which would be my last with them. Students were encouraged to utilise this last session to address any final queries before they were then expected to complete the assignment.

Session 8: Assessment Support (Face-to-face Seminar)

In this final session my goal was to again allow students a space to ask any questions about the assignment and I provided some PowerPoint slides based on some of the questions that I was asked in the previous session. Striving to make use of the time available I also prepared two tasks. Students were first set an individual task whereby, using a research paper I had provided, they were to critically debate the efficacy of the intervention within the research paper. Emphasis again was placed on them being able to critically debate the study and to help with this prompting questions were made visible onto the PowerPoint slides which helped guide their thought in regard to what to look out for within

the study. Students were allocated thirty minutes to read the paper and make some notes on what they had read. As a class we then discussed their findings and attempted to critique the papers. Within this I was keen for each student to feedback their notes as a method for me to check for understanding. Doing this task within the classroom also allowed me to provide additional support and encourage further critique if I felt student's analysis lacked the quality of depth required. The second task challenged students to debate factors contributing to the acceptability and feasibility of participation in physical activity for their chosen population. This was again a feature they were expected to discuss within their podcast yet many found the terminology confusing. Once clarified, students were tasked with sourcing their own literature which would help them to debate acceptability and feasibility of physical activity interventions. After twenty minutes we reconvened and by means of checking for understanding I asked students to voluntarily feedback to me what they had read. The session concluded with me summarising what we had done in this and the previous six sessions and how everything we had discussed can be utilised within their podcast. Students were thanked for their participation and engagement in my sessions.

Alongside the delivery of the programme, students were made aware that they could contact me privately via email or Microsoft Teams to arrange a one-to-one session for support regarding the assignment or to ask a question about an element of the session, seven students did so.

Programme Evaluation

To evaluate whether the programme achieved its intended aims, I decided to utilise student feedback forms (see Figure 6) as well as measure student's average module grades. Feedback forms were sent to students six weeks after the assignment deadline using

Microsoft Forms which permitted confidentiality. The delay in sending forms was due to having to wait for the institution to approve me gaining feedback.

Student Feedback Forms

A summary of the responses students provided for each of the questions on the feedback form is outlined below:

Question 1: Was there anything you liked about the sessions?

Students responses indicate an appreciation of the effort I made to build a rapport and a positive perception of the support being offered:

"I like how you chatted with us and got to know us, and we're very supporting even with aspects of other modules" **Participant 1**

"Scott was very helpful and always made himself available for support" **Participant 4**

The content and structure of sessions was also highlighted:

"Listening to Scott's experience with working in psychology, beneficial as gave more of a insight into job role. Linking in psychology to PA and Health. Discussing activities as a group at the end, giving everyone's opinion" **Participant 5**

"Content was spot on, helped loads with the assignment. Lessons made sense and followed a clear plan" **Participant 2**

"The content was well delivered, in a way which made learning easy and enjoyable"

Participant 6

Question 2: Was there anything you felt Scott could have done differently to improve his sessions?

With reference to improvements, it appears one student could not think of any:

“No, he explained his sessions very well. He was very understanding of us as students”

Participant 4

Other students however were able to offer an insight in regard to where they felt sessions could have been developed:

“I thought Scott was very vocal and open in the sessions but more movement throughout the classroom” **Participant 2**

“Sometimes I did not really understand the point of the task. So maybe he could have explained the importance of the task a bit more” **Participant 3**

“Maybe more quizzes and tests. Including case studies into having students research”

Participant 5

“To improve I would of liked to see more discussion based activities and task which can help with understanding” **Participant 6**

Question 3: How well do you think Scott’s sessions helped to prepare you for the podcast assignment?

Student responses were aligned in regard to this question:

“Indirectly, very well, it provided a lot of information around some good areas to talk about”

Participant 1

“Scott’s sessions were very beneficial to the assignment the content helped me personally form coherent arguments” **Participant 2**

“It helped me prepare really well” **Participant 3**

“Very well he explained in detail” **Participant 4**

“Scott broke the assignment down into sections and what we needed to add, as well as going over an example in lesson, overall it was good and beneficial” **Participant 5**

“I believe Scott was able to effectively prepare students with the podcast assignment by delivering the appropriate content, going through mark schemes and open to questions”

Participant 6

Question 4: Overall, how did you find having Scott as a lecturer?

Students again refer to the relationship that was built which appears to have supported the delivery of the programme:

“I very much enjoyed and gutted was only for half a semester” **Participant 1**

“I very much enjoyed Scott as a lecturer and his personality and rapport with everyone made the class enjoyable and a fun experience” **Participant 2**

“It was fun and learnt a lot” **Participant 3**

“Very good. I created a good relationship with him and he helped me a lot with both PA health and my dissertation” **Participant 4**

“Scott was a really good lecture who listened to everyone’s points and answered any questions, his lessons overall were engaging and involved everyone. As well as all being comfortable to speak up and ask queries” **Participant 5**

“Scott was very easy to build a rapport with, was very approachable, able to listen and answer questions in the best way he could. Overall a great experience considering he hasn’t been in the college before” **Participant 6**

Question 5: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Of all the responses for this question, all students replied “no” apart from two students:

“Keep at it! you are doing great!” **Participant 1**

“Scott would be a great addition to any university” **Participant 4**

“Scott was very helpful and was able to be effective even though he was placed mid-way through an academic year with no prior rapport with students or tutors” **Participant 6**

Assignment Grades

Whilst I acknowledge that there are a range of factors which will have contributed to the grade's students received for this assignment, measuring these does nonetheless provide some useful insight. For context, the podcast assignment was the second assignment students had to submit for this module and therefore the grades students received for the first assignment have also been measured by means of comparison. For the first assignment (submitted 5 weeks before the podcast), of the 38 students who submitted, the average mark 58.6 with a range of 30-75. Contrasting that with the second assignment (the podcast), of the 40 students who submitted, the average mark was 60.4 with a range of 40-76, therefore highlighting a marginal improvement from first through to the second assignment.

To summarise, with time permitting it would have been great to conduct interviews with the students to develop a deeper insight into regard to their experiences of the programme. Admittedly, it is also unfeasible to quantify all of the factors which contributed to the increase in average student grades across the two assignments. Nonetheless, in light of the feedback I did manage to obtain, as well as the grades they received, I would argue it is plausible to suggest the programme was successful in achieving its aims. The enjoyment students appeared to take from the sessions as well as the relationships I was able to build, from a personal point of view would also be an indication of success from a personal perspective.

Reflective Summary

The ensuing reflections embody some of my thoughts, feelings and experiences before, during/after my delivery of the discussed programme. Being one of my first experiences teaching in a higher education institution, the experience was without doubt a learning curve which presented a variety of challenges. Despite only having three hours contact time with the students each week, most challenging and most time consuming was the planning, producing of content and sourcing of materials for each session. This was something I massively underrated and struggled to do each week alongside other work commitments. Being on the other end of monotonous lectures and seminars throughout my own studies, I was keen for my sessions to be engaging and interactive. Doing so however probably made my job a lot harder and more time consuming due to the need to plan and prepare for the range of activities, (I have certainly developed a great deal of respect and empathy for lecturers as a result!). In spite of this, the feedback on the whole would suggest students appreciated and enjoyed the sessions, valuing their interactive nature and thus the effort put into the designing of the sessions was worthwhile.

Moreover, since the COVID-19 pandemic the institution has committed to a blended approach, meaning they permit and encourage students to attend sessions remotely if unable to attend in person. Whilst this helps to promote inclusivity and aims to prevent students from falling behind in their studies, this contributed to another challenge I faced in the delivery of the programme. There was one occasion, as I arrived to deliver a face-to-face session that I received a message from two students before the class stating that they had tested positive for COVID-19 and could therefore not attend the class in person. They were however, willing to join virtually. Immediately I began to panic. Probably a reflection of my inexperience as a teacher or even a degree of naivety, I had not considered and factored this

into my planning for the session and ultimately it did not cater for having students present both online and in person. Albeit a struggle, we navigated the session and did what we could to make it work. Fortunately, this occurred in the second week of the programme thus from there on in, when planning my sessions, I made sure to consider the workability of it being delivered both in person and online. On reflection, this experience was a critical moment and one which thankfully, early on in my teaching journey, highlighted the importance of contingency planning and flexibility.

I feel it is a reflection of today's society (probably not helped by social media), that we often compare ourselves with others and feel as though we have to be and look our best at all times, something I certainly fall into the trap of. It becomes easy therefore to avoid feedback due to not wanting to look bad or feel like a failure (Syed, 2015). As I have matured however, it has becomingly apparent how important feedback is in relation to one's development, particularly with reference to my own journey as an educator and applied practitioner. A lot of the feedback I received from this programme was positive, somewhat flattering but was helpful in confirming the approach which sat most comfortably with me supported students in their learning. Irrespective of these positive comments, I noticed myself focusing more on the comments regarding areas I could have improved. Despite understanding its importance, I often find this type of feedback difficult to hear, perhaps an indication of my own insecurities as a trainee. Nonetheless, the constructive feedback I received as part of this programme has helped me to uncover blind spots and aspects about my teaching which I hadn't previously considered and will undoubtedly support me moving forward. In all, I think this experience should give me confidence in my ability to work effectively as an educator but also highlights the importance of seek and receiving feedback.

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Figure 1

Assignment brief which outlines what was expected of students for the upcoming assignment

Assessment Two

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|-----|
| Title: | Physical Activity Interventions and Behaviour Change: What Works? | | |
| Deadline for this assignment: | Monday 2nd May 2021 by 9am | Assessment weighting: | 50% |

| | |
|--|---|
| Aims of this assessment: | |
| 1. | Understand local, regional and policy interventions aimed at increasing physical activity and promoting disease prevention in older adults. |
| 2. | Appreciate policy and behavioural strategies to promote physical activity in older adults |
| Intended Learning Outcomes covered by this assessment: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret a variety of different interventions aimed at increasing physical activity levels of local, regional and national populations and evaluate the epidemiological evidence for physical activity and preventative mechanisms involved in disease prevention • Critique policy, evaluation techniques and the state of literature surrounding physical activity and health | |
| Background information: | |
| <p>The way science is communicated is changing. Podcasts enable accessible translatable and credible source of evidence for the general public and academics alike. Physical activity (PA) guidelines exist to help people of all ages meet recommended guidelines. In England an inverse relationship exists between age and participation in PA in older age adults. Participation in PA is a known modifiable risk factor for mitigating non-communicable illnesses and conditions that contribute to premature mortality. Alongside ageing inactivity is known to predict frailty, psychological illbeing, loneliness, poor quality of life and complex cognitive disease (e.g., Alzheimer's). To address these issues various regional, national and policy level interventions have been proposed with a view to sustainably affecting behaviour change. A range of different behaviour change theories have been applied to these interventions with varying success. You are to systematically review behaviour change based interventions designed to promote physical activity in a population of your choice. In groups of three please present your findings in the form of a podcast lasting a maximum of 15 minutes. This should be supported with plain English statement. The plain English statement must be constructed independently.</p> | |

Figure 2

Session plan used to prepare for session 4

Learning Plan

| | | | |
|----------------------|------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Date | 24/03/2022 | Venue | Loughborough College Campus |
| Learner Group | Level 6 | Teaching Method | Seminar |

| | |
|---|---|
| Title of the session | Public health initiatives |
| Aim | Challenge students to source and critique literature. Practice articulating their findings. |
| Learning Outcome | By the end of the session students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore and critique current initiatives aimed at increasing physical activity levels within the UK |
| Resources needed | PowerPoint presentation slides Research articles |
| Beginning | Recap slides from previous session (public health initiatives lecture). Encourage students to ask questions if unclear on anything that was discussed. Then introduce the focus of this session. |
| Main section | Students to find their own examples of public health initiatives which attempt to engage a population in physical activity. Students to critique initiatives, I will give some support in regard to how and what to critique if needed. Students to feedback their ideas to myself and rest of class. |
| Ending | Summarise two sessions this week, link this to podcast assignment (sourcing literature, having to critique and discuss their findings) |
| How will I use my research and/or professional experience to inform this teaching session? | Pedagogical theory – learner-centred approach Draw upon my own experience taking part in Parkrun Using research to inform discussions |
| How will I involve students in their own learning? | Source own literature Encourage to feedback what they have read/notes they have made Hypothetical case study (working for CEO of Public Health England) |
| How will I know if the students have met the learning outcomes? | Students ability to source their own literature and the quality of student's discussions when feeding back to class |
| How will I evaluate this session? | Informal student feedback at the end of the class Personal reflection |

Figure 3

PowerPoint slide which outlines student's task and prompting questions used to help them design their own physical activity intervention

Task 2 (~20 mins)

1. Form a group and discuss findings from each research paper
2. Create an intervention – can be group or individual level to increase PA levels in this population

Will it be a group intervention?

How long will the programme be?

Where will the sessions be held?

Who will lead the sessions?

How will you motivate individuals?

Will it be individualized?

How long will the sessions be?

What activities will take place?

Will anyone else be involved?

Figure 4

Mentimeter word cloud used to gauge student's understanding of eating disorders

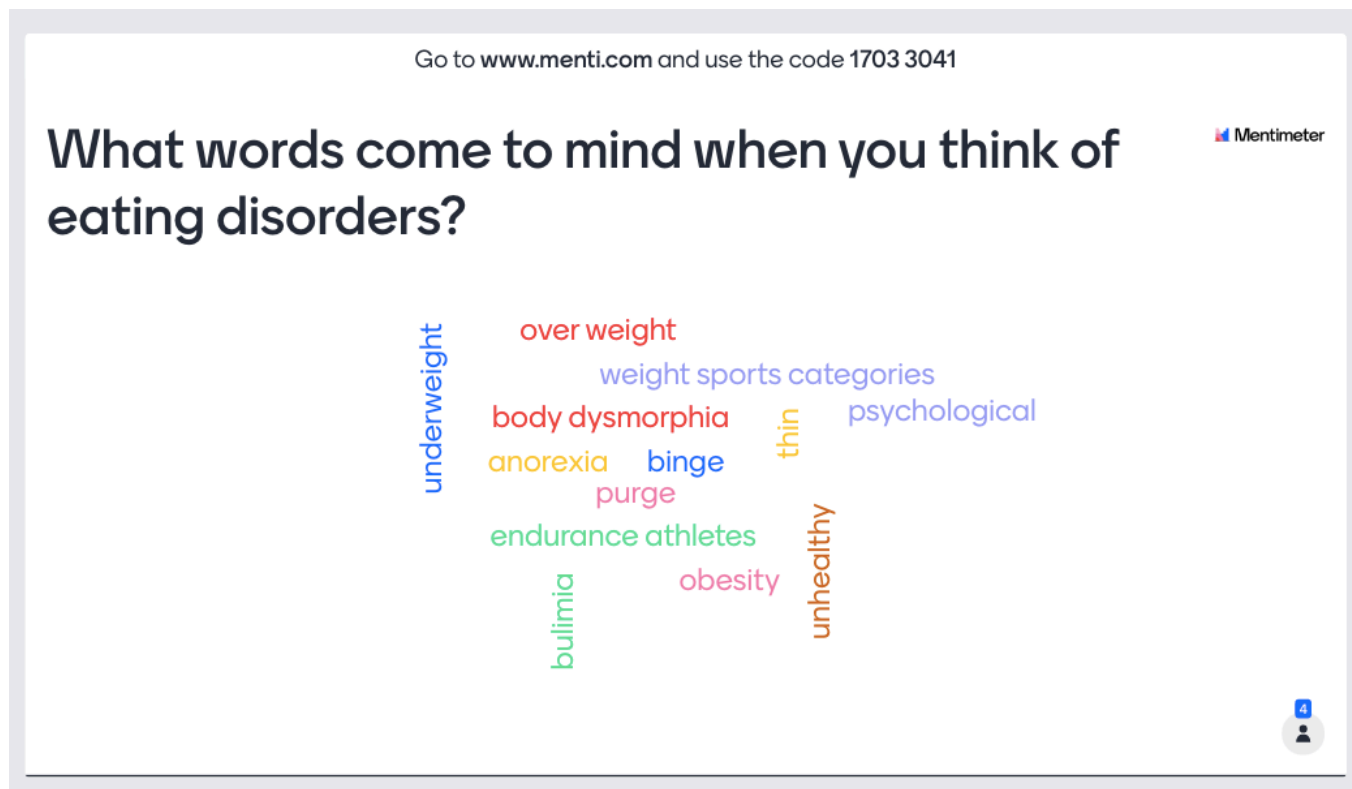


Figure 5

Competencies expected of students studying psychology/psychology related subjects as outlined by Quality Assurance Agency

Subject-specific skills

- 6.4 On graduating with an honours degree in psychology, graduates are able to:
- i reason scientifically, understand the role of evidence and make critical judgements about arguments in psychology
 - ii adopt multiple perspectives and systematically analyse the relationships between them
 - iii detect meaningful patterns in behaviour and evaluate their significance
 - iv recognise the subjective and variable nature of individual experience
 - v pose, operationalise and critique research questions
 - vi demonstrate substantial competence in research skills through practical activities
 - vii reason analytically and demonstrate competence in a range of quantitative and qualitative methods
 - viii competently initiate, design, conduct and report on an empirically-based research project under appropriate supervision, and recognise its theoretical, practical and methodological implications and limitations
 - ix be aware of ethical principles and approval procedures and demonstrate these in relation to personal study, particularly with regard to the research project, and be aware of the ethical context of psychology as a discipline.

⁴ Available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/qualifications-and-credit-frameworks

Figure 6

Evaluation form used to gain feedback from students

Lecturer Evaluation Form

The purpose of this evaluation form is to help me (Scott Whitfield) gain some feedback on the sessions I delivered in weeks 6-9 as part of your 'LGC911: Advanced Topics in Physical Activity and Health' module in preparation for your podcast assignment.

As I am sure you are aware I am still studying myself and therefore this feedback will be used to help me complete one of my own assignments as part of my qualification.

Please answer the questions as honestly as possible, all feedback is helpful whether good or bad.

All answers will be completely confidential meaning I will not know what student provided the feedback.

* Required

- 1. Was there anything you liked about the sessions?** *(thinking about the content/structure/activities or tasks within the sessions) **
- 2. Was there anything you felt Scott could have done differently to improve his sessions?** *(thinking about the content/structure/activities or tasks within the sessions) **
- 3. How well do you think Scott's sessions helped to prepare you for the podcast assignment? ***
- 4. Overall, how did you find having Scott as a lecturer?** *(points to consider - was you able to build a rapport/did he listen to points you made/did you feel comfortable to speak up and offer opinion/were the sessions engaging and interactive?) **
- 5. Is there anything else you would like to add? ***

Teaching Diary

Introduction

This teaching diary reflects on 4 moments which I felt have been critical in my development thus far as an educator and disseminator of psychological knowledge and principles. Within this reflection I discuss instances which have occurred whilst working with two different populations. The first 2 entries refer to my experience teaching level 4 undergraduate students studying a higher education course at Loughborough College whilst entries 3 and 4 explore my work with young athletes aged between 13-18 on a talent development pathway at Lancashire County Cricket Club.

Trying to Create Psychological Safety Online

What Happened?

Within the sessions I deliver, I am keen to try and create a psychologically safe space for students. Described as a shared belief that it is safe to engage in interpersonal risk-taking (Edmondson, 1999), given its associations with increased team and individual learning (Newman et al., 2017), I aim to create an environment where students felt comfortable to engage in sessions, answer questions and offer honest feedback. A challenge I have faced when trying to implement this was the fact a lot the lectures I delivered were online and how none of the students had their camera switched on. In attempt of addressing this I mentioned that I would appreciate it if the students turned their cameras on. I highlighted how I try to make the sessions as engaging as possible and that it would be great if they get involved, stating that they will never be judged for what they say and that having their cameras on will facilitate our discussions and help me to interact with them (still not a single student turned their camera on). I proceeded to do the lectures, feeling particularly awkward as it felt as though I was talking to a black hole. Moreover, out of approximately 60

students present on the calls it was the same 10 students who engaged in tasks and answered questions (all still with their camera switched off!).

On reflection I didn't enjoy doing these lectures and found it a difficult task talking to a load of black screens. For this reason, I decided to reflect and look inwardly in attempt of understanding if there was anything I could do differently to create a more psychologically safe space and potentially even persuade students to turn their camera on!

How will this Experience Inform my Future Practice?

At first, I felt a potential factor contributing to a lack of engagement from the students may have been the lack of relationship I had built with students considering I had only just started working at the institution. Nonetheless, as time passed and as I did begin to build what I thought was a good rapport with students during the face-to-face sessions, they still refrained from turning their cameras and it was still only the same few students engaging.

I began conducting some research to see what else I could do within my sessions yet was faced with a gap in the literature focusing on how to generate psychological safety in higher education as well as when working online, thus I was forced to read literature from other disciplines. McClintock et al. (2022), offer three pointers teachers in medical education ought to implement in attempt of creating a sense of psychological safety, these being: setting the stage, inviting participation and responding productively. Reading this however, I felt, did not provide any insight greater than what I had already attempted in my own sessions.

In a healthcare setting, Aranzamendez et al. (2018) highlight similar findings, placing importance on leaders removing constraints which discourage individuals' from expressing

ideas. Authors suggest leaders being inclusive, empowering, trustworthy and ethical which all contribute toward creating this climate.

Becerra et al. (2021) reflect on a similar experience to myself, documenting their difficult experiences dealing with partial engagement from participants and what was perceived as an increased pressure on organizers to actively foster engagement whilst teaching online. An option authors suggest is providing asynchronous materials for students to utilise before and after sessions. By doing so, and of course relying on students to actually do the work, students being given materials before the session and having time to think of questions or answers to the tasks, it is hypothesised they may be more willing to engage in the sessions.

Whilst the research discussed is not totally comparable to my environment, what can still be inferred is the importance of myself, the individual leading the session, being the person to generate this sense of psychological safety. Evidently, there is a need for me to further reflect on what else I can do to achieve this.

Challenging Disruptive Behaviour

What Happened?

Whilst talking students through one of the PowerPoint slides in a seminar I was delivering, I noticed two students talking and giggling whilst looking at one of their laptops. Before each session I make my slides accessible to students as I'm aware that a lot follow the session from their personal laptops and like to make notes whilst I'm talking. Appreciating each individual has their own learning style, I am fine with this, however it was apparent the two students were not doing this. They had not only distracted me through their actions but were beginning to distract the rest of the class thus, whether right or wrong, in that moment

I felt as though I had to do challenge their behaviour (something I probably hadn't thought I'd need to do in higher education).

I stopped what I was doing, turned to the students and said something along the lines of "boys do you mind". Being new to teaching and being one of my first experiences teaching this class of students, admittedly I felt uncomfortable doing this, I think also because I place such emphasis on building positive relationships with students I did not want to say something which would put this in jeopardy. Moreover, I am aware that I am only a few years older than most of these students which only adds to the discomfort in somewhat telling them off. After saying this to students I turned back around to the board and carried on with the session. As I turned to face the class again I caught one of the boys pulling a face to another student, a face which I felt was mocking me behind my back. Already feeling slightly awkward at having to challenge the students' behaviour, him doing this really annoyed me and I could begin to feel my heart pumping and the adrenaline begin to course through my veins. Unsure how it would come out, I decided to stop the class again and say, "can you stop messing about while I'm trying to talk to the class". By this point the tone of my voice had changed and the politeness to my words had vanished. The class was in silence and I felt extremely awkward. The session continued and during the first task, by which point I felt a lot calmer, I walked over and sat next to the students, making a sarcastic comment about what had happened previously. The students apologised and told me what they were doing. The rest of the class ran smoothly.

How will this Experience Inform my Future Practice?

Again, before anything I was keen to reflect inwardly and try to unpack why this situation made me feel the way it did before beginning to consider my actions and whether I could have dealt with it better. Ultimately, I think it was the perceived disrespect which

annoyed me most. A value of mine is courtesy which encompasses the desire to be considerate and polite toward others and therefore not being shown this back annoyed. Coupled with my anxieties about teaching, not having to deal with a similar situation in this context before and desire to build a positive relationship with the students I think this all contributed to why I felt and acted the way I did.

As I begin to consider how I will use this experience moving forward, I have since spoke with my girlfriend, supervisor and consulted relevant literature. My girlfriend assured me I dealt with it well and mentioned how it was useful I went back over to the students to discuss what happened. In discussion with my supervisor we considered other avenues to deal with problematic behaviours in class. Drawing upon his own experiences he mentioned how when in similar situations he will stop talking and look over to the students who are disrupting the class. Doing this draws attention to the students who are disruptive whom at some point will realise they are the only ones talking and have disrupted the class. Other avenues may be to ask the students a question based on what I have just said and since they haven't been listening they will get the message that they need to focus. I like these methods as indirectly you are challenging disruptive behaviour without actually having to tell them off like I did. My supervisor did highlight how I will find a method which works best for me and it may be a case of trial and error, a comment which was echoed in the literature. It is apparent that there is not one correct way of dealing with disruptive behaviour, rather one will have their own methods, whether that be ignoring or directly confronting students' actions (Murphy, 2010). A well-researched area, there a number of recommended strategies put forward to help educators manage disruptive behaviour, these range from setting clear expectations at the beginning of classes (Sorcinelli, 1994) to addressing students privately and using a calm, non-confrontational voice (Ali & Gracey, 2013). I'm sure all of these may

work in some instances, and for myself the task is to become more aware of what sits most comfortably with me whilst also having the contextual understanding to recognise what approach would work best with the students/groups I am teaching (Mezrigui, 2015).

Working Toward Authenticity

What Happened?

Since beginning to work at Lancashire County Cricket Club, a critical moment or contributing factor toward my development has been the opportunity to work under the senior psychologist at the club and to have had the chance to observe how he acts in and around the cricket environment. I have recently thrown myself into a lot of the literature surrounding the development of sport psychologist practitioners which draws parallels with Ronnestad and Skovholt (2013) life-span perspective for counsellor development. A lot of this work has been comforting to read, knowing others at a similar stage of their development have had similar experiences or felt similar emotions to myself. What I take from the literature is the importance of myself first being aware of what my core beliefs and values are (Poczwardowski et al., 2004), and subsequently being able to align this with my professional self, understanding how this translates into my applied practice (McEwan et al., 2019).

This journey is something all trainees will navigate (Tod et al., 2020) and up until now is something I too have tussled with. When working previously with a women's football team I would find myself almost being quite awkward and certainly feeling uncomfortable within myself in and around the players. This contrasts the person I naturally feel I am (sociable and someone who finds it easy to build relationships). With the women's team however and due to being at a stage of my development where I hadn't yet reached the sweet spot between the person and the practitioner, what presented was a quite confused

individual who struggled to engage in conversation because I did not know whether it was ok for me to be myself and have a laugh with the athletes or whether I had to remain professional at all times.

McEwan and colleagues (2019) discuss the importance of supervisors as they act as information sources in the early stages of trainee's development. Trainees lack knowledge and rely on supervisors to guide their cognitions and behaviours (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2013). It is safe to say I was not aware of how much my supervisor had subconsciously influenced my perceptions of sport psychologists, particularly in regard to how they should behave. Lancashire was the first time I had seen a sport psychologist actually operate within the field. Until then my interactions with sport psychologists had only been those who were teaching me at university. These supervisors/tutors at university had been incredibly helpful in getting me to where I am today and looking back I would say I almost put some of them on a pedestal, almost longing to be like them. In reality, this was never going to be the case as whilst they are fantastic at what they do, I have a) a completely different personality to them b) different life experiences and c) am a different generation. Almost trying to be a carbon copy of them is therefore unfeasible and would mean I would be practicing inauthentically.

As well as research such as McEwan et al. (2019), seeing the Lancashire psychologist in operation made me realise that its ok to be true to who you are. He was different to what I had previously seen before. He wasn't the most formal, he was having a laugh with athletes and talking to them about things which weren't related to sports. He made me realise its ok to do this and subsequently made me more confident that I can be myself whilst in the company of those I work with. I do not have to pretend to be this ultra-professional person. I can be me, someone who is more relaxed, sociable and adopts more of a conversational

approach to my work. It feels nice to almost have been given the reassurance that that is ok as that is what will make me a good practitioner, helping me to build relationships with athletes, an aspect of delivery arguably more important than the intervention itself (Tod & Anderson, 2012).

How will this Experience Inform my Future Practice?

As I mention above, this experience has certainly made me feel more confident and relaxed going into the environments I work in. Moreover, I have since reflected on my beliefs and values again to give myself more clarity in regard to who I am and what is important to me. In all, I feel as though a weight has been lifted off my shoulders and I have a renewed sense of positivity moving forward.

Working with Young Athletes

What Happened?

In my role at Lancashire I work most closely with the Academy and Emerging Players Programme squads. My first experience both working in elite sport and cricket. Me and a peer (whom is also on the Professional Doctorate pathway) have been employed, in most part to implement a psychology programme designed by the senior psychologist. The programme is structured around a model he developed called the '4 Pillars'. The 4 Pillars, incorporates a number of psychological concepts (Awareness, Attitude, Agility and Adjustment) which he feels are integral to the psychological development and sporting performance of athletes. Our role therefore entails delivering some workshops to the athletes, introducing them to psychological concepts integrated within the model. Whilst the topic of the sessions is provided from the model, we are given autonomy in regard to the delivery of the sessions. It was arranged, with the coaches and senior psychologist, that we would deliver the workshops during training sessions and would therefore have a 10-20-

minute slot to work with the athletes. As me and my peer worked on different days, we would deliver the workshops individually and decide between us beforehand who would deliver what content.

Reflecting back on my delivery of the sessions I can't say I was entirely satisfied with how they went. I felt as though I adopted more of a lecturer/teaching style approach in the sessions, positioning myself as the expert almost forcing them to learn and take on board the content. Whilst I did not receive any formal feedback on the sessions, how they were delivered did not sit comfortably with me. I feel I failed to take into account the context of the sessions in that a) this was the first time these athletes had worked with a sport psychologist (or trainee in my case), b) they are between the ages of 13-17 and c) were doing the sessions in the middle of training at around 5 or 6pm in the evening after they had been in school all day.

How will this Experience Inform my Future Practice?

On reflection I think it would have been beneficial to try and make the sessions more enjoyable and interactive given the context. Having discussed this with other practitioners, they provided reassurance that this could have been implemented whilst still intertwining the session with a focus on the psychological concept I was trying to introduce. This therefore would have meant the sessions were engaging yet still impactful.

I think the reason I designed the sessions as I did was perhaps because of my inexperience and own anxieties in regard to being a trainee practitioner and having an idea in my head that sessions cannot be fun and that we cannot play games. Talking this through with my peers helped me to realise that this isn't the case and by allowing my sessions to be fun, in particular with young athletes, they may be more likely to take something from the

session and actually may be more willing to talk to a psychologist (almost challenging some of the stigma attached to speaking with a psychologist).

Moving forward, I think I am going to strive to make my sessions more fun and engaging, acknowledging that it is ok to play games in workshops as long as there is still a link and focus back to the intended outcome of the session. Doing so I believe will also sit more comfortably with me. Linking back to the previous reflection where I discuss my journey toward becoming a more authentic practitioner, I think that also has relevance here. An issue similarly experienced by participants in Lindsay et al. (2007) and Tod et al., (2011), perhaps this example has highlighted the need for me to consider in greater depth how my core beliefs and values translate into practice.

Nonetheless, one positive aspect of the sessions which will serve me well moving forward was the consideration of the workshop group sizes. I decided to conduct the workshops in groups of 3 or 4, hoping that being in small groups would allow the athletes to bounce ideas off each other and feel more confident speaking to me. That was proved correct as I felt having their friends around them, athletes appeared more confident to speak up in comparison to if they were alone speaking to me. Moreover, being small groups minimised the prevalence of social loafing as I was able to encourage participation from all of the athletes during our discussion. I am cognisant however that this does not mean that this approach will work with all athletes and in all contexts and would need to consider this on a case by case basis.

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Systematic Review

Abstract

Talent development (TD) is a complex and non-linear process in which young athletes must navigate a number of challenges to reach the elite level of sport. Reasons why some talented athletes make it, why others do not, and what methods are most effective to develop talent is a topic under debate. The purpose of this review was to shed light on the experiences of individuals who have been involved in TD pathways. Following a systematic review of five databases (SPORTDiscus, Web of Science, Scopus, Medline, PsycInfo), 21 studies met the inclusion criteria. A meta-study method was used to examine the content and process of studies and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory offered a framework to organise and illustrate similarities and discrepancies amongst participant's TD experiences. After reviewing data, researchers highlight how TD journeys are unique to each individual. Perceptions of TD pathways and opportunities to reach the elite level of sport were said to impinge on individual and social factors such as athlete's ability to utilise psycho-behavioural skills and the support received from stakeholders across their development. Scholars are urged to conduct research which bridges the theory-practice gap and helps stakeholders utilise knowledge generated through TD research in their own practice.

Keywords: Talent development, young athletes, elite sport, ecological systems, psycho-behavioural skills

Introduction

Fostering talent to develop the next generation of elite athletes is vitally important to sporting organisations (Collins & MacNamara, 2017). That said, the reasons underpinning why some talented athletes make it, why others do not, and what methods are most effective to develop talent is a topic under debate (Baker et al. 2019). In spite of this complexity, criticism has still been directed toward some talent development pathways due to the low percentages of young players reaching the elite level (Webb et al., 2020).

Recognising young individuals progress through a series of developmental stages (Balyi & Hamilton, 2004), importance is placed on individuals having the ability and desire to consistently learn and improve whilst on a TD pathway (MacNamara et al. 2010a; 2010b). Authors discuss athletes needing to draw upon psychological characteristics to manage the challenges, stages and transitions the TD pathway offers (Collins & MacNamara, 2011). It is these factors which are said to differentiate between those who reach the elite level and those who do not (Collins & MacNamara, 2017). Whilst some athletes may naturally be more gifted in demonstrating such qualities, others meanwhile may need support to develop and utilise the skills outlined (MacNamara & Collins, 2011).

In order to hone the psychological characteristics required for high performance, research has increasingly recognised the value in exposing athletes to challenging experiences across their development (Taylor et al., 2022). This idea is built on the notion that talent needs trauma and that challenge is a crucial component of TD (Collins & MacNamara, 2012). In support of these claims, Sarkar et al. (2015) found sporting and non-sporting adversity was perceived as vital in helping athletes become Olympic champions. That said, to ensure the challenge does not negatively impact development, it is important

athletes are afforded appropriate support to help navigate such challenges (Costello et al., 2022).

On top of psychological qualities, athletes must be able to develop and demonstrate the technical and tactical skills required to perform at the elite level (Kannekans et al., 2009). For this reason, youth athletes are being recruited into formalized and structured TD pathways at increasingly younger ages to increase the amount of time spent deliberately practicing skills (Baker et al., 2019). Whilst early specialisation in a sport has been associated with increased skill acquisition and performance levels (Ford & Williams, 2012), others suggest it can also lead to burnout and injury (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2008; Law et al., 2007). As a result, Martindale et al. (2007) advocates the importance of early sporting engagement centering on fun and developing fundamental motor skills. Supporting this, Côté and Hancock (2016) argue early diversification (participating in a number of different sports rather than one) provides a foundation for elite performance. A debate which has permeated the TD landscape, Baker et al. (2017) offers future research recommendations which, if addressed, would provide greater insight into athlete's own experiences of this topic.

Moving beyond the individual, there is coherence within the literature that athletes' broader social environments are also crucial in determining whether young individuals successfully negotiate the pathway to excellence (Henriksen & Stambulova, 2017). Unsurprisingly, coaches are often referred to by athletes as the stakeholders most impactful on their development (Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). Parents also play an integral role in offering support and helping athletes overcome obstacles whilst on the TD pathway (Harwood et al., 2019). Whilst most research has focused on coach-athlete, parent-athlete or coach-parent-athlete relationships (Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005), scholars have recently examined the

impact broader support networks such as: siblings (Taylor et al., 2018), close friends and teachers (Gledhill & Harwood, 2015), team-mates (Costello et al., 2022), sport psychologists (Storm, 2020), and lifestyle practitioners (Devaney et al., 2018) can have in regard to TD. The knowledge stemming from such research has given rise to what Henriksen and Stambulova (2017) term a holistic ecological approach to talent development. This approach outlines the importance of considering the context in which athletes develop given they are influenced by the multiple social agents embedded in their environments (Stambulova & Alfermann, 2009). Stakeholders involved in youth sport are urged to work collaboratively to create environments that support young individuals' personal, psycho-social and sporting development (Henriksen & Stambulova, 2017).

With TD an area of research which has captured scholars' interest for a number of decades (Baker & Young, 2014), the knowledge the literature offers stakeholders working in applied contexts is vast. Despite this, scholars highlight a disconnect between how coaches and other stakeholders are working to develop talent and what research suggests is most effective in contributing to TD (Pankhurst et al., 2013). Rothwell et al. (2020) for example found a number of athletes dropped out of rugby league academies due to a lack of enjoyment and perceived negative coaching environment. Taylor et al. (2021) meanwhile discusses the challenges young athletes faced after receiving contradicting feedback from stakeholders in their TD environments, often leaving them confused and unsure of what is best for their development. With this knowledge it is plausible to suggest more needs to be done to help stakeholders integrate what is recommended from research into their own practice. Working closer with those involved in TD to bridge the theory to practice gap would mean (a) young athletes will be better supported in their aim of becoming elite

athletes, and (b) sporting organisations are more likely to achieve their goal of producing the next generation of elite athletes.

Since it is the athlete who experiences the pathway, researchers have also highlighted the need to better understand athletes' perceptions of their TD journeys and consider in greater depth how best to support them (Taylor et al., 2022a). Scholars in recent years have begun to address these claims and as a result, readers have been offered insight into the benefits and drawbacks of challenging experiences and early specialism in sport for example (McCarthy et al., 2022). That said, no attempts have been made to review this area of research. Through the creation of a research synthesis, this study will have implications for applied practitioners and academics. First, by summarising current research which sheds light on athlete's lived experiences TD pathways, stakeholders involved in TD will be able to utilise the knowledge for application in their own contexts. Second, knowledge gaps will be identified which will afford academics the opportunity to conduct research which is novel.

The purpose of this review is to synthesise the literature which focuses on the experiences of those who have been involved in TD pathways. Specifically, the aims are to (a) explore factors perceived to impact athlete development within TD environments, (b) critically appraise the quality of studies in this area, and (c) highlight gaps in the literature to offer recommendations for future research.

Method

Review Design

Positioned within a constructivist approach, the research team adopted the view that reality is multiple and subjective and that knowledge regarding experiences of TD pathways is co-constructed between researchers and participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This review utilised a meta-study method, an approach used to examine both the content and process of

qualitatively derived knowledge (Paterson et al., 2001). Meta-studies examine the methods, theory, and data of qualitative research and in doing so, allow researchers to synthesise knowledge and offer novel insights into a particular field of study (Paterson et al., 2001). To achieve its aims, this research drew upon the four components of a meta-study, which includes a meta-method, meta-data, meta-theory, and meta-synthesis (Paterson et al., 2001). The meta-method, meta-theory and meta-data were initially conducted to analyse the data before the meta-synthesis stage was implemented to integrate interpretations from the analytic components (Ronkainen et al., 2022).

Search Strategy

Developing Key Words for Electronic Search

A scoping review was conducted to (a) develop an understanding of the research topic and (b) highlight key concepts and terms which would inform the search strategy (Pham et al., 2014). Five articles were read (Collins & MacNamara, 2017; Coutinho et al., 2016; Martindale et al., 2007; Webb et al., 2020; Wrang et al., 2022) which helped to achieve the above outcomes. The research team also met on a number of occasions to refine search terms and conduct informal searches on multiple databases to ensure the suitability of search terms.

Formal Search

The search strategy was conducted in February 2023 and consisted of three searches: (1) Athlet* OR "Young athlet*" OR Sport* OR "Professional athlet*" OR "Elite athlet*" "Elite sport*" OR player* OR "young player*", (2) "talent develop*" OR "talent develop* pathway*" OR "talent pathway*" OR "develop* pathway*" OR "develop* journey*" OR "talent develop* pathway* experience*" OR "talent develop* pathway* percept*" OR "talent develop* journey*", (3) 1st AND 2nd searches combined. Searches were implemented

onto the following databases: SPORTDiscus, Web of Science, Scopus, Medline, PsycInfo. A backward and forward search of all retrieved articles was also conducted which involved reading reference lists as well as articles that have since cited the papers. Authors were also contacted to ask if they had published or knew of any further literature which met the inclusion criteria.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included if: (a) athletes recruited were currently on or had previously progressed through a talent development pathway in the UK, (b) in line with Swann et al. (2015) definition, participants had previous or current status as a semi-elite athlete, and (c) the studies were qualitative in design and focused on participants own experiences of their TD pathway. There were no publication date limits and participants recruited could compete in any sport and be male or female. Papers were excluded if they were not written in English and were not published.

Screening and Study Selection

A total of 1477 papers were yielded following the search. Using EndNote Software, 850 duplicates were removed (see PRISMA diagram in Figure 1) leaving a total of 627 papers to be screened. After screening abstracts, 566 of the 627 articles were excluded at this stage due to failing to meet the inclusion criteria. The full-text of the remaining 61 articles were read in full and 40 were excluded for reasons including (a) the studies recruiting participants who had been part of talent development pathways outside of the UK and (b) the authors focusing on a number of stakeholders' experiences of the pathways and therefore not providing sufficient insight into athletes' experiences. At this stage the research team met to discuss exclusion reasons and justify actions for exclusion. 21 articles remained that met the inclusion criteria and informed the systematic review.

Data Extraction

As well as using Paterson et al. (2001) guidelines to inform this review, the author also consulted previous examples of meta-studies (see Drew et al., 2019; Holt et al., 2017; Ronkainen et al., 2016) when deciding what data to extract and how to analyse studies. After reading research articles included in this review, data such as the study characteristics, research designs, and research findings were inputted onto tables which helped to inform subsequent analyses.

Data Analysis

Meta-Method Analysis

A meta-method assesses the influence a study's design and methodology has on research findings (Paterson et al., 2001). Since one's choice of methodology shapes the research we do and the results we yield (Paterson et al., 2001), a meta-method can be utilised to explore the implications a range of approaches has on the conclusions drawn (Ronkainen et al., 2022). This meta-method comprised two phases as the author first appraised the study characteristics (see Table 1) before beginning to evaluate methodological rigour (see Table 2). Ronkainen et al. (2022) urges scholars to be transparent when discussing the criteria used to evaluate research, thus for this second phase of the meta-method analysis, the current study followed Massey and Williams (2020) by reviewing: (1) the philosophical assumptions underpinning the research design, (2) whether researchers aligned to this philosophical stance, and (3) researchers' rationale for data collection and data analysis methods.

Meta-Theory Analysis

The meta-theory analysis sought to examine the philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks underpinning the research studies (Paterson et al., 2001). With this

analysis being informed by an underlying assumption that theory and research is embedded within the context in which it is written (Paterson et al., 2001), the author also considered the broader social, cultural, historical, and political contexts in which the literature was created. For this reason and using the work of Massey and Williams (2020) to inform the meta-theory, the author sought to extract the following data from studies: (1) the theoretical frameworks used to inform the study, and (2) how the larger social context may have influenced the selection of theoretical frameworks and reporting of research.

Meta-Data Analysis

The meta-data analysis centred on examining the findings presented within research studies (Massey & Williams, 2020). That said, rather than simply summarising the findings of literature in a coherent fashion, the author sought to critically appraise the literature, striving to reveal similarities, discrepancies, and themes amongst the data (Noblit & Hare, 1988). To achieve this, an inductive reflexive thematic analysis approach was used (Braun & Clarke, 2019) in which the author (a) acknowledged their role in shaping the knowledge that is produced, (b) reflected on their engagement with the data, and (c) followed an open and iterative coding process. The author was also cognisant of the need to align this analysis with his own philosophical assumptions (Ronkainen et al., 2022) as well as consider how findings from the meta-method and meta-theory analysis can be used to generate themes for the purpose of this review. By virtue of participants discussing individual characteristics as well as broader social-cultural factors which influenced their development, the author noticed parallels between the findings and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (2005) and therefore has used this model to organise and illustrate higher-order themes.

Meta-Synthesis

The meta-synthesis was the final stage in which the author aimed to draw together the findings from each of the three analytic components and translate knowledge to generate new interpretations in relation to understanding athletes' experiences of TD pathways (Paterson, 2012). To do so, the author spent time reflecting on the tables produced as part of the meta-method, meta-theory, and meta-data analyses as well as utilising the support of his supervisors who helped him reflect on his interpretations of the data (Riessman, 2008).

Researcher Positioning and Reflections

In line with the philosophical assumptions underpinning this research, I acknowledge my own influence in the generation of knowledge and seek to provide transparency in regard to my own positioning within the study. When reflecting on my motivations to undertake this research I was able to identify two contributing factors. First, from a professional standpoint, due to working within three different TD programmes as a trainee sport and exercise psychologist (SEP) at the time of writing, my motivation was predominantly driven by a desire to improve my own as well as others' practice in similar environments. On a personal level, my aim to become a SEP was due to my own failure to reach the elite level of sport, thus this research therefore is also underpinned by a desire to make sense of my own journey and shortcomings. That said, when analysing and reporting study's findings, I am conscious of not reporting data in a manner which narrates my own journey. To overcome this, I reflected on my own experiences before conducting the research and returned to such notes throughout the process. This enabled me to compare my own experiences whilst still striving to shed light on participant's stories.

Results

Meta-Method Analysis

Study characteristics

The articles that met the inclusion criteria were conducted between the years 2004 and 2022, and a total of 193 individuals were recruited across the studies (n=158 male, n=35 females). It was not possible to calculate the total age ranges or mean ages of participants due to studies reporting either one of the two or not reporting ages at all. Whilst the aim of this review was to understand athlete's experience of TD pathways in the UK, the author did not state participants had to be from Great Britain thus whilst most of the individuals recruited were British, participants were also from countries within Europe, North America, Africa, and Oceania. 10 studies did not outline the nationality or race of participants.

All studies provided details of competitive statuses and the participants could therefore be categorised into (1) athletes playing sport at the elite or semi-elite level (n=16 studies) (Swann et al., 2015), (2) individuals no longer playing at the elite or semi-elite level (n=3 studies), and (3) a mix of participants playing at the elite or semi-elite level and others who were not (through being dropped or quitting) (n=2 studies).

9 sports were represented in total with football being the sport featured most predominantly across studies (n=10). The remaining studies focused on rugby league (n=3), rugby union (n=3), rugby without specifying which form of rugby (n=2). Gymnastics, hockey, cricket, swimming and golf were each the focus of 1 study. Williams and MacNamara (2020; 2022) were the only 2 studies to recruit individuals from more than one sport within the same study.

Methodological Rigor

A number of methodological strengths and limitations could be identified across the studies. The first major flaw pertained to 8 of the studies failing to outline the philosophical

assumptions underpinning their research. Of the remaining 13, 6 adopted an interpretivist paradigmatic stance and 7 drew upon pragmatic research philosophies.

Most researchers were consistent in aligning the study with their underpinning philosophical approaches. For example, in light of their interpretivist stance, scholars discussed the aims of their research being to understand individuals' interpretations of their experiences and when collecting and analysing data, acknowledged reality is multiple and subjective. For some however there appeared to be some inconsistency in regard to how the assumptions informed the design and aims of research studies. Holt and Mitchell (2006) for example discussed working towards a saturation of data, thus implying more positivist perspectives in comparison to the interpretivist stance outlined. Furthermore, despite Simpson et al. (2022) aiming to understand TD pathways within Scottish female football, the author also discusses aiming toward reaching data saturation as well as wanting interviews to elicit accurate responses. This study does not outline its underpinning approach and therefore highlights the contradictions which may prevail if one's philosophy is not fully considered. Despite aligning the aims and design of studies to underpinning paradigms, some scholars also appeared to struggle when reporting their findings in respect of such approaches. For example, the use of words such as 'emerged', 'revealed' and phrase 'it is clear' were used when attempting to discuss participants' experiences. The use of such words opposes the stated philosophical stance and deny the active role the researchers have in constructing knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

With intentions of producing practical solutions to applied research questions and therefore striving to bridge the gap between academic and applied sport psychology practice (Giacobbi et al., 2005), 7 studies were underpinned by pragmatic research philosophies. Of these 7 studies, only 1 was explicit in mentioning where the study was

positioned within the continuum of positivist and constructivist paradigms (Giacobbi et al., 2005). Allowing the research question to inform their philosophical stance, the remaining studies discussed attempts to understand athlete's individual experience and therefore only implied interpretivist approaches (Taylor et al., 2021).

Irrespective of whether researchers adopted pragmatic or interpretivist research philosophies, it is crucial researchers reflect on how their own experiences, knowledge and positioning with the research process has influenced subsequent findings (Lincoln et al., 2011). That said, a major flaw in a number of studies was the lack of consideration of such impact. The authors of 10 studies failed to consider their positioning completely. For those that did, authors discussed utilising reflexive journals or using fellow authors as critical friends as a means to consider their influence and interpretations of data. With some researchers having been part of TD pathways themselves as young athletes, or actively working for the organisations at the time of study the methodological rigor of studies would have been enhanced if audiences were offered an insight into the nature of such reflections, journal entries and conversations and how these influenced subsequent data collection and analysis.

Moving beyond philosophical assumptions, the majority of studies provided sufficient detail when explaining the procedures and rationale for data collection and data analysis methods. Semi-structured interviews were the predominant form of data collection technique. Researchers discussed utilising such methods as it allowed them to (a) ask questions pertinent to research questions and (b) use probing techniques and clarification methods to delve deeper into participants responses (Patton, 2002). Authors referenced the use of relevant literature to inform the design of interview guides as well as pilot interviews which helped to develop interviewing techniques and refine questions. Whilst this was

appropriate for the chosen methodologies, the use of such methods may have limited participants opportunity to discuss topics pertinent to their own experience and the use of unstructured interviews may have been better suited (Sparkes & Smith, 2013). A number of studies also discuss the use of member checks as a means to validate the credibility of data (Taylor et al., 2022a), however using such approaches to achieve rigor has been criticised in recent literature (Smith & McGannon, 2018).

In light of studies aiming to understand the lived experiences of participants, another methodological flaw present in 18 of the articles lie in the authors decision to only conduct one interview with participants. Only 2 utilised fieldwork or behavioural observations to supplement the data collected from interviews, and only 4 completed more than one interview with participants. Collecting data at multiple time points or through more than one technique was seen as a strength of studies as authors will have been afforded greater insight and contextual understanding into participant's experience (Sparkes & Smith, 2013).

17 studies drew upon retrospective designs by asking participants to discuss TD experiences which had occurred in the past. The remaining studies drew upon both a retrospective and prospective design by encouraging participants to reflect on previous TD experiences as well as perceptions of the future. Most studies however failed to (a) provide a rationale for such designs and (b) consider how these designs influenced their findings.

When analysing data, 7 studies utilised inductive reasoning, 5 used both inductive and deductive reasoning and 9 did not disclose their approach. The approach most appropriate for use in qualitative research has been topic which has engaged a number of scholars in discussion (Willig, 2017). On one hand, researchers have argued drawing upon theory to make sense of data is contradictory to the principles that define qualitative research (Bendassolli, 2014). Others suggest studies are never wholly inductive since

research questions and designs are generated as a result of researcher's knowledge of current theory (Pope & Mays, 2020). Whilst this study does not seek to contribute to this debate, to develop the methodological rigor of studies, authors would have benefitted from providing greater clarity in regard to their rationale behind using such approaches.

Meta-Theory Analysis

Theoretical framework

Three studies drew upon theoretical frameworks as a lens to explore experiences of TD pathways. Hayman et al. (2020) used role strain theory (Fenzel, 1989) as a means to examine how international junior gymnasts balanced and coped with family and educational demands whilst simultaneously transitioning from the pre-elite to elite stages of competition. Rothwell et al. (2022) meanwhile utilised Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (2005) to discuss ex-rugby league academy players' experience of TD pathways. Finally, Sothern and O'Gorman (2021) drew upon Goffman's dramaturgical model (Goffman, 1959) to illustrate how the interactions and relationships experienced by Premier League academy players influenced their mental health and well-being.

Through the use of grounded theory approaches, 3 studies sought to develop their own theoretical framework in regard to experiences of TD pathways. Of the remaining studies, rather than using a framework to inform their research, scholars instead sought to build on contemporary literature and use such knowledge as a basis to inform their own studies. For example, McCarthy et al. (2022) investigated experiences of relate age effects within rugby union academies, whilst Taylor et al. (2022b) in their efforts to understand factors influencing TD, focused on psychological safety, aiming to explore whether it was enabling or disabling to TD. Other studies built on the work of Collins and MacNamara (2012) which is a pioneering study within the field of talent development literature and

discussed the importance of athletes being subject to challenge or trauma whilst on their developmental journey. Building on Collins and MacNamara (2012) work, Taylor and Collins (2022a) and Williams and MacNamara (2022) aimed to understand the impact challenge had on participants development and how they navigated the challenges they were exposed to. Without caution, a dominance of the narrative that young athletes need to be challenged in order to develop as athletes is at risk of becoming somewhat of a universal truth. A strength of these studies however lies in authors reporting of the findings and alignment with their interpretivist stance whereby they acknowledged the idiosyncratic nature of human experience.

Beyond the influence of contemporary literature and in consideration of the larger social contexts which influenced the studies, it is worthy of note to mention the 3 studies included in the review solely focused on women's TD experiences. This may be reflective of the rapidly increasing interest in women's sport across the UK (Williams et al., 2023). Furthermore, other articles focused on the migratory experiences of young athletes who joined English football club's TD pathways. Again, this is interesting in light of the English Premier League becoming a global brand and the economic powers of clubs meaning they can attract and purchase some of the best athletes from across the world (Penn & Penn, 2021).

Meta-Data Analysis

The authors' aim in this section was to appraise the findings of each study and provide a summary of themes that developed. As discussed previously, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (2005) was used to present higher-order themes. The meta-method and meta-theory stages were also considered at this stage to ensure the quality of the studies was taken into account when analysing findings.

Reinforcing the interpretivist philosophies of studies, experiences of TD pathways were discussed as being individually and contextually mediated. Each athlete had their own unique journey and whilst for most there was large crossover in regard to features of programmes, how these were perceived and how they subsequently influenced TD varied between participants.

Individual

For all participants, their time on the TD pathways was perceived as one which was complex, non-linear and one that presented an increasing number of challenges as they progressed on their journey (Hayman et al., 2020). Challenges included injuries, de-selection, demands and intensities of training and matches, transitions, balancing aspects of life, outside sport and managing relationships (Taylor & Collins, 2022; Williams & MacNamara, 2020). Some were able to adapt positively to this and were able to thrive, others struggled, putting athletes at risk of burnout and impacting their mental health or progression within the TD pathway (Taylor & Collins, 2022a). It was felt those that thrived were able to develop a number of characteristics which facilitated their progression within the TD programme. Examples included, being disciplined, being committed, keeping grounded, having realistic expectations and having self-belief (Holt & Dunn, 2004; Holt & Mitchell, 2006).

To develop the above characteristics, participants discussed needing to become self-aware and self-regulated learners who took responsibility and ownership over their own development (Williams & MacNamara, 2022). Participant's benefitted from knowing what it would take to reach the elite level and having an understanding of areas they needed to develop without relying solely on coach input. The use of psycho-behavioural and meta-cognitive skills was seen as critical in supporting development. Athletes who actively reflected on development and understood themselves and their own thoughts, emotions

and behaviours felt they were able to cope with challenges, and actively sought further challenge (Taylor et al., 2021). Due to feeling in control of their development and having the perception that they had resources or strategies to overcome obstacles, these athletes seemed to react positively to failure (Taylor et al., 2022a). Contrastingly, for those that did not reach the elite level of sport or dropped out, participants discussed not being able to draw upon such strategies, not feeling in control of their development and not being able to cope with the challenges put in front of them (Taylor et al., 2022a).

Microsystem

Participants also discussed the influence the environment and others, such as coaches, parents, team-mates and non-sporting peers within that environment had on their TD experiences. Again, reinforcing the idiosyncratic nature of human experience, each of these were considered as factors with potential for both positive and negative effects.

Coaches. Coaches often had a positive impact on experiences when there was a perceived positive relationship with athletes (Rothwell et al., 2020). Some wanted coaches to tailor coaching styles to suit their individualised needs (Williams & MacNamara, 2020), others wanted coaches to challenge them and show an interest in them as an individual beyond the athlete (Taylor et al., 2022b). Coaches were also seen positively if they (a) were perceived as having enough knowledge and experience to develop the athlete technically and tactically, (b) created a positive environment around training and matches, and (c) provided clear direction and feedback to athletes to help them improve (Taylor et al., 2021). Some athletes appreciated coaches who provided feedback which encouraged reflection and prompted further thought in regard to areas for improvement (Taylor & Collins, 2022). Moreover, some participants discussed the importance of coaches developing a

psychologically safe culture, whereas others felt the presence of psychological safety did not impact their development or experience (Taylor et al. 2022b).

Parents. Parents were athlete's primary source of support and were utilised for informational, emotional and tangible support (Holt & Dunn, 2004). Whilst most were grateful for the investment parent's put into their development, parents could become over-involved and become contradictory in the messages they were offering and how they behaved when athletes made mistakes or did not play well (Taylor et al., 2021). Whilst this involvement often came from good intentions, it negatively impacted experiences (Sothorn & O'Gorman, 2021). On the contrary, some parents were crucial in keeping players grounded and supporting them to develop the individual characteristics mentioned previously (Holt & Dunn, 2004).

With parents and coaches perceived as having most influence on athlete's TD experiences, participants in some studies discussed a fear of letting these individuals down (Sothorn & O'Gorman, 2021). Some felt they were playing for other people and had a need to always prove themselves (Taylor et al., 2021). For some this was useful and drove them to perform (Taylor et al., 202a), others however experienced heightened pressure, began judging themselves based on external evaluations and became scared to play (Taylor et al., 2022b). This led to less risk taking and even playing with injuries (Hem et al., 2022). Some athlete's felt they had to conceal such emotions to present a favourable image and portray the identity of what they perceived as an ideal professional (Sothorn & O'Gorman, 2021).

Team-mates. With the majority of participants playing or having played team sports, the impact of team-mates was discussed. Some found engagement with team-mates positive to TD experiences. Senior athletes frequently served as role models and helped athletes by setting standards to follow, offered informational and emotional support and

being positive motivational influences (Gledhill & Harwood, 2014). For others, the high competition for places meant athletes would compare their progress and ability in relation to team-mates and perceived those on the same team as rivals (Hem et al., 2022).

Non-sporting peers. Away from sport, participants' peers also influenced TD experiences. For participants in Gledhill and Harwood (2014) having friends outside of sport offered participants a sense of normality. Conversely, for those interviewed in Gledhill and Harwood (2015) individuals discussed their non-sporting peers as being bad influences.

Mesosystem

Beyond their individual characteristics and direct communication with stakeholders, athletes also discussed interactions or a lack of interaction between stakeholders existing in their immediate environments which impacted their experiences. As they progressed through adolescence and toward the elite level of sport, some found it increasingly difficult to balance athletic careers alongside educational and social commitments (Hayman et al., 2020). This pressure was alleviated when stakeholders within sporting and educational institutions aligned how they would support the individual on both sporting and academic fronts (Hayman et al., 2020). In some instances, teachers and coaches were perceived to be understanding and considerate of the competing demands placed on the lives of these young individuals, and between them they were able to reduce the role strain. These efforts between stakeholders served to positively benefit TD experiences. Comparatively, participants' experience of role overload only intensified and became more of a strain when stakeholders were not in contact (Rothwell et al., 2020).

The importance of parents and coaches being aligned was also highlighted. At times, athletes received too much or contrasting feedback from parents and coaches which was often confusing and a hinderance to development (Taylor et al., 2021). Others illustrated a

lack coherence in messages received across different TD environments. Inconsistent messages from national coaches, international coaches and senior players left participants struggling to make sense of feedback and highlighted the need for communication between stakeholders (Taylor et al., 2022a).

Exosystem

Participants also alluded to environments and interactions which occurred external to their presence, yet still impacted their TD experiences nonetheless. Illustrating this, a number of participants referenced having a lack of opportunity or receiving little feedback from coaches due to them giving more attention to their favourites within the team (Williams & MacNamara, 2020). Participants discussed feeling as though they were treated differently to others within the team who were given more attention and greater support (Gledhill & Harwood, 2015).

Additionally, despite not hindering their progress on the TD pathway itself, having limited time to socialise with family or friends left individuals feeling isolated and negatively impacted their experience (Weedon, 2012). Particularly those who had migrated to the UK, knowing they were so far away from home brought with it a sense of suffocation. In contrast, being away from family was received positively by others who sensed they no longer had as many distractions and could focus solely on their development (Hem et al., 2022).

Macrosystem

The culture and social norms of sport TD structures and sport more broadly were also factors referred to as having an influence on one's experiences. For some individuals, the attitudes and practices within these environments meant their experience was a challenging one and one in which they discussed feeling like an outsider (Weedon, 2012). For example,

those migrating to the UK to compete in a TD pathway struggled to adapt to the change in social norms and discussed the difficulties they faced integrating with their host culture. In some instances, females were questioned as to why they were pursuing a career in sport and spoke of the lack of opportunities they had to progress (Gledhill & Harwood, 2015).

The ruthless nature of sport and relentless pressure to perform and win was also perceived negatively by some (McCarthy et al., 2022). It was felt emphasis was placed on performance over well-being and a sole focus on sport was endorsed, thus encouraging identity foreclosure (Sothorn & O’Gorman, 2021). As discussed previously, it was one’s perception of this culture and appraisal of whether they had the resources and tools to cope with such demands which influenced whether they coped and progressed in such environments (McCarthy et al., 2022). Others felt organisations were like businesses in which clubs were only focused on short-term success (Williams & MacNamara, 2020). This limited participants’ opportunities to develop and led to a sense of stagnation and frustration (Taylor et al. 2022a). In some sports, only the young athletes who possessed similar characteristics to athletes who were successful at the elite level at the time were being selected (Webb et al., 2020). This put those who had not yet matured physically, whilst still possessing adequate technical and tactical abilities, at a disadvantage. This being considered, success on TD pathways may not always be about talent but also luck and being in the right place at the right time. Equally, for some participants who played in the lower professional leagues of the English football pyramid where financial reward was not as big a factor, it was felt these organisations adopted more of a long-term focus on athlete’s development and participants therefore felt more valued and were given more opportunity to develop (Webb et al., 2020).

Chronosystem

Finally, athletes considered their TD experiences across time and reflected on their development longitudinally. Upon doing so, ex-academy players for example discussed the player pathway structures being too prescriptive and not accounting for the non-linear and inflexible nature of player development (Rothwell et al., 2020). This was reinforced by Taylor et al. (2022a) who also advocated for organisations adopting a long-term outlook on player development.

When considering other critical moments across their TD journeys, challenges breaking into the first team or making the transition from junior to senior athlete were frequently raised. A big gulf was perceived in regard to the level athletes were at technically, tactically, physically, and psychologically and the level they need to reach to meet the demands and thrive at the elite level (Prendergast & Gibson, 2022). Whilst it took some time to adapt, participants reinforced the importance of support systems, gradual exposure to high-performance environments and the opportunity to go on loans which helped navigate this transition (Webb et al., 2020).

Discussion and Meta-Synthesis

This review sought to explore individuals' experiences of TD pathways in the UK. Through adopting a meta-study method, the research team were able to achieve their aims by (a) exploring factors perceived to impact athlete development within TD environments, (b) critically appraise the quality of studies in this area, and (c) highlight gaps in the literature to offer recommendations for future research. As the first study to review this literature, this research contributes to the field in a number of ways.

The first way this review adds to knowledge is by illustrating similarities and discrepancies between what athlete's perceived was facilitative or debilitating to their development. Highlighting this is particularly relevant for applied practitioners and other

stakeholders who are involved in TD. First, there was coherence amongst the studies that TD journeys are unique to each individual but one in which all athletes will inevitably encounter a number of challenges (Taylor et al., 2022a). That said, rather than it being universally accepted that young athletes need to be exposed to challenge in order to reach the elite level of sport, as was initially proposed (Collins & MacNamara, 2012), studies more recently have been able to offer a more granular understanding into the impact of challenge on TD. Whether athletes felt these experiences facilitated development impinged on a number of individual and social factors (Moodie et al., 2023). This includes: the young athlete's perception of the challenge, their ability to utilise psycho-behavioural skills (MacNamara et al. 2010a), and the support offered to them by those in coaches, parents and others in their environments. Participants highlighted the importance of having self-awareness and the ability to self-regulate in order to navigate and grow from challenging experiences (Gledhill & Harwood, 2014). Others discussed the need for stakeholders (a) preparing young athlete's for difficult moments before they arise, (b) providing support and guidance during the challenging period, and (c) helping them to reflect and learn from the challenge once it has been overcome (Taylor et al., 2022a). Whilst all participants experienced challenge, the biggest discrepancy between findings lie in how well participants were able to draw upon psycho-behavioural skills and how much support was received by each individual. Both factors impacted how TD pathways were perceived and participants' chances of reaching the elite level of sport.

Reviewing the literature has also helped researchers highlight how a large proportion of individuals described their TD journeys as ones that were emotionally disturbing and difficult to endure. Rather than being an enjoyable experience, the challenges and environments they were exposed to often meant the fun was taken out of participation.

Individuals remained committed and determined to achieve their goals, both of which are characteristics described as facilitative to TD (MacNamara et al., 2010a), however this seemingly came at the cost of neglecting other aspects of their identities and lives. These findings draw parallels with the work of scholars who suggest early specialisation and professionalism can come at a cost of enjoyment and may lead to future dropout (Côté & Abernethy, 2012), something which is counterintuitive to the aims of TD programmes. Concerns have been raised in regard to the 'healthiness' of TD systems (Rongen et al., 2018), however rather than the idea of supporting athletes to reach the elite level of sport being criticised, Rongen et al. (2018) suggests it is the nature in which pathways are designed, implemented and managed which needs considering. With only a small number of individuals who enter TD programmes making it to the elite level of sport (Güllich & Cobley, 2017), future research and stakeholders working in applied settings are urged to examine whether TD programmes can focus on performance as well as teaching life skills and promoting enjoyment (Rothwell et al., 2022).

Another way this review adds to knowledge is through its critical appraisal of studies. Doing so helped authors highlight knowledge gaps and allows researchers and practitioners to question the real-world application of findings. In light of previous research suggesting a lack of alignment between recommendations from TD research and the practice of coaches operating within TD environments (Pankhurst et al., 2013), a strength of studies lie in their decision to draw upon pragmatic research philosophies. With the aims of such approaches being to bridge the gap between research and applied practice (Giacobbi et al., 2005), authors such as Taylor and Collins (2022b) were able to discuss how their findings could be used by coaches to better support the development of athletes. The current review supports the use of these approaches given their ability to produce research which is practically useful

and transferrable to applied contexts. The use of action research may also be beneficial to applied settings given researchers aims when adopting this method being to produce information about particular issues and creating interventions to overcome challenges (Stringer & Dwyer, 2005).

A limitation in a number of the studies however lie in researchers either (a) lacking clarity in regard to their philosophical underpinning, (b) struggling to align with the outlined philosophical underpinnings when reporting findings, and (c) a lack of reflection in regard to their positioning and influence on research. Whilst research questions and data collection and analysis methods were appropriate to studies' aims, a lack of explicit consideration in regard to their assumptions meant the methodological rigor of studies was limited. Authors of future research are urged to (a) provide greater transparency in regard to the philosophical assumptions underpinning their research and (b) consider with greater scrutiny how their philosophical underpinning influences their reporting of findings. This is important since the research team are encouraging scholars to consider the use of pragmatic and action research methods to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Particularly for those who may not be as familiar with philosophical assumptions, it is important researchers are able to translate findings and the implications of their research into language which is understood by individuals who are working in applied contexts.

To understand athletes' experiences of TD systems most authors decided to use utilise retrospective designs. In some instances, it was felt this design offered rich insight as it appeared participants were able to reflect, piece together, and make sense of their experiences in the time that had passed (Rothwell et al., 2020). Through no longer being immersed in the environment, one could also suggest participants may have been inclined to offer a more insightful account of their experience without fear of repercussion. That said,

this does not negate a limitation of studies being their lack of consideration for prospective designs. Young individuals on TD pathways benefit from reflecting on experience, becoming more self-aware, and having oversight of what it takes to become an elite athlete (Glaser, 2014). Thus, whilst researchers may have decided not to recruit participants who are currently on TD pathways due to them still being on that journey, not utilising a retrospective and/or prospective design may have meant scholars missed the opportunity to use their researchers to support the development of these young individuals themselves. Whilst speculative, providing young athlete's the opportunity to discuss their current experiences, encouraging them to reflect on what they have enjoyed, what has been challenging and what lies ahead across their journey may have been a useful exercise to develop athlete's psychological skills. In all, whilst the use of either design has scope to be facilitative or debilitating to research, what was a limitation of studies overall was the lack of rationale as to why retrospective designs were used. Providing this information would have (a) improved the rigor of studies, (b) afforded the audience an understanding into potential socio-cultural factors impacting the research, and (c) provided useful insight for scholars conducting similar research in the future. Did researchers believe retrospective designs would offer greater insight into athlete's experience or were other factors such as gatekeepers limiting opportunities to access talented young athletes at play?

By utilising Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (2005) and a meta-method design, the research team have been able to highlight what areas of athlete's experiences may not have been explored in as much depth and offer suggestions for future research. In summary, athlete's perceptions of their individual characteristics and interactions with immediate environments (microsystem) is an area which has captured the attention of most researchers. What requires further investigation however is the influence broader cultures

and societal norms (macrosystems) have on individuals' experiences on TD pathways. With the increasing globalisation of the English Premier League and recent efforts made to develop women's sport, future research may benefit from exploring the experiences of this populations in greater depth. Furthermore, there is need to shed light on the experiences of individuals from BAME and LGBTQ+ communities whose views are often neglected and who have previously been found to struggle integrating into sporting cultures dominated by masculine ideologies and hegemony (Kavoura & Kokkonen, 2021). Studies would also benefit from utilising longitudinal study designs to investigate in greater depth the influence of chronosystems on TD.

A limitation of this study lies in the research team's decision to only include research which (a) was written in English and (b) recruited participants with experience of TD pathways in the UK. This research therefore fails to address calls to conduct research which gives voice to individuals from non-Western cultures and societies (Ponnusamy & Grove, 2014). By shedding light on the TD experiences of individuals from non-western cultures, those interested and involved in developing talent may be afforded opportunities to compare practices and learn from cultures which have alternative traditions and methods of working.

Synthesising the literature included in this paper nonetheless has provided the opportunity to understand in greater depth individuals' experiences of TD pathways. As a result, the author is confident this review can stimulate conversation regarding the future practices of individuals involved in talent development. Drawing upon the themes produced, readers are encouraged to reflect on the following questions in respect of their own practices and environments. What are the cultures and societal norms in your organisations and how do these impact athlete's experiences? How well do stakeholders work

collaboratively to support development? Is there a predominant focus on developing athletic talent, and it is feasible to support the holistic development of young people? Are athletes recognised as individuals each with their own needs, abilities and motivations and is this reflected in the support they receive? Are young individuals supported in becoming self-aware and self-regulated learners who are developing skills to cope with the pressures of elite sport?

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Table 1*Study Characteristics*

| Study | Purpose | Sport | Participant characteristics | Data collection | Data analysis |
|-----------------------------|--|----------|--|---|---|
| Gledhill and Harwood (2014) | Gain insight into the developmental experiences of elite youth female football players | Football | 4 female football players (mean age = 16.75 years) Mean playing experience = 8.13 years All participants Caucasian | Semi-structured interviews (3 interviews with 2 participants and 2 interviews with two participants) Fieldwork and informal conversations Retrospective and prospective | Inductive content analysis Composite sequence analysis |
| Gledhill and Harwood (2015) | Examine career experiences of UK-based female soccer players from a holistic perspective with a view to producing a grounded theory of factors contributing to career/talent development and | Football | 13 females (mean age = 19.61 years) Previously part of player development programme for between 3-7 years All have withdrawn from playing football | Semi-structured interviews Retrospective Inductive and deductive | Iterative data analysis Three stages of coding: open coding, axial coding, theoretical integration |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|---|------------|---|---|--|
| | transitions in UK youth female soccer | | Race not outlined <i>Coaches, players' best friends and teachers also interviewed</i> | | Memo-writing, diagramming and member reflections Review of literature to compare themes |
| Gowling (2021) | Examine experiences of UK elite junior tennis players and describe what it is like to perform in the elite junior context | Tennis | 8 tennis players (4 males and 4 females, age range = 11-18 years) Race not outlined | Semi-structured interviews Retrospective | Interpretative phenomenological analysis |
| Gowling (2022) | Examine experience of UK elite junior tennis players and describe what it is like to perform in the elite junior context | Tennis | 4 tennis players (2 males and 2 females, age range = 11-13 years) Race not outlined | Semi-structured interviews Retrospective | Interpretative phenomenological analysis |
| Hayman et al. (2020) | Apply the role strain theory to explain transitional experiences of junior international acrobatic gymnasts | Gymnastics | 5 international junior acrobatic gymnasts (2 females and 3 males, mean age = 16.2 years). All participants British | Interviews Retrospective | Thematic analysis Inductive and deductive approach Member checking |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|---|----------|--|--|--|
| Hem et al. (2022) | Gain insight into how talented Norwegian football players who made a club transfer to an English football academy managed the transition | Football | 8 players playing for English football academy. All players aged 16 at arrival of academy All participants Norwegian | Semi-structured interviews Retrospective | Thematic analysis Inductive approach Member checking |
| Holt and Dunn (2004) | Identify and examine psychosocial competencies among elite male adolescent soccer players in order to present a qualitatively-derived grounded theory of factors associated with soccer success | Football | 14 players playing for English football academy (mean age = 16.2 years) 3 Premier League clubs and 1 Division 1 club. 10 players born in England, 1 in Wales, 2 in Northern Ireland, and 1 in Australia 3 defenders, 4 midfielders, 3 strikers, 4 goalkeepers | Semi-structured interviews Fieldwork Retrospective and prospective | Open coding, axial coding, selective coding Inductive approach Story line, diagram, memo and notes, comparative techniques with other professionals. Delayed literature review for comparison of themes with literature Member checking |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|-------------|--|---|--|
| | | | 13 participants British. 1 participant Australian | | |
| | | | <i>Canadian players and English coaches also interviewed</i> | | |
| Holt and Mitchell (2006) | Examine psychological aspects of talent development experiences of adolescent youth players on the verge of being released by a third division professional soccer club Compare findings with Holt and Dunn (2004) grounded theory of soccer success | Football | 9 male academy players playing for a third division football club (mean age = 18.5 years) Players unaware they were going to be released at time of study All participants Caucasian <i>Coach, manager and director of youth section also interviewed</i> | Semi-structured interviews Retrospective and prospective | Inpitted onto the NUD-IST NVivo to analyse Open coding, axial coding and selective coding Inductive and deductive approach Member checking |
| McCarthy et al. (2022) | (a) Generate a deeper understanding of the lived experience of the relate age effects | Rugby Union | 8 male players who had played in an academy system in an English Premiership rugby | Semi-structured interviews Retrospective | Reflexive thematic analysis through QSR NVivo |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------|---|---|--|
| | in TD systems across groups of more and less successful athletes | | union team (mean age = 26.5 years, age range = 21-32 years). All playing rugby at time of study in either Premiership or Championship Race not outlined | | Comparison between birth quartiles Inductive and deductive approach |
| Prendergast and Gibson (2022) | (a) What are the experiences of players, coaches, first team managers of the loan? (b) How do players, coaches and first team managers perceive the impact of the loan on the player's development, and why? | Football | 3 professional footballers playing in the English Football League Experience playing professionally ranged from 2-9 years. Race not outlined <i>Managers of EPL, EFL and non-league teams also interviewed</i> | Virtual semi-structured interviews Retrospective | Thematic analysis Use of critical friend |
| Rothwell et al. (2020) | Explore experiences of being part of a professional rugby league academy and the reasons why | Rugby League | 9 male ex-professional academy players (mean age = 20.22 years) | Semi-structured interviews Retrospective | Thematic analysis Inductive and deductive approach |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|----------|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| | talented adolescents have dropped out of playing rugby league | | 6 participants not offered senior contract. 2 declined senior contact. 1 dropped out of sport mid-way through academy contract | | |
| | | | Race not outlined | | |
| Simpson et al. (2022) | Investigate the characteristics of the TD pathway within Scottish female football | Football | 5 female Scottish international A-Squad players (mean age = 26.8 years). 3 competing in Scottish women's Premier League and 2 competing in Women's Super League All participants British <i>Coaches also interviewed</i> | Semi-structured interviews Retrospective | Thematic analysis Peer review |
| Sothorn and O'Gorman (2021) | Explore the extent to which the mental health and wellbeing | Football | 12 males playing for a Premier League | Semi-structured interviews | Thematic analysis |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|--|--------------|---|---|--|
| | of elite professional academy junior and youth footballers are influenced by social relations and interactions with significant others | | academy (age range =10-15 years. 10 playing for Category 1 Academy 2 playing for Category 3 Academy Race not outlined | Retrospective | Inductive and deductive |
| Taylor et al. (2021) | (a) Investigate the number of feedback providers young players reported through their TD journey (b) Understand the degree of coherence players perceived from this feedback (c) Explore the sensemaking process of individual players by understanding their decision criteria. | Rugby League | 8 male players who had recently signed a senior contract at English Super League clubs (mean age = 18.25 years, age range = 18-19 years). All participants British | 3 semi-structured interviews with each participant Retrospective | Reflexive thematic analysis through QSR NVivo Version 12 Inductive approach |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|--------------|--|--|--|
| Taylor and Collins (2022) | <p>(a) Establish player perceptions of the level of challenge prior to and through senior transition</p> <p>(b) Understand the extent of emotional disturbance occurring from those challenges and the feedback associated with them</p> <p>(c) Investigate how feedback processes impacted players to help them progress through the transition.</p> | Rugby League | <p>8 male players on a talent development pathway and about to make the senior transition at England Rugby League clubs (mean age = 18.25 years, age range = 18-19 years)</p> <p>All have made at least one senior appearance (mean = 11.37 appearances in the Super League)</p> <p>All participants British</p> | <p>2 semi-structured interviews with each participant</p> <p>Retrospective</p> | Interpretative phenomenological analysis |
| Taylor et al. (2022) | <p>Contrast a group of 'successful' and 'unsuccessful' players to understand the nature of the challenge experience throughout their pathways on</p> | Rugby Union | <p>2 groups of participants. All had progressed through an English Premiership academy system, represented their country at junior international level</p> | <p>Semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Retrospective</p> | <p>Reflexive thematic analysis through QSR NVivo</p> |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|--|-------------|--|---|---|
| | perceived progression or stagnation. | | and were successful in gaining a professional contract at a senior elite team in the English Premiership | | |
| | Understand the extent and impact of system integration on challenge experience. | | Group 1 – 7 male professional players, now representing country at senior international level (mean age = 22.14) | | |
| | Understand the impact of the social milieu on their ability to process and benefit from challenging experiences. | | Group 2 – 8 males released from professional contracts. (mean age = 22.75) | | |
| | | | Race not outlined | | |
| Taylor et al. (2022) | (a) Examine the extent to which two matched groups of international and released professional rugby union players perceived psychological safety to be an adaptive | Rugby Union | 2 groups of participants. All had progressed through the English Premiership academy system, had represented their country at junior international level | Virtual semi-structured interviews Retrospective | Reflexive thematic analysis using QSR NVivo Second author as critical friend |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|----------|---|---|---|
| | feature of their developmental experience and | | and signed a professional contract at a senior elite team in the English Premiership | | |
| | (b) Understand what elements of the player's coaching experience were perceived to be enabling or disabling of future progress. | | Group 1 – 7 players (mean age = 22.14 years) who had represented county at senior international level | | |
| | | | Group 2 – 8 players (mean age = 22.75 years) who had been released from professional contract | | |
| | | | Race not outlined | | |
| Webb et al. (2020) | (a) What has been the talent identification and talent development experiences of senior professional players in England | Football | 11 male professional football players (age range = 18-22 years) | Semi-structured interviews Retrospective | Thematic analysis Inductive approach |
| | (b) The existence, focus and attention | | All participants British | | |

paid to player
development
through educational
provision at English
football clubs

(c) The extent of the
first team
development
opportunities which
exist.

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|------------------|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Weedon (2012) | Explore the challenges of international migration for youth footballers recruited into Premier League academies. | Football | 16 males playing for a Premier League academy (age range = 16-18 years). Players born in Germany, Holland, Italy, Slovakia, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, Nigeria and USA. <i>Directors, Managers, Coaches and Education and Welfare Officers also interviewed</i> | Interviews Retrospective | <i>Information not provided</i> |
| Williams and MacNamara (2020) | Explore the talent pathway experiences | Rugby Cricket | 10 athletes (7 male rugby players and 3 | Semi-structured interviews | Thematic analysis |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| | of youth athletes who were deselected from a pathway and consider how those experiences influenced their life post deselection. | | male cricket players, mean age = 20.6 years, age range = 20-25 years) | Retrospective | Inductive approach Member checking |
| | | | All involved in talent development pathways before being deselected prior to signing professional contract | | |
| | | | Time on pathway ranged from 2-9 years (mean = 5 years) | | |
| | | | Time since deselection = 2-4 years (mean = 2.6 years) | | |
| | | | Race not outlined | | |
| Williams and MacNamara (2022) | Explore what young athletes experienced during their most difficult challenges and how youth athletes negotiated their most difficult | Swimming Hockey Rugby Golf | 8 athletes on talent development pathways (5 females and 3 males, mean age = 15.8 years, age range = 15-17 years) | 2 semi-structured interviews with each participant Retrospective and Prospective | Thematic analysis Inductive approach |

challenges as they transitioned from the specialisation to the investment phase of development on the talent pathway.

4 swimmers, 2 hockey players, 1 rugby player, 1 golfer

Participants of White British origin

Table 2*Methodological Rigor*

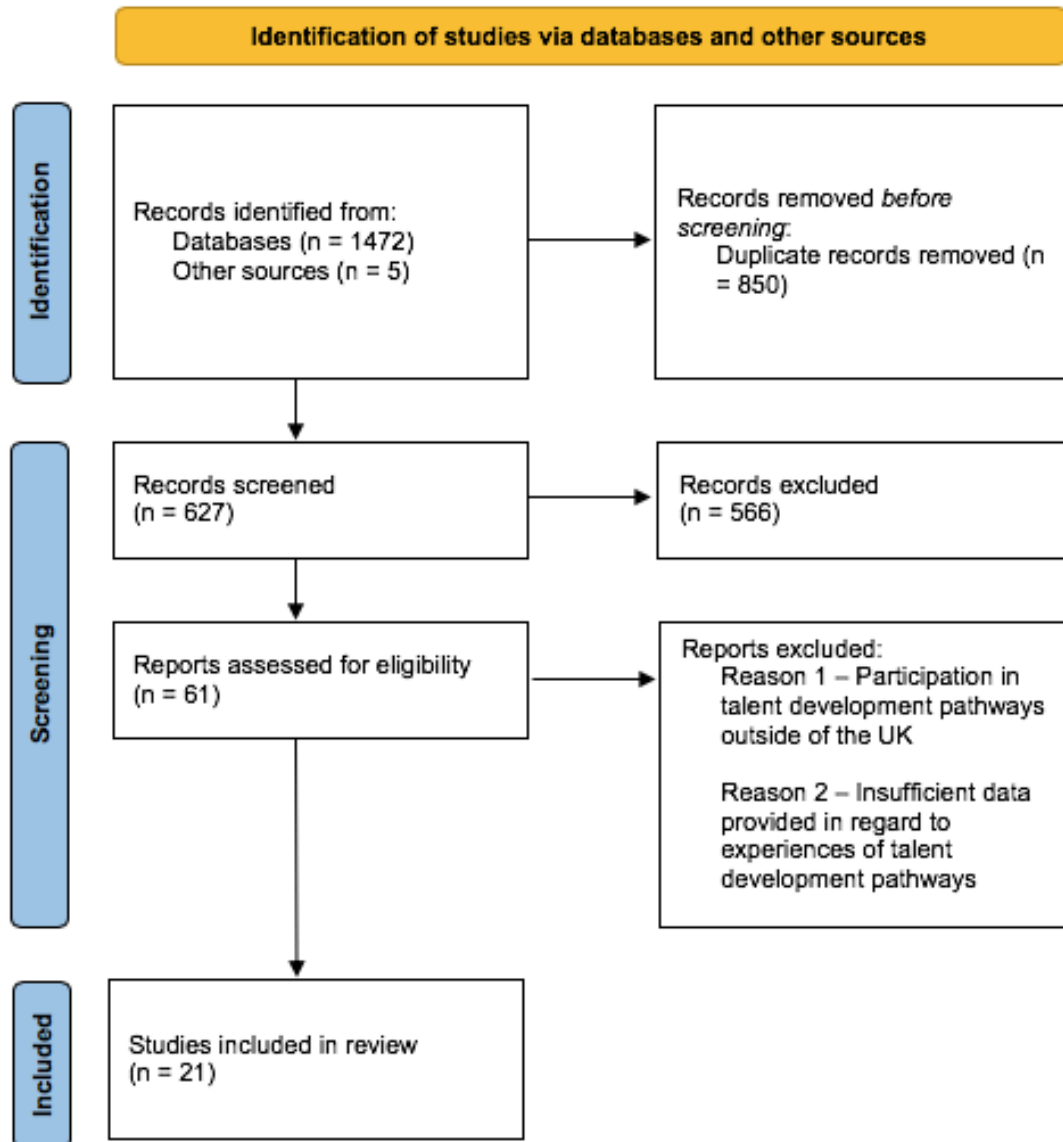
| Study | Philosophical assumption | Rationale for sampling procedures/methods provided | Enough detail and rationale to judge the data collection and analysis | Procedures appropriate for chosen methodology | Discusses their role as researcher Reflexivity section? | Methodology aligns with how findings are presented? |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|--|---|
| Gledhill and Harwood (2014) | Interpretivist | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Gledhill and Harwood (2015) | Interpretivist Relativist ontology | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| Gowling (2021) | Not stated | No | No | Unable to determine | No | Unable to determine |
| Gowling (2022) | Not stated | No | No | Unable to determine | No | Unable to determine |
| Hayman et al. (2020) | Not stated | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Unable to determine |
| Hem et al. (2022) | Not stated | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Unable to determine |
| Holt and Dunn (2004) | Not stated | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Unable to determine |
| Holt and Mitchell (2006) | Interpretive naturalistic approach | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| McCarthy et al. (2022) | Pragmatic research philosophy | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| | Interpretivist epistemology | | | | | |
| Prendergast and Gibson (2022) | Interpretivist epistemology | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| | Relativist ontology | | | | | |
| Rothwell et al. (2020) | Relativist ontology | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| | Transformative paradigm | | | | | |
| Simpson et al. (2022) | Not stated | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No |
| Sothorn and O’Gorman (2021) | Interpretivist epistemology | Yes | No | Yes | No | No |
| Taylor et al. (2021) | Pragmatic research philosophy | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |

| Interpretivist epistemology | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----|-----|---------------------|-----|-----|---------------------|
| Taylor and Collins (2022) | Pragmatic research philosophy | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Unable to determine |
| Taylor et al. (2022) | Pragmatic research philosophy | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Unable to determine |
| Taylor et al. (2022) | Pragmatic research philosophy | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Unable to determine |
| Webb et al. (2020) | Not outlined | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Unable to determine |
| Weedon (2012) | Not outlined | No | No | Unable to determine | No | No | Unable to determine |
| Williams and MacNamara (2020) | Pragmatic research philosophy | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Unable to determine |
| Williams and MacNamara (2022) | Pragmatic research philosophy | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |

Figure 1

Prisma Flow Diagram



Empirical Paper One

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate a youth rowing project (YRP) from a positive youth development (PYD) perspective. An action research approach was used to understand stakeholders' perceptions of the project and draw upon the knowledge generated to improve the YRP. Stakeholders believed the YRP was effective in contributing to student's psycho-social development with coaches being of central importance in fostering growth. Stakeholders also thought the YRP was an avenue in which to promote dialogue and action on social justice issues, such as economic and racial equality, and LGBTQ+ rights. In light of findings, the research team plan to design and deliver their own coach development programme for YRP coaches, and work towards an explicit focus of promoting PYD. Implications for scholars as well as those involved in developing PYD programmes include considering novel ways to engage youth in sport and promote dialogue and action on social justice issues.

Keywords: rowing, positive youth development, coaches, psycho-social development, social justice issues

Positive Youth Development through Sport

PYD refers to the ways in which children and adolescents are exposed to developmental opportunities through involvement in organized activities (Holt et al., 2020). Sport has proven a feasible avenue in which to cultivate this development (Gould & Carson, 2008), providing an environment where individuals can nurture skills which can be transferred for use in non-sport settings such as school, family life, social settings, work, or the community (Camiré et al., 2013; Gould & Carson, 2008; Mossman et al., 2021). To ensure sport operates as a PYD setting, there is a need for scholars to understand how to facilitate this development with diverse populations (Allen & Rhind, 2019; Weiss, 2016). Through investigating the process by which PYD occurs, stakeholders and policy makers will be equipped to design and implement evidence-based interventions which positively impact the development of youth sport participants (Weiss, 2016). To this end, this study outlines our attempts to evaluate a youth rowing project (YRP) from a PYD perspective.

Grounded in positive and developmental psychology (Lerner et al., 2009), PYD assumes all young people possess potential for positive, successful, and healthy development (Damon, 2004). This belief is a position built upon the concept of neural plasticity, supporting the idea that humans have capacity for systematic change across the lifespan (Bernhardi et al., 2017). Through this lens, youth are seen as individuals who can grow and develop (Damon, 2004) rather than problems to be solved, a strength-based approach which opposes the deficit-reduction/pathologizing perspective which had initially dominated the field of psychology (Snyder & Lopez, 2002).

Drawing upon relational developmental systems theory such as Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological theory as underpinning frameworks (Geldhof et al., 2013), youth development is understood to transpire within a system of relations involving young people

and the interrelated contexts in which they exist. Representing a shift from previous reductionist notions (Agans et al., 2016) to a holistic perspective of youth development, by virtue of the school, family, sporting, or other community groups in which they are embedded, young individuals are said to be influenced by others co-existing within their ecological system (Agans et al., 2016). Further, rather than being passive recipients of contextual influence or the result of genetic predetermination (Agans et al., 2016), young individuals are seen as active agents in their development, having the ability to adapt to and change the contexts in which they exist (Overton, 2015).

The use of sport as a mechanism to facilitate youth development has roots in literature tracing back nearly three decades (Weiss & Gill, 2005). Otherwise positioned as life skills, sport engagement has been found to foster behavioural, cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal developmental outcomes (Danish et al., 2004), including but not limited to: increased self-esteem (Coatsworth & Conroy, 2009), coping, resilience and prosocial behaviour (Pittaway & Dantas, 2022), emotion regulation (Holt & Sehn, 2007), problem-solving (Papacharisis et al., 2005), identity formation, and improved social relationships (Petitpas et al., 2004).

Notwithstanding the above findings, prudence is encouraged when interpreting these results because much of the literature has utilised cross-sectional, self-report or both types of designs (Camiré, 2014). Papacharisis et al. (2005) argue life skill programmes are only successful if they can transfer to non-sport settings, meanwhile others suggest sport involvement does not automatically produce positive outcomes and impinges on social and cultural factors (Holt et al., 2020; Knight et al., 2011). Strengthening this view, whilst Fraser-Thomas et al. (2005) found contextual assets have potential to facilitate young people's development, if managed ineffectively, there is potential to inhibit participant development

(Lerner et al., 2012). Consistent with earlier reviews (Eime et al., 2013; Holt et al., 2017; Whitley et al., 2019), Bruner et al.'s (2021) meta-analysis found just small to moderate effect sizes for the influence of sport-based PYD interventions on competence, confidence, and life-skill outcomes. By virtue of these findings, Coakley (2016) is justified in disputing the near universal belief that all PYD programmes produce positive developmental outcomes.

Rather than producing outcomes automatically, it is the manner in which sport is delivered and experienced which determines positive developmental outcomes (Petitpas et al., 2005). Since development and transfer of skills to non-sport settings is not a guarantee (Pierce et al., 2017) there is concurrence in the view that programmes ought to consider how they aim to generate intended outcomes (Weiss, 2016). A variety of conceptual models exist which outline how to generate learning environments conducive to developing life skills (see Côté et al. 2014; Danish, 2002; Gould & Carson, 2008; Hellison & Wright, 2003; Lerner et al., 2005; Petitpas et al. 2005). Successful in developing skills such as emotion regulation, teamwork, and communication (Allen & Rhind, 2019; Bean et al., 2022; Newman et al., 2020), consistent between models is the recognition that people and experiences in young individuals' environments are central in contributing to PYD. In spite of Turnnidge et al.'s (2014) and Bean et al. (2018) efforts to discuss the effectiveness between implicit and explicit approaches in regard to how life skills are taught, a lack of clarity still remains in respect to which is the most effective method to help students transfer these skills for use in non-sport settings (Bean et al., 2022; Holt et al., 2016).

Since Holt et al.'s (2017) qualitative meta-study of PYD literature, further critique has been aimed at PYD literature due to what Coakley (2011) suggests is a promotion of a neoliberal agenda and desire to teach skills which are said to be functional, teachable, and economically productive (Ronkainen et al., 2021). Beyond solely teaching life skills,

researchers are increasingly beginning to advocate for an examination of how sport can be used to challenge the socio-political inequalities young individuals face in contemporary society (Kochanek & Erickson, 2020; Outley & Blyth, 2020). As an inherent part of the fabric of society, Darnell and Millington (2019) argue sport offers a viable setting to teach young individuals about social justice issues (Darnell & Millington, 2019). For this reason, Camiré et al. (2021) urge those involved in the development of PYD programmes to consider how to promote dialogue and action on social justice issues and consider how they can become a social structure which promote inclusivity. In light of this, the current study aims to address such calls in the context of a youth rowing project.

Youth Rowing Project

The YRP examined in this study was established in the northwest of England in 2017 and aims to provide young people the opportunity to row. The project partners with schools and works to incorporate weekly rowing sessions into the curriculum of UK year 8 students (Grade 7 US) across the academic year. Students selected to participate are those eligible for pupil premium funding, an allocation of money provided by the UK Government to schools in England to support the educational outcomes of students deemed to be at a disadvantage (Department for Education, 2022). Students are coached by British Rowing Level 2 qualified coaches and the YRP works with 28 schools across the northwest of England incorporating over 300 students on the water each week. In the five years since its formation, three further projects have started and operate from different rowing clubs.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the above YRP from a PYD perspective. In doing so, the study will (a) examine whether the project helps students develop life skills, (b) understand what facilitates or hinders the development and transferability of these skills,

and (c) unearth whether the YRP is currently or can prove to be a viable avenue in which to stimulate discussion and raise awareness of social justice issues (Camiré et al., 2021). To achieve these aims the study utilises an action-research (AR) approach. Through this, researchers work alongside stakeholders, gather multiple perspectives, and draw upon the generated knowledge to improve the practice of the YRP (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010; Santos et al., 2020).

Methodology

Research Design and Philosophical Underpinnings

Positioned with a dual focus on both practice and theory (Norton, 2009), through its highly collaborative, reflective, experiential, and participatory nature, AR is a useful tool to generate social change at the local level (Cohen et al., 2017). AR focuses on development and embraces both problem-posing and problem-solving perspectives (McNiff, 2010). Investigators and stakeholders are co-creators of knowledge who work collaboratively to understand and produce information about a specific group or issue (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014), subsequently using this information to create interventions designed to develop the area of interest (Stringer & Dwyer, 2005). Coghlan and Brannick (2014), whose framework was utilised in this study, describe AR as a cyclical process consisting of four steps: (a) diagnosing the issue, (b) planning action, (c) taking action, and (d) evaluating action.

This current research lies within the participatory paradigm (Heron & Reason, 1997). We adopted a subjective-objective ontological view that reality is both one and many (Heron & Reason, 2008). Our position therefore is based on the notion that it is not possible to assert what is real or factual. Through this lens, Heron and Reason (1997) describe an extended epistemology of experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical ways of knowing. Understanding our research was set within a broader experiential context (Heron

& Reason, 1997), through self-reflective efforts, our aim was to intentionally and congruently embed these four ways of knowing into the study (Heron & Reason, 2008).

We recognised that those we collaborated with may have held alternative views about reality and how knowledge is constructed. For this reason, at the onset of our relationship with the youth rowing (YR) trustees, we made explicit what our perspectives were and identified how this would impact the research process and our interpretation of findings. Complimented by the collaborative nature of AR, during the many discussions held across the research process regarding participants' perceptions of the project, the lead researcher ensured all stakeholders were reminded of these assumptions.

Action Research Cycle

Diagnosing the Issue

The current study was informed by research produced by academics from two institutions based in the north of England (see Figure 2 for a flowchart which outlines our AR process). The scholars, whose backgrounds lie within sporting, educational, and developmental pedagogy, and who also comprised part of the research team in this study, worked collaboratively with trustees from the YRP to construct a logic model (Shaikh et al. 2020). The logic model identifies the inputs, activities, intended outputs, and intended outcomes of the YRP. As can be seen in Figure 1, YR trustees outlined their desire to contribute toward the students' physical, psychological and social-cultural development. Our task began by considering how, through our research, we could test the assumptions of the model and over a two-month period, meetings were held between the research team and YR stakeholders to discuss how to achieve these aims.

The research team and YR trustees in their discussions agreed that each stakeholder would offer novel insight into the project. Through this research we would seek to

understand their perceptions of the project and use the logic model to inform the data collection process. It was hoped subsequent results would (a) illustrate to YR trustees whether people perceived the project was achieving its intended outputs and outcomes, (b) how perceptions of the YRP aligned with or opposed the PYD literature, and (c) identify potential avenues to improve the YRP.

Planning Action

After receiving ethical approval from the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), a total of 56 individuals involved in the YRP agreed to take part in the study. Ages ranged between 12-69 and demographics were a mix of White British, Black British and Asian British. Students from five different schools were recruited (see Table 1 for participant demographics). All participants above the age of 18 provided informed written consent, whilst for those below the age of 18, written assent was obtained from parents or guardians. All participants were assured data would remain anonymous and confidential in the write up this study. A YR trustee (who would act as our gatekeeper) provided email addresses of stakeholders and allowed the lead researcher to make contact and arrange data collection.

Data Collection. Interviews and focus groups offered viable methods to understand students' and other stakeholders' (teachers, coaches, school senior leadership team members, YR trustee) perceptions of the project (Holloway, 1997). To ensure the questions asked were relevant to stakeholders' involvement in the project (Newcomer et al., 2015), the research team worked together to produce guides for both the interviews and focus groups which were underpinned by the logic model and tailored to each stakeholder's role in the project.

The lead researcher immersed himself into the culture of the rowing project by attending one of their indoor rowing competitions and a number of the weekly rowing

sessions. By doing so, he was able to develop his contextual understanding, get a feel for the project in real time and potentially pick-up on features of the project which students and stakeholders may not have mentioned during the interviews and focus groups (Sparkes & Smith, 2013).

Data Analysis. With intentions to give voice and illuminate participants' perceptions and experiences of the YRP, we drew upon an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Smith et al.'s (2009) five steps were utilised to analyse the data (Sparkes & Smith, 2013). To immerse himself in the data and make sense of the participants' worlds (Smith & Sparkes, 2016), the lead researcher read and re-read interview transcripts. For focus groups, and due to difficulties transcribing the data, the lead researcher listened to audio recordings multiple times. As he was doing so, annotations were made on transcripts and notes taken for focus groups in reference to comments in the data he perceived were relevant to PYD literature or significant in respect of the aims of the study. This process was followed for all of the transcripts and focus group recordings and as the data collection process evolved, the lead researcher recognised his analysis of transcripts beginning to inform future interviews, focus groups, and data analysis (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021).

Once all of the data was analysed, the lead researcher consulted with the research team, presenting his findings and drawing upon their support to identify, label, and cluster annotations and notes into themes and concepts which had shared meanings or references (Sparkes & Smith, 2013). Emergent themes were listed onto a piece of paper, permitting further analysis and giving rise to a table consisting of superordinate themes which the lead researcher felt best illuminated participants' accounts of the YRP (Sparkes & Smith, 2013). Finally, the lead researcher cross-referenced superordinate themes back to initial transcripts and focus group notes, an exercise undertaken to verify his interpretation of the data and

ensure he was satisfied with how lived experience were being portrayed (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021).

Research Rigour. By virtue of the participatory approach underpinning this research, to assess its quality, it is important the study is judged within the criteria of its own terms (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014; Sparkes & Smith, 2009). Shani and Coghlan (2018) highlight the need for researchers to demonstrate how AR cycles are carried out with rigour, reflectivity, and relevance.

Rigour. Patterson et al. (2022) conceptualised rigour as the extent to which participants are empowered to share their experience through an ethical and trustworthy process, and for these stories to be accurately and clearly told. To this end, and to achieve rigour in this manuscript, the researchers illustrate the rationale behind the study, the process they followed to achieve its aims, and the method of inquiry used to analyse the data. Further, the research team (a) worked collaboratively with YR stakeholders to check their interpretations of the data were fair and (b) include direct quotes from participants in the write up of the manuscript (Reason, 2003).

Reflectivity. Demonstrating reflectivity, the lead researcher openly discussed his interactions with the broader research team as well as the YR stakeholders which helped him reflect on his own positioning, actions, and influence throughout the research process. He was candid in his accounts of the challenges faced producing this research and recognised how his involvement in collecting the data meant he was a co-producer to the knowledge constructed (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014).

Relevance. The study discusses how our findings will be used by the research team and YR trustees at the local level to improve the YRP and impact the PYD of students further. Researchers also discuss the study's positioning amongst the broader landscape of the PYD

literature, considering how it addresses gaps in the research as well as debating how the findings can inform other PYD programmes (Eden & Huxham, 1996).

To establish relevance at the national level, the lead researcher also presented the findings of the study to the broader rowing community at an annual rowing conference. As a result of this, the research team were afforded the opportunity to meet and offer support to individuals who were in the early phases of developing their own YRP across the United Kingdom.

Taking and Evaluating Action

Drawing upon the knowledge generated from this AR, after outlining our findings to the YR trustees, we decided that to generate greater impact on student's PYD, our next steps would be to design and deliver a coach development program for the coaches delivering the YRP. This program is described further in the discussion section of this study but will be written up as its own manuscript.

Results

This section is divided into four parts. First, we outline stakeholders' perceptions of the YRP being able to teach young individuals life skills. We then illustrate the factors stakeholders felt contributed toward the outcomes of the YRP, as well as whether or not they believed students could transfer these skills for use in contexts beyond rowing. Finally, the feasibility of the YRP promoting dialogue on social justice issues is introduced.

Developing Life Skills

Speaking in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, a school headteacher discussed the negative impact he felt the lockdowns had on students' development of psycho-social skills:

If we reflect on the last two years its important students were resilient but if I look at them there's a sense of hopelessness, they've almost given up. There's a sense of what do you expect from us and there's a lack of self-motivation and self-drive. They want things given to them and if they don't get what they need then it's a bit of "well it's not our fault look what's happened to us". What's been nice is the rowing has helped them to challenge that.

It was perceived, by a number of stakeholders as well as the students themselves, that involvement in the YRP helped students develop a number of life skills. Achieving at something which had initially seemed a daunting task nurtured a sense of resilience in the young individuals, "I used to quit a lot and have the mindset that if I can't do it the first time then why do it a second time but it's taught me to not give up and keep going" (Student 9). Closely related to this, recognising the need to push themselves beyond what they thought was possible seemed to tie in closely with students appearing to become more emotionally intelligent. The project helped students recognise the emotions or thoughts they are experiencing are not always helpful but understand that they don't always have to act on them:

I've learnt how to keep calm because I used to get stressed out really easily and people used to really annoy me, and they still do but not as much now. We all messed up last week on the water but I reminded myself that I'm around other people and I can't just have a go at them because I really don't want that because otherwise I'm just going to be getting in fights every day because someone has annoyed me but I want to get on better with people. (Student 5)

Not only were students beginning to recognise their own emotions but also other's. This was a skill teacher 4 noticed his students develop and over the course of the project felt they were able to utilise to improve their performance on the water:

They start getting frustrated with each other because they want to row quickly and because of this they start putting their opinions in and firing at each other with constructive feedback. They're not getting on each other's case as it's constructive and they're not saying it in a horrible way but they're just trying to make each other better. It takes time but they begin to listen and understand each other and understand how each person reacts differently. For me as a teacher, I just take a step back and let them discuss and from having these discussions we have seen improvements later on the water.

Expanding on this, it became apparent students developed the ability to converse and engage in conversations with individuals from different backgrounds, ages and with different interests to their own, something they struggled with initially and had to work on, "students come to the project very nervous at the start, very introverted and don't really talk much but over time you see them blossom. They become very enthusiastic, they start talking and learn to interact with other people" (Coach 3)

Reflecting on their communication skills, one student recognised how before her involvement in the project she struggled talking to individuals whom she was not friends with or perceived to have different interests to:

I would never normally speak to anyone. When you first do it you think I'm never going to speak to these people but if we didn't learn how to talk to each other I wouldn't have become friends with her and I wouldn't really like her. (Student 8)

A by-product to becoming better at communicating, students shifted from seeing themselves as a group of individuals, to overtime creating a collective identity. With this brought with it an appreciation of the benefits working as a team can have on their rowing performance and enjoyment in the project. Student 29 reflected on her experience:

When we were doing our single races, we had the boys around us. We never used to but now we support the lads and the lads support us. We're all one big team. We've spent a day a week with each other for 9 months so we've got loads of close relationships and just want to cheer each other on and it helps so much. (Student 29)

Factors Contributing to the Development of Life Skills

When reflecting on the factors which contributed to the above outcomes stakeholders frequently highlighted the coaches as being of critical importance. The culture they were able to generate and effort they put into coaching and building relationships with students was something that was appreciated by students:

I think if you don't have a good relationship with your coach then you're not really going to listen. We have a strong relationship with ours and she's always pushing us to be the best we can but if we didn't have that I don't think we'd be this far ahead. (Student 31)

Through building positive relationships and understanding the students, coaches felt they were able to tailor sessions to suit students' individualised needs:

it's about understanding the different individuals and that they're not all of the same ability but tailoring the sessions to meet each of their own needs and help them to develop. It's knowing who you've got in your crew, adapting to your situation and most importantly making sure they have fun. (Coach 5)

Analysing the project at a broader level, reference was also made to the need for all stakeholders to buy-in to the project in order to promote PYD. Coach 4 discussed the value in having support and engagement from all stakeholders involved and felt this allowed the YRP to function and achieve its aims:

I think it's the engagement and commitment from all of the stakeholders. The second one stakeholder stops being engaged whether that's the school, the coaches, the parents, or the children then the whole thing falls apart. The commitment from everybody makes the programme so successful.

Sufficient funds were also needed to ensure the project had adequate resources to support student's development. Fortunately, the YRP could ensure there were enough boats, lifejackets, and rowing machines to allow students to row either indoors or outdoors each week. Ample funding also allowed the opportunity for students who demonstrated talent and were keen to carry on, the opportunity to join the rowing club at a subsidized fee, "they gave her a scholarship because she was that good and so they're paying all her monthly fees, any races that she enters, and for her British rowing membership" (Coach 7).

Money was also used to provide students their own rowing kit, something which gave them a sense of belonging to the programme and a positive sense of self "they get their own kit so it's a bit of a like I'm part of the team and I'm getting to come into school in a different uniform and so it's a bit of a privilege for them" (Teacher 3).

Finally, and unique to the sport itself, it was felt the nature of rowing was a significant contributing factor which led to the outcomes described, "it's a novel activity and novel activities are always going to keep you more engaged" (Coach 3). The novel nature of rowing, and the context in which most of the students could not swim or had never been in

a boat meant the development of skills such as teamwork, resilience and emotional regulation was magnified more so than other sports:

Rowing is really good for them because there's nowhere to hide, it's very easy in a game of 11 a side of football to hide, to sit back and just jog around a little bit and not really get involved. You can't stop rowing, if you stop rowing and then your whole team absolutely know about it. Your boats only as fast as the slowest person and you can't let anyone down. (Teacher 5)

Others coach shared similar views: "there's an element of it being on water and the element of the little bit of risk being involved and so it's a unique selling point because they have to listen and have to work together" (Coach 2), "when they arrive for the first session they've got the attitude, they've the ego, the cockiness, put them in a boat and all of that goes because they are very vulnerable when they first get in that boat" (Coach 3).

Having the whole academic year to work towards competitions directed students focus and fuelled their desire to push themselves beyond their limits, "we do the online competitions which are really fun but also really tiring. It makes us push ourselves because each time we want to beat our score and our opponents" (Student 18). Assistant headteacher 2 considered why these competitions were so effective, "having the opportunity to represent their school, there is that sense of identity and pride, because they probably never have before".

Life Skill Transferability

Regarding whether they felt students were drawing upon these skills for use in other contexts, stakeholders were not as assured in their answers, "they're developing skills which I assume and hope will ripple out in other aspects of their life so they can use them elsewhere" (Coach 3). What became apparent in interviews is that some stakeholders had

not given much thought to the transfer of life skills until questioned and asked to reflect on the matter. It appeared no explicit attempts were being made by stakeholders, in particular coaches, to support students in transferring the skills they had learnt. Rather, transfer was seen by some as something which happened naturally and something they hadn't considered trying to influence, "you just hope that on the bus back to school and after the sessions have finished that it stays in their brain and they take that experience back to school and the rest of their life" (Coach 4). By virtue of this, a number of stakeholders could only draw upon examples of where the skills might be useful or could potentially be used in other domains:

If you want to do something in your life or when you go to a job interview or start a new job or go to university, you need to have good skills and know how to communicate and work as a team, it's no good being in university or in a job and not speaking to no-one otherwise you're just going to be stuck. You're more likely to keep a job if you're better at team-work, communicating and listening. (Student 10)

Nevertheless, one student was able to recall an example of where they have been able to draw upon the skills learnt through the YRP:

I used to be really anxious and shy, but this has helped me feel more comfortable talking to new people. I didn't talk to most people, but this has given me more confidence for example when I go to the shop or something I'm less anxious to ask for something. (Student 5)

Assistant headteacher 2 felt there was some evidence which illustrated the students being able to apply the skills they have learnt back in the school environment:

The cohort that are currently on the program, their attendance has increased by 1% which doesn't sound a huge amount but in attendance terms it actually is quite a bit.

Now they're attending school more consistently and obviously if they attend school more consistently, they're in lessons, they're learning more and they'll achieve better.

A headteacher echoed the above statement:

We have a lesson monitor which measures student's attitude to learning and after tracking the student's who've gone on the rowing programme, across all of their lessons their scores have increased by half a point which we feel is down to increases in their resilience and confidence. They're not just a passenger in a lesson now but are actively contributing and are involved more in lessons because they've got more confidence and self-esteem and that's having a knock-on effect on their attitude to learning which hopefully when they come to do their GCSE's you'd argue it has to help. Their attendance has gone up as well and we hope this continues beyond their participation in the programme.

When considering the likelihood of students being able to draw upon these skills long-term and beyond school, some stakeholders were hopeful this would be the case, "I don't think it will be undone really, once they've had those experiences and they've had the positive of going down and building the skills and doing well it's not going to be undone" (Teacher 3).

This feeling however was not unanimous amongst participants, and as conversations continued, stakeholders felt as though students needed greater support to achieve such outcomes:

It would be nice if there was something else, something to help them develop that further. There's been a lot of emotional and well-being issues with the students since COVID but having some sort of mentoring which could help students blend the skills they learn from rowing to the academic side of school for example and other aspects

of their life. I think that would take it to the next level, it's almost like helping the children reflect on what they've been successful at and help them use the skills they're developing but aren't realising. It's making that obvious to them and celebrating what they've done and how they can use that to kick on in their life.

(Assistant Headteacher 2)

Social Justice Issues

Principally, the YRP aims to "make rowing a sport that's available to everyone, breaking the view that it's an elite sport and shedding its white middle-class, male only image" (Chair of Trustees). By virtue of its elitist image, rowing is often perceived to be out of reach for the demographic of students selected to participate in the project: "these pupils aren't the ones to go on trips or get involved in extra-curricular activities and that's down to a lack of money within the family" (Assistant Headteacher 1). As assistant headteacher 2 alluded to, there appeared to be coherence in the understanding however that the project enriches students and opens doors to opportunities they would never have the opportunity to do:

She engaged with the rowing program, started competing at a national level and eventually got a scholarship to go a university in America. She's doing a degree in America through an all-expenses paid rowing scholarship and it's down to the fact she engaged with the program. Had she not done the rowing program she wouldn't have been in the states now

A number of participants discussed how the project serves to broaden students' horizons.

the chances are a fair few of them haven't had broad life experiences so doing this you're involved in a sport, being involved in your local community, talking to another

adult who isn't your teacher or parent they take that experience it helps them to build what we call cultural capital. (Assistant Headteacher 2)

Cultural capital, social mobility, and broadening horizons were terms frequently used by participants, and through greater exploration of what participants meant by these labels, they described how students' involvement in the project, a sport which they had never heard of or thought was out of reach, helped them become more open-minded and think more broadly about their life, their future prospects and what else could be achieved:

It's helped them understand "oh this is what it could lead to" or "this is what could happen". This person was scouted and sponsored to go off to university in America and she was spotted through the rowing and all the students were like "oh my god that's amazing". I don't think they realise the opportunities you can get from it unless they have that conversation with the coaches. (Teacher 7)

Beyond an awareness of their future prospects, and because the students were increasingly seeing themselves as a team, the programme also served to help students become more socially aware and accepting of each other:

I think that's a big one that I've noticed has changed. They're becoming very aware of each other's pronouns. They're a team and they don't use sexuality as an insult, if one is gay or straight or whatever it's not a bother, it's not even something they consider to be mean to each other about. I think they are a more accepting group of kids and I think it's a by-product of becoming being a bit more socially aware. I think it would be an interesting comparison to see what that would have been like before. (Coach 4)

For some students, it was their first opportunity to engage in sport, and the YRP appeared to help students develop a new identity, one of them as a rower. A sense of pride seemed to be

attached to this identity and being part of the project appeared to boost student's self-esteem. Being allowed to join and be part of the project however proved difficult for one student in particular who was from a black, Asian and minority ethnicity (BAME)

background:

It's different for me, not in a racial way but because of my family background it's been harder for me to get their permission. When I join a sport, they see it a different way so it's harder for me because I love doing sports but I'm also trying to not cross the line with my parents which is very hard. They would be proud if they saw me but they still have that mindset, they're kind of very sexist towards it.

(Student 34)

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to evaluate a youth rowing project from PYD perspective. Stakeholders felt the YRP helped students develop life skills and believed there were a number of factors which contributed to this development. Participants were optimistic the students could draw upon these skills for use in other domains and also believed the YRP provided a viable opportunity to challenge and promote dialogue on social justice issues. The results correlate as well as add to existing literature in a number of ways.

First, the findings of this research draw parallels with previous research sharing the view that sport can be used as a tool which to teach young individuals life skills (Gould & Carson, 2008). That said, this study expands beyond the current landscape of PYD literature and addresses Agans et al. (2019) call to consider novel ways to engage youth in physical activity while promoting PYD. Context and the characteristics of the sport itself are said to be influential in the teaching of life skills (Evans et al. 2017; Petitpas et al., 2005) yet a number of traditional sports remain under-explored in regard to their contribution toward PYD.

Measuring the use of rowing as a vehicle to promote PYD is novel in itself and most noteworthy were participants' feeling that it was the sport's novel nature was a significant factor which exacerbated the development of life skills within the young individuals and impacted students more so than traditional sports would. The current study therefore strengthens Agans et al. (2019) hypothesis in that activities away from traditional sports can also contribute to PYD and has implications for individuals involved in establishing their own PYD programmes.

In response to Papacharisis et al. (2005) call for the skills being learnt in PYD programmes to be transferrable to other contexts, an abundance of literature has focused on how life skills and PYD programmes are delivered. A number of scholars nonetheless continue to highlight the need to evaluate further how to facilitate this development with diverse populations (Allen & Rhind, 2019; Evans et al., 2017; Holt et al., 2017), something the current research addresses. Unintentionally, the YRP reinforces elements of Petitpas et al. (2005) and Côte et al. (2014) models in that context and external assets were central to the development of student's skills. This study also draws parallels with Houlihan and Green (2009) and Pierce et al. (2016) in that people, resources and experiences were seen as crucial to the successful implementation of PYD programmes. Adding greater depth to what is currently offered within the research however, this study was able to pick up on the nuances of the YRP which also contributed toward PYD. Features such as the duration of the programme, the providing of kit for participants, having adequate resources, and the opportunity to progress and compete illustrate this. Despite it being felt that these characteristics were equally important in contributing toward PYD, a dearth of literature exploring what could be perceived as these smaller details of programmes may suggest that at present these factors have been overlooked.

Within interviews and focus groups, and despite some stakeholder's optimism in respect of the life skills being used in contexts beyond rowing, authors perceived psychosocial skills were being taught implicitly rather than explicitly. An issue initially introduced by Turnnidge et al. (2014), only a minority of stakeholders and students were able to draw on concrete examples of where the students have utilised the skills in other domains. Unlike Petitpas et al. (2005) the YRP did not utilise internal assets and aim to teach life skills in a systematic manner. Using Bean et al. (2018) continuum to make sense of these findings, it would appear the inherent features of the sport (Camiré & Kendellen, 2016) as well as the context and climate coaches were able to create facilitated this initial development of life skills. A lack of explicit focus however means it is plausible the likelihood of the students drawing upon these skills long-term and being able to transfer them to other contexts is limited (Bean et al., 2018; Papacharisis et al., 2005).

Beyond teaching life skills, Camiré et al. (2021) introduced a need for PYD programmes to be reimagined and promote dialogue and action around social justice issues. The evaluative nature of this research means it is one of the first to assess whether programmes currently are or can achieve such outcomes. Most insightful were stakeholder's perception that student's engagement in rowing, a sport which as discussed above, was initially seen as novel and potentially out of reach for their demographic was a significant factor in contributing toward the development of their cultural capital. Whilst the YRP strengthens Wilson (2002) idea that social class can influence the type of sport one engages in, the YRP challenges such notions and is active in its pursuit of tackling such social justice issues. By virtue of its efforts, it was felt the project develops student's cultural capital and provides social mobility for the young individuals. This relationship between sport and its use in promoting cultural capital and social mobility has been the focus for some sport

sociologists (Spaaji, 2012; Warde, 2006), however it remains under-explored within the landscape of PYD literature. Future research therefore is urged to investigate such avenues through the lens of Camiré et al. (2021) reimagination of PYD.

Whilst the YRP does well to challenge social justice issues, a student from a BAME background shed light on the resistance she experienced from parents who disapproved of her involvement in the project. Wheeler (2012) suggests this is a challenge faced by a number of young individuals, particularly those from BAME backgrounds (Fletcher, 2021). Coupled with claims that sporting environments can often also resist the inclusion of individuals from minority backgrounds (Coakley, 2016), it is plausible to suggest that psychosocial development opportunities for this population are often limited in comparison to their peers. As a result, the findings of this research establish strength in Camiré et al. (2021) calls, highlighting the need and critical importance of PYD programmes working collaboratively with stakeholders involved in student's immediate environment to challenge such social difficulties.

Limitations

Whilst the findings of this study allude to positive outcomes of the project, the research team are not naïve in thinking the YRP only has positive effects for those involved. Holt et al. (2020) discuss the potential of sport involvement having a negative psychosocial impact on young individuals. In this regard, a limitation of the study first lies in the knowledge that the researchers were only afforded the opportunity to speak to individuals currently involved in the YRP and second, that the findings are not without their own biases. Having access and talking to school students who had taken part in the YRP across the projects' five-year lifespan, including those who had dropped out, will have yielded a more in-depth insight into the project. Furthermore, being given the opportunity to interview

students' parents or guardians who are currently involved or who have dropped out of the programme may have also offered an alternate perspective. Acquiring such information will have helped the research team explore in greater depth the long-term impact of the YRP, consider whether experiences correlate with Holt et al. (2020), and in light of the study's AR approach, consider avenues to develop the YRP.

Furthermore, within focus groups what commonly occurred was a split between some students appearing confident and keen to give their opinions and others who seemed more reluctant. As a result, and despite the researchers attempts to help students feel comfortable in their presence and encourage input from all of those present, the lead researcher in particular felt he was unable to fully provide a platform for all of the students to discuss their experience. A lack of relationship or a negative perspective which went against that of their peers may have been factors underpinning this difficulty, however what this resulted in was the quotes provided in the results section originating predominantly from the same few students.

Future Directions

Given the research teams' ontological and epistemological perspective, readers are urged to acknowledge that findings outlined within this study should not be perceived as factual or concrete (Heron & Reason, 2008), rather this insight may be of use (a) from an applied perspective and for youth program leaders considering how to establish their own PYD programmes and (b) from a research perspective to further test the assumptions of the findings introduced in this study.

Benefitted by the AR approach to the study, the research team's own plan for the third cycle of their AR is to design and deliver a coach development program for the coaches on the YRP. As they were seen as integral to the delivery of the YRP, the aim is to work

through coaches to support the students and work toward an explicit focus of teaching life skills and promoting dialogue on social justice issues. Informed by Bean et al. (2018) continuum, by becoming more aware of the skills they are developing and having opportunities to practice these skills within sessions, it is hoped students will be more equipped to transfer the skills they are developing to broader contexts.

Whilst anecdotal, stakeholders in this study discussed a perception that students before participating in the YRP had extremely low levels of resilience and confidence, something they attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. This was a finding which draws parallels with Etekal and Agans (2020) suggestion that the pandemic had potential to impact youth development. Whilst this is a finding which illustrates the importance of PYD programmes and is an area which may warrant greater exploration, this also reiterates the need to produce longitudinal studies which measure the impact of PYD programmes, something which despite Weiss (2016) calls, this study fails to address.

Conclusion

This study aimed to evaluate a YRP through the lens of PYD literature. Findings suggest the unique nature of rowing was effective in teaching life skills and contributing toward student's cultural capital and social mobility. Stakeholders, in particular the coaches who co-existed within students' immediate environment were central to this development despite the YRP not explicitly focusing on nurturing psycho-social skills. The YRP also proved a viable avenue in which to promote dialogue and action on social justice issues, future research however is challenged to examine how to develop this further. Scholars are also encouraged to consider the use of novel activities to engage young individuals in sport and promote PYD. Finally, what remains is still a need for longitudinal studies to measure the long-term impact of PYD programmes.

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Table 1*Participant Demographics*

| Category | Sub-category | n |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Sex | Male | 26 |
| | Female | 30 |
| Age | < 18 | 40 |
| | 18-24 | 4 |
| | 25-34 | 2 |
| | 35-44 | 3 |
| | 45-54 | 4 |
| | 55-65 | 1 |
| | 65 < | 2 |
| Race | White British | 29 |
| | Black British | 16 |
| | Asian British | 11 |
| Role in YRP | Student | 40 |
| | Teacher | 5 |
| | Coach | 7 |
| | School senior leadership team member | 3 |
| | Youth rowing trustee | 1 |
| Time involved in YRP | < 1 year | 40 |
| | 1-2 years | 8 |
| | 3-4 years | 3 |
| | 4-5 years | 2 |
| | 5 < years | 3 |

Figure 1

Logic Model Produced by Academics and YRP Trustees

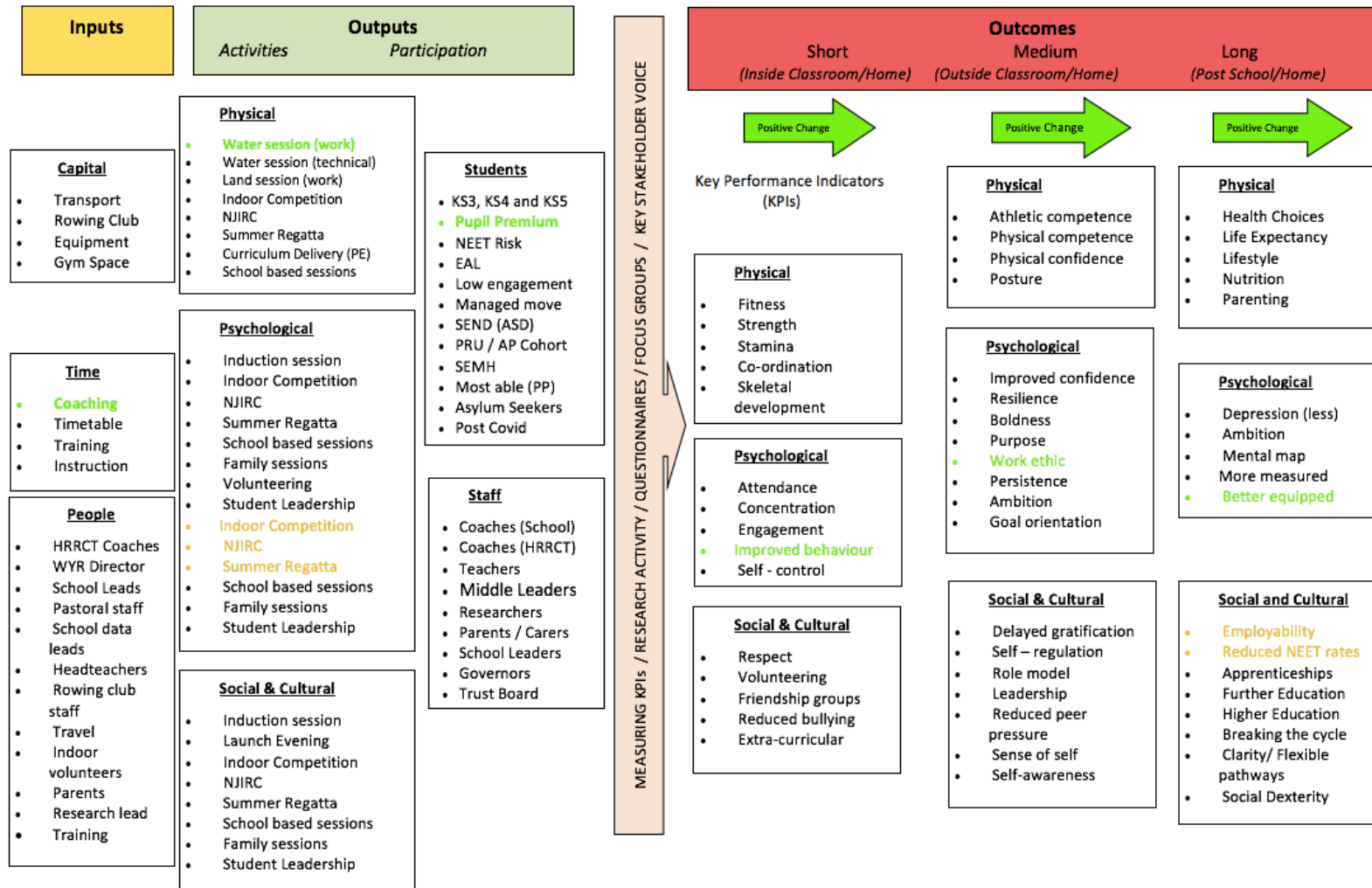
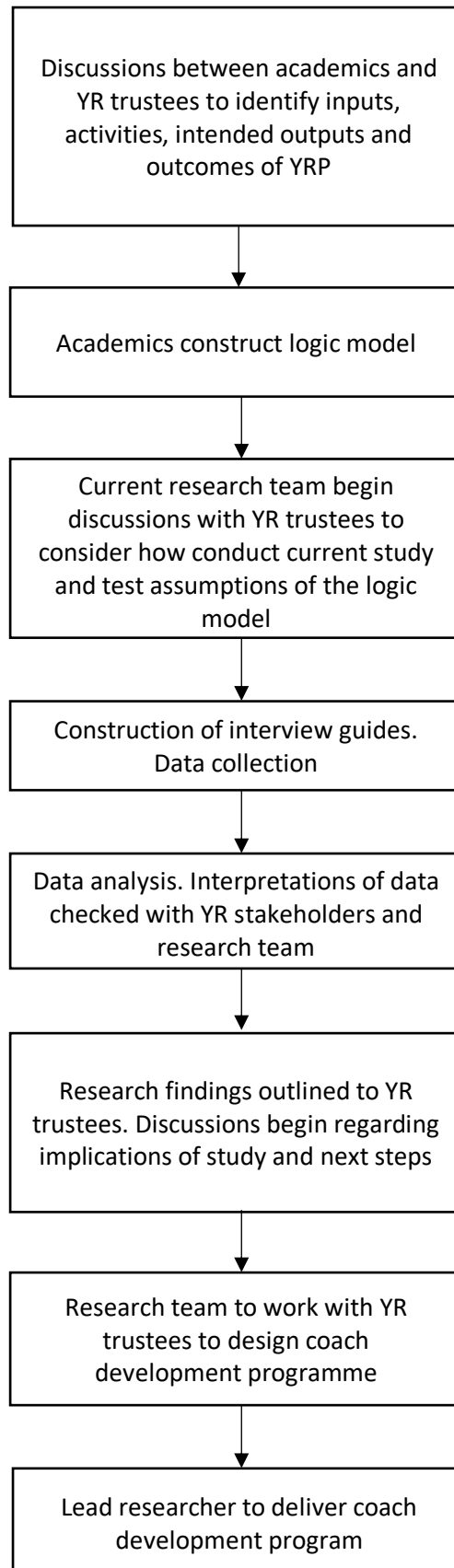


Figure 2

A Flowchart to Outline our Action Research Process



Empirical Paper Two

Abstract

This study emerged as a result of the findings discussed in part one of this research project. Benefitting from the action research (AR) approach utilised, authors aimed to design, implement, and evaluate a coach development programme (CDP) which would help coaches explicitly teach social justice life skills (SJLS). The programme consisted of five online sessions where participants were first introduced to what SJLS are before beginning to consider how they would incorporate the skills into their own sessions. The five coaches were then interviewed to explore their perceptions of the programme. Findings suggested rowing can be an effective sport to teach SJLS and coaches were able to draw upon a number of techniques which were effective in initiating discussion around the development of such skills. To generate long-term impact, there was a need for YRP stakeholders to create links with teachers and parents to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate skills beyond the context of rowing. Moving forward, scholars are urged to work collaboratively with individuals involved in youth sport to design interventions and create research which aims to explore the feasibility of teaching SJLS across other sports.

Introduction

This study builds on part one of the research project (see pages 306-344 of portfolio) in which the authors acknowledged the role sport can have in educating young individuals and teaching skills which can be used in contexts beyond sport. Findings drew parallels with previous research (see Gould & Carson, 2008) and recognised the crucial role people, and specifically coaches, have in facilitating such outcomes (Camiré et al., 2011; Pierce et al., 2016). Aware of Agans et al.'s (2019) calls to consider novel ways to engage youth in physical activity whilst promoting positive youth development (PYD), the research addressed a gap in the literature by focusing on how the sport of rowing can achieve these aims. Of interest to the authors were the stakeholders' perception that the unique and novel nature of rowing exacerbated PYD more so than traditional sports would.

Developing Life Skills

As stakeholders discussed their experiences of the youth rowing project (YRP), authors perceived psychosocial skills were being taught implicitly rather than explicitly. Until coaches were interviewed by researchers, they had not realised they may be helping students develop skills beyond the technical elements required for rowing. Teaching communication skills for example was not an intentional aim, but rather a by-product of the environment and culture coaches were creating. Students involved in the YRP were also not aware they may have been developing such skills until reflecting on it during interviews. When questioned, stakeholders were optimistic the YRP would have a long-term impact on the young individuals, however research would suggest the likelihood of this is limited if the learning process remains implicit (Papacharisis et al., 2005).

As a topic which has consumed scholars for a number of years, various models have been produced in attempt of explaining how best to facilitate PYD and support young

individuals in transferring skills for use in non-sport settings (Côté et al., 2014; Turnnidge et al., 2014). Seeking to move beyond the dichotomy of implicit or explicit approaches to life skills development, Bean et al. (2018) proposed a continuum which outlines how both are integral to the process. Put forward as a framework that can be used by coaches as a guide to optimise PYD, authors suggest if coaches are to contribute further to the development and transfer of life skills, their work must go beyond the creation of a positive learning climate. Instead, coaches ought to begin discussing what life skills are with young individuals, create opportunities to practice life skills in sport, and forge links with other stakeholders to provide opportunities to practice skills in broader contexts (Bean et al., 2018). The continuum offers a useful tool to bridge the gap between research and practice, however there remains a lack of research since its publication which discusses how the model has been utilised to inform applied practice. Despite Turnnidge et al. (2014) advocating for experimental research to examine the workability of PYD models, literature which sheds light on how programmes seek to explicitly teach life skills is currently scarce.

Social Justice Issues (YRP also did this but implicitly though)

In light of the socio-political inequalities which are omnipresent in contemporary society (Kochanek & Erickson, 2020), scholars in recent years have advocated for youth sport programmes to move away from teaching what are considered neoliberal values that promote economic productivity (Coakley, 2016; Ronkainen et al., 2021). Instead, coaches and those involved in developing sport programmes are urged to consider how sport can be used as a means to teach young individuals about social justice issues, subsequently helping them to reflect on their positionality with society and become active agents in social change (Camiré et al., 2021; Newman et al., 2022). Part one of this research project was one of the first studies to evaluate if sport can be used to achieve these aims and findings revealed

stakeholders felt the YRP offered a viable opportunity to do so. Participants believed the project supported the development of student's cultural capital and offered opportunities to address social difficulties. Involvement in the project was said to help students become more understanding of their peers and more aware of the challenges those who come from different ethnic backgrounds and gender identities may face in society. Whilst the first study was able to highlight the feasibility of rowing being able to support the diverse needs of young individuals in contemporary society (Camiré et al., 2021), authors did not explore in great depth how the YRP may achieve such outcomes. Therefore, what remains is a need to understand in greater depth how sport can implement the teaching of SJLS into its programmes (Santos, 2022).

Since Camire et al. (2021) initial proposal to reimagine PYD, studies have since built on the work and started to consider how SJLS can be taught within sport (Bishop et al., 2023; Robinson, 2023). Scholars have consistently recognised how integral coaches are to the process, the need for coaches to critically reflect on their own positionality within society, and the need for coaches to be educated in regard to what SJLS are and how they can be integrated into coaching practices (Bishop et al., 2023; Newman et al., 2022b). As discussed previously, and in line with Bean et al. (2018) continuum, to foster long-term behaviour change researchers suggests coaches must work beyond creating a climate which implicitly tackles social justice issues. Rather, youth sport programmes must intentionally embed SJLS into programmes by fostering opportunities for young individuals to discuss and explore their similarities and differences, build relationships and practice social justice behaviours (Newman et al., 2022b).

Social Justice Life Skills

Through this reimagining of PYD, rather than replacing the development of what may be considered traditional life skills (Gould & Carson, 2008), researchers and practitioners are encouraged to consider how the of teaching of life skills can be evolved to progress youth and societal development forward (Newman et al., 2022a). The development of skills such as teamwork and communication may still be taught however it may take on a new meaning by encouraging young individuals to consider its importance in respect of the societies they are embedded (Newman et al., 2022b). Teamwork for example may still be emphasised as a crucial skill to facilitate sporting performance. Through a SJLS lens however, coaches are also encouraged to engage young individuals in critical reflection as to why collaboration and engagement with others from different cultures and background is also important for settings beyond the sporting environment (Newman et al., 2022a).

Purpose

As is already discussed, at present there is a lack of literature which sheds light on how research such as Bean et al. (2018) continuum has or can been used to design youth sport programmes. Furthermore, with SJLS a topic which has recently emerged within the literature, there is a need for research to shed light on how SJLS can be taught through sport. In light of this knowledge gap, as well as findings from part one of this research project, the purpose of this research is to discuss coaches' experiences of a CDP which aimed to help them integrate the teaching of SJLS into their coaching sessions on the YRP. Specifically, the research teams' aim was to (a) design and deliver a coach development programme which was underpinned by Bean et al. (2018) continuum and Camiré et al. (2021) idea of reimagining PYD and (b) understand how coaches found incorporating what they were being taught into their coaching sessions. The research team felt intervening in

this manner was important so young individuals can be given opportunities to learn skills and become meaningful contributors to their society rather than active recipients of it (Newman et al., 2022b).

Methodology

Research Design and Philosophical Underpinnings

This study has emerged as a result of the findings discussed in part one of this research project. Benefitting from utilising an action research (AR) approach, researchers were afforded the opportunity to (a) draw upon their own findings, (b) consult the broader literature, and (c) collaborate with YRP stakeholders to develop an intervention which aimed to better support the development of young individuals involved in the YRP. In line with part one, Coghlan and Brannick's (2014) AR cycle was used to diagnose the issue and subsequently, plan, implement and evaluate the intervention.

Consistent with the first study, this research lies within the participatory paradigm (Heron & Reason, 1997). The research team therefore adopt the ontological view that reality is subjective and multiple (Heron & Reason, 1997). Understanding the study is positioned within a broader experiential context (Heron & Reason, 2008), through reflective efforts, the authors sought to embed what Heron and Reason (1997) describe as an extended epistemology of experiential, presentational, propositional and practical ways of knowing into the study.

Whilst planning, delivering, and evaluating the intervention the research team ensured those we collaborated with were aware of the research team's perspective in regard to what the nature of reality is and how knowledge is constructed. Authors discussed with participants how this would impact the intervention and our subsequent interpretation

of findings. The research team do acknowledge however that those we collaborated with may hold alternative views.

Action Research Cycle

Diagnosing the Issue

Following the completion of the first research project, the lead author continued to work closely with the YR trustees, engaging in a number of meetings to disseminate the findings. Conversations then moved toward considering avenues in which the YRP could be developed. By virtue of the lead researcher's understanding of the PYD literature, he highlighted two areas which he felt the YRP could better support the development of the young individuals.

First, the issue surrounding the coaches or students not being aware that they were developing life skills until interviews was highlighted. Trustees were open in acknowledging that up to this point the YRP had solely focused on giving coaches the tools to be able to teach students how to row, rather than considering how they could also teach the young individuals life skills. This was in spite of the logic model (as discussed in Part 1) identifying an intended outcome of the YRP being to contribute toward the psychological and social-cultural development of students. As a result, the researcher introduced trustees to Bean et al. (2018) continuum, striving to outline the key tenets of the framework in a manner which they could be understood having never looked the PYD literature before.

Second, despite the first study discussing how the YRP is working to challenge social justice issues, this process again seemed to be occurring outside of coaches' awareness. The lead researcher therefore felt there was a need to help coaches consider in greater depth how they could work to promote dialogue and action on social justice issues. Stakeholders agreed with the lead researchers' observations and believed there was a need to place

more of an explicit focus on supporting student's psycho-social development. As a collective, the next aim therefore was to consider how to go about trying to achieve these objectives.

Planning Action

Given how integral coaches were to the delivery and perceived outcomes of the project, it was agreed a logical next step would be to begin working closer with coaches. The research team began to consider how they could offer more support to coaches and help them incorporate the teaching of SJLS into their own coaching sessions. At this juncture, the YRP coaches were invited into conversations as a way of gathering ideas and feedback. As is discussed within the literature, for coaches to be able to teach life skills and address and challenge social justice issues they need help embedding these practices into their coaching (Bishop et al., 2023; Newman et al., 2022b). As a group, the next step would be for the research team to design and deliver a CDP for the YRP coaches. This would be informed by the research and would aim to help them incorporate the teaching of SJLS into their sessions more explicitly.

Ethical approval was received from the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). Due to the lead researcher already working closely with YR stakeholders, he made contact with coaches to obtain written consent and provide details of the CDP. A total of five coaches (n = 2 male, n = 3 female) agreed to take part. Of the seven coaches who were interviewed for part one of the research project, four agreed to also take part in the current research. One participant was not involved in the YRP at the time of the first study and three coaches no longer coached in the YRP and therefore were not involved in this research. Ages ranged between 18 and 54, all coaches were White British, and experience of coaching on the YRP was between one and four years.

Taking Action

The CDP was formulated by the lead researcher and mirrored the YRP (which runs across one academic year (September-July in the UK). This allowed coaches to reflect on practice, identify strengths and areas for develop and implement a plan moving forward (Newman et al., 2022c). The program consisted of five sessions which were all delivered over Zoom (see Figure x for a full outline of sessions). Sessions were run as a group to try and facilitate the sharing of ideas and best practice (Newman et al., 2022c). The first session was intentionally delivered in November to provide coaches six weeks at the start of the YRP the opportunity to set rules, build relationships and create a positive sporting climate (Bean et al., 2018) before commencing the CDP.

To help students understand their own positions within society, it is paramount one first reflects on their own intersectional identity and positionality (Tien, 2020). As a result, in the first CDP session, coaches were encouraged to reflect on their own and their students' identities and positionality. The researcher then asked them to consider some of the systemic barriers/social justice issues they and their students may face (Newman et al., 2022b). Finally, the group shared their reflections and begin considering how these conversations may inform their practice moving forward. To create a space where coaches felt they were able to be open and honest, the lead researcher was cognisant of the need to reinforce the idea that in all sessions no-one would be judged based on what they say during discussions.

Sessions were delivered in six-week intervals with one life skill being introduced in each session. This was done to give coaches enough time to progress from discussing SJLS with students through to students practicing transfer in broader contexts (Bean et al., 2018). Each zoom call followed a similar format in which coaches were (a) provided the

opportunity to share how the past 6 weeks had been, (b) introduced to the new skill and encouraged to reflect on what this skill represents in sport and in society, and (c) consider how they may then incorporate the teaching of the skill into their coaching (Newman et al., 2022b). Coaches were also given the opportunity to contact the lead researcher in between group meetings if they required further support.

Evaluating Action

Data Collection.

Six weeks after the final group session, all coaches were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview which would seek to explore their perceptions of the CDP (Sparkes & Smith, 2013). All coaches agreed to participate. Participants were asked open-ended questions which encouraged them to reflect on how they found (a) the CPD meetings and (b) incorporating the teaching of SJLS into their sessions. In attempt of gathering rich and descriptive data, probes were used to encourage participants to elaborate on answers and a visual aid in the form of Bean et al. (2018) continuum was also utilised to help participants reflect on their experiences (Sparkes & Smith, 2013). All interviews were conducted over Zoom and lasted between 34-48 minutes. Before data analysis, and to ensure coaches were happy with how they portrayed their experiences, coaches were offered the opportunity to review transcripts to add additional insights or reply with amendments (Braun & Clarke, 2013). None of the coaches changed their transcript (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

Data Analysis.

As an approach used to investigate how individuals make sense of their experiences (Smith, 2011), this study drew upon an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to examine coaches' perceptions of the CDP. The research team acknowledge their role in the

analysis as they sought to make sense of participants interpretations of their experience, otherwise known as the double hermeneutic (Smith, 2011).

Following procedures outlined by Smith et al. (2009) the analysis began with the lead researcher reading transcripts several times before beginning to highlight and make notes on parts of the transcript which he felt were interesting or significant in regard to the aims of the study. This process was followed for each of the transcripts, the researcher then returned to each transcript, re-read initial notes and transformed these into emergent themes which he felt captured the essence of participant's experience. Emergent themes identified from each of the transcripts were then clustered together to form concepts which had shared meanings across participants (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Finally, superordinate themes were produced which were cross-referenced back to initial transcripts to ensure the researcher was satisfied with how participants' lived experiences were being illustrated (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021).

Research Rigour. Acknowledging the underpinning philosophical assumptions underpinning the design of this study, to assess the quality of this research it is important it is judged within the criteria of its own terms (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). Since AR cycles ought to be carried out with rigour, reflectivity, and relevance (Shani & Coghlan, 2018), authors are tasked with demonstrating how this was achieved when planning, delivering and evaluating the CDP.

Rigour. This research sought to demonstrate rigour in a number of ways. First, the author has clearly outlined the research paradigm informing his work, has sought to align this with the research methods, and has explained the implications such a position has on how findings should be interpreted (Hamilton, 2020). Moreover, the author has aimed to be transparent in regard to how the idea of the intervention emerged and subsequently how it

was designed, implemented and evaluated (Hays et al., 2016). Rationales are provided in regard to why decisions were made across the research process and through his close working relationship with coaches, the researcher has discussed how he helped participants become partners in generating knowledge (Barusch et al., 2011). Finally, he has sought to portray an authentic account of coaches' experiences by providing direct quotes from interviews (Hays et al., 2016).

Reflectivity. To help coaches educate students about social justice, it was important the researcher also reflected on his own identities and position with society (Tien, 2020). Developing greater self-awareness helped the researcher reflect on his own biases, consider how these may influence the research process and afforded him the opportunity to act in a manner which he felt best served the coaches and students on the YRP in light of the aims of the CDP (Holmes, 2020).

At the time of writing, he is a 26-year old white male who was born, and currently resides, in the UK. He holds an undergraduate and postgraduate degree from a higher education in the UK and is studying for a Professional Doctorate in Sport and Exercise Psychology. He works as an applied practitioner in the elite youth sport environment as well as a lecturer in a higher education institution. His motivation to conduct research which explores youth development through sport stems from his own involvement in sport as a child and him reflecting on how playing football influenced his own development. He acknowledges he may be perceived by YRP stakeholders as an expert in the field of sport psychology however they are aware he has never participated in the sport of rowing. Given the close relationships he has built with YRP stakeholders over the last two years conducting research, the researcher believes he now an insider to the organisation, more so than he had been previously.

Relevance. Whilst AR can be a useful to generate change at the local level (Cohen et al., 2017), this research sought to establish relevance at both the local and national level. By supporting and working collaboratively with YR trustees and coaches throughout the research process, authors address Melrose (2001) calls for researchers to consider how their study can be utilised by intended audiences and communities to inform their own practices. By discussing how youth development programmes may draw upon research such as Bean et al. (2018) and Camiré et al. (2021) to inform their practice, this research also adds to a gap in the literature. Finally, to establish relevance at the national level, the lead author disseminated findings of this research to the broader rowing community at an annual rowing conference. Scholars advocate such endeavours (Newman et al., 2022b) and from the feedback provided by individuals were present at the conference, sharing findings has helped others in the development of their own YRP across the UK. As a result, the researchers are confident this study as well as part one of the research project demonstrate relevance and have had impact at both the local and national level.

Results

In this section coaches' experiences of the CDP programme itself are discussed before light is shed on how they found incorporating the teaching of SJLS into their coaching sessions. Finally, perceptions of how much impact the programme has had on student development as well as avenues to generate greater impact are outlined.

Experience of the Coach Development Programme

Whilst all coaches were aware of the role rowing can have in teaching young individual's SJLS, before the CDP their aim was solely to teach students how to row. Considering how to explicitly coach life skills was something they hadn't previously been introduced to.

We didn't cover this in our coaching qualifications. So much emphasis was placed on how to keep children safe and learning the coaching techniques and drills so there wasn't really a focus on the life skills side of it. (Coach 3)

Participation in the CDP therefore was something coaches enjoyed and felt added to their repertoire of coaching skills. The programme served to broaden their perspectives in regard to how they can contribute toward student's holistic development, and as a result, they planned to continue embedding SJLS into their coaching sessions moving forward.

I never really thought about going into sessions and actively trying to teach the life skills, so I suppose it opened my eyes. All you're normally thinking about is how you are going to get this bunch of kids with different abilities from A to B. I've definitely found it's helped improve my coaching and I'm already thinking about how to do it better moving forwards. (Coach 1)

An approach to coaching which was completely new to them, coaches spoke of their initial apprehension prior to their participation in the programme. Being asked to begin explicitly teaching SJLS alongside teaching the students to row was something which seemed daunting at first.

When we were first asked to specifically blend both the performance and the life skills stuff I felt a bit nervous and I questioned whether I could do it but then as we got talking during our first zoom call it was almost like hang on, we're doing some of it already anyway but just without realising. (Coach 2)

Another coach voiced the concerns he had at the start of the programme but shed light on how such worries were overcome:

I didn't go to university or anything so at first I was apprehensive when we started talking about the research and what you wanted from us. I didn't think I'd

understand it or be able to do it but it all made complete sense and just having the image of the continuum for example helped me understand what you were asking of us. (Coach 5)

Coaches discussed a number of features of the programme which they felt supported their learning. First, the use of visual aids such as Bean et al. (2018) continuum and the lead researchers' ability to translate research in a manner which they could understand meant coaches' confidence in their ability to explicitly coach SJLS grew. From the onset of the CDP, coaches felt there was clarity in regard to what was expected of them and understood how the process they were going to follow and the research that was underpinning the programme would help them achieve such aims.

Without it being so clear and without having the time to plan maybe I wouldn't have understood what we were working toward or how to do it because all of it was so new and it can be overwhelming to begin with. (Coach 3)

The zoom calls were designed in a manner to give coaches the opportunity to reflect on how previous coaching sessions had gone and to begin planning subsequent sessions. Doing so in the presence of their peers allowed coaches to come up with solutions to difficulties they were facing, share ideas and discuss tactics to incorporate SJLS. This was a feature of the programme coaches saw most value in.

I think the zooms were good because we could pick up best practice from other people in regard to what they done so that was massively helpful. There were a few times when I felt others had a particularly good idea of how they've incorporated certain skills. People would say "we did this" and you think "ah that's a really good idea" and then we could go away and try it and then come back the next time and discuss it again. (Coach 1)

Coaches benefitted from the sense of community the lead researcher tried to create. They felt there was psychological safety between group members, something which was beneficial when discussing potentially sensitive topics around social justice.

If you don't talk about it or haven't ever been asked to think about it before then you don't even realise you have these biases and it can be quite awkward. Talking about it between ourselves as coaches helped and that made me more confident to have the conversations with the students. I suppose it changed my perceptions on society and coaching and is definitely shaping how I'm approaching my own sessions moving forward. (Coach 4)

It became apparent coaches hadn't considered their identity and positionality within society. Due to a sense of psychological safety nonetheless, coaches felt comfortable to (a) reflect on their own privileges and barriers in life, (b) share how this may have influenced their coaching in the past, and (c) discuss how they may challenge this in the future. Participants felt their perceptions of what a coach's role is in sport was constantly being stretched and challenged across the CDP, and as a result, they felt they improved significantly as coaches.

Integrating Social Justice Life Skills

All coaches spoke of the need to be creative when attempting to embed the teaching of SJLS into their sessions. Aware of the students' desire to learn to row and for the YRP not to feel like a school lesson, coaches discussed trying to carefully drip conversations around life skills into sessions rather than throwing the skills in the children's faces.

We as coaches needed to be clever in terms of how we embed them into sessions and make students aware that they are practicing them. It was sort of like tricking

them into doing it, so asking leading questions and asking them to do certain activities that promote leadership for example. (Coach 4).

In a similar vein, coach 2 illustrated how she aimed to integrate skills into her sessions, to which she felt there was some success.

For me it was just about changing the language I'm using and placing more emphasis on certain moments during the sessions for example I'd say "you're in charge, you are the leader, I want you to communicate well and make sure everyone is working together as a team" and then if there was something that had gone wrong you might say "right you need to use your problem solving skills" so things like that and just trying to bring the terminology in. (Coach 2)

Coaches felt this ability to pick up on teachable moments was a particularly useful technique to embed life skills into their sessions. Students responded well to being praised during these moments and as a result, coaches felt they were then more inclined to repeat the positive behaviour.

For us that's where your programme has helped us as coaches because it's helped us pick up on those teachable moments. In the past we wouldn't have given it any thought but now we are picking up on situations where students have demonstrated a skill and we've praised them for it and had conversations with the students about this and I feel it's helped consolidate their learning and hopefully been a lightbulb moment. We've tried to talk about how these skills extend to school and other areas of life and to our surprise sometimes they've come back with some really good answers and like I say before we probably wouldn't have had those conversations which is a missed opportunity. (Coach 3)

As coaches slowly began to make students aware of the skills they were using, they also recognised the need to role model behaviours they were promoting.

In one school we have a pupil who is transitioning, in another a pupil who has a slight hearing impairment and then a student where English is their second language. I feel it's important for me to role model how I want the students to treat them and it's interesting because they are just totally accepted by their peers. I'm not saying it's because of me but I do believe it has reflected back onto the students. (Coach 1).

Another coach recognised the need to role model behaviours in line with SJLS and reflected on their experience of this.

People would often do the jobs that they felt they were better at or most comfortable doing but for us as coaches it was about promoting team-work, inclusion and making sure everybody gets an opportunity to do the different roles. We explained why to students so they understood and hopefully then they took those messages on board and applied it themselves. (Coach 5).

As students became increasingly aware of SJLS, coaches identified the next step was to consolidate student's learning and attempt to facilitate transfer. Again, coaches felt the need to be creative in terms of how and when they went about implementing this. One coach discussed talking to students whilst they were still in the boat so they could not wander off and had no choice but to listen. Others dedicated the end of the sessions as a time to help students reflect on and summarise what they had learnt.

At their age they're not exactly going to think about how they are learning life skills and where they can apply these elsewhere and that's where we come into it just to prompt that thought and get them thinking about it without it being too overbearing for them and it being like school otherwise they just switch off. So at the end of

sessions I'll maybe pick up on a few things I've seen during the session and have a few conversations about why these things were important and you could tell some students would switch off but some certainly took it on board. (Coach 4)

As coach 4 illustrates, despite their efforts to plan the sessions, buy-in from all students wasn't guaranteed. This led to some coaches questioning their ability to achieve the aims of the CDP.

We would always have brief conversations after where we would say right what have we learnt about these last few sessions and a lot of the time the answers were blasé and you could tell some just weren't interested and that was challenging. After a while though I was quite surprised with what they were coming up with and even though you're doubting yourself you think actually maybe we did do it more than we thought. (Coach 2)

All coaches were in agreement that it takes time and patience to teach SJLS. As well as offering praise and considering how and when to discuss life skills, participants also spoke of the need to build relationships with students and for sessions to be fun. By doing so, it was felt students were more receptive to coaches' efforts to teach SJLS.

We make it fun because then they're more likely to take on board the other concepts that we introduce because they're not sat down in a classroom in front of a big presentation about leadership. I think what's important for their learning is that practical application of it because element helps us achieve what we are aiming for. (Coach 2)

Whilst coaches shed light on their intentional efforts to make the sessions fun, they also believed the novel nature of rowing was enough to enthuse students and subsequently

teach life skills. A team sport which is unique to others, coaches felt participation in rowing offered students a number of opportunities to develop SJLS.

Rowing and being on the river is such a leveller. It's unlikely the kids we get have ever rowed before so they come with their experience from other sports but put them on a boat on a river and they can't act the big I am because they're vulnerable. It highlights everybody's vulnerability as they're in a situation they've never been in before and it's usually the sporty confident types that are most vulnerable because they are most used to being great on a football pitch and suddenly they're not, they're in the exact same position as the kid who is rubbish at football. They realise that to get to the other side of the river they can't do it alone and they need to work with their peers. It's then our role is to make them aware of how this applies not just in the boat but in life in general. I think that is very unique. (Coach 2)

In agreement, another coach reflected on why she felt rowing provides the perfect opportunity to teach young individuals SJLS.

The first time I taught one school they were so rude and aggressive to each other. I said I can't take you on the water because the way you're speaking and treating each other is going to make the boat unsafe. They soon realised there has to be that respect if they were to row together. To row they need to be as one because they can't do it alone and if they're horrible to someone they're not going to work well as a team. The boat is about a team of 5 so they have to be in time otherwise the boat will not function. (Coach 3)

Generating Impact

Responses were mixed when considering how much impact the CDP and subsequent teaching of SJLS had on students. Coaches agreed that it varied from school to school and student to student but did notice a change in some students.

It's hard because we only ever see them in our environment but I've certainly seen a massive change. The kids come in and at the start they don't want to talk to each other. They're all from different backgrounds and over time they've learnt loads about each other and come to understand each other and how we all are different. Rowing and achieving with people they never thought they'd get on with has helped them realise that no matter someone's background or ability it doesn't make them any better or worse. It's been a real eye opener for them I think. I've had a few teachers say they've noticed a difference in how certain students are interacting with others and we just hope that extends to when they are older. (Coach 4)

Reflecting on how to generate long-term impact however, coaches discussed needing to spend more time with students as doing so would allow them greater opportunities to progress through Bean et al. (2018) continuum. In the 8 months they did coach the students, whilst all had positive intentions to integrate SJLS into sessions, at times coaches felt their opportunity to do so was limited.

You go into it with the plan and thinking "right what did we talk about last week and how are we going to apply it in this session and then at the end we'll sit down with the kids and talk about how you can apply it for the rest of the week in school" but in reality they'd arrive late so you're thinking "we need to get on the water otherwise we're not going to have time and then it always takes forever getting the boats in the water and then you forget because you're rushing everything". So the reality is,

it was kind of frustrating from my perspective that we didn't get the opportunity to talk about it as much as we'd of liked. (Coach 2)

Coaches often spoke of a disparity between how they had planned their sessions to go and how they actually went. As well as logistical and environmental challenges that would frequently arise, often the student's rowing performance had to be prioritised over the learning of SJLS. With upcoming competitions against fellow schools, and with only limited time on the water, coaches felt they had no choice but to focus on coaching performance-focused skills.

We had quite a lot of time where we couldn't on the water because of the weather so when we eventually did get water it was like we can't do anything except teach them how to row. otherwise they're not going to be able to row in the regatta and for them the opportunity to do that is massive. (Coach 5)

For a lot of the coaches it was challenging to focus on both the performance and SJLS and this negatively affected the impact the coaches felt they were having. Reflecting on the year however, coaches felt they would be better equipped to incorporate the teaching of SJLS with the next group of students they coach. As they began considering how to generate greater impact on the students moving forward, coaches also highlighted the importance of others who regularly interact with the students buying into the project.

One particular school lead was brilliant, she was on board with what we were trying to achieve and would often continue our conversations with the students on the mini bus back to school and equally she'd reintroduce the concepts on the mini bus back in the next week. It was just chalk and cheese with another school lead where that didn't happen and he couldn't be less interested if he tried and you could see

the difference between the young people in terms of how they embraced the skills we were trying to develop. (Coach 2).

To generate long-term impact, as well as schools leads actively engaging in the programme, all coaches discussed the importance of other significant figures in the young individuals' lives being in harmony with the messages the YRP is trying to give.

A lot of the time it's the not knowing something about someone or something which causes that segregation. When you bring them together and they learn about each other that's what creates that unity. At the rowing programme we are good at doing that and hopefully getting them to see the value in it but sometimes the students may be hanging around with other people or going home and interacting with people who have opposite views of things we are trying to teach. They may say certain things about certain groups of people which causes that segregation and kids are so easily influenced that they just copy it.

In an ideal world the messages that are provided on the YRP are reinforced back in the school and at home. Whilst this would help to generate greater and longer-term impact on students, coaches ultimately had no control over this.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to shed light on coaches' experiences of a CDP which aimed to help them integrate SJLS into their coaching sessions. An approach to coaching which was completely new to those involved in the programme, participants discussed their initial scepticism prior to the commencement of the CDP. That said, coaches felt the support provided on the CDP eased their fears and developed their awareness of various techniques which would eventually help them to begin teaching SJLS. Finally, participants highlighted the need to work collaboratively with others who co-exist within

young individuals' immediate environments in order to generate greater impact on student's psycho-social development. By virtue of such findings, authors are confident this research paper adds to the existing literature in a number of ways.

This research paper is one of the first to design a CDP to help coaches explicitly teach SJLS and then discuss how it was implemented. This is significant since most CDPs do not offer coaches the knowledge and practical strategies to foster PYD (Lefebvre et al., 2016; Santos et al., 2017). Through its originality, this study is able to identify features of the programme which participants perceived were integral in helping them to embed SJLS. For example, in line with Newman et al. (2022b) coaches felt they needed to be educated in regard to what is meant by social justice and appreciated having the opportunity to critically reflect on their own positionality within society. Extending beyond the literature, participants discussed the significance of the lead researcher creating psychological safety between fellow coaches on the CDP sessions. Doing so welcomed the sharing of ideas and expressing of concerns in light of difficult conversations around social justice. Finally, participants' reflections also correlate with Newman et al. (2022c) who recognised the need for coaches to (a) be given autonomy and the power to take ownership of the CDP, (b) go through a process of trial and error when incorporating life skills into sessions, and (c) be provided the opportunity to interact and reflect on sessions with other coaches.

This study further adds to current knowledge by being one of the first to shed light on how literature such as Bean et al. (2018) and Camiré et al. (2021) can be integrated within a youth sport programme. By drawing attention to the nuances of coaches' practices, this study bridges the research to applied practice gap by specifically discussing how participants transitioned from discussing what SJLS are through to discussing how students may practice SJLS beyond the context of rowing. It has been suggested that individuals must

be the recipient of several 'nudges' to increase one's awareness of social justice issues and evoke long-term behaviour change (Whitley, 2021). Whilst coaches in this study agreed with these claims, to date little is known in regard to what the term 'nudges' means and how this translates in a sporting context. This paper therefore is novel in that it sheds light on how coaches went about 'nudging' students on the YRP. Participants discussed the importance of (a) engaging children in activities which were fun but that also encourage the use of SJLS, (b) utilising de-briefs and teachable moments to make students aware of the skills and consolidate learning, and (c) praising students when they demonstrate SJLS.

As authors sought to build on the findings of research project one, this research has been able to offer greater depth when considering how rowing can be used to teach SJLS. By virtue of the students having no option but to work collaboratively if they are to get to the other side of the river, coaches believed the students were quickly taught the importance of working co-operatively with others around them. A noticeable segregation was present between groups of students at the start of the academic year, however engaging in a completely new sport and therefore being vulnerable together meant students had to rely on their peers to be successful and soon recognised the need to form strong relationships with one another. As a result, coaches were afforded a number of opportunities to pick up on naturally occurring teachable moments to drive the development of SJLS. These findings reinforce Allport (1954) intergroup contact theory in that positive interactions between students improved attitudes towards those who they once perceived as outgroup members. As a result, coaches felt this reduced prejudice, improved social relations, and promoted a more integrated society (Allport, 1954).

In spite of the positive features of the CDP, some coaches discussed the challenges they encountered as they sought to simultaneously teach SJLS alongside teaching students

to row. A debate which has permeated the field of youth development since Côté and Hancock (2014) paper, a number of researchers have advocated for stakeholders involved in youth sport to focus on integrating PYD outcomes into programmes which aim to develop talented athletes (Strachan et al., 2016). Whilst coaches have been urged to work toward developing the person as well as the athlete, until this study, few have attempted to explore the feasibility of these ambitions. In this study, some coaches felt trying to teach students how to row alongside teaching SJLS was at times an unrealistic target. The opportunity for students to represent their school and compete at the end of year regatta meant athletic development and performance often took priority. Whilst coaches had positive intentions of trying to incorporate the teaching of SJLS, there were occasions where some felt they didn't have sufficient time to de-brief and help students reflect on topics around social justice. Such findings reinforce what has been found in a number of other youth sporting contexts in which winning at all costs and athletic performance is predominantly emphasised (Newman et al., 2022a). This highlights the need for scholars and others involved in youth sport to better consider how coaches can infuse SJLS into their coaching practices and connect PYD with performance outcomes (Santos et al., 2019).

Limitations and Future Directions

A limitation of our study lies in that whilst coaches felt their sessions helped to stimulate initial discussion and practice of SJLS, they identified a need to work more collaboratively with schools and parents in order to consolidate learning and help students practice skills beyond the context of sport. These findings reinforce recommendations from others who suggest efforts need to be made to create links with others within young people's immediate environment in order to impact long-term development (Bean et al., 2018; Dorsch et al., 2022). Whilst the authors of this research only worked with coaches to

integrate SJLS, stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of youth sport programmes are urged to consider how they would incorporate an ecological approach to their delivery. By doing so, it is hoped young individuals will be better supported to practice and utilise the skills they have learnt long-term and will be more likely to thrive in contemporary society (Bateman et al., 2020).

In what is becoming an ever-increasing diverse and multi-cultural society, the need for individuals to be critically conscious of their role within society and aware of the social issues which can privilege some and oppress other has never been more prevalent (Bishop et al., 2023). That said, despite literature advocating for the use of sport as a means to initiate conversation surrounding social justice issues (Camiré et al., 2021), achieving such ambitions was something coaches in the study were initially apprehensive toward. To this end, it is plausible to suggest more must be done to better equip coaches with the skills and resources to embed the teaching of SJLS into their sessions. From an applied perspective, sporting governing bodies are urged to consider how education surrounding around social justice can be embedded within their own coaching qualifications and courses. With regards to future research, scholars may benefit from exploring if and how conceptual frameworks which enable educators to teach social justice in schools for example (see Dover, 2013) can be applied to sporting contexts.

Given the ontological and epistemological perspective underpinning this study, readers are encouraged to acknowledge that the findings outlined in this paper should not be perceived as concrete. Whilst the study suggests the novel nature of rowing was a factor which complimented the aims of the CDP, scholars are encouraged to explore the suitability of other sports when aiming to teach SJLS. Authors benefitted from the AR approach to conducting this research and therefore other scholars are encouraged to work

collaboratively with stakeholders involved in youth sport to design interventions and create research which adds to PYD literature.

Conclusion

This study was one of the first to design, implement, and evaluate a CDP which aimed to help coaches explicitly teach SJLS. Findings suggested rowing can be an effective sport to teach SJLS and coaches were able to draw upon a number of techniques which were effective in initiating discussion around the development of such skills. Nevertheless, coaches encountered some challenges which affected the impact they felt they were having on student's long-term psycho-social development. Moving forward, scholars and stakeholders in youth sport programmes are encouraged to a) consider how PYD can be better integrated into performance-focused environments across other sports and b) aim to work collaboratively with others within young people's immediate environments to create greater opportunities to practice SJLS outside of sport.

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Research Commentary

When I started my undergraduate degree in 2015, conducting research was something I didn't know sport psychologists did nor something I hadn't ever considered doing or wanting to do myself. In the first few years of that degree I struggled to grasp why we were taught research methods. I wanted to become a Sport Psychologist. I wanted to help others who, like me, struggled with nerves before competing. I was expecting to be taught how to be a sport psychologist and to learn skills that would help me help athletes. Why therefore was I being taught how to input and analyse data on a computer? My undergraduate was heavily quantitative focused and on reflection, I feel this exacerbated my lack of desire to want to conduct research. It was only when I started the MSc Sport Psychology at Liverpool John Moores University however, a course which was opposite to what I had been exposed to previously (by virtue of its focus on qualitative research), that I saw an approach to doing research which resonated with my perception of the world and subsequently motivated me to do my own. Somewhat of a lightbulb moment, everything began to make a little more sense and I began to understand the importance of research and how it coincides with the applied practice of sport psychologists (Winter et al., 2023). A badly timed global pandemic however limited the type of research I was able to conduct at master's level. As I started the professional doctorate course therefore, I was eager to begin producing research which (a) aligned with my beliefs, (b) would inform my applied practice, and (c) better my chances of future employment (see Reflection 1 of Research Reflective Practice Diary).

Research Philosophy

I have decided to discuss my research philosophy toward the start of this commentary as since finishing the master's course, up to where I am as I write this reflective

commentary, I do not feel my positioning has changed. I had always felt psychometrics and questionnaires offered limited insight into human experience and was against the idea that there is one reality and that it is up to us as researchers to capture this reality. Rather, I adopt a relativist ontological perspective in that there is not one truth but rather reality is subjective and multiple (Lincoln et al., 2011). I hold a constructivist epistemological position that knowledge is co-constructed and that we are influenced by the socio-cultural environments in which we are embedded (Lincoln et al., 2011). As a result, all of the research I have conducted to date has been in qualitative in nature. I have drawn upon interviews and focus groups as a means to collect data and support me as I aim to give voice and shed light on participants' subjective experiences of the world (Sparkes & Smith, 2013).

Empirical Paper One

My first empirical paper aimed to conduct an evaluation of the Warrington Youth Rowing (WYR) project. A project which was part of a larger collaboration between Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) and Warrington Rowing Club, I remember feeling excited that I was going to be working with other scholars at LJMU as part of a research team. Having worked on my own to complete my undergraduate and MSc research projects, I felt I took a lot just from watching and engaging with those working at LJMU. Although it may seem trivial, I benefitted just from seeing how David Tod (my supervisor) communicated with stakeholders, how he went about trying to understand what they wanted from us and how we could go about achieving this. He was able to reflect back and summarise what clients had said in our meetings and in doing so, I feel this reassured them that he was listening and understood exactly what they wanted. As such, I felt this helped David establish a rapport with stakeholders and build their confidence that we could meet their needs. Seeing first-hand the effectiveness of these skills motivated me to practice them

myself and was something I have since been able to utilise when conducting interviews as well as in my applied consultancy work (Hutter & Pijpers, 2020).

A few months into starting the research David unfortunately left LJMU which meant I took on greater responsibility in driving the research. I remember feeling particularly nervous about one conversation I was planning on having with the WYR stakeholders. Given my philosophical positioning, I was conscious that as I began analysing data and writing up the report, their ontological and epistemological perspectives may differ to my own. Although they were not from academic backgrounds and therefore may not have given their positioning any thought, I believed I still ought to be transparent and discuss this with them. Since in the write up of the study I planned to acknowledge that my findings should not be perceived as concrete or factual, but rather our purpose was to illustrate participant's individualised perspectives of the WYR project, I thought this may prove to be a hiccup. This was particularly the case as the stakeholders were intending on using our research as a means to secure funding and broaden the reach of the project. Nonetheless, I was fortunate in that stakeholders agreed with me that we could not say for certain that their project was the sole reason why children may be developing life skills. Whilst this conversation went positively, I came out of the experience with greater appreciation of the need to be transparent with fellow research team members and other stakeholders when conducting research (Gonnerman et al., 2015). I feel discussions which explore how each member perceives the world and how they think knowledge is constructed should take place to ensure before any research is started, individuals are clear and starting off on the same page. I do appreciate however that having these conversations may be difficult in contexts such as sport where coaches for example may not be as familiar with these concepts and may not be interested in it (Reade et al., 2008).

Seeing the research project progress from the needs analysis stages through to it developing into a coherent study, I was proud of what I had achieved. More importantly, WYR stakeholders were equally as happy, so much so that I was invited to present the findings at an annual Rowing conference held by Henley Royal Regatta Charitable Trust and then at a professional development event hosted by British Rowing. On reflection, what I was most pleased with was the feedback I received in regard to the practical implications of the study. Personally, I believe it is important research is clear and explicit in outlining how its findings can be utilised by practitioners. That said, I have read a number of studies in which I have struggled to understand how the findings can be used in applied contexts. In our study however, I feel we benefitted from the use of an action research approach. Through utilising such methods, not only were we able to conduct an evaluation of the WYR, as was initially asked for by stakeholders, but we were also able to highlight areas of development and offer potential interventions (Stringer & Dwyer, 2005). I felt this exceeded WYR stakeholders' expectations and only helped to strengthen working relationships between LJMU and WYR.

Empirical Paper Two

By virtue of empirical paper 1 giving us the opportunity to propose some areas in which we believed we could help to develop the WYR project, my second empirical paper was an intervention which aimed to help WYR coaches move from an implicit to explicit approach to teaching life skills (Bean et al., 2018). By this point I had been working closely with stakeholders at WYR for over a year and had built some excellent relationships. My findings from the previous study were highly regarded and I felt I had transitioned from being an outsider to the organisation to an insider. As a result, this offered greater opportunity to disseminate my work to influential figures both at WYR and the broader

rowing community across the UK. Therefore, by the time I started to deliver the coach development programme (CDP) to WYR coaches I felt I had massive buy-in from all involved. They seemed trust me and were open to the ideas I put forward, something which surprised me given my lack of knowledge regarding the technical elements of rowing. Having read the literature, I was aware that getting buy-in and engagement from coaches during CDPs is often difficult (Griffiths et al., 2018; Santos et al., 2021). On reflection, if the CDP was the first thing I tried to when entering the organisation, before I had built relationships and earned the respect of the stakeholders, I do feel I would have had more of a difficult time in getting the buy-in.

Despite reaping the benefits of coaches buying into the CDP, I have also been able to consider the potential pitfalls this had on my results. To evaluate the 8-month programme I interviewed all of the coaches myself. Participants were largely complimentary and discussed how the programme positively challenged their perceptions of what being a coach meant and how our discussions informed their coaching sessions. Given (a) the relationship I had built with participants, (b) their awareness that the responses they provided would be used in the write up of the study, and (c) the findings would be shared with the broader rowing community and have potential to reflect positively or negatively on WYR, it isn't surprising that I was given such positive feedback. They may have genuinely found the CDP useful. It is only now after reflecting however that I am aware of the social desirability bias which may have been at play (Paulhus, 2001). In hindsight, I question whether I should have conducted the evaluation and whether there was anything else I could have done to try and minimise this bias. Whilst it may be beyond the scope of this commentary to discuss this in depth, in all, reflecting on how I engaged in this research has been massively beneficial for my own learning. Whilst not considering it at the time, it is now apparent that my transition

to an insider of the organisation gave rise to some pitfalls that have potential to impact the quality and rigor of my work. Whilst building relationships are integral to working relationships such as this (Sharp et al., 2015), in the future I would benefit from considering in greater depth how and where I want to position myself within the organisation and which of these best serve the research.

Systematic Review

With the benefit of hindsight, rather than it being my last, I wish my systematic review was the first piece of research I conducted on the professional doctorate. Doing so, I believe, would have served to increase the quality of the two studies I discuss above. From stories I had heard from colleagues and fellow professional doctorate students, I knew completing a systematic review can be a tedious and difficult piece of research to complete. As a result, I wanted to do something which I was interested in. Sticking with theme of youth development, I decided to focus on players' experiences of talent development pathways. Aware that I was about to spend most of my time reading and re-reading a number of journal articles, I hoped the knowledge I would develop would help me in my own role as a practitioner working in talent development environments. Being a failed footballer myself, I also hoped it would help me make sense of my own journey and shortcomings as a youth athlete.

I knew my supervisor had 73 studies in his systematic review and being honest, this sounded horrific. I would actually like to finish the professional doctorate one day and therefore I knew creating a research question which returns similar numbers would only consume even more of my time. As a result, after deciding I wanted to look at talent development pathways, an area which I was aware is heavily researched, I knew I needed to focus on an area which was niche. That said, I also wanted to produce something which

could warrant publication and that therefore also came into my thinking. In the end I ended up with 21 studies.

As part of one of my MSc assessments we did somewhat of a systematic review. We were given 6 quantitative papers to read and were told to utilise Downs and Black's (1998) checklist to first critically appraise the studies before discussing how confident we could be in study's findings based on the results of the critical appraisal. I benefitted from doing this assessment as up to that point I hadn't ever viewed papers through a critical lens, probably because I didn't know how to critique them. Thus, on one hand that assessment set me up well for this systematic review as I appreciated the importance of critically appraising studies, something I know other prof doc students have struggled to grasp. On the other hand, however, my challenge was that I had never critically appraised qualitative literature. I knew philosophical perspectives differed between the two and that qualitative criteria should be judged upon criteria of its own (Sparkes & Smith, 2009). When it got to the point of me having to start reviewing my 21 studies I remember struggling knowing what or how to review them.

Reinforcing the integral role supervisors have in trainee practitioner's development (Hutter & Pijpers, 2020), I was fortunate in that my supervisor had experience in writing and publishing systematic reviews (see Wadsworth et al., 2021). Interestingly, and whilst it may have been frustrating for some, he never gave me the answer or told me exactly what to do. Rather, he put the responsibility back on me and (a) asked me questions which provoked further thought or (b) pointed me in the direction of research articles which would answer my questions. For example, when questioning how to review the qualitative papers he put me in the direction of Paterson et al. (2001) or Drew et al. (2019), two studies which subsequently informed the design of my own review. If he had given me the answer when

initially asked I may have found it easier to complete the systematic review but I do not think I would have understood why I was extracting or analysing certain data. As such, it was the manner in which he offered me support which I feel massively benefitted my development as a researcher.

As I began extracting data and analysing studies, I think it surprised me how much was missing from studies and how many areas of improvement I was able to identify. I had always felt that I struggled critiquing papers and in the early stages of my academic journey was probably naïve in thinking that since research was published it must all be written to an extremely high standard. In my systematic review however, I found a number of authors either failed to outline what their philosophical assumptions were or struggled to write up the study in a manner which aligned with the stated philosophical underpinning. I also felt scholars in some papers did not offer enough depth or transparency in terms of their own positioning and influence on the research (something I failed to do in Empirical Paper 2). This didn't necessarily mean the papers were of a poor standard, however it did mean I perceive their methodological rigor to be limited. I am certain I wouldn't have been able to pick up on limitations such as this prior to doing the systematic review. Hence, I feel the systematic review has been great for my development as a researcher and will only help to improve the quality of the papers I write in the future.

Key Learning Points and Future Directions

In my first lecture as an undergraduate student I was amazed at how many people were studying the same course as me. If I was to ever build and have a successful career as a sport psychologist, I knew from that first day that a degree alone wouldn't be enough. I knew needed to begin gaining experiences which stood me out amongst the thousands of others studying the same course and wanting the same jobs as me. At the 2023 BPS

conference I experienced this feeling again. I felt like a small fish in a big pond and was reminded of the need to continue pursuing opportunities which set me apart from others. Despite not being interested in producing research at the start of my academic journey, my aims now are to develop as both an applied practitioner and a researcher. I believe building a credible reputation in both worlds will complement each other and will only serve to support me in my pursuit of a career in this field. From an academic perspective, to do this I know the next step for me is to start publishing my work.

As I approach the end of my professional doctorate journey I have now submitted 3 research articles, two of which have come back with major revisions and the remaining I am yet to receive any feedback. Needless to say, looking at reviewers' comments alone have been massively helpful for my development. As a researcher who aims to give voice and shed light on participants' subjective experiences (Sparkes & Smith, 2013), it was useful to see that reviewers felt I could put more effort into achieving that. At times they felt my research appeared sanitised and did not reflect the complex nature of human experience. They wanted me to be more authentic. They are interested in participants' stories and simply wanted to know more about what participants' thoughts and feelings were. This is something I will take on board and strive to do in future projects.

Finally, the more I engage in and read the sport psychology literature the more I realise how much there is I don't know. I recognise that as part of my professional doctorate portfolio I have had to produce my own research and in order to create a golden thread, I have intentionally focused most of my work on youth development. Moving forward however I would like to start collaborating more with my peers and colleagues. In doing so, similar to my experience when writing my first empirical paper, by collaborating I hope this will help (a) develop my understanding of different areas of interest within the field and (b)

broaden my perspectives in terms of methods to conduct research. With the difficulties I have faced in getting my first few publications, I hope collaborating with peers will make it easier for me to get more publications to my name. So far, I have had to put a lot of work into getting one publication (as is expected when doing a doctorate). When working as part of a team however, rather than writing the whole project, I anticipate I would share the load and may be able to focus on a number of projects simultaneously.

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Reflective Practice Commentary

By piecing together and reflecting on my journey, this commentary seeks to help me make sense of the learning and development I have experienced across the last three years (Knowles et al., 2007). The following anecdotes are presented in a manner which narrate, in chronological order, encounters which I believe were influential in my pursuit of becoming a Sport and Exercise Psychologist. To help demonstrate evidence of professional development and competence, reflections are discussed in line with relevant key roles.

Year 1

Key Role 2.4: Conduct consultancy

Despite being four years into studying sport psychology at the time, I started the Professional Doctorate still feeling as though I didn't know how I would go about helping an athlete. I had been introduced to different theoretical orientations on my MSc course, however due to stipulations set out by the British Psychological Society (BPS) regarding what students can and cannot do at Stage 1 and Stage 2 of their training, I had no experience putting this knowledge into practice. As such, I started the Doctorate most apprehensive about doing 1:1 work, purely because I had no idea what the content and structure of a session should look like.

Having no experience and only a superficial understanding of literature such as Poczwardowski et al. (2004), whilst volunteering with Liverpool Feds in what was my first applied role, I came to realise that I was impersonating my tutor. With supervisors often forming the most important role models for trainees at the early stages of their careers (Hutter & Pijpers, 2020), since David was one of few sport psychologists I had engaged with, he acted as a template in which I thought I also had to behave (Tod & Bond, 2010). Lacking an understanding of what being authentic meant, what my beliefs were, and how these

translated into a choice of theoretical orientation, what resulted was me behaving awkwardly around players and trying to be someone I'm not. Struggling to integrate my personal self into a coherent professional self (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2013), this early experience was critical in my development and helped me recognise that before I'd even begin helping others, I first needed to understand myself (Cecil, 2014).

As I think back to what helped me in those difficult early stages, parallel to what has been discussed by other practitioners, there was a feeling inside telling me that something wasn't right (Lindsay et al., 2007). I knew I needed to change something but wasn't completely sure what it was that needed to change. This lasted a while and so as I sit here and write this commentary, it is worthy to note that there wasn't a quick fix. As someone who learns by doing and experiencing, having this applied experience to apply research such as Poczwardowski et al. (2004) to was hugely beneficial. I increasingly felt as though I was understanding what it means to be a sport psychologist and began reflecting on what type of practitioner I wanted to be. As someone who considers himself a bubbly and extroverted character, I knew I needed to start bringing my own personality, skills, and qualities to the table (Anderson, 2014) and so moving forward, my aim at Feds was simply to start incorporating this into my practice.

Key Role 2.3: Establish, develop, and maintain working relationships with clients

Realising not only was I allowed to be myself but that practitioners are actively encouraged to do so (McEwan et al., 2019), the pressure I was putting on myself eased and things got a bit better at the Feds. I felt more comfortable having a laugh with the players, talking about my personal life, and not feeling as though everything that came out of my mouth had to be psychologically-informed. In allowing them to see more of the real me, I was able to build some stronger relationships with the playing and coaching staff. I also

became more appreciative of research such as Sharp et al. (2015) who discuss consultancy work needing to be built on solid working relationships with clients. That said, despite knowing practitioners' relationship with clients is often the biggest predictor in consultancy outcomes (Sharp & Hodge, 2011), I began noticing a feeling of uncomfot yet again. Building relationships wasn't difficult for me, however I was aware that simply building relationships wasn't enough.

“Professionals can use their orientations as large wardrobes in which they store and organize their conceptual clothes” (Tod et al., 2020, p. 5)

David discussed the above quote to our cohort on the MSc course. Again, having the experience at Liverpool Feds to reflect on what he had told us now made even more sense to me than it did at the time. He alludes to an integrated approach, suggesting practitioners benefit from being able to draw upon multiple frameworks in order to support clients' individualised needs. My problem however was that I didn't have sufficient knowledge of any theoretical orientation to be able to draw upon it, let alone multiple! Buying and reading Tod and Eubank's (2020) book nevertheless helped deepen my understanding of different models of practice, understand their underpinning philosophical assumptions, and begin to consider which aligned with my own beliefs and values. Despite having a preference for humanistic principles, shortly after reading the book I enrolled onto an online cognitive-behavioural course. Whilst this approach to working wasn't completely congruent with how I wanted to practice, the course offered an alternative lens to understand client problems and go about helping them. The task moving forward was to put this knowledge to practice!

Key Role 1.4: Understand organisational and systemic issues of relevance to the practice of applied sport psychologists/ Key Role 4.1: Promote psychological principles, practices, services and benefits

At the time of volunteering with Liverpool Feds I was also working at Ashworth High Secure Psychiatric Hospital as a healthcare assistant. Recognising how difficult it is to secure paid work within the field of Sport and Exercise Psychology, despite not being employed as a psychologist, I sought to make use of the opportunity by putting my skills and knowledge to use and trying to engage the patients in physical activity. Knowing the physical and psychological benefits exercise can have on the lives of individuals suffering with mental illness (Bartels et al., 2013; Firth et al., 2017), I saw a gap in how the hospital was treating patients and felt I could add value to the service they were providing. My initial efforts were well received by ward staff and I was able to start running with patients and taking others to the on-site gym and swimming pool. Backed by some anecdotal evidence of the positive impact my work was having, I was eager to have greater impact and formulated some ideas to implement a broader physical exercise initiative across the hospital. What followed however was a lack of interest and desire from key stakeholders across the hospital to support me in my ambitions.

“It’s like you’re selling me a rocket ship that will take me to space but I don’t even want to go to space” (Senior Forensic Psychologist at Ashworth Hospital)

As we were working with some of the most mentally ill and violent individuals in the country, their illnesses and the danger they posed to themselves and other people meant medication was the first line of therapy. I understood this and agreed that keeping staff and patients had to be of utmost priority. I was surprised however at how difficult I found it to convince my colleagues of the benefits exercising and living a healthy lifestyle could have for

the service (Cormac et al., 2008; Mateo-Urdiales et al., 2020). After a year of discussions with doctors, psychologists, and ward managers (those with power to implement change within the organisation), I felt I was fighting a losing battle. Unable to see the value a (trainee) Exercise Psychologist could add, I faced a lot of feedback similar the above quote and was told to focus on my day job. With a growing sense of frustration and a feeling that my idea had run its course, I decided to leave Ashworth at the first opportunity. Whilst difficult at the time, such an experience early on in my career exposed me to the organisational and systemic challenges us as psychologists are often faced with. My aims have never been to work in an exercise setting and so the decision for me to leave was easy. I was also in a position where financially I could afford to take a risk and leave. That being said, I am aware making a similar decision in the future may not be as easy or simple. It is plausible that that at some point in my career a coach or performance director for example may not believe in sport psychology or the ideas that I have. Deciding whether to leave or conform to the organisations' demands may therefore be more of a trickier decision, particularly as I am getting older and therefore am likely to start a family or buy a house soon. In an ideal world I'd work somewhere which aligns with my own beliefs and values however given the volatile nature of sporting environments (Chandler et al., 2016), I recognise this isn't always going to be feasible.

Year 2

Key Role 2.1: Assess requests for consultancy/Key Role 2.5: Monitor the implementation of consultancy

Marking the start of my second year on the Professional Doctorate, I was fortunate to be offered a role (alongside a peer also on the Professional Doctorate) working with the young athletes on Lancashire County Cricket Club's talent development pathway. Being a

practitioner who seeks to adopt a client-led approach, the coach's plan for us to work on the shop floor and interact with young athletes in and around the training environment seemed a great idea to me. Since he was the one with experience in that context, I therefore was happy to work in a manner which he felt would best fit. As I reflect on that early experience, whilst I was trying to be congruent with my preferred approach to practice at the time, I also believe a part of me wanting to be client-led may have actually derived from wanting to please others. I was insecure and didn't want to be the person who entered an environment thinking he was an 'expert' and came across as a know-it-all or arrogant. Comparing that to now, I still aim to be client-led however rather than it being fuelled by a degree of insecurity, my aim to practice in this manner is based on experience and a genuine belief that there is greater value in giving client's autonomy and encouraging them to take responsibility for their lives.

Being the first (trainee) psychologist Lancashire employed to work with the academy squads, what ensued were some teething problems as we sought to integrate psychology into the environment. Despite being clear in what they wanted from us at the beginning, we found coaches were often too busy planning and delivering their own sessions to tell us what they wanted or where we could support. Having never had access to a sport psychologist previously, the young athletes also lacked understanding in terms of what a sport psychology was and how we could help them. Whilst we were able to engage in informal conversations and start building relationships over time, it was difficult to have any meaningful conversations with athletes about performance in the short periods between their batting and bowling drills. As a result, a lot of my time was spent sitting around and observing, something which only exacerbated my self-doubt and concerns regarding others' perception of me. Unlike my experience at Ashworth, this time I was in a paid role which did

align with my career ambitions and therefore leaving wasn't an option. At Ashworth I blamed the culture and environment for my lack of success whereas with Lancashire, I looked inward, questioning what I could do differently rather than blaming those around me to protect my ego.

I began to question my approach and remembered a spotlight profiling session I was involved in as part of the professional doctorate CPD programme. During an activity in which we were first given cue cards with adjectives on before being asked to swap these with peers based on our perception of their characteristics, Martin Eubank gave me a card which contained the words 'Cautious & Conservative'. He offered a plausible rationale as to why he gave me this card, however at the time I wasn't sure how to take it. I couldn't see it myself and looking back, I probably didn't have enough applied experience to relate it to. In light of the challenges I was facing at Lancashire, reflecting on this session offered somewhat of an epiphany. The word 'flex' or 'flexing' was frequently used throughout the workshop, highlighting how as practitioners it can be useful to adapt how we work depending on the individual/s we are working with. Coupled with David Tod's quote above, I noticed this idea that practitioners are best served adopting an integrated approach to their practice was becoming somewhat of a golden thread through my training. Maybe Martin was right, perhaps I was too cautious. Recognising a client-led may not be suitable as young athletes do not always have the self-awareness to reflect on areas of development and may need to be actively supported in developing psycho-behavioural skills (Williams & MacNamara, 2022), I decided to flex my approach and became more practitioner-led. Rather than waiting for coaches or players to come to me with ideas or challenges, I made it an aim to be more forthright and proactive in going to them with areas I felt I could help. Fortunately, this landed well and over time such efforts enabled us to add more strands to

how psychology is being delivered at Lancashire. Whilst the plan initially was for us to work solely with the players, we are now collaborating more with parents, coaches and other multi-disciplinary team members in order to create more of a psychologically informed environment.

Key Role 1.2: Contribute to the continuing development of self as a professional applied psychologist

Frequently cited across the sport psychology literature is the crucial role supervisors and peers have in the ongoing development of trainee practitioners (Carr, 2007). Such individuals are said to be central to practitioners' journey as they figure out how to help clients and navigate the path towards authenticity and congruence (McEwan et al., 2019). Whilst I share this view, a critique I have of the literature lies in it failing to acknowledge how important others who exist within our environment are in the journey. With a belief of mine being that we do not exist in a vacuum and that we are influenced by the social-cultural contexts in which we operate (Lincoln et al., 2011), I feel it would be amiss for me not to acknowledge those around me who do not necessarily have any involvement in sport or psychology but have still played a huge role my development. This includes my girlfriend who I have often consulted in or my mum or dad who have always been available on the other end of the phone for informational or emotional support. As I discuss in some reflections, I was also helped by a business consultant (Carl) who helped me start my own business and offer an alternate and fresh insight into what sport psychology is/means and how I could go about building my career.

When looking at the talent development literature, we know that it is not only coaches who are integral to helping young athletes reaching the elite level of sport but rather there are many others who are equally important in supporting athletes on that

journey (Henriksen & Stambulova, 2017). Comparing this to the practitioner development literature, only supervisors and fellow practitioners are cited as figures who are helpful in helping trainees develop the technical competencies required to be a psychologist. When put this way, the gap within the literature seems glaringly obvious. Adopting an ecological perspective of practitioner development by recognising those within our environments who are just as integral to our development is therefore an area of research which I feel could be developed.

As humans I believe we can become blinkered. It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that our work is the most important and what we are doing in life is the be-all and end-all. Likewise, and as I discuss in some of my reflections within this portfolio, as a discipline I feel we are slightly blinkered. Until this second year, most of the individuals I spoke to about my work were also involved in a sport and/or psychology context. It was only when starting conversations with Carl in my second year that I increasingly recognised the importance of diversifying who I spoke with. I began to see the value in communicating with and learning from others with different perspectives or from different disciplines. This was reflected in an English Cricket Board conference I attended. Despite being one of few sport psychologists to attend the event, hearing how nutritionists and physios approached their practice gave me an array of ideas for my own work. For this and the reasons I discuss above, whilst supervisors have helped me greatly on my journey, I also feel those I have interacted with away from the sport psychology arena are just as worthy to note.

Key Role 2.4: Conduct consultancy/Key Role 2.6: Evaluate the impact of the consultancy

Continuing with the golden thread that was occurring across my training (recognising the value of drawing upon an integrated approach to my consultancy), over the course of my second year of the doctorate I attended Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and

Solution-Focused Brief Therapy courses as well as delving deeper into reading about different modalities. By the end of the second year I was working at Sale Sharks as well as Lancashire County Cricket Club and therefore had engaged in a lot of consultancy work.

In a reflection I termed 'embracing the messiness', I felt one conversation in particular was a turning point. Looking back at the earlier stages of my development, due to my nerves and insecurities I would often go into 1:1 conversations with a number of questions pre-prepared, something fuelled by the fear of running out of things to say whilst talking. I remember struggling to be present and listen to what athletes were saying whilst simultaneously planning what I would say next. In this particular conversation however, I noticed this voice quietening. Despite the athlete taking the conversation off on a number of tangents, through my use of reflections and ability to now be present and actively listen, I felt I was able to follow her on the journey. The session was completely unstructured and although at the time I struggled to understand where she was going with some things, her feedback at the end was positive. She appreciated having the opportunity to hear herself, and in doing so was able to come up with solutions to her own problems. I represented more of an authentic version of the type of practitioner I wanted to be in this session and on reflection I feel the conversation marked a critical moment in my journey and gave me a boost of confidence that was needed.

Year 3

Key Role 2.5: Monitor the implementation of consultancy/Key Role 4.2: Provide psychological advice and guidance to others and facilitate the use of psychological services/Key Role 4.3: Communicate the processes and outcomes of psychological and other applications and developments

I started working at Lancashire and Sale Sharks at a time where they were looking to increase levels of psychology provision into their talent development programmes. As such, I have had the opportunity to work with academy directors/heads of talent pathways to design psychology programmes that align with the objectives of the organisations (see Figure 1). Striving to ensure each programme is tailored to account for the developmental stages athletes are at (Kipp, 2018), I have then been responsible for their delivery and subsequent evaluation.



Figure 1 – Initial outline of Sale Sharks academy psychology programme mission and tactics

What became increasingly apparent across this time again was how important it is for practitioners to be flexible. Aligning with my belief that reality is subjective and multiple, by virtue of the club's resources, stakeholder's needs and perceptions of sport psychology, and the amount of time I have available for example, my approach to doing sport psychology has varied context-to-context and client-to-client. Being on the shop floor engaging in informal conversations with young athletes at Lancashire has meant I have

drawn largely upon cognitive-behavioural and solution-focused approaches to help with performance challenges in the moment. With Sale women's first team however, most of my time is spent talking 1:1 in private in which I have drawn upon a range of different modalities. With Sale men's academy wanting players to take initiative and ownership of their development, the workshops I have delivered have predominantly been person-centred in that through my use of questioning players are encouraged to come up with solutions to their difficulties themselves. Whilst this variety has been great for my development, I feel a solid understanding of what the philosophical assumptions of each theoretical orientation are has been crucial. Without such understanding it would have been easy for me to contradict and potentially confuse myself and/or clients if trying to adopt a person-centred and cognitive behavioural approach in the same session for example.

Key Role 1: Develop, implement and maintain personal and professional standards and ethical practice

As I approached the end of my training on the professional doctorate I found myself getting busier and busier. Alongside previously mentioned roles at Lancashire and Sale, I was also working as a lecturer in academia, helping a football agent start his own agency, whilst continuing to support Warrington Youth Rowing and work with individual private clients. If this wasn't enough, this coincided with me also trying to complete the assessments needed to finish the doctorate. I liked not being full-time anywhere and felt as though this meant I was able to not get caught up in the politics of organisations. Splitting my time across each of the organisations however made me feel as though I was spinning plates. I was always in a rush and admittedly, by spreading myself so thin, I don't think I was able to put 100% effort into any task or piece of work I was doing. Ironically, my desire to

keep busy and do so much was driven by a determination to build a successful career in this field. It is plausible however that doing this had potential to jeopardise the quality of the work I was doing.

“During this course, where I anticipate I will encounter a number of stressful situations, it is important I make sure I also dedicate time to do the things that I enjoy, that is, spending time with my friends and family and going to watch Liverpool Football Club. It will be in these moments where I will be afforded an opportunity to switch off and enjoy myself, thus preventing burnout and supporting my overall well-being, something I feel can easily be neglected”

The above excerpt is taken from the plan of training assessment I completed at the start of my training. Despite forecasting what was likely to be ahead, such insight was quickly forgotten as I sought to build my career. As I took on more and more work it became increasingly difficult to meet expectations and find balance and eventually I burnt out. Being so determined to develop from a professional standpoint, I also neglected what is important to me from a personal point of view. Guilty of having a foreclosed identity, most of my days have been spent either working or thinking about work, ironic given the conversations I have had with athletes regarding having balance in their lives and investing in themselves away from sport. This meant the effort I put into my relationship with my girlfriend or the amount of times I saw friends and family members has been minimal. With burnout commonly experienced by sport psychology practitioners (McCormack et al., 2015), having experienced it now myself, I appreciate the need for practitioner self-care a lot more (Quartiroli et al., 2022). I discussed this recently to sport psychology students at LJMU’s applied practice event and I felt myself getting emotional, somewhat of a realisation of how much stress I have put myself under the last few years. Having begun prizing my own well-

being in the last few months, I have actually started to turn down work, something which I would have never done a few years ago.

Concluding thoughts and looking ahead

“Humans are inherently storytellers, and use narratives as a means to make sense of our lives” (Sarbin, 1986)

As I’ve sought to make sense of these reflections, it has become increasingly apparent, that this journey across the last three years has been one of self-discovery more than anything. I feel I have learnt more about myself in this period, than I had done in the previous 24 years before starting the doctorate. Whilst the experiences and ongoing reflections have helped me develop the skills and knowledge required to be a Sport and Exercise Psychologist, I have also been able to connect the dots to my own story and over time, have come to understand why I wanted to pursue a career in this field, what is important to me, and what drives me to help athletes.

Having written this commentary and now being in a position to adopt an overarching view of my development, it is also noticeable that my experience thus far follows the typical developmental journey of practitioners (Tod et al., 2017). This is reflected for example in my illustration of the anxieties I faced early on, impersonating of my supervisor, and a gradual movement towards a practitioner identity that is congruent with my beliefs and values (Wadsworth et al., 2021). Although difficult at the time, I now take pride in how I have embraced and navigated such obstacles. Comparable to the talent development literature, I feel this exposure to challenging events whilst having a supportive social network is crucial for development (Taylor et al., 2022).

Despite this chapter of my life ending soon, I recognise learning and development is a continuous process (Fifer et al., 2008) and with that there are still a number of areas in

which I want to develop as a practitioner. With an aim of mine being to facilitate growth in those I support, my approach to practice has largely been informed by humanism. In light of what I discuss above regarding how my own growth as a practitioner has been facilitated by (a) the development of my own self-awareness and (b) a movement toward authenticity, I am now beginning to feel as though an existential approach aligns better with my beliefs rather than humanistic principles. Whilst both still place emphasis on the relationship or 'encounter' with clients, the more of the literature I read, the more I agree with criticism aimed at humanism regarding humans not having complete free will but rather what existentialists term situated freedom (van Deurzen, 2012). In recent months I have found myself talking more to athletes about the givens of existence and showing courage in light of anxieties and boundary situations (Ronkainen & Nesti, 2017), however to be completely confident in integrating existential principles into my practice, I still feel I need to develop my understanding of the underpinning theory.

To conclude, through the ethical, consultancy, research, and teaching experiences discussed across this portfolio, I feel I have been able to demonstrate achievement of the programme learning outcomes. It is for this reason that I am confident I have met BPS stage 2 requirements and standards outlined by HCPC which would grant me eligibility for registration as a Sport and Exercise Psychologist.

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