

Exploring consultant interview skills within the employment process in sport psychology

by

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A Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy of
Loughborough University

August 2018

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Abstract

Academic interest in the professional practice of sport psychology has meant a proliferation in models, theories, and guides to successful service provision, from gaining entry into practice to the evaluation and/or termination of service. However, there is an absence of research that examines the stage before practice can begin, and in particular, the formal employment interview. In order to address this gap in the literature, this thesis developed an understanding of the skills necessary to navigate the employment interview as a sport psychology consultant (SPC). The first study identified the features of experience that influenced gatekeepers to sport psychology's previous hiring decisions (study one). Assuming an interpretative phenomenological approach, data were collected through interviews with seven gatekeepers in positions directly responsible for hiring SPCs within United Kingdom elite sport organisations. The participants' experiences were interpreted to be influenced by four key features of the sport psychologists; (a) consultant affability, (b) consultant confidence versus arrogance, (c) consultant collaboration, and (d) presentation of consultant competencies. These features of experience were then used to create two short video vignettes simulating the employment interview between gatekeeper and practitioner (study two). Utilising these vignettes to stimulate discussion, Trainee Sport Psychologists were interviewed ($n=31$) concerning their ability to identify interview skills, their perception of their own skills, the sources of such skills and how they could be developed. Findings revealed that despite possessing desirable levels of both affability and collaboration skills, participants reported low levels of confidence in sport psychology and the ability to present their competencies. Parent and peer attachment, educational background and specific experiential features were proposed as sources of these skills. In an attempt to further examine the potential interactions between these proposed sources of interview skills, currently accredited, practicing Sport Psychologists and those undertaking practical training routes ($n=214$) were surveyed (study three). The findings of this study indicated that a SPC's peer attachment, educational background, applied experience, and interview experience variably relate to self-perceived levels of consultant affability, confidence in sport psychology, collaboration, and presentation of competencies. However, there was no significant effect observed for parent attachment, as suggested within study two. Together, the studies within this thesis provide the first examination of the features of experience that have influenced historic consumer decisions within the hiring of SPCs, the skills which SPCs should possess in order to gain entry through an employment interview, and the sources from which these skills may be derived.

Publications Arising from this Thesis

Peer-reviewed journal articles

- Woolway, T., & Harwood, C. G. (2018). Consultant characteristics in sport psychology service provision: A critical review and future directions. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1080/1612197X.2018.1462230
- Woolway, T., & Harwood, C. G. (2018). Gatekeepers' experiences of hiring a sport psychologist: A phenomenological study. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1080/10413200.2018.1484394

International Conference Proceedings

- Woolway, T. & Harwood, C.G. (2018, June). *Gatekeepers' experiences of hiring a sport psychologist: A phenomenological study*. Poster presentation at the NASPSPA 2018 Annual Conference, Denver, Colorado, USA.
- Woolway, T., & Harwood, C. (2017, July). Gaining entry as a Sport Psychologist: A review and extension of current knowledge. In R. Keegan (Chair), '*Bridging the research-practice gap in sport and exercise psychology: three strategies for reconciliation*'. Symposium conducted at the ISSP 14th World Congress, Sevilla, Spain.
- Woolway, T., & Harwood, C. (2017, July). *Gaining entry in sport psychology consulting: A critical review of consultant characteristics and future research directions*. Poster presentation at the ISSP 14th World Congress, Sevilla, Spain.
- Woolway, T., & Harwood, C. (2016, May). *The power of first impressions: How consultant characteristics can influence clients' first impressions*. Oral presentation at the EASY networking conference, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
- Woolway, T. (2016, May). *Gaining Entry Workshop*. Conducted at the EASY networking conference, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I must thank my supervisors. To Chris Harwood, thank you for the continuous support throughout my PhD study, for your patience when I waivered, enduring motivation and in-depth knowledge. You have been pivotal to both the development of this thesis and myself as an academic. I could not have wished for a better supervisor and advisor. To David Fletcher, thank you for the critical discussions regarding my choice of methods and approach, these have helped me to develop my own critical eye towards research.

Without everyone in the PhD research office my three years would have been a very different experience. I am proud and lucky to have been able to have worked alongside each and every one of you. Particular thanks must go to Svenja, Gill and Sam for continuously providing advice, support, and friendship throughout my time here.

To Daniel and Hannah, for the lasting friendship and for providing respite in the times that it was most necessary.

To my brothers, Thomas and Henry, for perpetually raising the bar to which I have strived for, thank you, I would not be the person I am without your (mis)guidance and friendship.

Finally, to my parents, I will never be able to show you how grateful I am for what you have done, without your support, belief and Mum's endless hours of reading through the following pages I would not be here.

Thank you

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Chapter One:

Introduction

Introduction

In 1989, John Silva suggested that the field of sport psychology was experiencing a period of unprecedented growth, attracting significant professional and consumer interest. Silva discussed how this ‘sleeping giant’ was transitioning from a sixty-eight-year-old sub-discipline of physical education to a standalone profession, where application and professionalization of the field were under increasing scrutiny. Undeniably, the application of sport psychology has experienced a proliferation in interest, professional bodies, and certification programmes, and it is now widely accepted that the field has achieved the professional status that Silva (1989) was striving for (Cropley, Hanton, Miles, & Niven, 2010). As the applied field has developed, so too has the focus of research, from the techniques used within sport psychology to the process and professional practice of applied sport psychology (Anderson, Knowles, & Gilbourne, 2004; Winter & Collins, 2016).

One recurring theme of this literature is the sport psychology service provision process (Poczwadowski, Sherman, & Ravizza, 2004). This process entails the progression of the consulting relationship from initial contact through program implementation to evaluation, continuation, or termination of service. Research exploring this consulting process has encompassed topics such as preferred practitioner characteristics (Lubker, Visek, Watson, & Singpurwalla, 2012; Woolway & Harwood, 2015), delivery heuristics (Poczwadowski, Sherman, & Henschen, 1998), barriers to entry (Pain & Harwood, 2004), models of practice (Aoyagi & Poczwadowski, 2012), and professional philosophy (Poczwadowski, Sherman, & Ravizza, 2004). However, Hanton and Mellalieu (2012) suggest that inevitably professional practice texts have often focused on the delivery and evaluation of applied sport psychology service provision (Visek, Harris, & Blom, 2009). Hence, there is a sparsity of research exploring the business skills associated with becoming and practicing as a SPC. In addition, there is little discussion regarding any preceding stage in which a sport psychology consultant (SPC) gains access to an organisation or client.

Here, this gaining entry stage of consultancy refers to the SPC securing employment from an organisation or consumer, and is a process that is undergone prior to intake/consultancy with an athlete. Hence, if an SPC does not gain entry, a proposed consultancy programme cannot begin. Coumbe-Lilley (2011) defined this stage as “the process that happens before a legal agreement is signed between a sport psychology consultant...and a future working partner”. One aspect of this process which may occur is an employment interview, a phenomenon that requires interpersonal interaction and communication between the employer and interviewee (Levashina, Hartwell, Morgeson, & Campion, 2014). The ability to successfully navigate an employment interview is

therefore a crucial business skill in the repertoire of an effective and successful sport psychologist. However, the lack of research and practical attention given to identifying and developing employment interview skills has developed a gap in our understanding of the sport psychology service process. In relation to such a gap in knowledge, Gardner (1991) provided a response to Silva's (1989) call for professionalization of the field of sport psychology, and stated that:

“As professionals, we are constantly required to learn more in order to practice optimally. Realistically, the advancement of true professionalism requires that as practitioners we admit to gaps in knowledge and accept the fact that our work is continually undergoing a learning process” (p. 58)

Purpose of the Thesis

The purpose of this thesis, therefore, was to continue this learning process by developing an understanding of the process of gaining entry to practice as a SPC. As this process may differ depending on the context, sport, level of competition, and individuals involved in the process, this thesis was constructed with particular regard to the formal employment interview. The specific aims of this thesis were to:

- Explore the constructs that influence the hiring decisions and perceptions of gatekeepers to sport psychology in elite sport
- Determine whether trainee sport psychology students can identify these constructs
- Identify potential sources which may develop these constructs
- Develop implications for practitioners, educators and governing bodies

Structure of the Thesis

Following the current chapter, chapter two will provide a review of the professional practice, barriers to entry and consultant characteristics in sport psychology literature and employment interview literature from wider domains. The third chapter (study 1) reports an interpretive phenomenological analysis of the hiring experiences of gatekeepers to sport psychology in elite sport within the United Kingdom. In the fourth chapter, study two is presented, which utilised a video-vignette approach to examine the ability of trainee sport psychologists to identify key employment interview skills, and the developmental sources these are perceived to derive from. Chapter five (study 3) utilises these reported sources to develop a battery of instruments to extend our understanding of the interactions between employment interview skills and the features which contribute to their development. The final chapter provides a general discussion of the key findings, the contribution and implications of the thesis to the applied sport psychology literature, and the limitations and future directions of this line of research.

Chapter Two:
Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will provide a summary of research examining gaining entry in applied sport psychology. Where possible, research specific to sport psychology is presented, however research from allied professions such as counselling and occupational psychology is included. This overview will begin by providing a definition of applied sport psychology before focusing on the attention that this discipline has received. Following this, a review of the professional practice of sport psychology literature and models of sport psychology service delivery will be presented. The concepts of barriers to and gaining of entry will then be defined and discussed. The penultimate section will provide a review of the consultant characteristics that influence consumers' perceptions of and preferences for applied sport psychologists. This chapter will conclude with a review of the research pertaining to the employment interview, predominantly focusing on literature external to sport psychology.

Defining Applied Sport Psychology

Almost thirty years ago, Silva (1989) suggested that the next decade would see the most significant advancements in the field of sport psychology. This timeframe would incorporate the shift from sport psychology as an academic domain to an applied profession and would see the 'professional proliferation' (p. 266) of sport psychology practice in a variety of sport and exercise settings. Whilst the practice of sport psychology had existed previously (Martens, 1979), Silva's (1989) statement is a seminal piece in the discussion of the *professionalisation* of sport psychology. In response, Gardner (1991) argued that this professionalisation would require a scientific knowledge base, a respect for the consumer, a definable ethical standard, and an understanding of the limits of current technique. However, in an earlier address to the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP) Silva posited three questions confronting the profession in an attempt to preserve and enhance the integrity that the academic field had generated (as cited in Portenga, Aoyagi, Balague, Cohen, & Harmison, 2011, p.3):

1. Who is a sport psychologist?
2. What is sport psychology?
3. What does the practice of sport psychology entail?

Despite the assertion of Silva (1989) regarding the expected rapid rate of professionalisation, Portenga and colleagues (2011) argued that more than two decades later, these questions were still to be answered. This lack of progression and confusion was suggested to arise from a lack of clarity surrounding the two converging yet different disciplines of sport psychology; the academic and the applied (Portenga et al., 2011). Historically, sport psychology has been

utilised as an umbrella term for both disciplines, however most definitions of ‘sport psychology’ position it as academic study (i.e. “the scientific study of”; Weinberg & Gould, 2007). These definitions limit sport psychology to research and discount the practical application of this knowledge. To address this, Portenga and colleagues (2011) defined the discipline of *applied sport psychology* as:

“The *study and application* of psychological principles of human performance in helping athletes consistently perform in the upper range of their capabilities and more thoroughly enjoy the sport performance process.”

This definition itself is limited to the practice of sport and performance psychology, failing to include such areas as promoting psychological wellbeing and development. However, it provides a basis for discussing conceptual differences between *sport psychology* and *applied sport psychology*. The extent to which these fields interact is debatable, with the focus of sport psychology research often lacking a focus on the practice of applied sport psychology. It is this potential gap between research and practice that is the focus of the next section.

Applied Sport Psychology in Research

Despite distinct definitions for these two disciplines, they are inherently connected and focused on the same human phenomenon. However, the extent to which this relationship is symbiotic has been a concern for almost four decades (Hassmen, Keegan, & Piggott, 2016; Martens, 1979; Vealey, 2006). Martens (1979) conveyed his dismay “about the utility of laboratory research for most of sport psychology” (p.94) and an apparent gap between those who conduct sport and exercise psychology research and those who practice applied sport psychology. This research-practice gap is characterised by researchers “getting on with” research, and the practitioners “getting on with” practice (Hassmen et al., 2016; Keegan, 2015). The potential impacts of allowing this ‘gap’ can include; (a) research not being used for its intended purpose of informing practice, (b) practice not being informed by evidence, and (c) an increase in the difficulty of training future practitioners (see Hassmen et al., 2016).

This research-practice gap is perpetuated from both sides of the sport psychology domain. The researcher prefers controlled environments, studying phenomenon in often sterile and abstract conditions, to form simplified and testable theories and models. The applied practitioner works in a complex, messy, and uncontrollable world, where the neatly assembled theories of the researcher are irrelevant (Hassmen et al., 2016). Martens (1979) reflected that practical theories, not theoretical practice should be an aim to assist in the continued evolution of the field. Historically, *sport psychology* has generated little research examining the ‘art’ of applied practice. However, in more

recent work (Keegan, 2015; Poczwadowski et al., 1998; Visek et al., 2009) researchers have begun to examine the processes, mechanisms, phenomenon, and service delivery of *applied sport psychology*.

Sport Psychology Service Delivery

Table 1. Sport psychology service delivery models

Model	Authors	Service delivery stages
Cognitive-Behavioural Consultation Model	Perna, Neyer, Murphy, Ogilvie, & Murphy, 1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation orientation • Sport familiarisation • Evaluation & assessment • Goal identification • Group intervention • Individual intervention • Outcome evaluation • Reassessment of goals
Sport Psychology Service Delivery Heuristic-Revised	Poczwadowski & Sherman (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education, training, & professional experience • Professional ethics • Professional philosophy • Making contact • Assessment • Conceptualising (concerns & interventions) • Range, types, & organisation of service • Program implementation • Managing the self as an intervention instrument • Program & consultant evaluation • Conclusions & implications • Leaving the setting • Consultant-client relationship • Consultant variables • Client variables
Consultant's Guide to Excellence	Halliwell, Orlick, Ravizza, & Rotella (1999)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting started • Program delivery • Making a difference • Fostering a commitment to the program
Youth Sport Consultation Model	Visek, Harris, & Blom (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioner characteristics • Initiating contact • Doing sport psychology • Wrapping up the season and consultation • Assessing the consulting relationship • Termination and continuation
Keegan's Model	Keegan (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intake • Needs analysis • Case formulation • Choosing an intervention • Planning the intervention • Delivery and monitoring

The focus of service delivery models is on the professional practice of the sport psychologist. Predominantly these models centre on the delivery of intervention and program implementation (Hanton & Mellalieu, 2012), however a preceding stage of practice, where the consultant gains entry to practice is identified. The following sections provides a brief analysis of this gaining entry to practice phase in five sport psychology service delivery models (Table 1.): Cognitive-Behavioural Consultation Model (Perna, Neyer, Murphy, Ogilvie, & Murphy, 1995), Sport Psychology Service Delivery Heuristic (Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011; Poczwadowski et al., 1998), Consultant's Guide to Excellence (Halliwell, Orlick, Ravizza, & Rotella, 1999), Youth Sport Consulting Model (Vissek et al., 2009), and Keegan's model of the sport psychology service delivery process (Keegan, 2015).

The fourth element of the SPSD-R (Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011) is 'making contact' which emphasises the need for the SPC to establish respect, credibility, and trust (Ravizza, 1988) by demonstrating knowledge, experience, provided services, consultant role, and opening lines of honest communication and maintaining confidentiality. The important outcome of 'making contact' is the consultant-client relationship, a suggested vehicle for consultants to effect a desired change in client behaviour (Poczwadowski et al., 1998). Building on the SPSD-R, Vissek and colleagues (2009) suggest that 'initiating contact' involves making contact, establishing respect and credibility, and pre-planning. The authors additionally provide means by which contact may be made, by echoing Coumbe-Lilley (2011) and adding that in youth sport, practitioners may need to adopt a more pro-active approach to seeking out organisations and local governing bodies. Keegan (2015) indicates that within the 'intake' phase of service delivery "somehow a relationship is started", and that this relationship may stem from coach referral, direct client contact, or the practitioner proactively seeking clients, however no further discussion is provided. The Consultant's Guide to Excellence (Halliwell et al., 1999) repeats the need to earn trust and respect, in addition to understanding the needs of the client, but again provides little practical guidance on how to achieve this. Murphy and Murphy (as cited in Perna et al., 1995) place an emphasis on the initial contact with a client. The primary objective of this initial contact is to determine if consultation is desirable and possible and if an agreement outlining consultation parameters can be made. These sport psychology service provision models each highlight a step prior to entry and client assessments, however they are discussed by differing names and the specifics of this step varies by model. When considered together, these models indicate a universal 'gaining entry' step, and it is this step which the remaining sections of this chapter and thesis focus upon.

Gaining Entry to Practice

Sport psychology service delivery models intend to describe, outline, and provide a route for consultants to follow during their consultation. Intuitively the focus of most of these models is the implementation or service delivery phase of consultancy. However, the events preceding and following the application of sport psychology techniques are rarely addressed (Poczwadowski et al., 1998). Andersen (2000) argues that before we ask the question ‘athlete meets sport psychologist. What happens?’ we need to look at the situations, environments, and referral processes that help bring an athlete and a sport psychologist together for the first-time face to face. This phase is crucial to successful consultancy, as without first *gaining entry*, a proposed programme cannot proceed.

Gaining entry, initiating contact, making contact, getting started, or simply entry is proposed as, if not the first, one of the earliest stages of consultancy that a practitioner needs to navigate, however it is often overshadowed by a focus on the programme implementation stage. This dominance of the ‘meat’ of service delivery has resulted in *gaining entry* often being underdiscussed with little procedural knowledge being imparted.

Before conducting and providing a thorough examination of this phase, the following questions must first be answered:

1. What is meant by gaining entry?
2. At what point does this phase begin and when has a consultant ‘gained entry’?

Perhaps the simplest and most concise answer to these questions and definition of gaining entry was provided by Coumbe-Lilley (2011) when discussing the sometimes-troubling experience of the initial contracting phase. Coumbe-Lilley (2011) highlights the lack of clarity of this consultancy phase, and draws on literature from allied consulting professions to offer this definition:

“the process that happens before a legal agreement is signed between a sport psychology consultant...and a future working partner”

This description relies on the assumption that the practitioner has been contacted in one of three ways: (a) by an organisational representative like a coaching director or a performance co-ordinator who communicates there is a ‘need’ for sport psychology services in their organisation, (b) the SPC has responded to a request through a formal application process in a sport organisation that thinks there is a role for an SPC in its organisational future, and (c) an informal contact from an organisation has reached out to learn more.

Thus, for the purpose of this thesis, gaining entry is discussed as the stage which precedes the initiation of consultancy, where a SPC gains employment within an organisation. This process may require the candidate SPC to complete an application process, provide a presentation, complete

an employment interview, or meet potential employers and stakeholders. It can also be influenced by potential barriers to entry (Ravizza, 1988), consumers' preferred consultant characteristics (Pain & Harwood, 2004), and successfully navigating the potential hurdles and phenomenon of the initial contracting phase (Coumbe-Lilley, 2011).

Gardner (1991) suggests that admitting gaps in knowledge is a requirement of a true profession, and that continually undergoing this learning process can help the field to understand what training is required to provide a sport psychology service. Despite highlighting gaining entry as a universal step (Keegan, 2015), where every working alliance must begin, the existing literature examining the procedure of sport psychology service delivery appear to possess a 'gap in knowledge' regarding how a practitioner navigates this stage of consultancy. It is important to address this apparent gap in our understanding of sport psychology consultancy as the SPC practices in a unique context to allied professions, both in sport science support and psychological occupations. Exploring the psychological components of performance within a sporting environment combines a number of concerns of practitioners from fields such as strength and conditioning, occupational psychology, nutrition and developmental psychology. Hence, the way in which a SPC gains employment within an organisation is also likely to experience contextually different issues. In addition, to the author's knowledge, the specifics of gaining entry to practice has been sparsely researched and discussed within allied professions. Thus, with little research literature from differing fields to inform our understanding and the contextually unique environment in which the SPC practices, it is important to explore the gaining entry process within sport psychology. However, before a practitioner can gain entry, it is necessary to overcome several barriers to entry.

Barriers to Entry

Barriers to entry are those factors which may hinder or prevent gaining entry, and need to be avoided to prevent a 'false start' in consulting (Coumbe-Lilley, 2011). SPCs must recognise the variety of significant hurdles present when 'outsiders' become involved with any athletic team as they may leave athletes and coaches less open to consultation and collaboration (Ravizza, 1988). This may result in the benefits of applied sport psychology being denied to athletes and athletes being denied to sport psychology research (Linder, Brewer, Van Raalte, & DeLange, 1991). Past research has suggested that barriers are encountered once entry to practice has been gained (Johnson, Andersson, & Fallby, 2011), however by their very nature, overcoming barriers to entry is an inherent requirement to gaining entry.

Three decades ago, Ravizza's (1988) seminal paper outlined the barriers encountered throughout consulting. Three significant barriers were proposed: (a) negative connotations related to

the “sport psychology-shrink” image, (b) lack of sport specific knowledge on behalf of the consultant, and (c) inadequate knowledge of and experience with the politics of each sport environment.

Negative Connotations. “Like it or not” (Ravizza, 1988, p. 244) there are negative connotations attached to sport psychology which can lead to apprehension regarding service delivery. Potentially, this is due to the perception that sport psychology service delivery involves examination of vulnerabilities and weaknesses, as the sport psychologist is seen as a non-sport, mental health professional, rather than a performance enhancement professional (Van Raalte, Brewer, Matheson, & Brewer, 1996). These negative connotations can manifest into two responses for the athlete; a stigma and/or a derogation response.

The stigma response leads to an athlete being labelled as a ‘problem athlete’ and has been reported by athletes (Linder et al., 1991; Martin, 2005), young elite athletes (Gulliver, Griffiths, & Christensen, 2012), coaches (Pain & Harwood, 2004; Hung, Lin, Lee, & Chen, 2008), and administrators (Pain & Harwood, 2004). If an athlete experiences stigma they may avoid consultation to prevent being labelled as a ‘mental patient’ (Brooks & Bull, 2001). Gulliver and colleagues (2012) found that a fear of stigma accounted for 40% of barriers to entry amongst youth elite athletes.

The derogation response refers to a significant other (e.g., coach or manager) viewing the consulting relationship as a deviance from the norm rather than the athlete as a problem individual (Linder, Pillow, & Reno, 1989). Shared anecdotes suggest that athletes have either not been drafted or given lower ratings when their consultations with a SPC became known to figures in power (Linder et al., 1989). This derogation likely occurs because of a deviance from the norm that is expected of an individual, especially an athlete, and that by participating in this behaviour, the athlete is likely to deviate from desirable behaviours in the future.

The often-masculine nature of competitive sports may magnify these stigma and derogation effects. When competing in sports, most males will gradually develop the belief that to be a man and an athlete, they must learn to accept pain, physical risk, and injury in stoic silence (Martin, 2005). The ultra-masculine, aggressive, and physical nature of certain sports (i.e., American Football, Rugby, and Ice Hockey) may further heighten the risk of stigma and derogation.

Lack of Sport-specific Knowledge. Ravizza’s (1988) second potential barrier, a lack of sport-specific knowledge on behalf of the consultant, has since been integrated into a field of research identified as consultant characteristics. This lack of knowledge is attributed to both a consultant’s sport-specific knowledge and athletic background. A review of these two

characteristics is provided within the consultant characteristics section later within this chapter. However, if a consultant does not possess this sport-specific knowledge, they are usually ineffective, do not last long in the system, and cannot effectively interact with athletes and coaches (Orlick & Partington, 1987; Ravizza, 1988).

Politics of Sport Environment. The third potential barrier suggested by Ravizza (1988) is the consultant's lack of knowledge and experience of the politics of the sport environment. Every team and organisation have a structure and major political components that must support, or at least not block, the program (Ravizza, 1988). The entire structure of the organisation, from front office workers to the athletic trainer, can provide resistance to the program, making the consultant's integration within the organisation vital for the success of the program (Ravizza, 1988).

Despite the development of applied sport psychology, over two decades after Ravizza (1988) presented his barriers to entry, these were still being reported within the elite sport environment (Johnson et al., 2011). Two studies within soccer found that the sport psychologist's failure to clarify their services and their integration with coaching staff and players were highly ranked barriers to entry in both UK professional soccer academies (Pain & Harwood, 2004) and Swedish premier male teams (Johnson et al., 2011). Pain and Harwood (2004) argued that sport psychologists must have the character to deal with the soccer environment and the want to work with not just the top performers, but the entire team.

In addition to Ravizza's (1988) three barriers to entry, research has identified further barriers. The most prominent of these is financial constraints (Voight & Callaghan, 2001) which has been reported as a potential barrier to entry by soccer academy directors and coaches, national soccer coaches (Pain & Harwood, 2004), premier soccer team coaches (Johnson et al., 2011), athletic department officials (Voight & Callaghan, 2001), and sport psychology consultants themselves (Gould, Murphy, Tammen, & May, 1989). Forty-two percent of respondents reported that there was "not at all" sufficient funding available for sport psychology (Pain & Harwood, 2004) with one coach stating that the financial situation is the largest barrier "for almost every club in Sweden" (Johnson et al., 2011).

Constraints of time has been reported as a further potential barrier to entry within applied sport psychology. Coaches report having limited time to allow a SPC access to the team because of the demands of elite sport, such as drills, rehab training, and other physically and technically oriented tasks (Johnson et al., 2011). Often coaches, particularly veteran coaches, that have "done the job without the assistance of a sport psychologist" (Ravizza, 1988) will not prioritise

psychological performance enhancement. Players themselves are unlikely to prioritise sport psychology services if they are not delegated by the coach (Johnson et al., 2011).

The transitory nature of elite sport means that a team or organisation are likely to change and alter, which places additional time and financial strain onto applied sport psychology as they are viewed as non-essential services (Ravizza, 1990). Whilst one administrator, coach, or manager may actively seek the services of an applied sport psychologist, if that individual, their position, or authority are altered, that need for psychological services may diminish.

Despite these barriers existing, and prevailing for three decades, once a practitioner has overcome these barriers there are opportunities and possibilities for entry. Johnson, Andersson, and Fallby (2011) suggested that personal chemistry, providing examples of positive role-models, and increasing the organisational support for development are methods of increasing the possibility for entry. In addition, understanding the consultant characteristics that may influence consumers' preferences for applied sport psychologists can help to predict the initiation of consultation and perhaps the successful abatement of certain barriers such as stigma towards the field and a perceived lack of sport specific knowledge. It is this body of research into consultant characteristics and preferences to which I now turn.

Consultant Characteristics

A number of desirable characteristics for a consultant to possess and which are likely to influence their interactions with clients have been suggested within allied professions to sport psychology research such as counsellors (Lewis & Walsh, 1978; Townes, Chavez-Korell, & Cunningham, 2009) and physicians (Hash, Munna, Vogel, & Bason, 2003). These studies persistently find interpersonal skills, race, gender, body build and professional qualifications as favoured characteristics. Recent research within sport psychology has integrated these characteristics with those that are idiosyncratic to the practice of sport psychology, such as sport-specific knowledge and athletic background (Lubker, Visek, Geer, & Watson II, 2008). Early research assessed the perceived importance of each characteristic, which led to positively skewed results for each characteristic (Lubker et al., 2008). However recent research has begun to consider the client as a consumer of sport psychology, and thus started to utilise consumer market analysis tools and methods which results in participants ranking the characteristics against one another. This shift of research design allows applied practitioners and researchers within the field to easily identify which characteristic is most influential in a consumers' decision towards a specific SPC.

An understanding of consumer perspectives would lead to a more informed consideration of the factors that predict initiation of the formal consultation process (Hamberger & Iso-Ahola, 2006).

This understanding of intention in turn allows for SPCs to better understand consumer perspectives and how to affect these in order to gain entry. Additionally, knowledge of preferred characteristics that can be controlled by the SPC can facilitate the development of appropriate training for practitioners, as well as educational and marketing materials designed for the consumer (Van Raalte et al., 1996). Practitioners can utilise this information to identify which characteristics to develop and market with this knowledge.

The extent to which our understanding of consultant characteristics can benefit and develop the field of applied sport psychology is dependent upon the individuals' level of characteristic control. The consultant has a varying level of control over each characteristic, with little to no control over some and complete control over others. Thus, these characteristics can be placed on a continuum of controllability ranging from race and gender (i.e., least controllable) to the consultant's sport specific knowledge and attire (i.e., most controllable). The following section of this chapter will provide a review of the literature regarding each consultant characteristic as researched within sport psychology beginning with three characteristics considered uncontrollable: a) gender, b) race and c) age.

Gender. This research focuses on consumer's preference for consultant's gender and when presented with a choice over the consultant gender participants prefer a SPC of the same gender (Lubker et al., 2008; Naoi, Watson, Deaner, & Sato, 2011; Ponnusamy & Grove, 2014). However, when forced to choose between a male or female consultant, participants prefer female consultants (Lubker, Visek, Watson, & Singpurwalla, 2012) and rate them higher on personality traits, whilst rating males higher on sport knowledge (Lubker, Watson, Visek, & Geer, 2005). This area of gender preference research suggests that gender schema theory (Bem, 1981), where characteristics are linked to each sex, is a possible explanation for this preference. Particular feminine qualities, such as listening, caring, and empathy, are suggested to be the qualities of effective service provision, thus increasing individuals' preference for a female consultant over their male counterparts.

Race. When presented with consultants of differing race, participants indicate that they would be more comfortable with a SPC of the same race (Martin, Wrisberg, Beitel, & Lounsbury, 1997) and similar race practitioners are rated higher than dissimilar practitioners (Lubker et al., 2005). However, race is consistently rated as the least important characteristic influencing preference and likelihood to seek services (Lubker et al., 2012; Naoi et al., 2011) and is not a significant predictor of attitude towards SPCs (Hamberger & Iso-Ahola, 2006). Due to the ethnic diversity within sport, a sport psychologist is often unlikely to consult with a group of individuals

from homogenous ethnic backgrounds (Martens, Mobley, & Zizzi, 2000) and racial/ethnic matches between sport psychologists and athletes can be difficult due to the small number of minority consultants (Martens et al., 2000).

Age. The third uncontrollable characteristic which has received research interest is the consultant's age. Naoi and colleagues (2011) reported that athletes from Japan and the USA would prefer to seek the services of a consultant close in age to themselves.

Due to the uncontrollable nature and the lack of importance relative to other characteristics, it is perhaps more beneficial to focus on those characteristics which a SPC has a greater degree of control over. It is those characteristics which appear towards the middle of the controllability continuum, indicating a degree of control on behalf of the consultant, that will be presented in the following section. These characteristics are: a) accreditation, b) practitioner title, c) athletic background, d) reputation, e) body build, f) multicultural exposure and g) interpersonal skills.

Accreditation. Research studies examining the importance and influence of a SPC's accreditation and certification on consumers preferences have reported differing findings. Lubker and colleagues (2008) found that a SPC with certification to work with athletes on mental skills was rated higher than one who possessed an advanced degree in performance enhancement. However, in a later study, a SPC with an advanced degree was preferred over one that was a certified/licensed practitioner or one with no credentials (Lubker et al., 2012). In terms of importance relative to other characteristics, accreditation has been rated as both the most (Lubker et al., 2012) and fifth most important (Ponnusamy & Grove, 2014) characteristic. A potential explanation for the equivocal findings is a lack of awareness related to the actual credentialing required in sport psychology (Zakrajsek et al., 2013).

Practitioner title. The title of sport psychologist has been perceived as being concerned with mental, non-sport related issues (Van Raalte, Brewer, Linder, & DeLange, 1990) and more similar to mental health practitioners than coaches (Van Raalte, Brewer, Brewer, & Linder, 1993; Van Raalte et al., 1996). However, later studies have found that the sport psychologist title is associated with both sport/physical and mental professionals, but closer to the sport/physical professionals (Brooks & Bull, 1997; 1999). It is this perception that a SPC is associated with mental health professionals which may explain the stigma response identified earlier in this chapter as a potential barrier to entry. In light of this barrier, consumers are more likely to seek the help of other individuals such as coaches, friends and family and sport counsellors before seeking the services of a sport psychologist (Maniar, Curry, Sommers, & Walsh, 2001).

Similar to the research findings regarding accreditation, consumers' perceptions of practitioner title have been suggested to be influenced by a lack of awareness regarding the applied sport psychology profession. An educational intervention aimed at increasing participants' knowledge of professional titles, and those practitioners using different titles, resulted in the relative importance of a practitioner's title rising from third to first most important, with the title 'Sport Psychologist' preferred over Life Coach and Neuro-Linguistic Programming Practitioner (Woolway & Harwood, 2015).

Athletic background. Possessing an athletic background indicates that a SPC has experience and knowledge of 'walking the walk' in the sport environment (Lubker et al., 2005). Past research has found that the importance of a SPC possessing an athletic background ranges between being the second (Lubker et al., 2012; Naoi et al., 2011) and fourth (Ponnusamy & Grove, 2014; Woolway & Harwood, 2015) most important characteristic relative to others. When explaining why a SPC who possessed athletic experience is preferred, Zakrajsek and colleagues (2013) highlighted the understanding of the athletic environment that this characteristic may provide.

Reputation. Intuitively, consumers of sport psychology have been found to prefer a SPC whose perceived effectiveness and reputation were known (Thelwell, Wood, Harwood, Woolway, & Van Raalte, 2018).

Body build. Research examining the SPCs body build refers to the individuals body mass index (BMI) utilising non-obese/obese labels to categorise the presented practitioners. This research has found that SPCs presented with a lean, athletic body build and a normal or pre-obese BMI are rated and ranked significantly more positively (Lovell, Parker, Brady, Cotterill, & Howatson, 2011), higher on personality traits, sport knowledge, and likelihood to seek services (Lubker et al., 2005), than class I and II obese, out of shape SPCs. However, it has been rated as one of the least important characteristics for the SPC to possess relative to others (Lubker et al., 2008; Lubker et al., 2012).

Multicultural exposure. In the one study that has investigated the consultants' exposure to a number of cultures within previous consultations, Japanese and American athletes rated experience working with diverse populations as the most important consultant characteristic influencing their likelihood to seek the services of a SPC. (Naoi et al., 2011).

Interpersonal skills. Naturally, characteristics associated with interpersonal skills such as trustworthiness, energy, personality and confidence are viewed as desirable (Zakrajsek et al., 2013). These positive interpersonal skills have been consistently reported as one of the most important

characteristic for a SPC to possess (Lubker et al., 2008; Woolway & Harwood, 2015) and have been found to predict between fourteen (Lubker et al., 2012) and forty-two (Thelwell et al., 2018) percent of variance in consumers preference for a SPC.

The interpersonal skills of the SPC have additionally been perceived as essential for consulting effectiveness once entry has been gained. Orlick and Partington (1987) identified that athletes perceived an effective practitioner to be easily relatable and who fitted in with all individuals connected with the team. More recently, elite British athletes highlighted that an effective SPC is personable, a good communicator, honest and trustworthy (Anderson, Miles, Robinson, & Mahoney, 2004). SPCs themselves identified that effective practice is characterised by (a) building a connection with the athlete to create positive change, (b) building a professional consulting relationship with the athlete, and (c) the consulting relationship meets athletes' needs (Sharp & Hodge, 2011). Sharp and Hodge (2014) additionally reported that athletes perceived a number of characteristics associated with a SPCs interpersonal skills (i.e. personable, openness, trust, respect, and approachable) to be essential for consultant effectiveness. This importance of interpersonal skills to effective consultancy reflects that which is reported in the preferred characteristics literature. This congruence is important as the skills desired by potential consumers may be the same as those which influence an individuals' perceptions of consultant effectiveness. An appraisal of this skill may then be the most important in forming an impression of the potential success of any therapeutic relationship, and in turn influencing whether a SPC gains entry to practice.

In addition, a number of personal qualities have been reported by sport science professionals to be essential to effective practice as a sport psychology practitioner (Chandler, Eubank, Nesti, & Cable, 2014). These qualities create a foundation for effectiveness by complimenting the SPCs knowledge and education. Sport physicians identified being open, honest, empathetic, trustworthy, good communicator and caring as such essential qualities. Additionally, these participants highlighted the need to be approachable, agreeable, and possess the natural ability to get on with people as being critical to building working relationships with athletes and colleagues (Chandler et al., 2014). This perspective of sport professionals whose practice is akin to that of the SPC further supports the findings of consultant characteristics and consultant effectiveness literature. Furthermore, this research highlights the appraisals of SPCs that professionals within the sport environment make during interactions, and these appraisals may be similar to those made by employers of SPCs within these organisations.

In addition to the above characteristics which a SPC has a certain degree of control over, there are a number of characteristics which practitioners have complete control over. These characteristics are: a) attire, b) sport-specific knowledge, c) physical activity, d) consultancy focus and e) service nature.

Attire. Research examining consumer preferences for SPC attire have found contrasting results across studies. Lovell and colleagues found that SPCs in sports attire are rated more positively, and are perceived higher on sport knowledge and likelihood to seek services (Lubker et al., 2005) than formally attired SPCs. Whereas academically dressed SPCs were rated significantly higher on personality traits (Lubker et al., 2005), and professional and staff attired SPCs positively influenced participants perceptions and preferences for the consultant (Lubker et al., 2012). However, despite these equivocal findings, SPC attire has been rated as the second least (Lubker et al., 2008) and only the fourth most important characteristic relative to others (Lubker et al., 2012).

Sport-specific knowledge. A high level of sport-specific knowledge, described as the ability to ‘talk the talk’ of sport, is consistently rated as moderately important relative to other characteristics (Lubker et al., 2008). Within recent consumer research sport-specific knowledge has been ranked fourth most important (Lubker et al., 2012) and second pre-and third most important post an educational intervention (Woolway & Harwood, 2015) when ranked against other characteristics.

Physical activity. The practitioner’s level of physical activity has been found to be relatively important to a sample of Malaysian athletes (Ponnusamy & Grove, 2014). The participants rated the importance of the consultant being physically active to their likelihood to seek services as high and this characteristic was the second most important to the sample.

Consultancy focus and service nature. Recent research has examined how the consultant’s philosophy or model of practice, with regards to their aims of consultation, may influence consumer preference. In a single study in this area, Thelwell and colleagues (2018) found that coaches and parents preferred a SPC whose consultancy focused on performance and who worked independently of an organisation. However, differences between coaches and parents, and male and female participants emerged. Both the male and coach subgroup preferred a SPC focus on performance, whereas female and parent groups rated a focus on well-being as more important. Additionally, male participants displayed a preference for a consultant to be employed by the organisation, whereas female coaches and parents preferred the SPC to work independently of the organisation.

Overall, when these findings are collated, with particular regard to more recent research utilising novel and improved methodological techniques, the most preferred SPC was of the same

gender, race, and age to the individuals with whom they would consult, with a high athletic background, sport-specific knowledge, and interpersonal skills. They were lean and athletically built, physically active, possessed either an advanced degree or was certified, and had experience working with diverse populations. Their reputation was known, had a consultancy focus on performance, and worked independently of an organisation.

As noted earlier, consultant characteristics can be placed on a continuum of controllability ranging from age, race, and gender to the consultant's sport-specific knowledge and attire. The reviewed characteristics here show that whilst individuals may prefer someone of the same gender and race as themselves, these characteristics are the least important relative to other characteristics. Therefore, those characteristics which are controllable are most pertinent for the applied practitioner.

This area of research can additionally provide suggestions to overcome barriers to entry. Research has repeatedly found that the SPC title carries stigma (Ravizza, 1988) and can lead athletes to encounter derogation (Linder et al., 1989) and in turn other-titled professionals are preferred to the SPC (Van Raalte et al., 1990; Van Raalte et al., 1996). However, an educational intervention targeting the consumers' knowledge of sport psychology and other competing professions (Woolway & Harwood, 2015) elicited a significant positive change in consumers' perceptions of the sport psychology title. This suggests that when marketing the field and oneself as a consultant, the intricacies of the profession, such as protection of title, the training routes that are required, and the techniques and methods utilised by SPCs should be highlighted, especially in relation to competing service providers.

A further observation to draw relates to the sampling characteristics of the studies examining consultant characteristics. Eleven of the seventeen studies reviewed utilised a student population, with a number of these specifying that the sample were non-athletes. Student-athletes are unlikely to be the individuals seeking the services of a practitioner at their level of competition; instead this responsibility is likely to fall to coaches, managers or athletic directors, thus making the findings from this particular population more relevant to the applied SPC. In addition, non-athletes do not represent the population of individuals that would consult with a SPC, rendering these findings less practically or ecologically relevant to the SPC.

Participants' intention to actually seek and initiate sport psychology service is also problematic when interpreting these findings. The majority of participants within the reviewed studies are considered as prospective consumers, they are not reported as actively seeking or interested in the services of a SPC. It is likely that as this data has not been reported, study designs

did not set out to ascertain this information. This is an important limitation to the body of research as the participants may not have accurately responded to the measures due to having a low individual interest in the subject, and potentially having had no prior thoughts regarding this topic. In addition, the participants' previous experiences with SPCs are minimally reported. Individuals who do not have experience of a consulting relationship and the processes involved clearly possess a different knowledge base and mind-set to those whose perceptual preferences are influenced by prior consultant experience. Woolway and Harwood (2015) found that individuals' previous experience with a life coach negatively affected their ratings of SPCs compared to those with no previous experience. Therefore, whilst studying the virgin preferences of prospective consumers can help practitioners to understand how to best market themselves to a population of similar demographics, it is arguably more salient for researchers to scrutinise the perceptions of past or presently active employers vis a vis the consultant characteristics that would be influential in any subsequent practitioner-based decision making.

One phenomenon which elicits the preferences and perceptions of those individuals who have direct control over hiring a SPC is the employment interview. As this process requires interpersonal interaction between an organisation/consumer and the SPC, it is more pertinent and valid to the applied practitioner for the employment interview to be examined. Hence, the final section of this chapter will present and discuss research literature examining the employment interview.

Employment Interview

In personnel selection, the employment interview has been one of the most widely used methods for the past 100 years (Levashina, Hartwell, Morgeson, & Campion, 2014), and continues to be a centrepiece of employee selection (Huffcutt, 2011). The utility of this selection tool led Huffcutt and Culbertson (2010) to suggest that "it is rare, even unthinkable, for someone to be hired without some type of interview". Employment interviews are a method of personnel selection that require some form of interpersonal interaction and communication between the interviewer and interviewee (Levashina et al., 2014), and can be designed to assess a variety of predictor constructs (Huffcutt, 2011). Although the validity and reliability of employment interviews has been established (Huffcutt, 2011), we know surprisingly little about the constructs that these interviews capture and how these constructs can influence candidate performance (Huffcutt, Conway, Roth, & Stone, 2001; Huffcutt, Van Iddekinge, & Roth, 2011). Understanding these constructs can provide insights into why interviews predict performance (Huffcutt, 2011), and provide guidelines and

training for candidates. Hence, contemporary research has focused on these constructs (Levashina et al., 2014).

There is a myriad of individual differences (i.e. interview self-efficacy, cultural background, interview medium, and interviewer personality; Huffcutt, 2011) that can influence the capability of interviewees to present themselves effectively. Early research focused on the cognitive ability of the candidate, however this was found to represent less than 20% of variance in interview ratings (Huffcutt, Roth, & McDaniel, 1996). To explain the remaining variance, Huffcutt and colleagues (2011) proposed a theoretical model (Figure 1) of performance in selection interviews which argued that interviewee performance is a mediating construct between candidate attributes and interviewer ratings. The model suggested that several attributes (Interviewer-interviewee dynamics, supplemental preparation, interviewee state influences, general attributes, core candidate qualifications, interview design considerations, and demographic/personal characteristics) act as determinants of interviewee performance. Factors may strengthen or inhibit performance, interacting in a complex ‘give and take’ pattern, where interviewer ratings are arrived at through a cumulative sum of these.

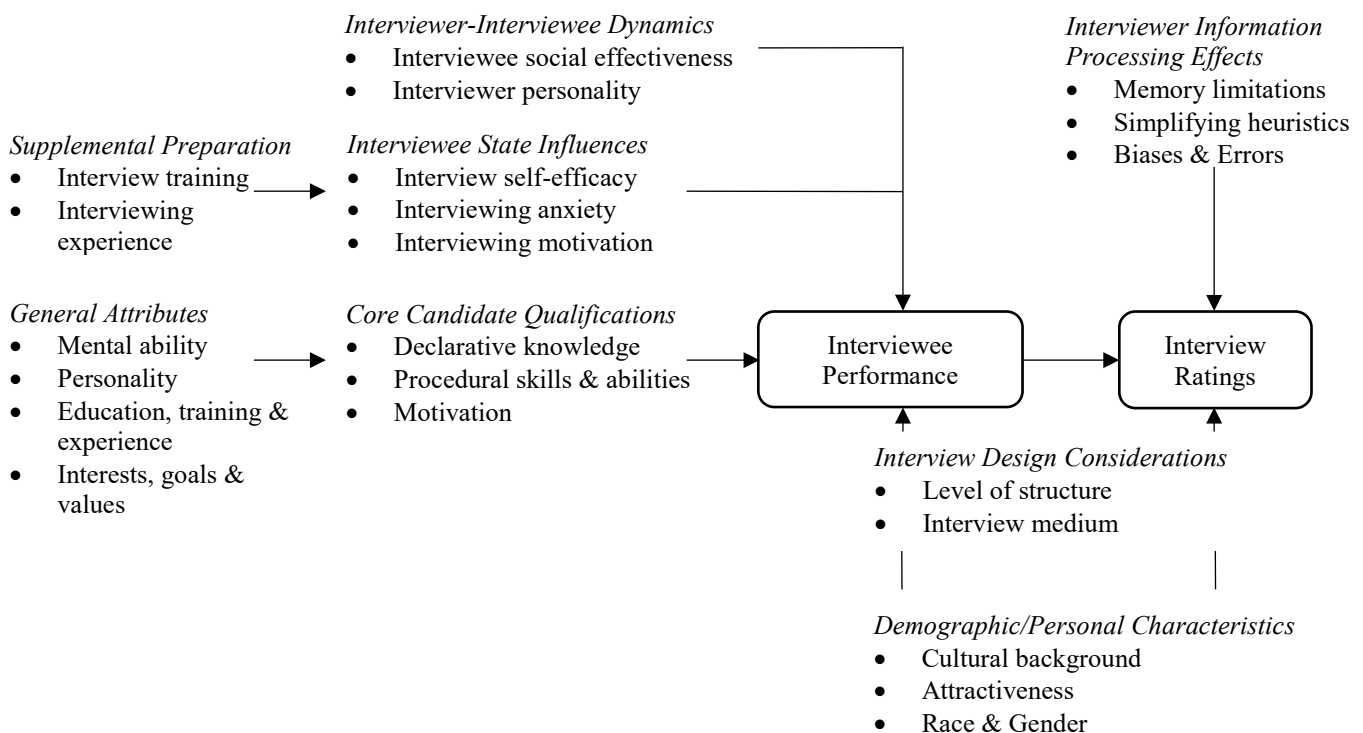


Figure 1. Model of interviewee performance as a moderating construct between candidate attributes and interviewer ratings (Huffcutt, van Iddekinge, & Roth, 2011)

One contributing factor to interviewee dynamics is interviewee social effectiveness; an umbrella term attributed to a collection of behavioural tactics and strategies used to gain positive outcomes through social influence (Ferris, Perrewe, & Douglas, 2002). The most widely used of these tactics is impression management (IM; Huffcutt, 2011), which can increase the probability of a successful interview outcome by 46% (Levashina & Campion, 2007). Impression management tactics are attempts to build, manipulate, or protect a ‘desired image’ during an interview (Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley, & Gilstrap, 2008). Interviewees attempt to portray this image to maximise their chances of a positive interview outcome (i.e., receiving a job offer; Swider, Barrick, Harris, & Stovernik, 2011). These IM behaviours can be categorised depending on the goal of IM; assertive behaviours (used to actively portray a particular image) comprised of both self-focused and other-focused behaviours (Table 1) and defensive behaviours (used to protect or repair image).

Table 2. Assertive and defensive impression management behaviours

Behaviour	Definition
Assertive behaviours	Behaviours interviewees use to actively portray a particular image
Self-focused behaviours	Behaviours the interviewee uses to convince the interviewer that the interviewee possesses desirable qualities
Other-focused behaviours	Behaviours the interviewee uses to get the interviewer to feel a sense of interpersonal liking and attraction toward him or her
Defensive behaviours	Behaviours interviewees use to protect or repair their image

In attempts to create a desired image, IM may not always be honest (i.e., truthful descriptions of knowledge, skills, and abilities); candidates may engage in deceptive IM behaviours, by embellishing or creating credentials related to job requirements (Roulin, Bangerter, & Levashina, 2015), the detection of which may result in negative evaluations from interviewers (Swider et al., 2011). Despite a growing body of research regarding the impact of IM on interviewer ratings, the sources of social effectiveness behaviours have received little attention (Huffcutt et al., 2011). Van Iddekinge, McFarland, and Raymark (2007) found that an individual’s level of neuroticism, or emotional stability, can be used as a predictor variable for use of defensive tactics. High levels of the vulnerability facet (i.e., high emotional stability) of neuroticism used more self-focused and other-focused behaviours, due to less of a need to protect their image. Huffcutt and colleagues (2011) suggested that interview self-efficacy may additionally influence the amount or effectiveness of IM tactics that a candidate uses.

Interview self-efficacy (I-SE), a factor effecting interviewee state (Huffcutt et al., 2011), relates to the interviewee's cognitions about task-specific self-competence in employment interviewing (Tay, Ang, & Van Dyne, 2006). This differs from trait self-efficacy as it could be influenced by factors such as employment status and past interview success (Huffcutt et al., 2011). Amongst the constructs attributed to influencing interviewee performance, I-SE has been sparsely researched. Tay and colleagues (2006) found that I-SE mediated the effects of personality traits, extraversion and conscientiousness, and leadership experience on interview success, suggesting that I-SE has a proximal effect on interviewee performance. In relation to increasing the level of I-SE, Tross and Maurer (2008) found that interview training correlated with I-SE, but not subsequent interview anxiety. In addition, an individual's locus of causality attributions for interview outcome moderated the relationship between past interview success and I-SE.

One factor that appears to be disregarded by Huffcutt and colleagues' (2011) model of interviewee performance is the person-environment fit (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). This 'fit' may influence both interviewer-interviewee dynamics and interviewer ratings directly. During relatively brief pre-entry encounters, attitudes, and decisions are strongly influenced by this concept of 'fit' (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Person-environment fit is the compatibility between an individual and a work environment that occurs when their characteristics are well matched. Several types of fit interact to build a perception of person-environment fit, with person-job fit and person-organisation fit receiving the most research attention to date.

Person-organisation fit. Person-organisation fit relates to the compatibility between people and entire organisations. Tom (1971) suggested that individuals are most successful in organisations that share their personality; with value congruence, the most widely accepted defining aspect of person-organisation fit. A fit between the individual (e.g. values, beliefs, and interests) and the climate can lead to enhanced job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

Person-job fit. Edwards (1991) outlined two conceptualisations of the person-job fit: the demands-abilities fit and the needs-role fit. The demands-abilities fit occurs when employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities are commensurate with what the role requires. Whereas the needs-role fit occurs when employees' needs, desires, and preferences are met by the role. Overall, person-job fit correlates strongly with organisational attraction and intent to hire during the pre-entry interactions.

Fit in applied sport psychology. The consultant 'fit' has been a concept discussed by applied sport psychologists for the past three decades (Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011; Ravizza, 1988). However, 'fit' has only relatively recently been conceptualised in a sport psychology service

process model as a new element of the SPSPD-R, labelled as “goodness of fit” (Poczwardowski & Sherman, 2011; p. 514). The authors propose fit as the level of congruence (or disconnection) between the way in which a consultant gains entry, builds interpersonal relationships, and carries out assessment and implementation stages of consultancy and the wants and needs of the client. Goodness of fit is considered to derive from: (a) extensive and detailed knowledge of the sport (Ravizza, 1988), (b) having the right personality (Thompson & Ravizza, 1998), and (c) fitting in with the team (Gould, Tammen, Murphy, & May, 1991). Ten experienced applied sport psychologists suggested that whilst a consultant can help to create fit, it is important to recognise when it is not possible (Poczwardowski & Sherman, 2011). Additionally, the majority of practitioners highlighted that client and consultant variables co-determine the goodness of fit.

The consultant variables element of the SPSPD-R relates to the consultant’s ability to invest in the consultant-client relationship, professional skills and abilities, and personal qualities, style, and enjoyment (Poczwardowski & Sherman, 2011). Likewise, Huffcutt and colleagues (2011) suggest that a candidate’s interview performance is, in part, influenced by general attributes (i.e., mental ability, personality, and education, training, and experience) and demographic/personal characteristics (i.e., cultural background, attractiveness, race, and gender)

Methodological Considerations

The following section will detail the methodological considerations undertaken throughout the development of this thesis. It is important to present a discussion of these considerations to position the research designs and methodological approaches utilised in the three following chapters.

It is important to first acknowledge the underpinning philosophical position of this thesis and myself as a researcher. One approach used within sport psychology research, guided by the practical concerns of applied SPCs, creates closer links between theory and practice, and is congruent to my own interests and personal values as an applied researcher, is pragmatism (Giacobbi, Poczwardowski, & Hager, 2005). Pragmatism emphasises developing practical solutions to applied research questions and the real-world consequences of enquiry. Hence, the topic, research problem, and purpose statement are of greater importance to pragmatists than philosophical assumptions of this paradigm (Thrower, 2016). Indeed, the first step of pragmatic inquiry requires the selection of a research problem (Morgan, 2013). Therefore, the focus of this thesis is a response to a gap in the literature of applied sport psychology as identified within this literature review, and its purpose is outlined in chapter one.

The purpose of this thesis was to explore this gap in the literature, with a specific focus on the formal employment interview. Derived from this purpose, the aims of this thesis were to (a) explore the constructs that influence hiring decisions within sport psychology, (b) determine whether trainee sport psychologists can identify these, (c) the potential sources of these constructs, and (d) the potential implications that this knowledge can provide. Due to the novel area of research interest, the evolution of the research question for the first study of the thesis (chapter three) was driven by the gap in the literature base of applied sport psychology. In line with pragmatic inquiry, this research question informed the development of a research design for this study. When attempting to develop an understanding of a new or under-researched area, rich detailed information is required. A qualitative approach was therefore chosen to drive the discovery of new information. In turn, the findings of the first study informed the research question of the second study of this thesis (chapter four), from which the research methodology was derived. A mixed-method approach utilising semi-structured interviews and rating scales was chosen to elicit responses to the research question. A similar organic process occurred during the development of the research question for study three of this thesis (chapter five). This research question drove the selection of a quantitative design.

The organic evolution of the thesis from literature review to the final study integrated with a pragmatic philosophy necessitated a similar approach to the selection of research designs. Individual study methodologies were chosen to best provide a response to research questions. This approach resulted in a combination of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method designs to develop solutions to the applied research questions. In addition, in developing solutions to these questions, practical implications were developed and are discussed with specific recommendations for the field of sport psychology.

Summary

A proliferation of research examining applied sport psychology has occurred over the past thirty years. This research has focused on nearly the entire consulting process, from initial assessment through program implementation to evaluation and continuation/termination. Assembling these stages of practice has led to the development of models of practice. Despite a number of models being proposed, the general linear process of sport psychology service delivery is consistent. However, whilst being mentioned by the majority of these models, how a practitioner gains entry has been sparsely researched within sport psychology. The line of research that has most closely allied itself with this stage of practice is that assessing the barriers that consultants face during entry. In addition, research examining the characteristics of the consultant that influence

consumers perceptions and preferences for a practitioner has developed an ‘image’ of the most desirable consultant profile. However, this research has focused on prospective consumers who are unlikely to seek the services of an applied sport psychologist (i.e., student-athletes and non-athletic populations). Hence, a gap exists in the literature regarding how a practitioner gains entry, and how this process is viewed by previous consumers of the discipline. In order to address this gap in the literature, the purpose of this thesis was to build an understanding of the factors that influence an applied sport psychologist gaining entry to practice, and how the skills necessary to navigate this stage of practice are developed. In particular, a focus is placed on the employment interview between SPC and gatekeeper to sport psychology. Based on the limitations of the research reviewed, study one (chapter four) provides an interpretative phenomenological approach to understanding the employment interview from the experiences of gatekeepers within the United Kingdom elite sport system. The second study (chapter five) used these findings to design a video-vignette study to evaluate trainee sport psychologists: (a) ability to identify interview skills, (b) self-perceived interview skills, and (c) the potential factors underlying these skills. Study three (chapter six) examined the relationship between these perceived sources of interview skills and applied sport psychologists’ perceptions of interview abilities. Together the findings of these studies provide a number of contributions to knowledge, practice, and methodology within this field of sport psychology research. The identification of four employment interview skills and the potential developmental sources of these are discussed, along with specific recommendations and implications for practice and education of SPCs.

Chapter Three:

Gatekeepers' Experience of Hiring a Sport Psychologist: A Phenomenological Study

Introduction

Sport can have a profound impact on individuals, communities and wider society (Sport England, 2015) and in an environment driven by results, whether it be at a club, collegiate or professional level, the “bottom line” for most organizations is winning (Wrisberg, Withycombe, Simpson, Loberg, & Reed, 2012). With the financial consequences of winning and losing, those involved in sport have been faced with the question of how to improve their rates of success (Humara, 2000), and it is not uncommon for an array of sport science support personnel to be recruited at all levels of competition to help manage the physical demands of practices and competition (Wrisberg et al., 2012). However, a hesitancy to seek the services of a SPC is still prevalent despite a shared acknowledgement of the importance of sport psychology for success in a wide-range of sporting environments from Olympic Games (Hodge, 2010), to Academy Soccer (Johnson et al., 2011).

Wrisberg and colleagues (2012) suggested that to propel and develop the field of applied sport psychology, lessons should be learned from the sudden change in perceptions of strength and conditioning in the 1970s. At that time, athletic directors were sceptical of the potential benefits of strength and conditioning, even presuming that its practice impaired performance (Lukacs, 2010). Within a decade practically every NCAA Division-I athletic directors had hired strength and conditioning coaches, possibly due to a better awareness about the potential benefits and services that strength and conditioning provided (Wrisberg et al., 2012). In addition, both program evaluation and professional accountability requires a greater attention (Gould et al., 1991). In addressing this concern, Sharp and Hodge (2014) stated that “substantial progress has been made in identifying the characteristics and qualities necessary for effective sport psychology consulting” (p. 92). This field of research has found many characteristics to be important for consultant effectiveness that include (but are not limited to) being; knowledgeable about sport psychology, honest, trustworthy (Anderson et al., 2004), and able to build a connection and professional consulting relationship with the athlete (Sharp & Hodge, 2011). However, Andersen (2000) suggested that before we ask what happens when athlete meets sport psychologist, “we need to look at the situations, environments, and processes that help bring a client and a sport psychologist together for the first time” (p. 3).

Taking this into consideration, it is not surprising that within the last three decades there has been growing academic and applied interest in the features that contribute to a SPC gaining entry to practice (see chapter two for a comprehensive literature review). This research interest has focused on contrasting lines of research to provide an understanding of consumers preferred SPC

characteristics and competencies, as well as barriers that have the potential to delay or even block entry. However, the specifics of gaining entry, as the first stage of consultation process models (e.g., Sport Psychology Service Delivery Heuristic; Poczwadowski et al., 2004) are often under-discussed due to the generic nature of exploring the consultation process. One aspect of this process that appears to have been overlooked by the sport psychology service delivery literature is that of the entry/employment interview. This encounter with an organisation's 'gatekeeper to sport psychology' is an interpersonal interaction that may influence the success or failure of consultancy before it has begun.

Owing to the sparse research and the interdisciplinary nature of sport psychology, it is necessary to look beyond our fields boundaries to the occupational psychology literature exploring personnel selection (Poczwadowski, Sherman, & Henschen, 1998). A focus of such psychological inquiry regarding the employment interview has been the many constructs that influence interviewer ratings of candidates (Higgins & Judge, 2004). Huffcutt (2011) found that within personnel selection, job-related interview content (information pertaining directly to the requirements of the position), interviewee performance (the 'performance of the candidate'), and personal/demographic characteristics (grouping features that may affect ratings) are major sources of employment interview ratings. Interviewee performance constructs (e.g. impression management techniques) correlated most strongly with interview ratings, as individuals can adjust their impression management tactics to have the greatest impact (Peeters & Lievens, 2006). These findings highlight the importance of the individuals' interpersonal skills in determining the outcome of an employment interview, which is particularly important to the SPC whose success depends on building a rapport and relationship with the client. Despite this a considerable amount of studies utilise a laboratory or 'interview-type situation' research design (Huffcutt, 2011), indicating that any extension of this academic focus to the profession of sport psychology, should use an approach and design that examines the phenomenon of actual employment interviews

Guest (1998) argued that a comprehensive and valid understanding of the employment relationship is unlikely to develop until researchers begin to consider the perceptions and reactions of both parties in the relationship, the organisation and the individual. In the microcosm of elite sport, it is the athletic directors (Wilson, Gilbert, Gilbert, & Sailor, 2009), administrators, coaches, team captains (Sands, 2002), and organisational presidents (Wrisberg et al., 2012) that are at the helm due to their control of budgets and key decisions, and control access to other group members, group activities, and sources of information (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Understanding how these individuals' perceptions, preferences and beliefs affect the provision of sport psychology

consulting within athletic departments can provide useful information to organisations and individuals promoting applied sport psychology (Wilson et al., 2009). Past research has examined gatekeepers' and potential consumers likelihood to seek the services of a sport psychologist, as an aspect of the gaining entry process (Wilson et al., 2009; Woolway & Harwood, 2015). However, recent research suggests that understanding the hiring experiences and decisions of individuals with direct organizational responsibility for employing SPCs would provide clarity to previous findings from prospective consumers (Thelwell et al., 2018).

The purpose of this study, therefore was to explore the lived experiences of individuals with experiences of directly employing SPCs previously, specifically those hired through employment interviews. Additionally, it endeavoured to explore how these lived experiences have shaped their current perceptions and future hiring beliefs. Based on the lack of research within this area, an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach was used to explore how gatekeeper experiences are shaped by the sport psychologist within an employment interview.

Methods

Methodology

When conducting research into a novel topic, rich detailed information is important to develop our understanding of the field. One approach which strives to understand individuals' lived experiences (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006), places social interaction and the cultural context at the heart of the research endeavour (Clarke & Harwood, 2014), and is particularly useful when investigating an area that is new or under-researched is IPA. Furthermore, IPA "offers psychologists the opportunity to learn from the insights of the experts" (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005, p. 20). A branch of phenomenology which draws upon Husserl (1973) IPA involves the detailed examination of participant's personal experience (Smith & Osborn, 2004). In addition, IPA emphasizes the active role of the researcher as their own conceptions are required to make sense of the other participants' personal worlds through a process of interpretative activity. Smith and Osborn (2004) propose that a two-stage interpretation process takes place, where participants are trying to make sense of their world whilst the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant's interpretations. Despite studies often mapping individuals' experiences of a variety of conditions and interventions (Hamill, Carson, & Dorahy, 2010, Rhodes & Smith, 2010), there is a growing body of work that moves beyond describing episodic accounts of experience and further addresses the meanings held by professionals in their own lines of work (Arvinen-Barrow, Penny, Hemmings, & Corr, 2010; Vachon, Fillion, Achille, Duval, & Leung, 2011). It is important to note that IPA has received criticism for lacking agreement with any particular phenomenological school (Giorgi,

2011) and may be best described as phenomenologically inspired and interpretatively-focused (Miller, Cronin, & Baker, 2015). Importantly, Brocki and Wearden (2006) state that IPA researchers with different interests may adopt different levels of interpretation in varying topics. Thus, the role of the researchers own position in the interpretation process and concerns regarding research credibility are addressed below.

Participants

IPA aims to gain a detailed and personalised understanding of each case resulting in many research studies having sample sizes of 10 or fewer (Caron, Bloom, Johnston, & Sabiston, 2013; Smith, 2016). In line with these IPA guidelines (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009), seven gatekeepers of sport psychology were sampled utilising purposive homogenous sampling through contacts made for the current study, contacts previously held by the second author, and peer recommendations. Participants were gatekeepers to sport psychology within United Kingdom elite sport organisations who had professional experience in gatekeeping roles for 3 to 27 years. All participants had been directly responsible for hiring at least two SPCs, however some of the participants could not accurately account for how many SPCs they had historically hired. Participant experiences of the employment interview process ranged from one interaction with the SPC to four separate interactions.

Six male and one female gatekeepers aged between 34 and 57 ($M=41.2$) participated in the current study. The participants' roles in their organisations were: Head of Performance Support, Head of Sport Science & Medicine, Performance Director, Paralympic Lead, Head of Sport Science, Senior Psychologist, and Academy Director. Four sports (Martial arts, Rugby, Cricket, and Tennis) were represented along with a UK based sport science services organisation.

In accordance with ethical requirements, participants are identified by culturally appropriate pseudonyms.

Data Collection

Following institutional ethical board approval, potential participants were contacted based upon their current roles within professional organizations. Selection was guided by an individuals' extensive involvement in the recruitment and hiring of sport psychologists. Male and female participants from both private and public-sector organisations, representing four different sports were recruited. This allowed for both experiences that are common to the sample, and those that are unique to individuals to be presented (Clarke & Harwood, 2014).

Prior to data collection, all participants were provided with an information sheet which explained the purpose of the study, what involvement would entail, and how confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained (see Appendix 1).

Data were collected using semi-structured phenomenological interviews between the lead investigator and individual participants. The interview guide was created using guidelines to conducting IPA studies (Smith, 2016; Smith et al., 2009). Questions were designed to gather information on what the participants experienced and how this influenced their experience. The interview schedule was designed with a focus on open questions, to allow the participants to express their experiences as wholly as possible. As such it served merely as a stimulus to aid discussion rather than being rigidly used (Smith, 2016). A summarised schedule of questions was sent to the participants at least three days prior to the interview to aid them in providing detail that might not have been revealed with the use of unseen questions, and to facilitate their own reflection on pertinent experiences (Hays, Maynard, Thomas, & Bawden, 2007; see Appendix 2). The schedule itself was guided by questions such as:

1. When I talk about hiring an SPC, what does that mean to you?
2. Can you tell me about your experiences when hiring sport psychologists?

Probes were used to elicit as thorough a description of experience as possible, and participants were only returned to the interview schedule when the interviewer deemed that a recount of experience had ended (see Appendix 3). Additional questions were designed to establish how the gatekeeper experiences affected their current perceptions and views of sport psychology, and their future hiring beliefs, such as:

1. Based on your past experiences would you hire an SPC again?
2. Do you think your past experiences have changed the way you would hire a sport psychologist in the future?

In the closing section of the interview, participants were asked questions to ensure that they had enough opportunity to share and discuss their experiences:

1. Is there anything else that you would like to talk about that we haven't covered?
2. Do you feel that you had a chance to share everything you wanted to?

A pilot interview was held to trial the questions and interview technique. Following the pilot interview, several additional questions were formulated to provide a deeper understanding of gatekeepers' perceptions and experiences. A question regarding participants' perceptions of sport psychology prior to their first encounter was added to aid in developing an understanding of potential influences on interactions with SPCs. In addition, further validation was added to increase

the participants' chance to share their experiences. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The mean interview duration was 45 minutes (Range = 36 to 57 minutes, SD = 7.16). To ensure confidentiality for participants, data were anonymised at transcription and participants were assigned pseudonyms (see Appendix 4).

Data Analysis

IPA is a flexible perspective used in the analysis of qualitative data that involves a close examination of each case (Caron et al., 2013; Smith, 2016). Despite Smith (2016) suggesting that "there is not a single right way to do IPA analysis" (p. 222) the general guidelines proposed by Smith and colleagues (2009) were adopted for this study. During this process, I engaged with the concepts of bracketing and a search for essences. The process of bracketing requires the researcher to explicitly identify their own preconceptions relating to the topic (Tamminen, Holt, & Neely, 2013). However, it has been suggested an impossibility to completely bracket one's predisposed biases (Allen-Collinson, 2009). In the current study, I identified any assumptions informed by prior research by listing any preconceptions about the influences on perceptions and preferences for sport psychologists. Having no experience of hiring SPCs, my understanding and preconceptions of experiences may have been limited. However, it should be acknowledged that to some extent, prior understanding may still have informed analysis. This setting aside of preconceptions attempts to avoid imposing these biases formed through personal experiences (Sanders & Winter, 2016).

Consistent with IPA guidelines, each transcript was analysed as a case in its own right (Smith, 2016). Hence the first four stages of analysis were conducted on one transcript before attending to the next. Transcripts were read and re-read to achieve a sense of familiarity with each participant's experience (Stage 1). The data was next attended to with the aim of identifying themes by making comments in the margin of the page that was be descriptive, linguistic, or conceptual in nature (Stage 2). A return to the beginning of the transcript was made to identify and label essences in the opposing margin to the one used earlier, before connections between the themes were sought (Stage 3). A table of 'essences' was then produced (Stage 4). This method of analysis was then repeated for each transcript. This repeated process followed by a comparison of individual data to others, allowed the discovery of the universals underlying the inter-subjectively experienced phenomenon (Crotty, 1998; Stage 5). Analysis was initially conducted by myself, followed by engaging in discussions with a critical friend to review the analytic approach (Sanders & Winter, 2016). The final step of IPA was writing; translating essences into a coherent account (Smith et al., 2009; Stage 6).

A relativist approach was applied to guide the judging of quality in the current research (Smith & McGannon, 2017). This approach does not utilise a set of universal criteria that “are fixed, rigid, or predetermined before the study” (Smith & McGannon, 2017; p. 16), but uses a list of criteria that can be added to, subtracted from and modified. This study provides a *substantive contribution* to this field as the first qualitative study to offer an insight into the experiences of those directly responsible for the hiring of SPCs. In addition, the *impact* of the study is evident in the generation of further questions regarding the SPC influence on this phenomenon, and how this can be altered. The *width* of data is evident through the numerous quotations provided to illustrate each interpretation, and the different manifestations of each essence experienced by participants. Furthermore, the study displays *coherence* in the presentation of those essences which were analogous to participants in order to provide a meaningful picture of the employment interview phenomenon.

Smith and McGannon (2017) additionally suggested that the notion of critical friends, to encourage reflection and provide alternative interpretations and perspectives should be utilised. In line with this, a critical friend aided in reviewing the codes and respective quotes interpreted by the myself.

Results

The gatekeepers discussed various experiences of hiring SPCs that shared common characteristics, including consultant affability, consultant confidence versus arrogance, consultant collaboration, and consultant competency. While all seven participants’ descriptions informed the findings, and detailed examples are provided for each essence of their shared experiences, for participants, manifestations of these superordinate constructs were aligned to different lower-order themes. These emergent themes are described in relation to the gatekeepers’ experiences.

Consultant Affability: ‘I needed an affability, an ability to relate’

We interpreted participants’ descriptions of *a sense of closeness, developing a connection, and fitting in* as being related to the consultant’s affable nature. Despite the level of affability varying across gatekeeper experiences, it was obviously a key factor in their decision to both hire or not to hire. Andrew and Brian felt they experienced a sense of closeness or a close relationship developing, however they initially could not explain this feeling:

When he left we all felt like he was the right person; he left us with such a good impression about himself. He instantly struck up a relationship with the two coaches in the room and the interview ended up just being a conversation about [the sport] for large parts, but he just left us feeling that sense of ‘we want this guy in our club’ – Andrew

I got on with him, which helps, he listened to what I wanted, um and I felt comfortable that he would be, he would be able to connect with the players I had in the academy - Brian

For Brian, it appeared to be particularly difficult to “put [his] finger on” what created this feeling of potential connection and getting on with the SPC. Despite discussing that he “just felt a sense”, Andrew provided a suggestion that being able to instantly develop a relationship, and leading the interview into a more informal conversation resulted in the positive reflections on this SPC. Although not explicitly stated, Andrew and Brian seem to suggest that this initial connection was guided by the SPCs interpersonal skills. Hence, it was not surprising that some features commonly associated with interpersonal skills were explicitly detailed by two participants:

Their ability to immediately build rapport with our coaches and athletes was important too, so we would have some of them either in the interview or around the environment and how they handled that sort of situation – Matt

It was that ability to instantly gain that sort of trust and respect that made us want to talk to him and in the end, is probably what contributed to us hiring him the most – Robert

For Robert and Matt, this building of rapport, trust, and respect positively influenced their perceptions of a SPC and whilst established during early interactions, appeared to influence communication for the duration of the interview process. While reflecting on one encounter with a SPC, James’ tone of voice suggested an enduring positive memory of a SPC who “had a personality [he] could get on with, they were positive and boosting to the whole environment”.

For one of the participants, discussions turned to interactions with consultants who did not appear to possess the necessary interpersonal skills:

They've come in one by one and it's been obvious within five minutes that they are not suitable for the role and those days are long days because you're interviewing eight or nine people and if we'd of had an opportunity to converse with them previously they wouldn't have been shortlisted...um it's a cutthroat world and [we] will know immediately as to whether that person has the personality and the social skills to be able to operate in that environment – Sarah

For Sarah, this lack of “personality and social skills” led to a withdrawal from the interview process “within five minutes”, showcasing the early evaluations of consultant affability, and the enduring effects of these perceptions.

This desire for an interpersonal connection between the gatekeepers and SPC highlights the need for practitioners to possess the necessary skills to develop rapport, trust, respect, and a relationship with individuals at all levels and stages of consultation. Without this characteristic, it is

apparent that the gatekeeper is likely to withdraw from interactions before the consultant can progress through other stages of the interview process. The importance of consultant affability is perhaps best summarised by Stephen:

Especially in sport psychology where you don't come with a gym, or you don't come with an ultrasound machine, you come with you, and see what personality, your rapport building skills are your gym essentially - Stephen

Consultant Confidence versus Arrogance: ‘they were too much into their ology’

In addition to reflecting upon the consultant’s affable nature, six of the participants felt that their experiences of hiring were characterised by the consultants’ attitude towards sport psychology. This attitude manifested itself as the consultant’s beliefs of sport psychology’s *effectiveness and place within a multi-disciplinary team*.

For Matt and Robert, the consultants exaggerated belief in the effectiveness of sport psychology appeared to lead to the gatekeepers’ withdrawal from further interaction with both the individual practitioner and in the extreme from the field as a whole:

[he] promised us the world, he promised us he could get our players to their absolute best, and that their absolute best would be gold, that he wouldn’t rest until that happened, that psychology would make the impact and change that we needed – Matt

I despised it, it is a privileged position that we put this guy in and he screwed us, I never wanted to use psyches again if this is what they were like – Robert

During this reflection, Robert’s tone of voice highlighted that this encounter with the SPC still impacted his perceptions of the individual practitioner. This in turn may have potentially lead to negative perceptions of the field to this day, identifying the durable nature of perceptions of SPCs and the wider profession. For Matt, the affect displayed towards the SPC, led to dissipating interest in hiring the consultant. The differing extent of these responses may be explained by the gatekeepers’ prior experiences with SPCs. Robert was reflecting upon his first experience of hiring an SPC, likely making his knowledge of both the field, and such SPC claims less than that of Matt, who had previous experience of this phenomenon. This experience may be the cause for Matt’s withdrawal from the individual practitioner rather than a response of “despising the field” as a whole.

In contrast, two participants discussed that a belief in sport psychology portrayed in a truthful and open manner led to an endearing perception of the SPC:

Honesty. I think that's the biggest thing, we don't need to hear how you're going to save the world, we want to know honestly if you can do the job, and how you're going to do it –
Andrew

Belief in what you do is obviously important, and we want someone to come in with a sense of they know what they're doing, and they will do the job, but sometimes that is taken to a different level, and it sounds like they are bragging about themselves and I guess the profession as a whole – Stephen

This highlights the need for SPCs to focus on providing consumers a truthful account of the effectiveness and efficacy of their profession, without exaggerating potential benefits and time frames for these benefits.

Further to beliefs regarding the effectiveness of sport psychology, two participants discussed how SPCs portrayed perceptions of their position within multi-disciplinary sport science service provision:

[they] had their sense of importance way too high, when it works well we work a total interdisciplinary approach, which is a family feel, it's a corny word but it's actually the best sport teams are like families so nobody is more important than the others, everybody's helping other people whereas this particular sport psychologist that was 'I want more psychology, psychology is the thing the [athletes] need', so there were a lot of friction points there – James

When he said that psychology was key, that psychology was what was missing, if you're looking for a psych then you feel it's needed and that's what will make a difference, I mean he gave that impression of I want specified times for psych, and nothing else should infringe on that, no real flexibility there - Matt

For Matt, the suggestion that sport psychology will induce a change in performance and a lack of flexibility of time and service provision, over complimentary services, interacted to develop a sense that sport psychology was the most important sport science service. James had wanted a SPC that fitted in with the “family feel” of the organisation and a belief that “psychology is the thing that is needed” did not match this want. Andrew shared an anecdote relating to his early experiences of a pre-existing SPC when entering a new organisation:

well you need more psychologists you know this is literally what happened the guy said to me “I know you told that we've not got any budget, but I went to see the CEO yesterday and asked him for more budget for psychology” – Andrew

Andrew's account, whilst discussing an already contracted SPC, provides a warning to practitioners regarding their vision of sport psychology's position relative to the entire organisation. Collectively, interpreted with the recounted experiences of other gatekeepers this feature of experience highlights the need for SPCs to describe an honest and balanced belief in the field:

I mean don't get me wrong, I think everyone should believe in their own field, if you don't you shouldn't be doing it, but there is believing in it and there is thinking that you are God's gift to the club because of it, and that's not the impression we want to be given - Andrew

The experiences of the gatekeepers in relation to SPCs attitude were interpreted as being influenced by a consultant being either *arrogant or confident* in sport psychology. When consultants were appropriately confident in sport psychology, the participants' descriptions of their experiences used more positive language and ultimately lead to a more positive perception of the consultant.

Consultant Collaboration: 'I would go down a route where we find a common ground'

The third feature characterising the shared experience of the participants was the need to reach an agreement on the consultant's method of practice. All seven participants discussed this need, however they diverged on what this agreement involved. We interpreted that gatekeepers' experience was characterised by the consultant's ability to find both a *common philosophy and a common plan*.

For some of the participants, connecting with a SPC concerned agreement on a common philosophy of practice. However, the meaning of philosophy appeared to differ between participants. Andrew discussed his experience of a consultant whose service focused on a humanistic approach, rather than solely on performance:

They came in and talked about how they wanted to work on the aspects of the guys [sport], which is obviously important, but then they went into other things, and how this could help them as people outside of it, that really struck me because it's not just about the sport for me, it's about producing more rounded people, and if they've got a greater understanding of psychology behind behaviour then they can take that into the work place and future life as well – Andrew

This section of the discussion highlighted how Andrew's experience was shaped by the practitioner's consultancy focus on both the psychological well-being and performance of the athletes. In contrast, Robert appeared to reflect upon an instance of agreement on who the SPC was to work with:

So, we wanted someone that could work with our elite players, and their coaches, and then the younger academy style guys, their coaches as well as their parents, so we wanted someone to cover all the bases, and there were a couple of people we interviewed that met those sorts of criteria - Robert

This divergence in perceptions of philosophy indicates that both focus of service and intended recipients are critical discussion points with gatekeepers. These features of the consultant's philosophy proposed throughout the interview process appeared to be a major impact upon the participants' decision to hire or not to hire a SPC. However, it may not be this simple for the consultant:

So yeah, we hired somebody who naturally, who believes that um the right, the most effective way to do it is with the coaches...but when it's the national governing body hiring then it's the responsibility of the psychologist to fit into the right way for that context – James

James indicates the potential need for SPCs to be malleable concerning their philosophy of practice when attempting to gain entry with an elite or National governing body. It was apparent from the discussion with James that this warning to practitioners was especially pertinent in relation to both the gatekeeper's experience with sport psychology and the practitioners experience. When the gatekeeper possesses experiences of employing SPCs, they appear to more likely to have a developed perception of their desired philosophy:

So I, you know, I had the background in, in skill acquisition and sport psych which was useful for me to know what a program should look like and help with identifying the right type of person to lead the program – Brian

For Brian, his pre-existing knowledge of sport psychology influenced experiences of hiring a SPC. However, for Robert it was apparent that the SPCs experience was a crucial factor in determining agreement on consultant philosophy:

When they come in and have no experience and are saying, this is how we want to do it, you know, we look at it and say, “what is this based on”, but with the guy we hired he had worked in [sport] and we discussed his time there and it gave them more credibility really - Robert

Robert suggests that neophyte sport psychologists, who have less experience and reputation than their experienced counterparts, must be prepared to sacrifice their philosophy to gain entry. When asked for advice for SPCs attempting to gain entry to practice, Stephen suggested:

Come with principles and you come with knowledge and experiences and you adapt your skills to solve the solution in the first place – Stephen

In addition to consulting philosophy, participants indicated that candidates were required to propose a plan of work they would conduct once entry had been gained. Participants experience was characterised by the way in which consultants responded to questions relating to their program of work:

You had those that came in and said this is what I've done previously in x, y, and z sports, and this is what I'm going to do here based on my previous experiences. They had no leeway in their approach and knew exactly how they wanted to do things before they had even spoken to us about the role. On the other hand, we had people that would come in and say well you tell me what to do and I'll do it. They had no impetus, it seemed to me like they didn't really know what they were doing, and that may not have been the case, but that distinct lack of direction and independence made me lose a bit of confidence in their ability to work with my players. Both styles made me and my team feel uneasy – Matt

In the end we had to go for somebody that had their plan but say woah you know let's slow down a bit and let's get on a level playing field, settle you in and then we can discuss the finer points of the role. In the end that worked well, but the actual experience, it made it difficult for us to actually choose someone, there was a point where we were thinking we were just going to leave it – Robert

For Robert and Matt both described approaches led to negative affect, with Matt feeling uneasy and Robert contemplating withdrawing from the entire process of employing a practitioner. However, Brian proposed that SPCs should attempt to display autonomy whilst indicating that flexibility is essential:

I want to know how they would influence the program within the parameters of what we have as an academy, I would want to know where they want to take it, if they had a little bit of autonomy, a little bit of being able to do that, and whether they could stretch me and my thought process - Brian

Consultant Competency: 'Those were the things I went tick, tick, tick'

Through extended discussions regarding the factors that led to a gatekeeper's historic decision to hire a SPC or not, participants highlighted that candidates varied in their ability to *present their competencies*:

It was essential that the psychologist had a good knowledge of the sport so that he could actually talk to the coaches in a way that they would listen because if you're not from a sport

and you try to speak to people from the sport it's difficult you know. He's a [sport] player himself so he could talk the language you know he knew what it was like what the anxiety was like [playing the sport] he knew what the whole thing was about and um that was very telling for us – James

During discussions with James, it became apparent that sport-specific knowledge was necessary for a positive experience, however, a deeper understanding of the sport, above and beyond that of talking the talk was telling. This deeper understanding may develop from the consultant's athletic background within the same or similar sport, however an understanding is not necessarily predicated on experience within the sport.

A further competency that SPCs presented and discussed was their consulting experience. Participants diverged in the type and level of experience that they suggested to be preferential:

Their experience, that was a big part, not really their overall experience as a psych, but had they worked within a similar sport to ours, to what level, with what demands and had they had any success, because if they didn't understand our sport, it would have been a struggle - Matt

Our sport psychologists are working with [elite level] athletes, it's very very rare for somebody at that level to have [elite level] experience and that's the problem we have so usually and not in every case but usually the experience that people are gaining through stage two is with university level athletes or local athletes or a local club and they just do not have the exposure to this context – Sarah

For Sarah the consultant's experience was characterised by the level of sport in which an individual gained experience, and whether this translated into adequate preparation for the current role. In contrast, Matt's discussion centred on the type of sport that the consultant had gained experience in.

Participants highlighted their preference for a consultant who possessed desirable characteristics such as sport-specific knowledge and experiences within sport psychology. However, it became apparent through further discussion concerning these characteristics that for the participants, it was the consultant's ability to present these characteristics in relation to the current role that influenced perceptions of the SPC. Stephen suggested that being able to effectively present competencies could increase gatekeepers' confidence in the candidate:

I think there's also people that are actually quite bad at answering questions, in interviews people that answer interview questions well, when you're digging into their experiences um will quickly go to a real-life example, that tells me two things, one um that they've prepped

and they've thought about the kind of things that will come up at interview and they've thought about their careers and some of the things they've been successful at, so it's in their short term memory, and it starts to trip off the tongue really quickly, and it's also that they know how to sell themselves, cause that's how you would operate with a coach or athlete, you'd engage in conversation with them and they'd go into examples, you'd go into scenarios and the more specific you can be the harder it is for an interview panel to argue with you so if you start talking about generically or vaguely about how you would tackle something, um, that's just you're in a game of opinions - Stephen

Discussion

Current United Kingdom gatekeepers to sport psychology were interviewed to better understand their lived experiences of hiring SPCs. The gatekeepers' experiences were interpreted to be characterised by consultant affability, consultant confidence versus arrogance, consultant collaboration, and presentation of consultant competencies. To the authors knowledge, this study provides the first qualitative account regarding the employment interview within sport psychology. These findings advance research on SPC gaining entry, and interview and impression management literature from differing disciplines by increasing our understanding of those factors idiosyncratic to the role of the SPC. By sampling from a novel population and utilising an interpretative phenomenological approach, several limitations of past research were addressed to progress the understanding of gaining entry as far as possible.

The findings and interpretations presented in the current study indicate that sport psychologists should endeavour to view the employment interview process, in the most part, as similar to that within other professional disciplines, where self-presentation, interpersonal, and authentic impression management skills are important. In addition, features specific to the practice of sport psychology, such as their philosophy and model of practice, and interdisciplinarity, were highlighted as influential in participants' experiences. The four essences interacted to influence participants' experiences in several ways.

All gatekeepers in this study felt that a consultant's affability played an influential part on their experiences. The ability to build rapport has been reported as one of the most important characteristics of an effective service provider, aiding in successful service provision during the consultancy stage (Campbell, 2009; Sharpley, Jeffrey, & McMahon, 2006; Orlick & Partington, 1987). In addition, past research (Lubker et al., 2012; Woolway & Harwood, 2015) has indicated that interpersonal skills, defined as the broad "ability of the consultant/practitioner to use his or her personality (e.g., approachable, respectful, caring) to build a positive working relationship with

athletes and coaches” (Woolway & Harwood, 2015; p.173) are important to potential consumers. However, this previous definition has disregarded both the gatekeeper, and specific interpersonal qualities. Through detailed discussions a deeper understanding of the specific interpersonal qualities (e.g. trust and respect) that characterised the gatekeepers’ lived experiences. The descriptions given by Matt, Robert, Brian, and Andrew here echo those of other potential consumers; that there is a high importance placed on the ability to build rapport, trust, and respect. However, it was apparent from the detailed descriptions of the gatekeepers that a further set of interpersonal skills are required during the interview stage. Drawing upon the gatekeepers experiences it is proposed that interpersonal skills required to interact with potential employers may be different to those needed to successfully navigate a consulting relationship with coaches, athletes, and parents. This may be predicated on developing a level of rapport between colleagues rather than a consultant-client relationship that has been the focus of previous research. This set of interpersonal skills on behalf of the SPC led participants to feel a sense of wanting to hire the individual on their connection and rapport building alone. The findings relating to interpersonal skills are prominent for the applied practitioner seeking to enter elite sport, as they are derived from the experiences of individuals that influence this gaining entry process. It is advised that practitioners place significant importance on learning how to establish rapport during interactions with potential gatekeepers to consultancy. Additionally, echoing recent research, it would be remiss of practitioner training programs if an emphasis on education and practice around rapport building skills was not integrated into program content (Thelwell et al., 2018). Thelwell and colleagues (2018) suggested that a rigid appraisal of interpersonal skills would be appropriate for both neophyte SPCs entering qualification pathways and more experienced SPCs as a feature of their continual professional development.

Recent research has identified the efficacy of simulation training to aid in the development of interpersonal and communication skills (DeBenedectis, Gauguet, Makris, Brown, & Rosen, 2017; Rivera-Gutierrez, Lok, Kleinsmith, Childs, & Pileggi, 2016). Simulation training entails the participant encountering simulated scenarios that require the studied skill, and receive feedback either in-action (Rivera-Gutierrez et al., 2016) or between simulations (DeBenedectis et al., 2017). Continued practice with simulated experiences can aid in the development of skills for future interactions (Rivera-Gutierrez et al., 2016). Both studies found that simulation combined with informative external feedback resulted in an increased performance in communication skills (DeBenedectis et al., 2017) and interpersonal skills (Rivera-Gutierrez et al., 2016).

For some of the participants, a perception of affability was constructed early during the interview process. Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick (2007) suggest that individuals differentiate others by

warmth and competence dimensions in spontaneous (first) impressions. The warmth dimension relates constructs including friendliness, sincerity, trustworthiness, and morality. This suggests that participants' perception of the SPCs' affability was determined by judgements pertaining to warmth and the competence dimension related to the characteristics (i.e. sport-specific knowledge and experience) of the SPCs presented. Thus, the interpretations of gatekeepers' experiences may be explained by their judgements of SPC warmth and competence. However, several additional factors (i.e. philosophy, interdisciplinarity, and discipline-specific beliefs) that are idiosyncratic to the practice of applied sport psychology were described by participants. First impressions, based on application and test information, have been found to influence interviewers' behavioural styles to confirm their first impressions (Dougherty, Turban, & Callender, 1994). Interviewer behaviour was related to applicant behaviour in solitary employment interviews, however the current study suggests that gatekeepers' perceptions of SPCs are shaped across multiple interactions.

A further essence derived from the gatekeepers' accounts is that of the collaborative nature of the consultant. The participants discussed the negative influence of consultants who failed to both develop an autonomous plan and ignore the specificity of the sport and new environment when designing a consultancy program. This finding was particularly pertinent to the gatekeepers that had more experience of employing sport psychologists and implementing their programs, as these individuals had gained an understanding and sense of what they desired. This implies that a larger range of flexibility may be required when preparing to consult with these gatekeepers. However, consultants should remember that engaging with either extreme of such behaviour risks not gaining entry, as neither approach leads to either a positive gatekeeper experience or perception of the consultant. For the applied SPC, this suggests that using their own experiences to develop a programme of work that can be altered slightly to the needs and wants of the organisation is crucial. This need for flexibility may be particularly pertinent for the neophyte sport psychologist who intuitively will have lower levels of professional experiences to build a programme around, in addition to a lack of reputation and respect that may precede a more experienced consultant.

Participants described how a consultant possessing sport-specific knowledge, athletic background, and experience was important, yet the extent to which gatekeepers reported a positive interaction was determined by the consultants' ability to present these in an "effective way and how they will help in the current role". Hence, it is important for the consultant to possess the ability to promote oneself without sounding over-confident (Fifer, Henschen, Gould, & Ravizza, 2008). This is particularly important when discussing athletic background, sport specific knowledge, and experience. Self-promotion can sometimes be uncomfortable (Fifer et al., 2008), but practitioners

should use examples of past relevant work to present expertise in the field, whilst utilising terminology of the current sport, to demonstrate an honest representation of them and the field. Ravizza (1988) suggested that this sport specific knowledge can “be developed through reading, taking physical education courses, talking with people who play the sport” (p. 247), viewing the game, and playing the sport itself. Similarly, Brown, Gould, and Foster (2005) suggested that “learning the language” (p.55) of the sport is a key factor of contextual intelligence. Contextual intelligence refers to an understanding of the culture and context which is being operated in and is required in addition to knowledge of techniques and strategies to build legitimacy, trust and respect (Winter & Collins, 2015). A practitioner can learn the language by “visiting and immersing oneself in the culture...attend practices and travel with the team. One may want to shadow the team trainer” (Brown et al., 2005, p.56)

Participants’ perceptions of consultants were further characterised by a consultant’s confident or arrogant attitude regarding sport psychology. When describing a consultant who was perceived to be arrogant, participants highlighted that exaggerating the potential impact that sport psychology could have led to negative perceptions, affect, and withdrawal from the interaction. The ability to self-promote without this hyperbole is deemed to have a positive impact on participants’ perceptions of the consultant and the sport psychologist’s likelihood to gain entry. The over-selling of sport psychology has been a concern echoed in several applied practitioner’s recounts of experience within previous research studies (Fifer et al., 2008; Ravizza, 1988). Hemmings and Holder (2009) suggest that it is commonplace for consumers to believe sport psychology to be a ‘quick fix’ solution in competitive sport, and the resulting pressure can lead to a long-term perspective being sacrificed (Ravizza, 1988). This pressure can lead sport psychology practitioners to agree with gatekeepers regarding time frames; however, the results of quick fix programs are often suspended before being able to make a significant impact (Ravizza, 1988). This early suspension of services can make it harder for other practitioners to gain entry in the future and can discredit the profession. Sport psychology practitioners should be honest with the gatekeeper about any limitations and the need for long-term commitment (Ravizza, 1988), and should adopt a subtle low-key approach using examples to present expertise within the field (Fifer et al., 2008).

The gatekeepers’ discussions reinforced previous suggestions that consultants should recognise that they are part of an interdisciplinary team contending with a number of performance issues and should complement their colleagues (Fifer et al., 2008). As Fifer and colleagues (2008) suggest, sport psychologists may sometimes forget that other professionals have performed successfully without their expertise. Thus, practitioners should understand and appreciate the place

of sport psychology in relation to other professions and demonstrate their ability to work as part of an interdisciplinary team with appropriately illustrative examples of previous work in such contexts.

The findings of the current study support research from wider psychological literature regarding the employment interview. The skills highlighted by gatekeepers align with the social effectiveness skills suggested to be a major source construct of interviewer ratings (Huffcutt, 2011). These social effectiveness skills, described as “the notion that candidates really put on a performance” (Huffcutt, 2011; p. 74) include social influence behaviours and interpersonal presentation that directly influence interview ratings. In addition, impression management tactics utilised can be altered and manipulated to best suit the situation in which they are required (Peeters & Lievens, 2006). The current findings extend this understanding of impression management and interpersonal skills to the sport psychology domain. It is important to note the difference between authentic, assertive behaviours and deceptive, defensive impression management. Authentic and honest impression management are truthful descriptions of knowledge, skills and abilities, that interviewees use to actively portray a desirable image (Swider et al., 2011). It is these skills that individuals require to build effective relationships with gatekeepers which may differ from those required for similar interactions with athletes. However, the gatekeeper experiences reported in this study support previous research which suggests that the detection of deceptive IM behaviours may result in negative evaluations from interviewers (Roulin et al., 2015). Hence, it is important for SPCs to understand the potential impact of both authentic and deceptive impression management on consumer perceptions of practitioners. An emphasis should be placed on developing knowledge and use of impression management to honestly display an image of an individual. This suggests that practitioners need to develop a new set of social effectiveness skills to effectively interact with potential employing agents. In addition to supporting Huffcutt’s (2011) model of major sources of interview ratings, the current findings extend this collection of constructs to include items specific to the field of applied sport psychology. These are the SPC’s philosophy, their attitude toward interdisciplinarity, and their discipline specific beliefs.

Within the United Kingdom, the British Psychological Society (BPS) candidate handbook for the Qualification in Sport and Exercise Psychology (Stage 2; BPS, 2018) outlines essential competencies for candidates to develop with one being to “establish, develop, and maintain working relationships with clients” (p. 31). In addition, the standards to be met for the accreditation of master’s and Doctoral programmes (BPS, 2017) identify a core skill as “identifying and developing skills and capabilities relevant to the progression to sport and exercise psychology practice” (p. 18). Furthermore, the British Association of Sport and Exercises Sciences (BASES) Supervised

Experience Competency Profile (BASES, 2016), identifies the need to “be able to select, move between, and use appropriate forms of verbal and non-verbal communication with service users and others” (p. 9).

The “ability to mediate, develop, and maintain positive working relationships” (p. 12) required with the BASES competency profile mirrors the competency of the Qualification in Sport and Exercise Psychology (BPS, 2018). Despite a focus on professional relationships, skills, and capabilities, neither document refers to interviewing skills and the techniques to communicate one’s philosophy, or the training of these abilities. Cotterill (2016) argues that these programs are often lacking the practical business skills that are necessary to succeed as an SPC. Hence the findings of this study highlight an apparent gap within the training programmes of SPCs which may result in neophyte practitioners lacking the basic practical business skills they require to succeed. Professional competencies are an issue that sport psychology is still facing as a relatively new, developing profession, with training documentation often providing insufficient preparation for trainees (Fletcher & Maher, 2013; Portenga, Aoyagi, & Cohen, 2017). Developing these competencies to produce an adequate pool of appropriately trained professionals is required for the health and development of the profession (Portenga et al., 2017; Winter & Collins, 2016). These findings therefore should act as valuable considerations for both the trainee SPC and the governing bodies that are responsible for educating and regulating the profession. Additionally, it is important for the development of future sport psychologists that we assess whether trainee and neophyte sport psychology consultants: a) are aware of these essences, b) possess these skills, and c) receive appropriate training in these areas.

The current study enhanced understanding of the sport psychologist’s employment interview. However, certain limitations are important to consider when interpreting these findings. First, the sample were solely from the United Kingdom, and gatekeeper experience may differ depending on the nationality of the individual and the country in which they are working. This difference may occur due to the differing structure of organisations and perceptions towards sport psychology that may exist. Similarly, the sample all held roles in elite sport organisations; an environment where an employment interview may be more likely to be necessary than lower competitive levels of sports organisations. Therefore, applied researchers are encouraged to explore how the findings in this study compare with gatekeepers in other countries, level of competition, and contextual environment of individual sports.

Summary

In summary, the current study fills a gap in the knowledge of the sport psychology service delivery process. This study provides detailed insights into the features that influence their gaining entry that has practical implications for the applied practitioner at all stages of their career. The participants of this study highlighted a potential need for less experienced, neophyte sport psychologists to make particular sacrifices during the employment interview. These SPCs have gained little to no experience of sport psychology consulting, and therefore have fewer experiences to both discuss and support their own beliefs and confidence in sport psychology. It is important for the continued development and professionalization of applied sport psychology as a field and profession, it is these neophyte and trainee SPCs that should be equipped with the professional knowledge, skills and abilities to succeed. Hence, it is important to reiterate the need to assess whether trainee and neophyte SPCs are aware of and possess these skills to establish if there is a need for appropriate training in these areas.

Chapter Four:

Entry or Exit: Trainee Sport Psychology Consultants' perspective on the entry interview

Introduction

The first study within this thesis (chapter three) explored the hiring experiences of gatekeepers to sport psychology. Following an interpretative phenomenological analysis of the participants' experiential data, findings identified that experiences appeared to be influenced by four key features: (a) consultant affability, (b) consultant confidence versus arrogance, (c) consultant collaboration, and (d) presentation of consultant competencies. Despite these features being experienced divergently by participants, they highlight a number of important considerations regarding interpersonal skills, interview technique, and self-promotion skills. In addition, features specific to the practice of sport psychology, consultant displays of confidence versus arrogance and their professional competencies, were interpreted as important.

The first study (see chapter three) concludes with several suggested implications for the applied SPC, specifically regarding the improvement of self-marketing practices, self-promotion strategies, and the improvement of counselling and interpersonal skills training. Despite being directed towards both the neophyte and experienced SPC, it is potentially more poignant for the neophyte and trainee SPCs, as these individuals have little to no experience of sport psychology consulting. In addition, in an ever more professional environment, it is essential for continued success of the applied field that this population are equipped with the knowledge and skills to succeed. Cotterill (2016) argued that whilst education and training programs provide focus on the crucial underpinning knowledge and amassing practice hours, they are often lacking the practical business knowledge and skills that are necessary to succeed as a SPC. Similarly, Harwood (2016a) stated that "BSc and MSc degrees may not educate or train you enough in 'working with people and personalities'" (p.31). Utilising Miller's (1990) hierarchy of competence, Harwood (2016b) suggested that a discrepancy exists between a student's (a) factual knowledge (know), (b) applied knowledge (know-how), (c) demonstrable application of knowledge (shows how), and (d) application of knowledge, skills, and experience in real-world performance (does). This discrepancy is described as the 'practitioner skills gap':

"In effect, after completion of their MSc, student practitioners are 'out on their own' doing the job and trying to make a living under the supervision of an individual they may meet only 6-12 times a year. With universities responsible for 'know' and professional associations supervising what a practitioner 'does,' the canyon of untapped 'know how' and 'show how' looms large" (Harwood, 2016b; p. 243)

In addition to the skills of applying theory to applied practice this 'practitioner skills gap' may well exist in the business skills, such as employment interview skills, necessary for a SPC to

succeed, and without developed skills, a SPC is unlikely to gain entry. Both Cotterill (2016) and Harwood (2016a, b) suggested that these areas of training may be lacking even within accredited education programs, despite the importance for the neophyte SPC to develop and possess such skills. Indeed, interviewing skills, techniques and the training of these are not referenced within the British Psychological Society QSEP candidate handbook (BPS, 2018). Hence it is important to focus attention on “the degree to which neophyte practitioners feel that university undergraduate and postgraduate degrees adequately prepared them for supervised practice” (Harwood, 2016b, p. 244).

A comprehensive and valid understanding of the employment relationship cannot develop until both parties are given similar consideration (Guest, 1998). The gaining entry process of an SPC has been explored from several directions, with differing focuses, from prospective consumers to those that have experience in the direct hiring of SPCs. However, the perspective of the trainee SPC themselves has been under-researched in comparison to consumers. Therefore, for the advancement of training and knowledge it was important to explore how SPCs view gaining entry, and the skills that are required to gain entry. Investigating the perspective of each party within the gaining entry process can aid in developing professional practice research, and the development of the future professionals within the field.

Thus, the aim of this study was to explore the SPCs ability to identify key interviewing skills as recognized by gatekeepers in study one (see chapter three), and to develop an understanding of SPCs self-perceptions of interview skills and the source that these were derived from. Due to the important nature of developing these skills at an early stage, it was valuable to investigate this aim within a Trainee SPC (TSPC) sample, to investigate whether those who are soon to attempt gaining entry for the first time, possess the knowledge to succeed. Therefore, the research questions investigated here were:

1. Do TSPCs have the ability to identify, describe, and explain key interviewing skills in relation to prior gatekeeping perceptions?
2. How do TSPCs perceive their own interviewing skills, and what do they believe the source of these skills to be?
3. How do TSPCs believe that these interviewing skills can be developed in the future?

Methods

Participants

A key transition from an educational dominance of ‘knows’ and ‘knows how’ to ‘does’ occurs between stage one and stage two of SPC training. In order to analyse the employment interview skill needs of TSPCs, it was necessary to limit the potential exposure effects that gaining practical knowledge may have on these skills. Hence, to recruit participants with the least exposure to applied practice experiences, TSPCs enrolled on a BPS accredited Master’s degree (stage one) were recruited.

Participants were 31 (M=14, F=17; *Age*=23.61, *SD*=3.84) students enrolled on BPS accredited MSc (stage 1) courses in the field of sport psychology at six universities across the UK at the time of data collection, however not all participants possessed BPS graduate basis for chartered membership. Six undergraduate courses were represented within the sample; Psychology (N=14), Sport and Exercise Science (N=13), Exercise Science (N=1), Geography and Sport Science (N=1), Law (N=1), and Sport Psychology and Coaching (N=1). Following institutional ethical board approval, the sample were recruited using typical case purposive sampling (Devers & Frankel, 2000; Teddlie & Yu, 2007), by contacting the course lead at each university requesting that this information be passed on to current students. Once individuals had replied indicating a wish to participate, snowball sampling was utilised through these contacts to increase the number of participants. Participants previous practical experience as a sport psychologist ranged from 0 to 12 months (M=1.35 months, *SD*=2.03). Participants are hereby referred to by nominal pseudonyms (i.e. Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), etc.). Prior to data collection, all participants were provided with an information sheet which explained the purpose of the study, what involvement would entail, and how confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained (see Appendix 5).

Methodology

Based on the nature of the research questions, the current study adopted a mixed methods research design, utilising both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect, analyse, and interpret data. In particular, semi-structured interviews and Likert-type scales were adopted to elicit the desired information from participants. In addition, scripted video-vignettes were chosen as an appropriate methodology for the current study. The use of video vignettes within research studies can make vignettes more realistic, more engaging, and makes manipulations more obvious (Sriram, McManus, Emmerton, & Jiwa, 2015). In addition, used alongside interviews, video vignettes can prompt discussion (Roth, 2009), and provide a basis for reflection on practice and continuing professional development (Jewitt, 2012). Furthermore, this methodology allows a comparison between different respondents’ behaviour over the same set of scenarios (Jiwa, Spilsbury, & Duke, 2010).

Video vignettes

An adapted version of van Vliet, Hillen, Wall, Plum, and Bensing (2013) guidelines to creating and administering scripted video-vignettes (Figure 2) was adopted. It is important to consider each stage of this process; therefore, each phase is discussed below.

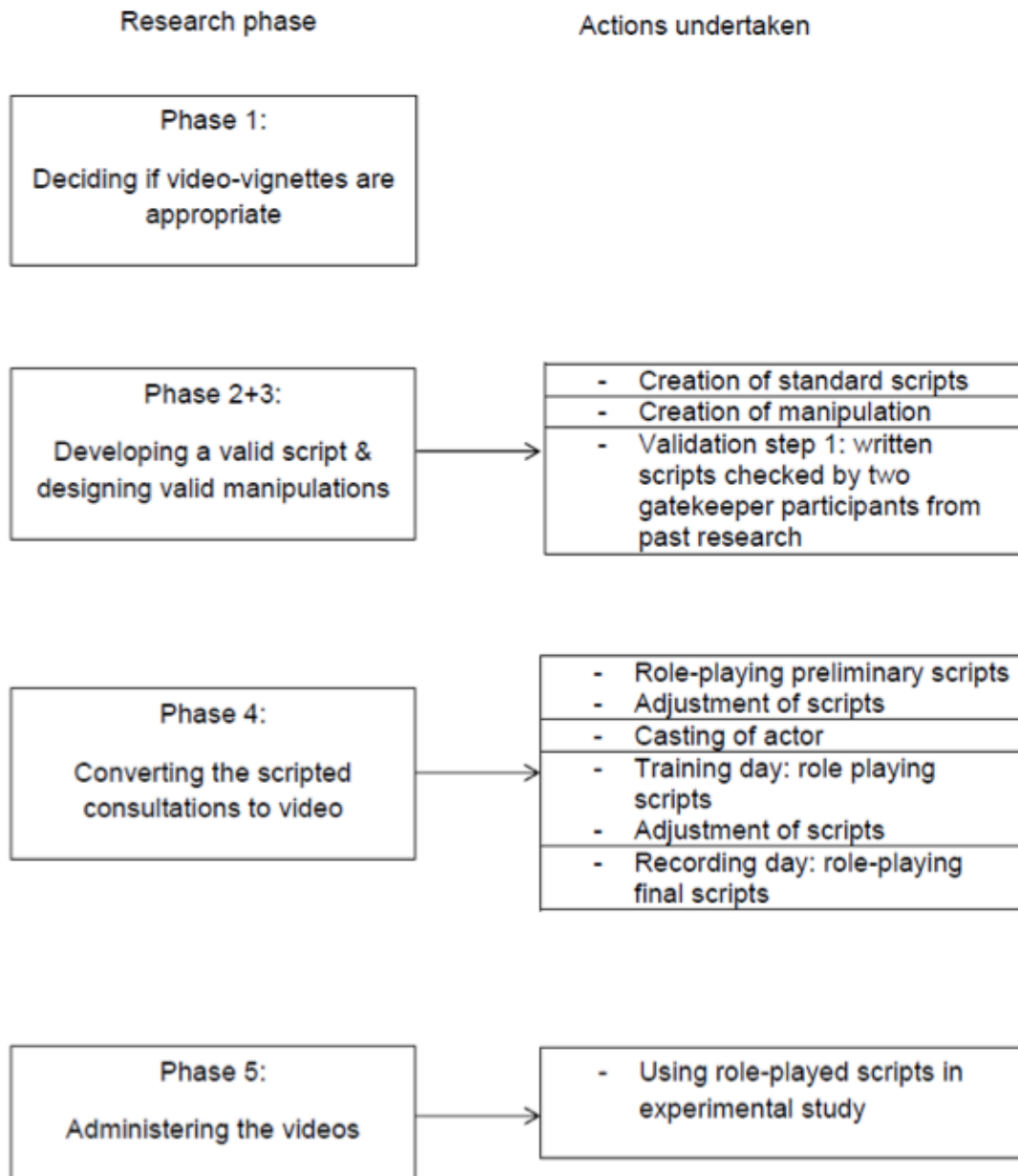


Figure 2. Procedure of creating and administering video vignettes (adapted from van Vliet et al., 2013)

Phase 1: Deciding if video-vignettes are appropriate. The first study in this thesis (chapter three) found that gatekeeper' perceptions and intentions to hire sport psychology consultants was influenced by four superordinate themes. The purpose of this study was to determine whether participants could identify these themes within an entry to practice interview. It aimed to provide

participants with an example of: (i) high versus low affability, (ii) an appropriate- or over-confidence in sport psychology, (iii) high versus low ability to collaborate with the gatekeeper, and (iv) high versus low ability to promote one's own competencies in relation to the current role.

Scripted video-vignettes were therefore chosen as the appropriate strategy for the current study. Firstly, using scripted interactions can standardize responses and ensure that manipulations across the four themes are present, allowing causal conclusions about the manipulated communications to be drawn (van Vliet et al., 2013). Secondly, it would be unethical to attempt to manipulate individuals' responses in actual entry to practice interviews.

Phase 2: Developing a valid script. A standard script was written of the first stages of an employment interview between a sport psychologist and a two-gatekeeper interview panel. A number of sources were used to develop this script. First, the majority of questions posed were drawn from one investigators pool of interview questions utilised in a previous employment interview for a sport psychology internship position at a professional rugby academy (Table 2). Any further questions were derived from the data of study one of this thesis (chapter three). Second, quotes from study one (chapter three) were used to develop the interviewee's responses. Those responses that gatekeepers suggested were the 'ideal' for an interviewee to present were utilised for the standard script.

Table 3: Interview questions in video vignettes

Video Vignette Interview Questions
What motivated you to apply for this role?
To what extent do you feel it is possible to influence the characteristics of our athletes?
Where do you see sport psychology fitting in to a full support program?
Would you want sport psychology to be first priority in terms of scheduling?
What do you see are the day to day roles of a sport psychologist within a youth development environment?
What would your program of work look like?
How do you think your previous experiences lend themselves to this role?

The standard script followed the process of a standard employment interview, including questions and responses designed to elicit participants' perceptions of four themes: (a) consultant affability, defined as the ability of the candidate to build rapport with other individuals, develop respect, and to produce a positive environment between themselves and others; (b) confidence in sport psychology, defined as the confidence that the candidate has in the effectiveness, usefulness, and

potential outcomes of sport psychology within the prospective role; (c) consultant collaboration defined as the ability of the candidate to collaboratively and co-operatively work with employers, colleagues, and athletes, on programmes of work and within interdisciplinary teams; (d) presentation of consultant competencies, defined as the ability of the candidate to effectively present their competencies and characteristics, such as athletic background, sport-specific knowledge, and experience, and how these relate to the current role.

Table 4. Example quotations from two video vignettes

Desirable		Undesirable
“Yeah that sounds great, from what I’ve seen so far you’ve got a great set-up here, I’m excited to have a proper look around”	Consultant Affability	“Okay, sounds good”
“I saw the job advert and I got excited by it, it just jumped out at me because I think it’s a good fit for me here”		“Well I think I fit your job description well...now if you haven’t got a Sport Psych here then it is obviously needed”
“the physio and I, we managed to reduce his anxiety and got him slowly back to playing again”	Confidence in Sport Psychology	“In my experience, sport psychology is everything when trying to improve an athlete”
“I’m not saying it’s a miracle cure or that I can provide a quick fix...but I really believe that it can benefit performers”		“I don’t think there is anything that we couldn’t tackle...and I think that that influence can take effect pretty quickly”
“I think that all the sport science professionals need to work as a cooperative team in order to really help an athlete”	Consultant Collaboration	“It’s the most important piece of the sport science puzzle”
“with your input we could build this into a programme that in my experience I see working, and you can get the programme that you were thinking of”		“I would begin to implement the programme I’ve used before, because I know how it works”
“personally, I grew up playing tennis...but that experience helps me to know the pressures of tennis itself”	Consultant Competency	“I also have a background in tennis so that lends itself to this”
“my work in academies, not only cricket but football as well has developed an understanding of what is important to work with performers of this age”		“sport psychology has shown to be effective with those kids and I don’t see why it wouldn’t work the same here”

Phase 3: Designing valid manipulation. A ‘manipulation’ script was crafted, based on the structure of the standard script. Manipulations were derived from the responses of gatekeepers in the qualitative study, and each of the four areas was manipulated (see Table 3). The standard script included high affability, an appropriate confidence in sport psychology, a high ability to collaborate, and a high ability to promote one’s own competencies.

The manipulated script presented a lowly affable individual with an over-confidence in sport psychology, and an inability to both collaborate and promote one’s own competencies.

Only verbal content of the interviewee’s responses was varied between the two scripts. The same questions were posed by the interviewers, in the same order, with non-verbal communications remaining equal between both scripts. A length-difference between the two scripts emerged due to a higher level of elaboration on consultant competencies within the standard script. This was considered acceptable as this is a natural cause of the manipulated themes. In addition, adding ‘filler’ content in the manipulated script might unintentionally influence perceptions (van Vliet et al., 2013). For ease of discussion, the consultant presented in the standard script will be referred to as ‘Alex’ and the consultant presented in the manipulated script will be referred to as ‘Jack’.

Validation step 1: Once both scripts were written and altered by the lead investigator, a validation step was deemed necessary. Therefore, the two scripts were sent to two gatekeepers that had participated in the first study of this thesis. Experts were asked to comment and provide guidance where alterations should be made in order to increase each script’s realism (external validity), and to ensure the manipulation was apparent (Van Vliet et al., 2013; Appendix 7).

Phase 4: Converting the scripted consultations to video. An actor was chosen to play the role of the interviewee, with the lead investigator and a confederate playing the roles of the interview panel. It was decided not to use a qualified sport psychologist for the interviewee role, as any sport psychology specific improvisation based on experience may have varied the intended communication. Hence, an actor was chosen that possessed a master’s level degree within sport science and had experience of working within an elite sport setting to ensure that the actor understood the process of a more generic gaining entry process. Past research has found that individual’s perceptions and likelihood to seek the services of sport psychologists can be influenced by a number of characteristics, including age, race, gender, build, and attire (Lubker et al., 2012; Woolway & Harwood, 2015). Based on these findings, it was considered essential that the same actor should be used for both vignettes to avoid any confounding factors affecting individuals’ perceptions of each candidate. A male actor was chosen as the reports of gatekeepers that informed the scripts of the current study all discussed male sport psychology consultants.

Validation step 2: Once the actor had been decided upon, and agreed to participate, they were provided with the scripts to begin a familiarisation phase. They were allowed 72 hours to familiarise themselves with the scripts before joining the lead investigator to undergo a role-playing activity. During this time, the actor was asked to comment on the scripts and provide feedback regarding how ‘natural’ the script was to act out. Collaboratively the scripts were adjusted to become more natural, whilst every care was taken to avoid making any changes to the content of the verbal communication.

Filming of video vignettes. The adjusted scripts were again role-played on the subsequent day. Following this, the final scripts were role-played and videotaped by the lead investigator, confederate, and actor (see Appendix 9). The camera-perspective focused on the interviewee, from a position directly in front of the interviewers to simulate how a real-world interview may be recorded (Appendix 8).

Procedure

The data collection procedure was conducted in two sections. The first of these sections focused on the two video vignettes and participant’s perceptions of these. The second section focused on the participants self-perceived interview skills (Figure 3.). This procedure will be discussed in further detail below.

Participants were instructed as to the protocol they would be required to undertake, and that when viewing the vignettes, their focus should be solely on the verbal content of the video.

Following the viewing of video one, the investigator asked, “do you have any general observations regarding the vignette” proceeded by questions relating to any strengths or weaknesses observed, and why these were identified as either a strength or a weakness. The same set of questions was repeated following vignette two, with the addition of a question asking which of the practitioners the participants preferred (see Appendix 6).

Following these questions, the participants were presented with the four interview skills identified in the first study of this thesis. Along with the labels of each skill, a brief definition was presented. Participants were then required to complete a 7-point Likert scale for each of the interview skills in each of the video vignettes (see Appendix 10)

The second section of the interview asked participants to self-reflect on their own competencies in each of the four identified themes. They were required to complete 7-point Likert scales identical to those used in stage two on their self-perceived skill in each area. Participants were then asked to discuss their perceptions of their own ability, including where their perception

has derived from, how they think it has been developed, and how this area could be improved in the future.

Figure 3. Procedural timeline

Section One	<p>Viewing of Video 1 -</p> <p>Viewing of Video 2 -</p> <p>Presentation of Four Interview Skills and Definitions -</p>	<p>- Interview Stage 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any observations that stand out to you? • Do you think there were any strengths? • Do you think there were any weaknesses? <p>- Interview Stage 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any observations that stand out to you? • Do you think there were any strengths? • Do you think there were any weaknesses? • Which SPC would you employ? <p>- Completion of Interview Skill Scales (x2)</p>
Section Two	<p>Interview Stage 3: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each skill, what score would you currently give yourself? • What needs to happen to improve this score? 	

Data Analysis

Qualitative data were transcribed verbatim and analysed using an inductive thematic analysis approach (see Appendix 11). This method of analysis was conducted on data to identify, analyse, and report patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data were grouped into the a priori interview skills (i.e. consultant affability, confidence in sport psychology, finding common ground, and presentation of consultant competencies). The analysis for each category was conducted using a bottom-up, content-driven approach, in order to reflect the participants' perspectives without

imposing preconceived theoretical limits (Quest, MacQueen, & Nancy, 2012). Each interview was coded using a systematic manner to generate general codes across the data set. Where codes had similar content, these codes were condensed. A hierarchy of responses moving from specific to general levels was then established (see Table 6).

The notes taken during stage one of the interviews were checked against their verbal responses to ensure that no perceptions of the vignettes were discarded.

Self-report quantitative data were entered into SPSS 22.0 and were analysed using t-tests to identify any sub-group differences.

Results

The study was conducted in two distinct sections; the first regarded the participants' perceptions of the video vignettes, and their ability to identify, describe and explain key interviewing skills. The second section related to how TSPCs perceived their own interviewing skills, the sources that these perceptions were derived from, and how these skills could be further developed. Results will be individually presented for the two sections, respectively.

Section One

Section one of the interview procedure was conducted to assess whether TSPCs could identify, describe and explain key interviewing skills as presented in two video vignettes. The number of participants that identified each of the four skills post-vignettes is presented in Table 4.

Table 5. Number of participants identifying each skill

	Consultant Affability	Confidence in Sport Psychology	Consultant Collaboration	Presentation of Consultant Competencies
Number of participants identifying area (N/31)	23	29	31	19

For Alex's script, participants reported that he was "engaged, enthusiastic, and positive" (P4) which developed a sense that "he was starting to build a rapport" (P19) with the interviewer. However, responses indicated that Jack was "disengaged" (P3) and that his focus was "all about him" (P29). These responses relate to the consultant affability construct indicating that participants could identify this. In addition, when presented with the four interview skills, participants rated Alex higher on the affability scale than Jack, reflecting their perceptions directly following viewing of the video vignettes (see Table 5).

Jack's responses to questions elicited a sense that "sport psychology is everything" and that there was a "need for a psychologist who can completely transform an athlete" (P15). In contrast, Alex was perceived to "have confidence, but it's a different confidence to (Jack), it's less cocky, less pushy" (P1). The consultant's confidence in sport psychology was clearly identified in most interviews as an important skill that was needed to navigate this process. Jack was rated as nearing over-confidence by participants, whereas Alex was rated as appropriately confident in sport psychology (Table 5)

Alex was considered to be able to find common ground as he was not "the be all and the end all" (P17) and wanted to work within a "more collaborative, team-focused" (P22) setting. Participants reported that Jack "neglected other sport sciences" (P25) and "demanded the majority of the players time", indicating a lack of ability on behalf of the consultant to collaborate. This indication was supported by the TSPCs' rating of the two vignettes on the interview skill scales (Table 5). Jack was rated closer to the 'not collaborative' label, with Alex being rated towards the 'very collaborative' end of the scale.

Participants identified that Alex could present his "past experience of working and playing, using different modalities and programmes" (P13), his "specific (sport) background" (P22) and his "knowledge of what is needed in this specific sport, he's obviously done his research into it, he just seems to know what he is talking about" (P9). However, Jack "did not specify details" (P4) and provided "sweeping statements without much padding information about his background". Jack was considered to be less effective than Alex in presenting his consultant competencies (Table 5).

Table 6. Participant mean rating scores for video vignette interview candidates and self-perceived scores

	Alex	Jack	TSPC self-report	Bachelor's degree subject Sport Science	Other
Consultant Affability	5.81	3.39	5.35	5.40	5.31
Consultant Confidence	4.32	6.32	2.97	3.00	2.93
Consultant Collaboration	6.22	3.13	5.55	6.06	4.60
Consultant Competency	4.96	3.77	3.65	3.73	3.56

Despite all four skills being identified across the sample, the number of participants highlighting each of these skills varied (see Table 4). The entire sample found the existence of consultant collaboration, however only 61% found the existence of presentation of consultant competencies, making this skill the least identified.

Section Two

The second section of the interview assessed participants' self-perceptions of their current interview skills, where these have derived from, and how they could be developed. This discussion was conducted an attribute at a time, with sources of skill differing for each attribute. Therefore, the results of the thematic analysis will be presented by attribute. Methods of development are presented within a combined section as similar themes were found between attributes.

Table 7. Themes generated by thematic analysis

Theme	Subtheme	Participants (n)
Parent attachment	Personality as developed via parent interaction	28
	Family upbringing	21
	Personal values and beliefs as developed by parents	14
Peer attachment	Establishing multiple friendship networks	16
	Developing friendships in short time frames	27
	Moving from first to second degree	19
Education	Interdisciplinary nature of undergraduate degree	14
	Sport psychology specific education	31
	Educational background in psychology	15
Experience	Lack of practical experience	19
	Applied practice experience	12
	Experience in external contexts	1
	Experience in sport	27

Consultant affability. Participant self-ratings of consultant affability indicated that TSPCs believed they had a relatively high level of affability ($M_{rating}=5.35$, $SD=0.49$; Table 5) on a 7-point Likert-type scale. This high level of affability was attributed to two main sources from the participants' personal background: parents and peers.

Consultant affability was described by participants as being heavily influenced by their personality, and “being a nice, friendly person” (P12) which was developed during the early stages of life through interactions with parental figures. These influences developed a sense of “who I am, and the way I behave from an early age” (P31). A family upbringing and beliefs were reported to be critical in forming the behaviour of participants. As P2 noted, “It’s sort of that family background of being friendly to others and being approachable” (P2).

In addition to parents, interaction with peers was reported by every participant as being important to developing the skills to build rapport and trust in a novel, and often short time-frame. The experience of meeting new people and developing relationships quickly were a common feature of individual’s reports. As the participants were undertaking their second university course, they had experienced new environments and in particular having to establish new friendship connections and networks several times. Participant 1 highlighted that “If you don’t build that sort of relationship or rapport or talk to people, then it’s going to be a very difficult three years” (P1)

Consultant confidence versus arrogance. TSPCs rated themselves as possessing a lower than ‘ideal’ confidence in sport psychology ($M_{rating}=2.97$, $SD=0.87$) and lower than Alex’s perceived confidence (Table 5). However, the source that participants attributed to this ability differed depending on their level of practical experience within sport psychology. Those with no experience indicated that the source of current confidence resulted from their education to date, whereas those with practical experience reported that these experiences were the source of their confidence. Despite this difference in sources, there were no significant differences between mean ratings on the confidence in sport psychology scale.

The nineteen participants that indicated they had no practical experience highlighted their education within sport psychology as the current source of confidence within the field. It was suggested that “as I only really have what I’ve been taught, I guess my only real knowledge of what is needed comes from that” (P22). This reliance on technical knowledge gained through education also indicates that participants believed that practical experience was needed to enhance the confidence gained from education. Practical experience related to specific experience working as an applied practitioner within sport psychology. It was reported that without experience of doing sport psychology it would be difficult to “explain and discuss how the field would be useful, beneficial and the potential outcomes that it may elicit” (P14). As self-ratings were low this lack of experience was discussed as a dominant source for this skill.

My personal ability to do that at the moment, it would be less than they would be expecting or want and I think that's dependent on experience if I’m honest (P16)

This importance of practical experiences was echoed by those that had gained actual applied practice experience. These individuals suggested that the limited experience they had gained had replaced the confidence they originally possessed from educational sources.

When I first started getting experience, I was relying on what I'd learnt to explain sport psychology to people, but since I've actually been doing it, I guess I fall back on that more than the education now (P17)

Despite possessing applied experience, these individuals did not report a higher level of confidence in sport psychology, as one participant suggested this was because "I have some practice, but I still don't think it's enough to be like 'hey this is what I can do and what I have done'" (P5).

Consultant collaboration. Self-ratings indicated that participants perceived that they had a high level of ability to find common ground ($M_{rating}=5.55$, $SD=0.88$). TSPCs reported that their ability to co-operate and collaborate derived from two primary sources of education and their athletic background.

Education was a source of willingness to collaborate primarily for those participants that had completed a sport science bachelor's degree. This indication is evident in the participants' responses to the finding common ground scale, as those that held a sport science degree rated themselves significantly ($p=0.019$) higher than those that did not ($M=6.06$ vs. $M=4.60$, respectively). This study of sport from a wider context including other sport science related professions provided individuals with the knowledge and respect for these other fields. Possessing these beliefs regarding sport psychology and other professions led to participants understanding "how the cogs all fit together" (P26) and how sport psychology would need to fit into pre-existing programmes. As one participant stated "I did sport science as a degree, and I feel like I have an appreciation of how all the different disciplines work to create the whole (P15).

Whilst an education in sport science was a source of collaboration, education in sport psychology at master's level provided the participants with an understanding of how to create a programme in conjunction with the gatekeepers. Participants reported that their education had taught them the necessary ways of "tailoring a programme" (P30) to each individual client. As P7 suggested: "What is important in work with a team or an athlete, but also that you can't just use the same thing over and over again, you have to chop and change things" (P7)

In addition to education, athletic background provided participants with the ability to find common ground. TSPCs indicated that this was due to possessing knowledge of "how important it

was for me as an athlete, I had all the support staff involved” (P16). This personal understanding provided individuals with an appreciation of the importance of all sport science professions.

Presentation of consultant competencies. Individuals reported that they possessed lower than necessary ability to present their competencies ($M_{rating}=3.65$, $SD=0.96$). The source for the self-rating score was reported by participants as professional experiences. These experiences were broken down into sport psychology and other professional experiences.

Those participants that had gained practical consulting experience noted this as a major source of their ability to present their own competencies. TSPCs identified that these experiences would allow for a more descriptive discussion of their competencies, and would “give an understanding of what they want to hear, I know more of what they want now, so that would be something I would highlight” (P11).

In addition to sport psychology specific experiences, participants highlighted professional experiences in other domains as a source of confidence in presenting their competencies to gatekeepers. These past experiences “mean that I know how to interact with employers” (P5) and for one participant many experiences of being both the interviewee and interviewer within a business setting resulted in this individual rating themselves higher than each of the other participants.

Through my career I’ve been interviewed and I’ve done the interviewing so I know what sort of things that those employers want to hear, and I think that's quite a generic thing across both business and other fields (P9)

However, despite professional experiences being reported as a source of efficacy in presenting consultant competencies, the results indicate that participants did not perceive their ability to be at a level that would help to successfully navigate an entry interview.

Development. Further to discussing the source of current interviewing skills, participants were also asked to discuss how they believed that these skills could be developed in the future. Two themes were constructed from the participant responses, with these relating to two methods of development: awareness education and practical experiences.

Awareness Education. The first method suggested by participants to develop these areas was further education within sport psychology. In particular, TSPCs referred to specific education and training within the four attributes reported within the first study of this thesis (see chapter three). Participants initially indicated that “even just being made aware of these things is a good start” (P2) and this awareness “makes you start to think about these things and how to go away and develop them” (P18). In addition to this increasing level of awareness, specific training in relation

to the gaining entry interview which prepares TSPCs for this process was suggested as being a crucial area for development to “get you to a state where you can get there and show yourself as the consultant you are” (P27). In particular, participants suggested that simulated situations that replicate the gaining entry process would be beneficial. This method would “let you practice your technique, but with nothing really at risk” (P23). TSPCs suggested that “if you had like a false interview panel or something and you had to go in and pretend you were going for a role, it would get you used to talking through your points in front of someone” (P14), and that “feedback on interviewing technique and about the content you talk about from people with experience would be really useful” (P9). One participant indicated that this would “provide a sense of knowing what is coming that would allow you to prepare more thoroughly” (P26).

Practical experience. The secondary method of developing these skills identified by participants was gaining more practical experiences which “would just give you that confidence in yourself, and you would just know more of what they’re looking for” (P5). Gaining additional practical experience was identified by most participants as being crucial for further development and that “every time you do these sorts of things, like each time you go for an interview, or even just try and talk to someone about what you do, you start to learn what specifics people want to hear” (P29). Participants suggested that “any practice at this sort of thing, whether it’s down with the local club, or like when I talk to my mates, I have to explain what sport psychology is and defend it almost, so it gets you used to talking about it” (P3).

Discussion

This research study aimed to assess (a) whether TSPCs could identify and describe key interviewing skills as found in the first study of this thesis (chapter three), (b) TSPCs self-ratings on these interviewing skills, (c) the sources of current interviewing skills, and (d) methods to develop these skills further. The results show that whilst TSPCs can identify the four interviewing skills after viewing short video vignettes, their self-report ratings indicate that perceived current level of employment interview skills differed, and these variations were attributed to a number of potential sources.

A number of participants highlighted the importance of social interactions in the development of their own affability, and the source for the relatively high self-ratings of this skill. What and how others think about an individual becomes incorporated into his/her self-esteem (Engels, Finkenauer, Meeus, & Dekovic, 2001), and these self-perceptions of relational competence are suggested to be crucial in psychosocial functioning (Sedikides & Skowronski, 1995). The TSPCs particularly noted the importance of their relationships with parents and peers in providing a

base ability in building rapport, trust, respect and a positive environment. Secure parental attachment has been positively related to social skills such as negotiation (Engels et al., 2001), and provides examples and internal working models of relationships with others (Bowlby, 1973, 1991), that direct action in external social situations (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). A safe, secure, and supportive background has been related to quality of relationships and emotional adjustment (Rice, 1990). However, in disharmonious families, these social skills are less available to the child (Webb & Baer, 1995).

The secondary perceived source of this skill was interactions with peers during adolescence and early adulthood, and with the development of new friendships, individuals may feel the need to distance themselves from parental ties (Engels et al., 2001). The main role in psychosocial development changes from parents to peers (Wylleman, Alfermann, & Lavalley, 2004), and individuals spend an increasing amount of time in activities with peers, without the supervision of their parents (Engels, Dekovic, & Meeus, 2002). Adolescence represents a time of transformation of social relationships (Engels et al., 2002), where there is an increased need to regulate affect and behaviour, without the adults who provide regulatory structure and guidance during childhood (Steinberg, 2005). The competencies required for satisfactory peer relationships only partly overlap with skills required for familial relationships (Engels et al., 2001). Thus, a new set of competencies are required, with peer interaction playing multiple causal roles in the socialization of these competencies (Parker & Asher, 1987). The TSPCs of the current study highlighted that in particular their peer interactions during university developed their perceptions of affability. Johnson (as cited in Parker & Asher, 1987) suggested that student-student relationships are an absolute necessity for healthy cognitive and social development. The findings of the current study support those of previous studies indicating that peer relationships build upon the familial background to aid in socialization (Engels et al., 2002; Parker & Asher, 1987).

However, attributing the development of affability to only social interactions indicates that this skill cannot be learned. For those invested in the training and education of sport psychology students this is a discouraging indication. However, as discussed in chapter three, consultant affability is strongly related to the specific interpersonal skills of building rapport, trust and respect with the gatekeeper. Teaching interpersonal skills has been an area of interest for fields including psychology (Baldwin, 1992), pre-medicine students (Blair & Fretz, 1980) and teaching (La Greca, 1983). This suggests that these skills can be taught and learnt; meaning those who may possess low levels of consultant affability can be trained to improve this attribute. This is of importance to the

gaining entry interview, as consultant affability in this setting constitutes a different set of interpersonal skills and behaviours to those required to consult with clients.

In relation to the other three constructs, consultant confidence versus arrogance, consultant collaboration, and presentation of consultant competencies, participants identified that their educational and practical experiences were influential sources of these skills. Education played a major role in developing individuals' knowledge and competency within the field, as well as an understanding and appreciation for allied sport science service providers.

When discussing educational sources, participants reported sport psychology specific education as a source of both confidence in sport psychology and the willingness to collaborate. The reliance on education for confidence in the field was identified more often by those that had little to no experience within a practical setting. This indicates that the neophyte sport psychologist with little experience relies on their education and training as a source of confidence, however as practical experience is gained, this becomes the most influential source as discussed later. Despite identifying participants with experience and no experience, there were no significant differences between individuals self-perceived ability to present their belief in sport psychology. One explanation for this is that of the twelve individuals that reported having gained experience, only one of these was for a period longer than six months. Hence participants had a minimal level of experience and this may have moderated the potential beneficial effect of gaining practical experiences.

Education within other fields was identified by a number of participants as providing a source of proficiency in collaborating with potential gatekeepers. Where participants held a bachelor's degree in Sport Sciences, they recorded a higher score on this scale than those with differing degree subjects. This was reported as being influential as an education in the wider Sport Sciences provided students with a greater appreciation of other disciplines, and the importance of an interdisciplinary team within a sport setting.

Past experiences, within sport psychology and other professional settings, were reported to be a source of the ability to communicate their competencies and confidence in sport psychology, despite low ratings within both abilities. This confidence, or lack of, can be attributed to participants' self-efficacy; where expectation is the conviction that the behaviour required to produce desirable outcomes can be executed (Bandura, 1977). Performance accomplishments are especially influential as they are based on personal mastery experiences (Bandura, 1977; 1997). Performance experiences and self-efficacy form a reciprocal relationship (Vancouver, Thompson, Tischner, & Putka, 2002), and these self-efficacy beliefs are used to construct a perception of one's

current state (Powers, 1991). The participants' experiences ranged from none to one year of practical engagement with clients, representing a relatively short length of time in which performance accomplishments can influence an individual's self-efficacy beliefs.

Experiences in other professional settings, particularly those experiences of involvement in past interviews were reported as being influential to the participants' ability to present their competencies effectively. These task performances influence an individual's interviewing self-efficacy (ISE; Tay et al., 2006); the personal judgements of interviewing capabilities. ISE reflects cognitions about task-specific self-competence (Tay et al., 2006), is dynamic and malleable, and influences perceptions of future efficacy in the interviewing environment (Bandura, 1997). Relevant performance information (i.e. Feedback on interview success) enhances self-efficacy beliefs over time, and job-seekers should seek to develop their ISE (Tay et al., 2006). In addition, educational programs and placement services should develop training to help applicants enhance their ISE.

These findings indicate the important role that both education and practical experience play in the development of TSPCs. It is apparent from the current findings that the TSPC should gather practical experience alongside their current education to develop self-efficacy to gain entry and potential gaining entry interview efficacy.

TSPCs were additionally asked to suggest ways in which to further develop interviewing skills. Participants reported that education and experience, with an emphasis on practical education and training would be beneficial in readying these individuals for the gaining entry process. This training was suggested as taking the shape of practice interviews, in front of a panel of perceived experts, or individuals with knowledge of interviewing candidates. In a review of employment interview literature, Huffcutt (2011) reported that previous research found a correlation between participation in interview training/coaching and interview ratings. Sport psychology programs within the United Kingdom do not currently include training or guidance in relation to gaining entry or further business skills that are necessary to succeed as a sport psychology consultant (Cotterill, 2016). These suggestions have been made by researchers and educators of sport psychology, yet have lacked the perspective of those that are directly influenced by the training programmes and accreditation routes that are currently in place. The findings of the current study lend support to the previous reports that these educational pathways are not providing individuals with the necessary skills to gain entry and may indicate a lack of wider business skill acumen and training.

Both trainee sport psychology consultants and the governing bodies that create, implement, and monitor training programmes and accreditation routes should take note of the findings from this current research, which signify that this studied population of the applied field perceive that they

may not be being educated in necessary skills to gain entry to practice. TSPCs should seek to gain knowledge on the four interviewing skills outlined by gatekeepers in the first study of this thesis (Chapter three) and the sources that these are derived from. In addition, governing bodies and educational institutions should regard the opinions and perceptions of these trainee SPCs towards their existing training programmes not educating in these necessary skills.

Whilst the findings of the current study provide the field with practical implications, these should be considered against its limitations. The self-report nature of the study provides a limitation to the interpretation of these findings. The main aim of the study was to gather information regarding TSPCs opinions and perceptions regarding their current level and sources of interviewing skills. However, self-report data may not reflect accurate levels of each skill or the sources from which these are derived. Instead, data may reflect individuals skewed or biased perceptions or a socially desirable view they wish to present. This self-serving bias is perhaps most evident within the participants' scores for consultant affability. There were no significant differences between any participants with all scores relatively high compared to the other three abilities. Affability is related to the personality of the individual and is therefore predicted to be more inherently linked to self-esteem. Self-serving bias distorts cognitions and perceptions by a need to maintain self-esteem and may perpetuate illusions and errors in individuals self-report on explicit measures (Forsyth, 2008). Therefore, researchers are encouraged to establish the congruence between self-perceived ratings and those made by external raters.

This study aimed to explore the perceptions of TSPCs who were enrolled on Stage 1 of the BPS QSEP training route within the United Kingdom. However, it is during the second stage of this training (QSEP Stage 2, BPS, 2018) that practical supervised experience is gained. Hence it may be this stage in which individuals may develop necessary business and gaining entry skills that SPCs require. Future research should endeavour to evaluate those who are and have progressed through the BPS QSEP Stage 2. In addition, extending the findings of this study, research should examine the effects of the proposed sources and the skill they are perceived to influence in a wider range of participants (i.e. BPS Stage 2 TSPCs, Accredited SPCs). Additionally, it is important to develop an understanding of the potential global implications of these findings. Future research should assess populations and cultures beyond the United Kingdom examined here, and identify the implications for hiring of SPCs as a global applied field.

Summary

In summary, the findings of this study advance understanding of the current status of trainee SPCs concerning their employment interview skills. More specifically, the current study indicates

that TSPCs could identify the employment interview skills, when displayed within short video vignettes. However, the findings demonstrate that TSPCs self-perceived desirable levels of affability and collaboration, compared to low perceptions of the ability to display appropriate confidence in sport psychology and present their own competencies. Parental and peer interaction, education, and practical experience were reported as key sources of employment interview skills. The findings indicate that TSPCs are lacking education in the necessary skills to proceed through the employment interview. Despite the apparent need for specific training regarding these skills, it is perhaps necessary to clarify and corroborate these potential sources of skills in a wider sample.

Chapter Five:

Examining the Antecedents of Employment Interview Skills in Sport Psychology Consultants

Introduction

The second study (see chapter four) within this thesis investigated whether trainee (i.e., neophyte) sport psychologists could identify employment interview skills essential to a successful self-presentation and interview performance. In addition, the participants' self-perceived skill levels, and the perceived sources of such skills for interviews were examined. A mixed methods research study, which utilized videos of two scripted employment interviews (a good versus poor interview performance) between a SPC and an interview panel, examined thirty-one participants in stage 1 of the BPS QSEP certification pathway. Results indicated that participants could identify the core interview skills differentiated within the scripted videos. Although participants perceived their own levels of affability and collaboration skills as high, they reported low perceptions of confidence in sport psychology and the ability to present their own competencies. Participants highlighted parental influences, quality of peer interactions, education and practical experience as core contributing sources of employment interview skills.

Despite these findings, our understanding of employment interview skills, and the sources contributing to their development is limited (Huffcutt et al., 2001). Huffcutt and colleagues (2011) proposed a model of the candidate attributes which act as determinants of interviewee performance, in turn shaping interviewer ratings. These attributes are argued to influence interviewee performance in a complex 'give and take' pattern, where ratings are arrived at through a cumulative sum of attributes. This cumulative sum can be arrived at through multiple combinations of factors. However, more research is needed to better understand the antecedents of interviewee performance. Whilst candidate personality (Van Iddekinge et al., 2007), locus of control (Rotter, 1982), and self-efficacy (Tay et al., 2006) have been suggested as potentially important influences on interviewee performance, the extant literature on these and other potential sources of candidate attributes is sparse. Hence, to continue progressing this field of study, Huffcutt and colleagues (2011) argued that a shift in the way the employment interview is researched was necessary. Shifting from a focus on interviewer ratings to interviewee performance may lead to a greater understanding of the interview process, and benefits for candidates, organizations, and the accrediting organizations responsible for the initial training and continuous professional development of SPCs.

To address this call and the apparent gap in the sport psychology literature, the first two studies of this thesis (see chapter three and four) provided the first exploration of interviewee performance as a SPC. Consultant affability, a confidence in sport psychology, a collaborative nature and the ability to present competencies were identified as important interview skills key to gaining entry as a consultant. When presented with these skills, TSPCs suggested that parental

attachment, quality of peer interactions, practical experiences, and education were key contributing sources. To further this line of research and our understanding of interviewee performance as a SPC, it is important to explore these potential sources and their effects on interview skills.

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1973; 1991) was initially developed to describe the connection between primary caregivers and infants. However, research has been extended to examine the attachment of adolescents and adults, as one's attachment is assumed to have an enduring influence on the way individuals engage and perceive close relationships (Collins, Guichard, Ford, & Feeney, 2004; Rholes & Simpson, 2004). Corcoran and Mallinckrodt (2000) found attachment security to be associated with social competence (i.e., one's ability to establish and nurture close and enduring relationships). Additionally, individuals are more likely to develop a trustworthy and communicative nature if their caregiver displayed these attributes (Kerns & Stevens, 1996). Participants additionally highlighted that the repeated process of developing close relationships with peers determined their affable nature. Individuals more involved in peer activities tend to be stimulated in the development of social skills (Mize, Pettit, & Brown, 1995), and the quality of these attachments predict empathy and assertion (Mota & Matos, 2008) and the development of 'social skills' (e.g. Freeman & Brown, 2001; Meeus, Oosterwegel, & Vollebergh, 2002).

Educational background, specifically an education in sport sciences or sport psychology, appeared to contribute to TSPCs beliefs concerning their ability to present their competencies, collaborative nature and confidence in sport psychology without appearing arrogant. Past experiences, within both sport psychology and other professional settings, were reported to be a source of the ability to communicate one's competencies and confidence in sport psychology. These findings indicate both controllable (i.e., experience and education) and less controllable (i.e., parent and peer attachment) sources of interviewing skills. However, it is during stage 2 of the BPS QSEP, which requires TSPCs to undertake supervised sport psychology service delivery, where these preparatory experiences may be gained. Therefore, it is this supervised practice which may lead to the development of necessary employment interview skills and may act as a mediator for the less controllable interview skills.

Hence, it is important to both expand our understanding of these sources and corroborate interactions between source and skill. This need for further development of this field indicates that a quantitative approach which clarifies these effects is necessary. Specifically, this approach in conjunction with findings from qualitative methods, can be used for triangulation (i.e., the convergence or corroboration of results from different methods or sources), complementarity (i.e., the clarification of the results from one method with results from another), and utility (i.e., that

combining the two approaches will be more useful to practitioners and others) (Bryman, 2006; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). Both methodological (i.e., the use of multiple methods) and data (i.e., the use of different sources of data) triangulation is beneficial in confirmation of findings, providing more comprehensive data, and enhancing how we understand the studied phenomenon (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Guion, 2002).

The purpose of the present study, therefore, was to build on study two (chapter four) by utilising a quantitative approach to explore the four interview skills and the potential effects of sources of these skills within a sample of qualified and 'in-training' SPCs with a range of employment interview experience. The four interview skills measured were the consultants' affability, confidence in sport psychology, collaboration, and presentation of competencies, and following study two, peer and parent attachment, education, and practical experience were assessed as potential sources of these skills. The main aim of this study was to answer the following research question: what effects do the potential sources indicated in study two of this thesis have on the employment skills interpreted within study one of this thesis? Reflecting on the exploratory findings of study two (chapter four), the following effects were expected: a) the higher a consultant's parental attachment, the higher their self-reported affability, b) the higher a consultant's peer attachment, the higher their self-reported affability, c) consultants with a greater knowledge of sport psychology were expected to report a higher confidence in sport psychology than those with a lesser knowledge of the field, d) consultants with an educational background in sport science were expected to report a higher collaborative nature than those with a sport psychology or psychology education, and e) the more applied experience in sport psychology a consultant possessed, the higher their self-reported ability to present consultant competencies.

Methods

Participants

Participants were 214 ($M=119$, $F=95$, $Mage=33.63$, $SD=8.32$) individuals who were either currently providing applied sport psychology service provision or currently enrolled on an applied sport psychology training route. This included both TSPCs enrolled on the supervised practice stage of accreditation pathways, and those with pre-existing accreditation as a SPC. Participants were from Britain (58), the USA (53), Germany (15), France (11), Austria (9), The Netherlands (9), Canada (8), Spain (8), Australia (6), Ireland (6), Poland (6), Sweden (6), Belgium (5), Finland (4), Italy (3), Norway (3), Denmark (1), India (1), Israel (1), and Switzerland (1). Initially the sample were recruited using homogenous purposive sampling by contacting individuals that were known to fulfil the inclusion criteria (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Additionally, a hyperlink to access the online

study and its measures was posted in pre-existing social media groups designed for communication and dissemination between TSPCs and SPCs both within the United Kingdom and Europe. Snowball purposive sampling was then utilised where contacted individuals were asked to recruit further relevant individuals (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007).

Online surveys.

When designing the current study, and considering the research questions, a quantitative research design was chosen. Specifically, an online survey technique was adopted to collect responses to a multi-section survey consisting of both scales and study-specific items.

Online surveys require participants to respond to surveys that are either embedded within an email or surveys that are web-based. Since the initial email surveys in the 1980s, the technology associated with the internet has revolutionised the way in which we administer surveys (Evans & Mathur, 2005). Distributing and collecting responses to surveys online has both strengths and weaknesses. One major strength of utilising web-based surveys is the potentially global reach of the survey to participants. Distribution of ‘pencil and paper’ surveys requires investigators to either post surveys or distribute to target populations by hand, whereas a hyperlink to an online survey can be instantaneously distributed globally (Kannan, Chang, & Whinston, 1998). In addition, this ease of distribution reduces the potential preparation and administration time and costs of the research. A further strength of web-based surveys is the convenience afforded to participants. Once provided with access to the survey, participants can respond at a convenient time for themselves (Hogg, 2003). Although the adoption of online surveys has potential benefits, potential weaknesses of this methodology should also be considered. The first of these weaknesses is the impersonal nature of an online survey, which can limit the ability to probe in-depth and opportunities to pause for reflection that telephone surveys may present (Brown, Culkin, & Fletcher, 2001; Scholl, Mulders, & Drent, 2002). Unclear answering instructions, with a lack of ability to clarify any potential issues, is another weakness of online surveys (Ray & Tabor, 2003). Notwithstanding these potential disadvantages and guided by the research question of the current study, an online survey strategy was chosen due to the beneficial strengths that this technique can provide.

Measures.

Experience. Participant experience was assessed by eight items concerning number of years as a practicing SPC, how many SPC positions held, and the number of total and successful past interviews for SPC positions.

Education. Participants were asked to respond to four items regarding their educational background. These items addressed individuals' subject of bachelor's, master's, and potential further higher education degrees, professional accreditation, and further professional training.

Parent attachment. The parent subscale of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) was used to measure participants' beliefs about their past attachment to parents. The IPPA was initially developed to assess adolescents' perceptions of relationships with their parents and close friends, however recent research found high internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .91$) for the measure in an adult sample (Holt, Mattanah, & Long, 2018). The parent subscale of the IPPA consists of 28 items addressing one's beliefs of mutual trust (e.g., "my parents respected my feelings"; "I trusted my parents"), quality of communication (e.g., "I liked to get my parents' point of view on things I was concerned about"; "My parents helped me to understand myself better"), and the extent of anger and alienation (e.g., "I felt that no one understood me"; "I got upset a lot more than my parents knew about"). Participants are required to indicate how true each statement is on a 5-point likert scale ranging from 1 = *almost never or never* to 5 = *almost always or always*. A composite parental attachment score was created by averaging the trust (10 items), communication (10 items), and alienation (8 items reverse scored) subscales.

Peer attachment. The peer subscale of the IPPA (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) was used to measure individuals' beliefs about their current peer attachment which consists of 25 items. Similar to the parent subscale, items measure beliefs concerning mutual trust (e.g., "my friends understand me"; "my friends are fairly easy to talk to"), quality of communication (e.g., "I like to get my friends' point of view on things I'm concerned about"; "my friends help me to understand myself better"), and the extent of anger and alienation (e.g., "my friends don't understand what I'm going through these days"; "I get upset a lot more than my friends know about"). The alienation items (7 items) were reversed scored and a composite score was created by averaging alienation, communication (8 items) and trust (10 items) item scores.

Interview skills. A study-specific measure of perceived interview skills was constructed from the four skills from study one (chapter three) and the definitions of these skills presented to participants in study two (chapter four). This scale was constructed in line with Bandura's (2006) recommendations for constructing self-efficacy scales, which argued that scales "must be tailored to the particular domain of functioning that is the object of interest" (p. 308), and followed a development process similar to that described in Jackson, Gucciardi, and Dimmock (2011). This scale was named the Interview Skills in Sport Psychology Scale (ISSP-S).

For stage 1, the four features of gatekeeper experience (consultant affability, confidence in

sport psychology, consultant collaboration, presentation of consultant competencies) interpreted in the first study of this thesis, were utilised as factors of the scale. Stage 2 involved extracting specific references to each of the four factors from the interview data collected during the first study. The most frequently occurring references to these factors were then used to generate items for the measure, resulting in 20 items, five for each factor (Table 7).

Table 8. Initial items developed during ISSP-S construction.

Item	Related Skill	Mean Rating (-2 to 2)	Included in Final Measure?
Build rapport with the interviewer(s)	CA	1.91	Yes
Develop and gain the interviewer(s) trust and respect	CA	1.55	Yes
Produce a positive environment between myself and the interviewer(s)	CA	1.82	Yes
Build a good working relationship with potential employers	CA	1.19	No
Make the best impression during the job interview	CA	1.64	Yes
Develop realistic expectations of the effectiveness of sport psychology support	CSP	1.46	Yes
Present realistic potential outcomes from sport psychology	CSP	0.73	No
Present myself as appropriately confident in the usefulness of sport psychology	CSP	1.27	Yes
Not exaggerate the potential benefits or time requirements of a sport psychology programme	CSP	1.45	Yes
Demonstrate realistic potential outcomes of a sport psychology programme	CSP	1.64	Yes
Work with the interviewer to develop a consultancy programme	CC	1.55	Yes
Display my ability to work as part of an interdisciplinary team	CC	1.91	Yes
Be flexible in my approach to working with athletes	CC	1.18	No
Demonstrate an ability to collaborate with potential employers and other employees	CC	1.82	Yes
Present my philosophy of practice to the interviewer	CC	1.36	Yes
Effectively describe how my experiences and knowledge of sport lend themselves to a role	PCC	1.45	Yes
Effectively present my personal competencies and how these relate to a role	PCC	1.64	Yes
Describe how my personal characteristics relate to the role in an effective way	PCC	1.73	Yes
Market my skills and abilities during the job interview	PCC	1.45	Yes
Use my past experiences to explain my suitability for a role	PCC	0.82	No

CA=Consultant Affability; CSP=Confidence in Sport Psychology; CC=Consultant Collaboration; PCC=Presentation of Consultant Competencies

In stage 3, these initial items were presented to a group of: a) researchers who were currently completing post-graduate research degrees in the field of sport psychology and had previous knowledge and experience of constructing scales ($n = 2$), b) TSPCs who were currently registered on the QSEP Stage 2 training pathway ($n = 4$), and c) individuals in allied professions ($n = 5$; three currently practicing occupational and health psychologists who had a range of employment interview experiences (between 1 and 4); two coaches who were currently working within elite professional sports organisations who had gained employment following an employment interview) along with definitions of each of the factors (Jackson et al., 2011). This group of individuals were recruited for this process from contacts previously made by myself. They were contacted regarding their participation and then provided with an email that contained information on the scale under construction, and a hyperlink to a web-based survey platform that contained the twenty initial items developed, in order to replicate how the ISSP-S would be presented to final participants of the study. These individuals were asked to provide feedback on these items, the ease of understanding of the items, the appropriateness of the language used, their representation of the four interview skills, and any potential replication of items. In addition, quantitative ratings of each item were sought, using a 5-point scale between -2 (*very poor*) and 2 (*very good*). Following this process, the item which was rated the lowest in each factor was removed, resulting in a scale of 16 items. None of the remaining items were rated less than 1.0 (Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009). Feedback highlighted no issues with the remaining items and therefore the wording of these items was kept the same.

The 16-item scale was prefixed by the instruction, “please rate how confident you are that you can successfully.....” Respondents were asked to rate their confidence in their ability on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*to a great extent*).

Procedure

Following institutional ethical board approval, potential participants were contacted through individual e-mail, membership within a social media group, or professional network e-mail. Initial selection was guided by our knowledge of individuals role as an applied SPC, followed by snowball sampling where participants were asked to invite further relevant individuals to participate.

Prior to data collection, all participants were provided with an information sheet which explained the purpose of the study, what participation would involve, and how confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained (see Appendix 12).

Participants were provided with a hyperlink to an online survey platform (www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk). Having consented to participate and completing items relating to demographic information, participants were asked to respond to each of the measures identified above, regarding education, experience, both subscales of the IPPA, and the ISSP-S (see Appendix 13).

Data Analysis

Data were downloaded into SPSS 23.0 and checked for missing or incorrect responses. Remaining data were then sorted and scored in line with the procedures described above. Participant's bachelor's degree and master's degree were coded into one of four categories (1. Sport Science, 2. Psychology, 3. Sport Psychology, & 4. Other). Past interview success was determined by calculating the percentage of interviews which had been successful from total number of interviews and total number of successful interviews. Before computing descriptive statistics and regressions, to examine the psychometric properties of the ISSP-S, principal components analysis was performed in SPSS.

Having established that the data conformed to relevant statistical assumptions (i.e., univariate and multivariate normality, homogeneity of variance) a series of multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were conducted to analyse group differences in terms of bachelor's degree (sport science/psychology/sport psychology/other), master's degree (sport science/psychology/sport psychology/other), years of applied experience, past interview success, parental attachment composite score, and peer attachment composite score. Participants' perceived affability, confidence, collaboration, and presentation of competency scores were entered as dependent variables. In these analyses, a significant multivariate effect was followed up with post-hoc analyses.

Results

Principal components analysis revealed that the 16 items of the interview skills efficacy measure loaded onto four factors (all factor loadings $> .65$). These item loadings were consistent with the four factors that were intended to be measured. These were consultant affability (items 1, 10, 11, and 16; all factor loadings $> .87$), consultant confidence (items 2, 3, 5, and 7; all factor loadings $> .79$), consultant collaboration (items 6, 9, 14, and 15; all factor loadings $> .65$) and presentation of consultant competencies (items 4, 8, 12, and 13; all factor loadings $> .72$). Guided by this evidence, a single sum of individual item scores was computed for each of the factors in all subsequent analyses.

Table 9. Descriptive statistics and mean sample scores.

	Attachment						Presentation of Competencies
	Years of experience	Peer	Parent	Consultant Affability	Consultant Confidence	Consultant Collaboration	
Sample	7.18	32.15	32.09	23.00	18.57	20.59	22.19
Male	8.39	32.13	31.81	22.99	19.16	21.06	22.12
Female	5.67	32.18	32.45	23.01	17.82	20.02	22.28

Parent Attachment

No significant multivariate effects emerged for parent attachment ($F_{(4, 209)}=2.032$, $p>0.05$, Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.338$), indicating that there were no significant differences in affability, confidence, collaboration, and presentation of consultant competencies depending on participants' attachment to parental figures.

Peer Attachment

A significant multivariate test statistic emerged for peer score ($F_{(4, 209)}= 2.259$, $p<0.001$, Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.718$). Follow-up univariate F-tests identified significant differences for consultant affability ($F=6.127$, $p<0.001$), but not for confidence ($F=1.579$, $p>0.05$), collaboration ($F=1.241$, $p>0.05$), or presentation of consultant competency ($F=1.212$, $p>0.05$). This indicated that those with higher peer attachment scores had higher affability scores than those with lower peer attachment scores.

Subject of Bachelor's Degree

Significant multivariate effects were observed for participant's bachelor's degree ($F_{(12, 547)}= 8.152$, $p<0.001$, Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.648$; Table 10). Follow-up univariate F-tests identified significant group differences for consultant confidence ($F=6.072$, $p=0.026$) and collaboration ($F=20.938$, $p<0.00$), but not affability ($F=1.891$, $p>0.05$) or presentation of consultant competency ($F=1.715$, $p>0.05$). Post hoc tests revealed that participants with a bachelor's degree in sport psychology had significantly ($p=0.016$) higher mean confidence levels than those with bachelor's degrees in sport science, psychology, and other degree subjects (22.09 versus 18.40, 18.74, and 16.06, respectively). Additionally, these tests revealed that participants with a bachelor's degree in sport science had significantly ($p<0.000$) higher mean collaboration levels than those with psychology, sport psychology, and other degree subjects (23.05 versus 19.15, 19.17, and 20.64 respectively).

Table 10. Participant mean scores of peer and parent attachment.

	Peer Attachment				Parent Attachment			
	Trust	Communication	Alienation	Composite Attachment	Trust	Communication	Alienation	Composite Attachment
Total Sample	40.09	29.09	27.27	32.15	35.19	31.78	29.29	32.09
Male	39.53	27.94	28.91	32.13	35.48	31.07	28.87	31.81
Female	41.16	30.17	25.21	32.18	34.61	32.71	30.03	32.45

Table 11. Mean self-reported employment interview skills by bachelors and master's degree subject

	<i>N</i>	Consultant Affability	Consultant Confidence	Consultant Collaboration	Consultant Competencies
Bachelors					
Sport Science	75	23.00	18.40	23.05	22.55
Psychology	109	22.68	18.74	19.15	22.16
Sport Psychology	19	23.17	22.09	19.17	21.17
Other	11	23.91	16.06	20.64	21.73
Master's					
Sport Science	29	23.48	17.84	22.76	22.59
Psychology	28	22.96	18.70	20.48	22.63
Sport Psychology	144	22.86	20.34	19.38	21.91
Other	13	23.62	20.08	21.38	22.54

Master's Degree

Significant multivariate effects were observed for participant's master's degree ($F_{(12, 547)} = 2.002$, $p = 0.022$, Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.893$). Follow-up univariate F-tests identified significant group differences for confidence ($F = 2.955$, $p = 0.033$) and collaboration ($F = 3.986$, $p = 0.009$), but not affability ($F = 0.796$, $p > 0.05$) or presentation of consultant competency ($F = 2.517$, $p > 0.05$). Post hoc tests revealed that participants with a master's degree in sport science had significantly ($p = 0.009$) higher mean collaboration levels than those with sport psychology related master's degrees (22.76 versus 19.38 respectively). In addition, those with sport psychology master's degrees had significantly ($p < 0.001$) higher mean confidence levels than those with sport science related master's degrees (20.34 versus 17.84 respectively).

Table 12. Possible combinations of bachelor's and master's level degree subjects

Combination	N	Degree Subject	
		Bachelor's	Master's
1	17	Sport Science	Sport Science
2	44	Sport Science	Sport Psychology
3	9	Sport Science	Psychology
4	5	Sport Science	Other
5	0	Sport Psychology	Sport Science
6	15	Sport Psychology	Sport Psychology
7	3	Sport Psychology	Psychology
8	0	Sport Psychology	Other
9	9	Psychology	Sport Science
10	79	Psychology	Sport Psychology
11	14	Psychology	Psychology
12	8	Psychology	Other
13	3	Other	Sport Science
14	7	Other	Sport Psychology
15	1	Other	Psychology
16	0	Other	Other

Interaction of Bachelor's and Master's Degree Subjects

A two-way MANOVA was conducted to identify any interaction effect between bachelor's and master's degree subject. There was a statistically significant interaction effect

between bachelor's subject and master's subject on the dependent variables, $F_{(24,804)} = 3.768$, $p < 0.000$; Wilks' $\Lambda = .651$. Post-hoc tests were conducted to identify sub-group differences between the sixteen potential combinations of bachelor's and master's degree subjects (Table 11). These tests identified significant differences for both consultant collaboration (Table 12) and consultant confidence in sport psychology (Table 13). For this analysis, only combinations of degrees which were represented by more than ten participants was chosen for comparison. This resulted in five combinations being analysed (Combinations 1, 2, 6, 10 and 11; Table 11)

Consultant Collaboration. Combination one (sport science bachelor's/sport science master's) reported significantly higher levels of collaboration than combinations six (sport psychology/sport psychology; $p = 0.007$) and eleven (psychology/psychology; $p = 0.003$). Participants with combination two of degree subjects (sport science/sport psychology) reported significantly higher levels of collaboration than six (sport psychology/sport psychology; $p = 0.031$), ten (psychology/sport psychology; $p < 0.000$), and eleven (psychology/psychology; $p = 0.014$).

Table 13. Consultant collaboration mean scores for degree combinations and significant differences.

		Degree subject combination				
Degree subject combination		1	2	6	10	11
	1	23.94		*.007		*.003
	2		22.77	*.031	*.000	*.014
	6			19.33		
	10				19.13	
	11					19.00

Confidence in Sport Psychology. Participants with combination two of degree subjects (sport science/sport psychology) reported significantly higher confidence in sport psychology than combinations one (sport science/sport science; $p = 0.001$) and eleven (psychology/psychology; $p = 0.004$). Combination six (sport psychology/sport psychology) participants reported significantly higher confidence than combinations one (sport science/sport science; $p = 0.003$) and eleven (psychology/psychology; $p = 0.008$). Combination ten (psychology/sport psychology) participants reported significantly higher confidence in sport psychology than those with combination one of degree subjects (sport science/sport science; $p = 0.003$).

Table 14. Consultant confidence mean scores for degree combinations and significant differences.

		Degree subject combination				
Degree subject combination		1	2	6	10	11
	1	17.59	*.001	*.003	*.003	
	2		22.82			*.004
	6			21.37		*.008
	10				21.24	
	11					18.62

Consultant Experience

A significant multivariate effect emerged for years of applied experience as a SPC ($F_{(4, 209)} = 33.178$, $p < 0.001$, Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.612$). Follow-up univariate tests identified group differences for consultant affability ($F = 6.092$, $p = 0.014$), consultant confidence ($F = 106.252$, $p < 0.001$), and presentation of competencies ($F = 47.951$, $p < 0.001$), but not collaboration ($F = 0.472$, $p > 0.05$). This indicated that those with more years of experience reported higher affability, confidence, and presentation of competencies scores than those with less years of applied experience

Interview Experience

Significant multivariate effects were observed for participants' percentage of successful interviews for SPC roles ($F_{(4, 209)} = 5.822$, $p < 0.001$, Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.900$). Follow-up univariate tests identified differences for consultant confidence ($F = 10.617$, $p = 0.001$) and presentation of competencies ($F = 19.081$, $p < 0.001$), but not affability ($F = 0.477$, $p > 0.05$) or collaboration ($F = 0.068$, $p > 0.05$). This finding suggests that a higher past success in employment interviews is related to higher perceptions of confidence and perceived ability to present competencies.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to further develop our understanding of the factors which contribute to the development of employment interview skills as a SPC. Two hundred and fourteen currently practicing SPCs were surveyed utilising instruments which measured parent and peer attachment, experience as a SPC, education, and their employment interview skills, as interpreted as part of study one within this thesis. The results indicate that peer attachment, SPC experience, and SPC education are all significantly related to practitioners' perceptions of their employment interview skills.

The findings of the current study indicate that an individuals' attachment level to their peers is significantly related to their reported ability to build rapport, develop trust and respect, and

produce a positive environment between themselves and an interviewer. Those with higher peer attachment reported higher levels of affability than those with lower levels of such attachment. This finding supports the suggestion of TSPCs within the second study of this thesis that peer interactions, and the continual need to develop new close relationships with individuals through university and employment, increases an individual's perception of their affable nature. It is this peer interaction which can play multiple causal roles in the socialization of these competencies (Parker & Asher, 1987). The continual practice of developing relationships with peers in both vocational and friendship settings allows for a trial and error type of skill development where interpersonal skills can be developed over time and number of interactions.

In addition to their attachment to their peers, TSPCs indicated that parental attachment was a contributing factor to their affability (see study two). Secure attachment is positively related to social skills and provides models of relationships with others. However, the findings of the current study do not support these suggestions; affability did not differ as a function of attachment to parents. One potential explanation for this is that individuals transition from a reliance on parental figures to their peers when gaining guidance and feedback regarding behaviour, interpersonal skills, and attachment (Parker & Asher, 1987). The participants of the current study were currently practicing SPCs, meaning that the average age of participant was higher than the TSPCs interviewed in study two of this thesis (chapter four). This difference in age indicates that as individuals move further into adulthood and develop more close relationships with peers their reliance on parental attachment figures continues to reduce to a point where it appears to have no significant effect on an individual's affability.

Participants' aptitude to present both their confidence in sport psychology and the ability to work collaboratively with potential employers and other sport science service providers was found to be influenced by both bachelor's and postgraduate degree subjects. With regards to bachelor's degree subject, those who studied sport science related subjects reported a higher ability to present their interdisciplinary nature than the other three subject categories, whereas those who had studied sport psychology related degree subjects rated themselves higher on the ability to effectively present their belief in the field of sport psychology. These differences may be explained by the module subjects which are offered as part of these degree courses (Table 14). To gain BPS accreditation, university degrees within the United Kingdom must include education in core subjects of (a) biological psychology, (b) cognitive psychology, (c) developmental psychology, (d) individual differences, (e) social psychology, and (f) conceptual and historical issues in psychology (Quality Assurance Agency, 2016). In contrast, to gain BASES undergraduate endorsement requires

education in (a) biomechanics, (b) physiology, and (c) psychology, with specific exposure to the inter-disciplinary study of sport and exercise and science (BASES, n.d.). Hence, an interdisciplinary approach is an inherent feature of sport and exercise science degree programmes in the UK, whereas a stronger background in psychological components is the focus of sport psychology undergraduate programmes. The current findings indicate that this difference in the content of bachelor's degree programmes continue to effect individual's self-perceived employment interview skills when presenting their belief in sport psychology and their interdisciplinary approach.

A similar effect was found for participants' master's degree subject, where those who had completed sport and exercise science degree programmes reported higher levels of collaborative skills than those who had gained a master's level degree in sport psychology. In addition, those individuals who had gained a master's degree in sport psychology reported a better ability to present their confidence in sport psychology than those who had gained a master's degree in sport and exercise sciences. The content of these differing degree programmes is one factor which may explain this finding. The BPS standards for the accreditation of master's programmes in sport and exercise psychology (2017) require the core components of research methods and sport and exercise psychology in practice. In addition, these programmes must include specialist taught components of (a) cognitive processes, (b) psychological skills and strategies, (c) developmental processes, (d) social process, (e) participation and wellbeing, and (f) individual differences. This focus on the psychological components of sport and exercise in comparison to the interdisciplinary nature of sport and exercise science degree programmes is likely to replicate the differences highlighted between undergraduate degree subjects for both consultant collaboration and confidence.

When exploring the potential interaction effect between bachelor's and master's degree, there were significant differences in both consultant collaboration and consultant confidence in sport psychology. When taken together, the findings relating to consultant collaboration indicate that, with the exception of those with a master's degree in an 'other' subject, those with a bachelor's degree in sport science report higher levels of this skill than a number of other clusters of degree regardless of master's degree. This finding supports the main effect findings for bachelor's and master's degree subject individually. Analysing the findings of degree subject interaction on consultant confidence in sport psychology indicates that a master's degree in sport psychology is perhaps the most influential stage of education that develops a confidence in sport psychology. The findings of the current study suggest that a combination of a bachelor's degree in sport science and a master's degree in sport psychology results in the highest self-ratings of employment interview skills. These findings indicate that a SPC with this educational background would at least report

high levels of both confidence in sport psychology and consultant collaboration. However, this too may be due to the design of these degree programmes. Sport science programmes require a high level of cross-cognate discipline learning and interaction, developing a high rating in consultant collaboration. Therefore, it may be pertinent for the individuals who design and deliver sport psychology courses to increase the provision of similar opportunities. By including assessments and projects which require individuals to interact with students from cognate disciplines, a TSPCs consultant collaboration may be increased.

Two differing measures of consultant experience were utilised; firstly, the amount of years that participants had been practicing as applied SPCs, and secondly, the percentage of past successful interviews that participants had experienced. Across the sample, those with a higher employment interview success rate reported higher perceived abilities to effectively present their competencies and characteristics which relate to a SPC role, and their belief in the field of applied sport psychology. This finding supports the research findings of Tay and colleagues (2006) where past interview success is positively related to subsequent interview self-efficacy. This form of self-efficacy relates to individuals' beliefs about their employment-interviewing capabilities. According to self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997) past performance on relevant tasks conveys the most salient information for revising efficacy beliefs, where success increases belief of capability and failure heightens self-doubt (Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Saks, 1995). Despite the current findings referring to actual past performances within an employment interview situation, it is possible to create a similar scenario where feedback is provided, and performance can be adjusted within a training environment (DeBenedictis et al., 2017). This form of simulation training can provide individuals with experiences of completing an interview without a potential outcome of not receiving an offer of employment. Feedback and guidance may be provided at the end of an entire simulated interview, where the individual is then interviewed again at a later date, to assess the effect of training, or this feedback can be offered between each answer (DeBenedictis et al., 2017; Rivera-Gutierrez et al., 2016). There are a number of possibilities for simulation training, as it may be done in person, where individuals answer directly to an interviewer (or interview panel), with the use of electronic communication software (e.g., skype), or via an online platform where individuals are required to audio-visually record their responses to posed questions, which are then assessed, and feedback provided to the participants. An online option may offer the largest chance for training as it would allow for repeated practices, which can be completed and assessed at a suitable time for both participant and assessor. However, future research should endeavour to examine the effectiveness of such simulation training when used to improve SPC employment interview skills.

Table 14. Module choices at a university within the United Kingdom

Year of Study	BSc (Hons) Sport and Exercise Science	BSc (Hons) Sport and Exercise Psychology	
Year One	Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology (c)	Historical and Conceptual issues in Psychology (c)	Foundations in Biological Psychology (c)
	Anatomy and Physiology (c)	Foundations in Social Psychology (c)	Foundations in Cognitive Psychology (c)
	Biochemistry and Cell biology for Sport and Exercise Science (c)	Teaching and Coaching (c)	Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology (c)
	Introduction to Sports Biomechanics and Kinesiology (c)	Foundations in Developmental Psychology (c)	Introduction to Work Psychology (o)
		Issues in Sport and Exercise Science (o)	
Year Two	Current Themes in Sport and Exercise Psychology (o)	Human Cognition (c)	Social Psychology (c)
	Expert Performance in Sport (o)	Developmental Psychology (c)	Group and Interpersonal Processes in Sport (c)
	Physiology of Exercise and training (o)	Psychological Issues and Strategies in Sport (c)	Social Psychology and Communication (o)
	Biochemistry of exercise and nutrition (o)	Psychological Approaches to Human Resource Management (o)	Personality and Individual Difference (c)
	Biomechanics of sport (o)	Political Psychology (o)	Brain and Behaviour (c)
	Motor control and motor learning (o)	Forensic Psychology (o)	Principles of Exercise Psychology (c)
Year Three	Applied Exercise Psychology (c)	Performance Psychology for Sporting Excellence (c)	Psychological Disorders in Society (o)
	Physiology of Sport, Exercise and Health (o)	Science and Elite Performance in Sport (c)	Sport Psychology in Action (c)
	Nutrition for Sport, Exercise and Health (o)	Psychology of PE and Youth Sport (c)	Applied Exercise Psychology (c)
	Advanced Sports Biomechanics (o)	Psychology of Workplace health (o)	Behavioural Decision Science (o)
	Advanced Motor Control of Sports Movements (o)	Psychology of eating behaviour (o)	Consumer Psychology (o)
	Applied Psychology in Competitive Sport (o)	Social Psychology of Everyday Life (o)	Clinical Psychology (o)
		Psychology and Health (o)	Applied Psychology and Human Resources Management (o)

Note. (c) = core module. (o) = optional module

Consultants' perceptions of affability, confidence, and their presentation of competencies differed by the number of years they had been practicing as applied sport psychologists. An individual's self-presentation abilities, particularly when describing how experience and sport-specific knowledge relate to a role, may develop over a SPC's career as there is more of a knowledge base, and efficacy of that knowledge base to call upon when answering questions. Within study one of this thesis (chapter three) one gatekeeper shared how consultant experience can aid in positive interview outcomes as they allow for an interviewee to utilise specific "real-life" examples and scenarios from throughout their careers. The findings regarding consultant affability and confidence can potentially be explained in a similar manner to those evident between past interview success and confidence in sport psychology and presentation of their competencies, where previous experiences increase an individual's self-efficacy. As a SPC progresses throughout their career they are required to build, develop and maintain working relationships, and implement and evaluate consultancy programmes. To have a prolonged career in such a field, an individual will be required to demonstrate these abilities multiple times, thus increasing their past performance perceptions, and in turn increasing their self-efficacy beliefs of successfully demonstrating these skills in the future. However, these findings do not provide any implications to neophyte or less experienced practitioners. Thus, it would be pertinent for future research to examine how this effect of experience can be countered through education and training.

The findings of the current study should be considered against a number of limitations. The first of these limitations is a lack of ability to demonstrate causality. This limitation ensures that it is not possible to show causality between perceived sources of employment interview skills and the skills themselves which were indicated within the second study of this thesis (see chapter four). However, when interpreting the findings of study two and the present one, I believe it is possible to infer causality within these effects. This is due to the one-way interactions that inherently exist between a number of these constructs. The significant findings concerning consultant collaboration, presentation of consultant competency, and confidence versus arrogance appear to show one-way effects. For example, where an effect exists between consultant confidence in sport psychology and their bachelor's degree, it is not difficult to understand how gaining a bachelor's degree in sport psychology affects later confidence in sport psychology. However, it appears less likely that an individual's confidence in sport psychology affected their choice of bachelor's degree subjects, thus I would conclude that causation in this direction does not exist. Hence whilst a lack of ability to indicate causality is a limitation to the interpretation of the findings of this thesis, I believe the mitigation of this by one-way effect means that the practical implications of these findings should be considered and utilised to develop the education and training of the next generation of SPCs.

A further limitation to the current study is similar to that of study two of this thesis. The participants were required to report their self-perceived level of each interview skill. This methodology may be affected by a self-serving bias exaggerating the reported scores, and therefore potentially confounding the results discussed previously. This limitation could be addressed by requiring participants actual responses and behaviour within a simulated employment interview to be rated by gatekeepers to sport psychology, similar to the participants interviewed within study one of this thesis.

In addition, a limitation which should be considered when interpreting the results of ISSP-S consultant collaboration subscale relates to the potential limited scope of the items within this subscale. The first study of this thesis (chapter three) characterised this employment interview skill as relating to both developing a consultancy programme and philosophy with potential employers and the ability to work collaboratively with colleagues. The items of the ISSP-S consultant collaboration subscale reflect this possible divergence in definition, which limits the extent to which the results associated with this subscale can be interpreted as being due to either working collaboratively with employers or colleagues.

Summary

In summary, the findings of the current study advance our understanding of the interaction between SPC employment interview skills and their potential sources. More specifically, building upon the second study of this thesis, the current study examined these sources within a sample of applied and practicing SPCs in order to produce a clearer picture of how sources interact and relate to the four employment interview skills. The findings of this study indicate that a SPC's peer attachment, educational background, applied experience, and interview experience variably relate to self-perceived levels of consultant affability, confidence in sport psychology, collaboration, and presentation of competencies. However, there was no significant effect observed for parent attachment, as suggested within study two. These findings highlight the need for training and accreditation pathways, educational institutions, and consultant's continuous professional development to place a greater emphasis on developing these skills in order to best prepare the consultant in gaining entry.

Chapter Six:
General Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis was to develop an understanding of the employment interview as a Sport and Exercise Psychologist and the skills of the SPC that are required to successfully gain entry through this phenomenon. To address the overall purpose and aims of this thesis, three linked studies were conducted. To begin this chapter, a recap of each of these studies and their main findings is presented. I will then turn attention to their collective contribution. The first study (chapter three) explored gatekeepers' experiences of employing sport psychologists within United Kingdom elite sport organisations. Following interviews with seven gatekeepers to sport psychology, experiences were interpreted to be influenced by four key features of interaction with the Sport Psychologist. The consultant's affability, confidence versus arrogance, collaborative nature, and presentation of their own competencies, appeared to influence participants' experiences, perceptions of the field of sport psychology, and subsequent hiring beliefs and practices. Diverging representations and descriptions of each feature highlighted that the interviewer's experience could be influenced in a favourable or adverse manner depending on a practitioner's demonstration of each feature.

Following from study one, study two (chapter four) utilised these four features to examine Trainee Sport Psychologists perceptions of the employment interview and the associated skills necessary to successfully navigate this process. Video vignettes simulating an employment interview between gatekeeper and Sport Psychologist were presented to Trainee Sport Psychologists ($n=31$) followed by a structured interview to investigate their (a) ability to identify interviewing skills, (b) their self-perceived levels of such interview skills, (c) sources of these skills, and (d) perceptions of how these skills can be developed. Interview data and self-report measures were used to evaluate these research aims. The ability to identify the four interview skills varied (61-100%) between participants, who self-reported desirable levels of affability and collaboration, compared to low perceptions of their ability to present both their belief in sport psychology and their own competencies. Participants identified parental influences, peer interaction and educational and applied practice experiences as potential sources of employment skills. Further findings highlighted specific employment-interview-centred education and gaining practical experience as potential methods to develop employment interview skills.

The final study (chapter five) built upon the first and second studies by exploring the effects of the reported sources of interviewing skills on individuals' perceived levels of these skills. This study sought to further explore these potential effects within a sample of practicing SPCs ($n=214$). A battery of quantitative surveys was utilised to assess parent and peer attachment, practical

experience, educational background, and employment interview skills. The findings of this study support TSPC suggestions that peer attachment, educational background, and applied experience relate to a consultant's affability, confidence in sport psychology, collaborative nature, and presentation of competencies. In addition, interview experience was found to significantly affect confidence in sport psychology and presentation of consultant competencies. The following sections of this chapter will focus on the three studies combined contribution to knowledge and methodology, the limitations of these studies and future directions of this research.

Contribution to Knowledge

In addition to discussing how the findings of each of the studies within this thesis individually contribute to knowledge and practice within the area of gaining entry to sport psychology service provision, it is important to provide an overall discussion of the implications of this thesis as a whole. One of the main contributions of this thesis has been to address a gap within the gaining entry to practice literature; specifically, the phenomenon that is the employment interview. To date, existing research has focused predominantly on the preferred consultant characteristics of athletes, coaches and student athletes of sport psychology rather than the individuals responsible for hiring SPCs and the potential barriers to entry which SPCs may encounter. However, the practical implications of this research were limited by methodological flaws and the populations which were sampled. The studies in this thesis are the first to provide an examination of the factors that have influenced the hiring experiences of gatekeepers to sport psychological services (i.e., those responsible for employing support staff). In doing so, this thesis has provided a clearer understanding of how the SPC influences the experience of gatekeepers during employment interviews, the skills that are required to navigate the entry interview as a SPC, and the features that contribute to these skills.

The findings of the first study (see chapter three), highlight the need to consider the practice of sport psychology (as a professional, paid business) as closely aligned to a number of allied occupations. The combined experiences and processes of both psychological (e.g., occupational psychology and developmental psychology) and sport-based (e.g., strength & conditioning and sports therapy) professions are likely to align closely to those of the SPC. This can be explained by the similar employment environment of the sport-based professions and the similar interactions with individuals of the psychological professions. In addition, the self-presentation, interpersonal, and impression management skills highlighted within this thesis are similar to those evident in research examining the wider occupational environment (Huffcutt et al., 2011). This consideration should be adopted within future research to increase the potential for education and training from allied

professions to be amalgamated into the development of sport psychology education, training, and accreditation of its practitioners. In addition, this consideration would influence the manner in which sport psychology research is disseminated and adapted to individuals within these professions. Hence, the collective findings of this thesis may have practical implications for these wider occupations.

Another contribution of this thesis is the identification and categorisation of employment interview skills necessary as a SPC. The consultants' affability, display of appropriate confidence, collaborative nature, and presentation of competencies were highlighted and further examined through the three studies of this thesis (see chapters three, four, and five). The consultant's affability, a feature of experience characterised by the ability to build rapport, trust and respect, was critically influential to gatekeepers' decision to hire. These characteristics of interpersonal skills mirror those identified in research fields exploring preferred consultant characteristics (Woolway & Harwood, 2015), characteristics of effective consultants (Sharp & Hodge, 2011), and the personal qualities associated with effective practice (Chandler et al., 2014). However, it is suggested that these interpersonal skills differ from those necessary for the client-consultant relationship described in previous research (Lubker et al., 2012; Woolway & Harwood, 2015). This indicates that an emphasis should be placed on differing sets of interpersonal skills for both those responsible for hiring SPCs and the client. In calling for this new category of interpersonal skills to be considered, I believe it is important to echo the suggestion of Thelwell and colleagues (2018) that a rigid appraisal of interpersonal skills would be appropriate for both neophyte and more experienced SPCs continual professional development. The consultant's displays of appropriate confidence in sport psychology, rather than an over-exaggerated, potentially arrogant description and belief within the field was interpreted as being influential to consumer decisions. In particular, it was those SPCs who presented themselves and the field with this 'arrogant' style who appeared to negatively influence gatekeepers' decisions. Hence, it is advised that SPCs provide potential consumers with truthful and realistic descriptions and expectations throughout the consulting relationship, but specifically when attempting to gain entry. In conjunction with a SPCs confidence in sport psychology, their ability to collaborate with both employers and other colleagues was reported as positively skewing a gatekeepers' perception during an employment interview. The ability to relate one's competencies for a specific role, and how such competencies aid in sport psychology service delivery were interpreted as being influential to participants experiences. As suggested in past research (e.g., Lubker et al., 2012; Woolway & Harwood, 2015), the competencies of athletic background, sport specific knowledge, and experience were highlighted as important by the

participants in study one within this thesis (see chapter three).

Collectively these four skills were interpreted to interact to change a gatekeepers' perceptions of individual SPCs and in turn, their hiring decisions. I believe this research focus and its findings can offer a starting point for the future development of practitioners within our profession. A focus within education and training pathways is currently placed on acquiring knowledge and disseminating this knowledge through consultancy, however as discussed throughout this thesis, an interest in the skills required to successfully run a business is lacking within these pathways. In particular, these findings provide a position from which to start developing educational resources regarding the employment interview process as a SPC.

Understanding the skills of the SPC which can influence a hiring decision is vital to the development of future practitioners, however it is equally important to understand how to develop these skills. In order to do this, it was important to first identify the sources by which consultants currently develop these skills. Studies two and three highlight the important roles that peer attachment, education, applied experience, and experience of successful interviews play in the development of employment interview skills. However, these constructs vary in the extent to which a consultant, or indeed an accrediting body, can control them. An individual's social and intimate interactions with peers, their educational background prior to entering an accreditation pathway, and their experience of successful interviews would be difficult to control. However, by developing an understanding of these sources, educational institutions and accrediting bodies can begin to develop procedures and training which may moderate this lack of early control of sources. For example, requiring individuals to engage in social processes that require peers to engage with one another (e.g., group presentations, pair work, group feedback practices) may aid in the development of confidence and empathy of individuals in building peer relationships.

The findings of study three (chapter five) indicate that the interaction of degree subjects which individuals choose and study has an influence on the SPCs interview skills. Importantly, the combination of degree subjects which appeared to best equip SPCs was a bachelor's degree in sport science followed by a master's level degree in sport psychology. A practitioner with this educational background would report high levels of collaboration and interdisciplinary focus as fostered by a sports science bachelor's degree, and a confidence in sport psychology which is suggested to be most influenced by an individual's master's degree in sport psychology. With the many training routes and combination of degree subjects available to would-be practitioners, it is important to highlight these differences which may occur amongst SPCs because of their educational background. Additionally, for a similar development of all practitioners to exist across

these degree combinations it may be necessary for educational programmes to identify ways in which collaboration and confidence in sport psychology may be further developed. Within a sport psychology master's degree this could involve highlighting the collaboration which may be required when working within a sport organisation by requiring students to complete assessments with individuals or groups from differing sport science fields, such as nutrition, biomechanics and physiology.

In addition to interpreting a number of employment interview skills, and examining their sources within this thesis, TSPCs' knowledge and self-perceived level of these skills were investigated in the second study (chapter four). The participants' rudimentary ability to identify the four interview skills within the video vignettes indicates that a base level of understanding was present. However, the difference in ability to identify these skills when presented in a manipulated video and the participants' self-efficacy highlights a disparity between education and the development of practical knowledge and abilities regarding these skills. This finding reiterates Harwood's (2016b) argument concerning a 'practitioner skills gap' created by universities developing 'know' and professional accreditation programmes developing 'does'. It is therefore important that a closer alliance is developed between universities and accrediting bodies. Until this happens, such gaps in 'know how' and 'show how' may continue to exist not only in relation to skills translating theory into applied practice, but also in the translation of business skills to the real-world environment.

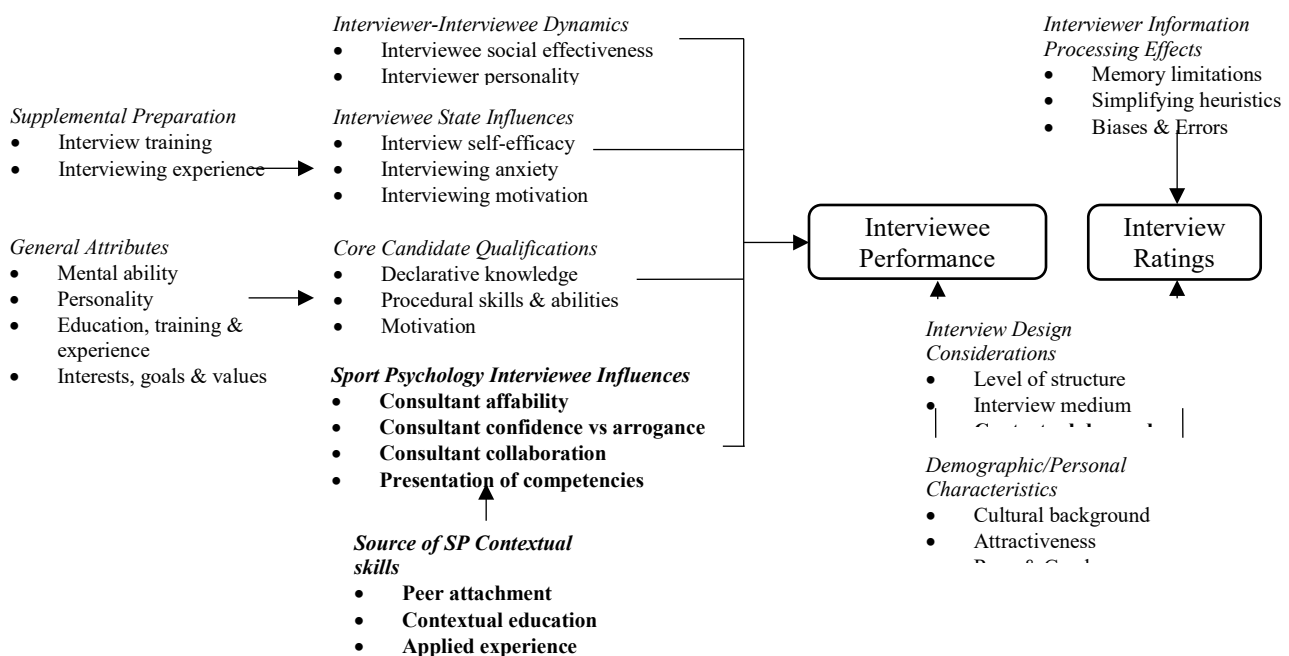


Figure 4. Model of sport psychology employment interview performance

Interpreting the cumulative findings of the three studies in this thesis provides a greater understanding of the employment interview as a phenomenon within sport psychology. This developing knowledge base allows for the progression of past employment interview research by highlighting the importance of contextual differences between occupations. Hence, a sport psychology specific revision of Huffcutt and colleagues (2011) model of interview constructs that influence interviewee performance is required (Figure 4). This updated model highlights the importance of considering the contextual demands of applied sport psychology, in particular the skills of the SPC (see study one) which influence the interviewees performance and in turn an interviewers rating. In addition, when identifying contextual differences between professions and the influences these may have on interviewee constructs, it is important to recognise that these contextual demands should be considered in interview design and by the interviewer themselves. The findings of this thesis provide a basis by which to revise a model of employment interview performance, however future research should endeavour to further our understanding of this phenomenon.

Contribution to Practice

In addition to discussing the contributions of this thesis to knowledge, it is important to discuss how a developing understanding of employment interview skills can implicate the practice of applied SPCs, the continual development of practitioners, and the education and training of neophyte SPCs.

A consultant's affability, characterised by the practitioner's ability to build trust, respect, and a relationship with an employer, is closely aligned to a SPC's interpersonal skills which have previously been reported to be critical to perceived and actual SPC effectiveness (Orlick & Partington, 1987; Woolway & Harwood, 2015). Hence, I believe it is important to echo the suggestion of Thelwell and colleagues (2018) that interpersonal skills be assessed throughout the career path of a SPC. In addition, creating an educational environment which fosters and develops interpersonal skills should be emphasised. Requiring students across undergraduate degree courses to complete peer/group assessments would encourage the socialisation of skills through interaction with a number of individuals, with differing experience and personality characteristics. For the continued development of these skills following education, a focus on developing communication skills (i.e. active listening, attending) should be encouraged. An intervention focused on communication skills, which included workshops, written feedback, and video observation learning, led to integration of key communication skills into participants interactions with clients

(Fallowfield, Jenkins, Farewell, & Solis-Trapala, 2003). The provision of a similar training course for SPCs may increase consultant affability.

As a consultants' confidence in sport psychology (CSP) is an occupation specific interview skill, it is one which should be developed when an individual progresses to occupation specific education and training. Hence, increasing this skill should be a focus of Masters (BPS stage one) and BPS stage two phases of education. I believe that a number of possible methods could be utilised to develop CSP; simulation training, brief description techniques, and impression management workshops. As previously discussed, simulation training has been shown to enhance interview skills (DeBenedictis et al., 2017), in addition, Huffcutt and colleagues (2011) model of interviewee performance highlights the importance of interview training on interviewer ratings. Brief description techniques, such as an 'elevator pitch' in which an individual must describe a given topic in a short space of time (i.e. one minute). This practice emphasises the importance of presenting concise and important information to another individual. This could aid SPCs in delivering honest and concise information regarding the applied profession. In addition, workshops regarding the use of honest, truthful impression management techniques could aid SPCs to present their belief in sport psychology and its effectiveness in a manner that is not exaggerated. Similarly, I believe that both simulation training and impression management workshops can aid in the development of the presentation of consultant competencies interview skill. It is one which requires practice and honest descriptions of competencies.

As previously discussed, consultant collaboration may be fostered within TSPCs by increasing the provision and availability of cross-cognate discipline assessment and interaction. The participants of study three of this thesis (chapter five) who had gained a bachelor's degree in sport science reported higher levels of consultant collaboration than those with a sport psychology bachelor's degree. In addition, the TSPCs interviewed in study two (chapter four) highlighted that their education across a number of sport science service disciplines increased their awareness, understanding, and collaborative nature with these disciplines. Hence, increasing the requirement of such interaction throughout undergraduate degree programmes may result in future TSPCs reporting similar levels of consultant collaboration.

Contribution to Methodology

The research designs used within this thesis offer a number of contributions to the methodological repertoire of researchers in the field of gaining entry to practice. To date, research has often relied on quantitative designs focusing on *potential* consumers of sport psychology service (i.e., Woolway & Harwood, 2015; Lubker et al., 2012) and reflexive accounts by SPCs

(Ravizza, 1988). This has meant that in terms of sampling decisions, existing research has failed to capture the complex features that interact to determine *actual hiring decisions* by sampling those that are, and have been, directly responsible for the selection and employment of Sport Psychologists. In addition to its contribution to knowledge, the first study within this thesis demonstrates how utilising a qualitative approach can elicit why gatekeepers make hiring decisions and what SPC behaviours influence these experiences and decisions. In particular an interpretative phenomenological approach, and its focus on individual's experience appears to be well matched to exploring actual consumers previous hiring decisions regarding SPCs and how these experiences have influenced prospective hiring decisions.

A further methodological contribution of this thesis has been to illustrate the value and benefit of research designs which include video vignettes. To the authors knowledge, this is the first study in Sport Psychology to utilise such a research design. This is somewhat surprising considering that video vignettes can make research more realistic, more engaging, make manipulations more obvious, and prompt discussion (Roth, 2009; Sriram et al., 2015). Using scripted interactions can ensure that these manipulations are present and standardised and allow a comparison between participants over the same set of scenarios (Jiwa et al., 2010; van Vliet et al., 2013). It is this design which provided participants with examples of the skills interpreted from data in the first study of this thesis.

The ISSP-S constructed for the purposes of the final study of this thesis (chapter five) may provide a valuable contribution to the field of applied practice research and the self-evaluation of applied practitioners themselves. This is the first scale which assesses the perceived employment interview skills of a SPC, and given the importance of successfully navigating this phenomenon, its further use may prove important to the field. The TSPCs in study two (chapter four) of this thesis suggested that being made aware of the four interview skills would increase their future desire to seek training and improve these skills. Therefore, this scale can act as a measure by which to assess the efficacy of training and education, as a research tool to assess SPCs and interventions, and as a self-awareness tool for continuing professional development.

Limitations

The findings and contributions of the current thesis should be considered against its limitations. The first and second studies within this thesis (see chapter three and four) were limited to samples from the United Kingdom, with gatekeepers holding roles within British elite sport organisations, and the TSPC participants enrolled within British university institutions. Gatekeeper experience may differ depending on a number of variables. Firstly, the country in which individuals

work may determine the structure of organisations, the perceptions that may exist of sport psychology, potential funding available for the provision of sport psychology, and the prevalence of SPCs. In addition, holding a gatekeeper role within an elite sport organisation may have also exposed the participants to experiences which may differ to those within lower competitive and financial levels of sport organisation. Thelwell and colleagues (2018) found that the potential consumers of sport psychology that are the coaches and parents of youth sport prefer a SPC with high interpersonal skills, a known reputation, focuses on performance, and works independently of an organisation. This highlights that those responsible for hiring practitioners at different levels of competition may have differing preferences of SPC characteristics and skills. TSPC participants from British higher education institutions, who were currently enrolled on Stage 1 of the BPS QSEP training route, are likely to have undergone similar educational and cultural experiences. SPCs at similar levels of training, accreditation, and experience from differing nationalities and attending institutions in different countries may have responded differently to the stimulus and questions utilised during the second study of this thesis.

Secondly, the self-report nature of both the second and third studies (see chapters four and five) within the current thesis may lead findings to be influenced by a self-serving bias. Data may not reflect participants actual levels of interview skills, but rather a skewed or socially desirable score. Hence it would be interesting to see the level of congruence between SPCs self-reported employment interview skills, and those attributed by external raters or assessors. Exploring this would clarify the extent to which an individual's self-rating of interview skills are accurate. Establishing an acceptable level of agreement would eliminate the need for research designs that would require significant time and resources in order to collect the ratings from experts.

Future Directions

In addition to extending this field of research to address the limitations of the current thesis, I believe there are a number of further directions to which research should turn. Firstly, the employment interview is just one distinct phenomenon within sport psychology service delivery, and the skills interpreted in the first study of the current thesis (see chapter three) may only be one set of business skills that a SPC requires. Cotterill (2016) suggested that “the development of sound business knowledge and skills is going to increasingly define those who make it as successful practitioners”. In addition, increasing numbers of neophyte practitioners are self-employed, but training concerning this is lacking (Cotterill, 2016). Alongside employment interview skills, crucial to any business are the knowledge, skills, and abilities to negotiate (i.e., price, access, & timing), to register a limited company or business name, to gain new clients, to ensure the business' accounts

are complete, and many more potential business skills. Exploring the extent to which TSPCs are educated in these business skills can aid in the development or improvement of current professional accreditation pathways. Following the findings of the third study of this thesis (chapter five) regarding the interaction effect of degree subjects on SPC employment interview skills, I believe it would be worthwhile for further research to focus interest on the mechanisms underlying these differences, and how educational institutions may best develop these skills across all cohorts of students. Additionally, when studying further business skills as previously suggested, it may be valuable to identify any further differences which may occur between individuals who have graduated from varying degree programmes.

The third study of this thesis (chapter five) involved the initial development of a scale to measure SPC employment interview skills. Given the promising internal reliability of the ISSP-S, future research should focus on the further use and validation of this measure. In order to best further the use of this measure, and to validate this measure as widely as possible, future research should utilise this measure within samples from differing cultures. In this context, this cultural difference can refer to both the country or region in which the research is conducted and the training pathway and accrediting body in which practitioners have developed.

A further direction to which research should now turn is the development of the four interview skills investigated within this thesis. For the findings of these studies to have the maximal potential impact upon professional practice and SPCs, research which designs and implements interventions to enhance employment interview skills should be conducted, and the efficacy of these interventions examined. As previously discussed within the first study of this thesis simulation training, simulating scenarios which require the studied skills, has been shown to improve communication skills and interpersonal skills when delivered with informative feedback (DeBenedictis et al., 2017; Rivera-Gutierrez et al., 2016). This form of intervention is an interesting one which could act as a medium to effectively educate TSPCs employment interview skills, and therefore research should endeavour to extend this research to the TSPC sample. In addition, Tod, Marchant, and Andersen (2007) highlighted the importance of role-playing as part of trainees' service delivery preparation. This practice aided students in learning and refining such skills as how to communicate theory in lay terms and how to handle specific consultancy situations. This reported benefit of role-playing exercises may also exist when the employment interview is the situation that is constructed. In addition to the type of intervention, it is also important to study the mode of delivery (i.e., face-to-face, group workshops, online). With the continued development of both internet usage and the sophistication of software available to researchers, I believe delivering

online interventions could be the mode of delivery enabling the quickest intervention, to the widest audience, in the most convenient way (e.g., participant and researcher time and availability). However, it is important that research evaluates the efficacy of such an intervention before discussions and use of this technique can progress.

Summary

In conclusion, the aim of this thesis was to develop an understanding of the skills SPCs require to prove successful during an employment interview. In doing so, this thesis has begun to address the limitations of past research designs and build a new understanding of the attributes that influence what happens before SPC and athlete come face to face (Coumbe-Lilley, 2011). Specifically, the studies within this thesis have (i) explored and proposed a range of skills viewed as important to successfully navigate the employment interview, (ii) assessed TSPCs' self-perceptions and potential sources of these skills, and (iii) examined the interactions between these skills and their proposed sources. It is hoped that the findings from this thesis will foster interest in applied researchers in terms of the development of a targeted educational program to enhance SPC and TSPC employment interview skills. It is also hoped that this thesis will act as a stimulus for continued examination of developing business skills within TSPCs. This would go some way to ensuring that this population of practitioners are as equipped as possible to gain entry into the professional industry as much as possessing the skills to actually serve the athlete clients in such environments.

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Appendix 1:
Participant Information Sheet (Study 1)

Adult Participant Information Sheet

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What is the purpose of the study?

Understanding the experiences of individuals that have direct experience of employing sport psychology consultants can benefit the future practices of the profession. By eliciting how your past experiences have shaped your current beliefs about the field, it is possible to develop an understanding that can aid in the training of neophyte sport psychologists.

Who is doing this research and why?

This study is part of a Student research project supported by Loughborough University. This research will be conducted by the researchers as detailed above.

Are there any exclusion criteria?

There is a set of inclusion criteria which must be met in order to participate.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to participate in a solitary interview with the researcher regarding your past experiences of employing sport psychology consultants, and how this has impacted your beliefs and considerations when employing a consultant in the future.

Once I take part, can I change my mind?

Yes. After you have read this information and asked any questions you may have we will ask you to complete an Informed Consent Form, however if at any time, before, during or after the sessions you wish to withdraw from the study please just contact the main investigator. You can withdraw at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing.

However, once the results of the study are aggregated/published/dissertation has been submitted, it will not be possible to withdraw your individual data from the research.

Will I be required to attend any sessions and where will these be?

This will be organised once you have agreed to participate in the research.

How long will it take?

Interviews should take no longer than 60 minutes.

What personal information will be required from me?

Information regarding your current position within your organisation, your experience with employing sport psychologists, and basic demographic information such as age, gender and type of sport that you are involved with will be recorded.

Are there any risks in participating?

There are no expected risks involved with participating in this study.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Information will be kept confidential according to the British Psychological Society code of ethics and conduct. Audio recordings will be transcribed and all data will be kept on a password protected computer.

I have some more questions; who should I contact?

If you have any further questions, please contact Mr Toby Woolway through the contact details provided at the beginning of this form.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of the study will be disseminated and presented in a research paper.

What if I am not happy with how the research was conducted?

If you are not happy with how the research was conducted, please contact Ms Jackie Green, the Secretary for the University's Ethics Approvals (Human Participants) Sub-Committee:

Ms J Green, Research Office, Hazlerigg Building, Loughborough University, Epinal Way, Loughborough, LE11 3TU. Tel: 01509 222423. Email: J.A.Green@lboro.ac.uk

The University also has a policy relating to Research Misconduct and Whistle Blowing which is available online at <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/committees/ethics-approvals-human-participants/additionalinformation/codesofpractice/>.

Appendix 2:
Pre-interview Questions (Study1)



Hiring a Sport Psychologist: Past Experiences and Future Considerations

Thank you again for participating in this research study.

Please read the following carefully:

In order to prepare for the interview, please consider the following questions in relation to your experiences with sport psychology consultants. It is suggested to think of 2-3 different experiences you have in relation to these questions, if possible.

1. What are your experiences when hiring sport psychologists?
2. Is there any particular experience that you remember as being good or bad?
3. In this instance what made your experience good or bad?
4. What factors have led to your final hiring decisions?
5. Literature suggests that SPCs are hired to work with athletes, coaches, parents, or a combination of all three. Did the role that the SPC was expected to fulfil influence your decision?
6. Is the way you hire a sport psychologist similar to the way you employ other sport science professionals?

Kind regards,
Toby Woolway

Appendix 3:
Interview Guide (Study 1)

Hiring a Sport Psychologist Interview Guideline	
Name:	Date of interview:
Position:	Participant Pseudonym:

Participants to pre-consider Section Two questions for up to 3 experiences with SPCs

Section One: Actual experience of hiring SPCs		
Question	Probes	Aim
How many instances have there been where you have been directly involved/responsible for the hiring of an SPC?	What was your role at the time? Are you currently in a role with the same responsibilities? Level of sport Environment Situation	To gain a basic understanding of the individuals previous experience in hiring SPCs
When I talk about hiring an SPC, what does that mean to you?		To ensure that the participant is aware of the meaning of the project and to highlight any area which may not have been thought of previously
What processes have you followed in order to hire an SPC?	EIS? Advert? Approached?	To understand the avenues that organisations go down to employ SPCs
In these instances what was the driving force for hiring an SPC?	Governing body/Sport England mandated Player request	To understand why SPCs are hired
Before your first encounter with an SPC what was your knowledge/belief of the area?	How do you feel this has influenced your approach to hiring SPCs	To understand the individual's prior knowledge and how this affected their decision to hire an SPC
Section Two: Experience when hiring SPCs		
Question	Probes	Aim

Can you tell me about your experiences when hiring sport psychologists?		Main aim of the research: to explore gatekeeper's experiences and understanding of the gaining entry phase from their perspective
Is there any particular experience that you remember as being good/bad?		To elicit for in-depth specific information
In this instance what made your experience good/bad?		To elicit what factors make the experience positive/negative
What factors have led to your past hiring decisions?		
Literature suggests that SPCs are hired to work with athletes, coaches, parents, or a combination of all three. Did the role that the SPC was expected to fill influence your decision?		To understand a link with the consultants fit and the potential impact of the future role on employment decisions
Is the way you hire a sport psychologist similar to the way you employ other sport science professionals?		To ascertain if other professions are similar which may aid in knowledge sharing
Return to start of Section Two for further experiences		
Section Three: Future considerations in hiring SPCs		
Question	Probes	Aim
Based on your past experiences would you hire an SPC again?		To begin a discussion about future hiring practices
What, if any, advice would you give to an SPC seeking employment in your organisation?		Future considerations for SPCs
Would this change depending on the SPC experience? (novice vs experienced)		Trying to differentiate whether life stage/novice vs experienced need to present themselves differently
Do you think your past experiences have changed the way you would hire a sport psychologist in the future?		To understand the impact of experiences on future considerations

Section Four: Interview validation		
Is there anything else that you would like to talk about that we haven't covered?		To make sure no important information has been missed
How do you feel the interview went?		To give the participant the opportunity to feedback on the interview
Do you feel that you had a chance to share everything you wanted to?		To give the participant the opportunity to feedback on the interview
Do you think that the interview structure flowed?	Is there anything that you think could be changed to improve the structure of the interview?	To give the participant the opportunity to feedback on the interview

Appendix 4:

Gatekeeper Interview Transcript Example (Study 1)

I = Interviewer

P = Participant

Introduction and interview validation were not transcribed.

I: When I talk about hiring an SPC, what does that mean to you?

P: Ha-ha okay so the well I see it, and when you sent those questions it seems like from when we either advertise or want to hire someone through that whole sort of interview and selection process until we say yeah, you're the guy

I: Spot on, so yeah when I talk about hiring a sport psychologist for this, I'm talking about the point of initial contact, to the point of signing a contract or coming to a formal agreement. So, with that in mind how many times in your professional capacity have you been directly responsible for the hiring of a sport psychologist?

P: Um well I've been in this position for quite a while now and because of the size and success of the club we have employed quite a lot of sport psych's here for all the different levels of the club

I: Okay and you eluded to it earlier, but what processes have you followed in order to hire an SPC?

P: So yeah as I said we generally will advertise for our roles, especially those within the academy and the lower sorts of positions, our top position with the first team we have advertised for one of the times and then another we had a guy in mind and approached him so yeah that one was different but generally we like to make sure we get applications from as many people as possible

I: In these instances, what was the driving force for hiring an SPC?

P: Well it's something that I think you need in this line of work, these guys are supposed to be playing their best [sport] for us and they are so prepared physically it would be stupid to not get them prepared mentally to go alongside that, so it's just something, especially more recently it's become more prominent but yeah, I think it's important and that's why we have it.

I: And before your first encounter with an SPC what was your knowledge/belief of the area?

P: Um well as a player and a coach you know you always hear about mental toughness and goal setting and relaxation and stuff like that but I guess it's not really housed as sport psychology, so when I found out that that's what it was I thought it was useful, it was something that I always tried to have during my play. You know when I first heard sport psychology I thought it was like a shrink and you only went with problems but when I first

met one, I began to realise that it was actually just as much about performance enhancement than issues.

I: So, going more deeply into specific hiring experiences, going through one at a time, can you tell me your hiring experiences?

P: Um so where do you want me to start?

I: Okay so if you take me through the first time that you recruited a sport psychologist for the senior team?

P: Okay, so yeah we were looking for someone to come and work with the senior team, we had already brought in individuals to the academy set-up for a couple of hours here and there to do workshops and things, but we wanted to keep it separate so we wanted someone new to come in, so we went through all the normal stuff like writing up job specs and descriptions and we based that on basically the sort of qualities we want from everyone here but also obviously those things that were specific to the role, and then we put it out to advert, got the applications in and sorted through them to find the people that did actually meet our criteria, we got them in and spoke to them really, it wasn't as formal an interview as we would normally do because I think it's a much more fluid role than some of the others we have, these psych's are expected to work differently so I think we knew we had to focus on getting that more personable approach to the selection process and then I guess we just decided on who we liked the best and hired them.

I: And when you say the qualities specific to the role, what were those that you were looking for?

P: So, we wanted someone that had the experience of working at this sort of level, someone who had the qualifications that you need to do it and showed that they understood the sort of environment they would be working in, I know this is not a yes/no sort of thing but yeah, we were looking for someone that understood the elite setting and just what we are trying to achieve here.

I: Okay, and when you say you decided on who you liked the best, what was it that made you like that individual?

P: Hmm it's hard to put your finger on, but he came in, well first of all, he was the same sort of age range as a lot of the players which I think made him more relevant, if that's the right word, he was age appropriate to them and knew what they were likely going through in their stage of their lives, but he had also played [sport] to quite a high standard, which meant that not only did he know the sport inside out but he knew what performing at a high level meant and the pressures that that brings. He was also available and could fit his schedule around

ours, whereas a lot of people came in and said this is when I want to work with people, well maybe not as forcefully as that but that's the impression you got, whereas the guy we hired was flexible and said he would work around us. So those are all tangible things, you know we could ask him what his background was, whether he knew [sport], how old he was. I guess it's the other stuff that's hard to describe. We understood that this was a role where the chosen candidate would be working with 30 top [sport] players with confidential and sensitive information, and the only way that it was going to work was getting someone that was personable and could build that relationship with the players and the coaches. When this guy came in, I had a couple of coaches on the interview panel with me, and when he left we all felt like he was the right person, he left us with such a good impression about himself as a person. He instantly struck up a relationship with the two coaches in the room and the interview ended up just being a conversation about [sport] for large parts, and it was that ability to instantly gain that sort of trust and respect that made us want to talk to him and in the end is probably what contributed to us hiring him the most. You know the experience in [sport], and the age, were things that we could have gone to someone else for, or not really considered it, but he just left us feeling that sense of "we want that guy in our club"

I: Okay and literature suggests that SPCs are hired to work with athletes, coaches, parents or a combination of the three, Did the role that the SPC was required to fill influence your decision?

P: So yes, with the age thing, he was the same age as I said so you know he was at the same sort of life choices and stages as those in the club, but also, he was going to be working with the coaches so that ability to get on with them when he first came in also made our decision so much easier

I: Okay, so moving on to the time that you approached an individual, can you take me through your experiences of that hiring process?

P: Yeah so that was following on from the guy that we were just talking about and we really liked what that guy was doing, and it just came to a natural end from his side of things, so we were looking for someone that could carry on and work in the same way, and so we went to him, initially it was to try and see if he could help us pick out what the new person would have to be like in order to fill his boots, but then he kind of gave us a name of someone that he knew that worked in the same sort of style as him and had the same sort of experiences as him, so we approached this guy and said you know we want you to come and work with us, and he came in and again we just got that sense of yeah we like this guy, he filled the room but wasn't dominating, and didn't try to shove his beliefs or his profession down our throats,

he was very much about the working as part of a team, and understood the psych's role within that team. So yeah, we hired him, we were going to go to interview but the experience of meeting him and listening to him was so positive and boosting that we decided there and then to hire him.

I: And was it just that personable aspect that led to your decision?

P: Well you know, he had been suggested by someone who's opinion we had grown to respect and listen to so that was important, we might never have met him otherwise, but yeah, when we went into that meeting we had no intention of hiring him, but his personality kind of made us do it I suppose.

I: Okay so it was quite a straightforward process?

P: Yeah it was easy we spoke to him, he came in the following week, the next week we had a contract to him

I: Okay so moving on to, and I know you said you've hired quite a few sport psychologists to work within the academy here, were there any experiences from these appointments that were either positive or perhaps more negative?

P: Hmm yeah so, I guess shall we start with the negative because that really sets up the positive. So in the academy, we don't have the players for the whole day, they are still kids, except for the older ones but they are still expected to study and things like that so we don't have as much time, also we don't have as much money so the S&C, the psych's the massage therapists, they are not full time positions, so these psych's have to work in a different way and be more flexible to the way we want to work. Additionally, we wanted the academy players to get more of an educational sort of thing so more workshop sort of thing than one on one, we didn't rule out that sort of work but that would be an addition as part of the work. So yeah, we advertised that position and we had a few applicants and I guess both experiences were from the same pool. So, we interviewed a couple of people and for one reason or another we just didn't really see them working within the set-up but that's just normal interviewing, but then this one guy came in, and he was just so brash, he was so just focused on how important psychology was and that it should be one of the most important things to these young players. He didn't seem to have that sort of team focus and a realisation that he would have to fit around our more stable and long running positions. He also didn't agree with the fact that one on one work wasn't a priority, he felt that he would be under used if he was just doing presentations, but that's not what we were saying, he just sort of dismissed our beliefs and wanted to put in place his own regime of work. That all left a sour taste in our mouths and to be honest that was one of the shortest interviews I have ever done,

I had to cut it short because there was no way we could work with this guy. You know we had to go to the players parents and say this is who is going to be working with your child, and he was not the person we could do that with.

I: So, it was a sense of self-importance that you didn't like?

P: Yeah exactly, I mean don't get me wrong, I think everyone should believe in their own field, if you don't you shouldn't be doing it, but there is believing in it and there is thinking that you are god's gift to the club because of it, and that's not the impression we want to be given

I: Okay, so I think I have an impression of why that experience was so negative, can you take me through the positive one next?

P: Yeah so that guy left the room and we had chance to talk about it, and we had the time to kind of reflect on it, and then the next candidate came in and I don't know if it was just because he was following what had just happened but he was a breath of fresh air, he came in, had had vast experience of working within academies, he believed that the education route was the best way to go to begin with and then as the players got older and more used to psych stuff then introduce the one on one work. But most importantly, he understood the place of psychology within the programme, he didn't think it was the most important, but he was still willing to fight for its case as just as important, which is what we wanted, believing but not being cocky. And again, like the two roles at senior level we just got this sort of relationship with him pretty quickly, he could build that rapport.

I: Okay and at the risk of repeating ourselves, it is that ability to build rapport that is crucial for you isn't it?

P: Yeah, I mean, your profession acts on such a personal level that I don't think someone can work effectively if they can't do that, and that's the crux of why it's so important, they need to be able to do that with the players in order to work.

I: Okay, and is the way that you hire sport psychologists similar to the way you employ other sport science professionals?

P: Yes, I mean we might look for slightly different things in the interview, but that's like any job, we need role specific abilities, but the process is the same yeah.

I: Okay so now I want to move on to how the experiences you've described to me influence your current and future views, so based on your past experiences would you hire a sport psychologist again?

P: Yeah, I would, I will never hesitate to hire them in the field that I'm currently working

I: And what, if any advice would you give to an SPC seeking employment in your organisation?

P: Just really come in with an understanding of the position of the role within the club, and the setting that you're coming into, it's busy, things change, it's elite sport you know it's not Sunday league football

I: Okay and would this change depending on the individuals experience within sport psychology?

P: Um well I guess you'd have to be more clever about it, if an experienced person came in, they could describe their experiences to show that they have those things, but I guess an inexperienced one would have to draw on something else and just be smarter in their responses, I guess maybe just showing that they have thought about it and know what they are going into

I: Do you think your past experiences have changed the way you would hire a sport psychologist in the future?

P: Um well I want there to be a way to kind of rule out those people that are going to come in with that attitude, but I can't see there being a way to do that so no I think it'll stay pretty similar

Appendix 5:
Participant Information Sheet (study two)

Adult Participant Information Sheet

Entry or Exit: Trainee sport psychology consultants perspective on the entry interview

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What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the current study is to gain an understanding of how trainee Sport Psychologists view the entry to practice interview. In particular this study examines how individuals perceive differing interview skills, and areas that are defined in previous research within the current project.

Who is doing this research and why?

This study is part of a Student research project supported by Loughborough University. This research will be conducted by the researchers as detailed above.

Are there any exclusion criteria?

There is a set of inclusion criteria which must be met in order to participate.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to participate in a solitary data collection session with the researcher. This session will involve viewing two brief video vignettes, followed by a short interview regarding the videos, and your perceptions of interview skills.

Once I take part, can I change my mind?

Yes. After you have read this information and asked any questions you may have we will ask you to complete an Informed Consent Form, however if at any time, before, during or after the sessions you wish to withdraw from the study please just contact the main investigator. You can withdraw at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing.

However, once the results of the study are aggregated/published/dissertation has been submitted, it will not be possible to withdraw your individual data from the research.

Will I be required to attend any sessions and where will these be?

This will be organised once you have agreed to participate in the research.

How long will it take?

Data collection should take no longer than 60 minutes.

What personal information will be required from me?

Information regarding your current position training level, your experience with working as a sport psychologist, and basic demographic information such as age, gender and place of study will be recorded.

Are there any risks in participating?

There are no expected risks involved with participating in this study.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Information will be kept confidential according to the British Psychological Society code of ethics and conduct. Audio recordings will be transcribed, and all data will be kept on a password protected computer.

I have some more questions; who should I contact?

If you have any further questions, please contact Mr Toby Woolway through the contact details provided at the beginning of this form.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of the study will be disseminated and presented in a research paper.

What if I am not happy with how the research was conducted?

If you are not happy with how the research was conducted, please contact Ms Jackie Green, the Secretary for the University's Ethics Approvals (Human Participants) Sub-Committee:

Ms J Green, Research Office, Hazlerigg Building, Loughborough University, Epinal Way, Loughborough, LE11 3TU. Tel: 01509 222423. Email: J.A.Green@lboro.ac.uk

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Appendix 6:
Interview Guide (study two)

Entry of Exit Interview Guideline	
Name:	Date of interview:
Participant Pseudonym:	

Section One: Following Video 1		
Question	Probes	Aim
With respect to the video you have just seen, are there any observations that stand out to you?		
Do you think there were any strengths to this interview?	Why was that a strength? What made that a strength? Were there any specific phrases that you noticed that made these strengths?	For further clarification to deepen understanding
Do you think there were any weaknesses?	Why was that a weakness? What made that a weakness? Were there any specific phrases that you noticed that made these weaknesses?	For further clarification to deepen understanding
		To understand exactly what affected participants perspectives
Section Two: Following Video 2		
Question	Probes	Aim
With respect to the video you have just seen, are there any observations that stand out to you?		
Do you think there were any strengths to this interview?	Why was that a strength? What made that a strength? Were there any specific phrases that you noticed that made these strengths?	For further clarification to deepen understanding
Do you think there were any weaknesses?	Why was that a weakness? What made that a weakness? Were there any specific phrases that you noticed that made these weaknesses?	For further clarification to deepen understanding
If you were the employer in this situation, which SPC would you employ?		To examine if SPC student perceive interviews the same as gatekeepers
Section Three: Following presentation of four areas (AFF, CS, FCG, PCC)		
Question	Probes	Aim

For each of the four areas, can you rate each video you have seen on a 1-7 scale?	To what extent did each interviewee show each of these areas? Is this a good or a bad thing?	Manipulation check
For each of the areas, where do you think you are? (1-7)	Where have you derived that score from? What are your sources of confidence in this area?	To understand where SPC students derive their practical skills from
What needs to happen to improve this score?	What do you think could improve your ability to display positive interview skills?	Provide future steps for research

Appendix 7:

Vignette Play Scripts Edited by Study One Participant

Control

Interviewer 1 (I1): Good morning, come in and take a seat, my name is Ian and I'm the head of performance support here, and this is Sarah, our head of coaching

Interviewer 2 (I2): Good morning, thank you for coming in, how are you?

A: Good morning, I'm Alex, I'm good thanks, how are you? **This is a nice change from the other one – it's generally nerves but a lot of people don't do this sort of thing and it sticks out sometimes**

I1: I'm good thanks Alex. Okay so again thank you for coming in today, we asked you to come in so we could get to know you a bit better than we can from your application and how you would fit in with us here. After this session with us, we'll take you on a quick tour and you'll meet some of the coaches, and some of our other staff, does that sound okay?

A: That sounds great, from what I've seen so far, you've got a great set-up here, I'm excited to have a proper look around, and see the heart of this academy. I wish I had something like this when I was growing up. **The personal side of this is good – and makes them seem excited and confident and not nervous**

I2: So, to begin with, we just want to know what motivated you to apply for this role?

A: What motivated me to apply? Well I'm currently working in **(specifics – is this academy, with a pro team etc.)** cricket that's got a similar set-up to the one here, and I really enjoy it, I love working with the different age groups that academies allow you to work with, and the amount of work and experience you can gain in a short amount of time, but unfortunately it's only a part-time role, and I'm looking for something more full-time, that I can devote my whole time to rather than seeking additional private work. What motivates me to this particular role is that my personal experience really lies in Tennis, you know, I used to play, and that's really where I started to gain my experience as a psychologist, **(what experience was this? Own experience or working with teams)**. I think that tennis is such a personal sport and that you need a good knowledge of what these players experience, day to day and I think that through playing and working in Tennis I can understand that. So, I guess what motivated me was that I saw the job advert and I got excited by it, it just jumped out at me because I think it's a good fit for me here. **What I like to see is like a personal story, so they used to play in one of these academies or they know someone who does, or they know people that work in similar ones...just that personal link to the role**

- I1: Okay, so if you're successful, your role would be with our elite academy players, so as a psych, to what extent do you feel it is possible to influence the characteristics of our athletes?
- A: **So, I think Sport psychology has great potential to influence performers, especially with athletes in academies. And I don't think it's just athletic characteristics either, their characteristics outside of sport can also be influenced and enhanced. I'm not saying it's a miracle cure or that I can provide a quick fix if there is any issue that you think there may be with any player, but I really believe that it can benefit performers. (Here a good candidate would give us examples of previous work or specifics of how sport psych can help rather than the general stuff)**
- I1: You alluded to it there, but we have a full support program here for our athletes, where do you see sport psychology fitting in here?
- A: **In terms of with the other sport sciences? Much more polite than the other guy!!**
- I2: Yes
- A: **Maybe link this to previous answer – make experience about working with different people, maybe nutritionist or physio...I think that all the sport science professionals need to work as a co-operative team in order to really help an athlete, so in terms of fitting in, I would want to fit in with the team that you already have. It's important to me that an athlete gets the full support that can be provided...In my experience someone would bring this back to the question so something like "so I see it fitting in well, or it would fit in nicely, it would work well with the other sciences"**
- I1: So as the new role would you want to be first priority in terms of scheduling?
- A: **Not at all, I think everyone should have an equal time. I understand that coaching will have the top priority and will take the majority of the players time. In terms of any individual work I prefer to work on a basis of players can come and see me, an open-door sort of policy, and then we can individually schedule future sessions around their pre-existing ones. In terms of workshops and group sessions I would like them scheduled in, but I understand that sometimes things may overrun or get in the way of certain aspects of my work This sounds like they still don't want it to happen, add another line about it not being controllable maybe**

I1: Okay so what do you see are the day to day roles of a sport psychologist within a youth development environment like this? And what would your program of work look like?

A: Okay, so if I answer the second question first. So, I think it's important to collaborate with yourselves on the actual, final programme, but I would bring in the aspects of programmes that I have used before and we can tailor it to your needs. So I believe that especially with the younger age groups, workshops are very effective in introducing psychology **(people will often slip into using psych or sport psych when talking to us in this sort of situation – might sound more natural to change throughout)** to the athletes and beginning to get them thinking about their own performance and that's where the individual work comes from, they see these things in workshops and they think "Oh that sounds like me" and they want to talk about it further. For the older guys, individual work is more of a focus, to prepare them for the next stage of their careers and development. Obviously, that's how I see this working, but with your input we could build this into a programme that in my experience I see working, and you can get the programme that you were thinking of when you advertised this position. On a day to day basis, as well as the workshops which would focus on a different topic each week, and the individual sessions would take up a bit of time with regards to the older players. I would keep some time each day free for the open-door sessions in order to promote the players staying comfortable with the idea of coming to see me and opening up about any issues that may be there. Other than that, I think that it's important for me to observe their training sessions to see how they interact with other players and their coaches. **How about matches? We want to hear about the full range of services...And this is quite a long answer – the Psych's that we get on best with are the ones that would make a joke about this or try to bring us back in**

I2: So how do you think your previous experiences lend themselves to this role?

A: As I said earlier I think I have experiences from a variety of sources really. I think that professionally, my work in academies, not only cricket but football as well has developed an understanding of what is important to work with performers of this age and within an environment like this I know the important aspects of developing programmes and working with colleagues. It's a different nature of work between my own private work and as part of an interdisciplinary

team. Now whilst professionally my experience is in similar environments, personally I grew up playing tennis and still do recreationally but I used to play at quite a high level...this sounds like this guy wants them to know how good he was at tennis – hasn't really explained why he's said this other than to make himself look good. It is such a mental sport and I think it's hard for people to know that when you're working with someone or a new set of players, knowing the specifics of the sport is crucial. Playing also gives me the understanding of what it's like to be a kid playing high level sport, I know the pressures to perform and stand out...Why does this help – really need to explain this...how does this mean he will be a better psych?

Manipulation

Interviewer 1 (I1): Good morning, come in and take a seat, my name is Ian and I'm the head of performance support here, and this is Sarah, our coaching lead

Interviewer 2 (I2): Good morning, thank you for coming in, how are you?

A: **Hi, I'm Alex, I'm good thanks**

I1: Okay so again thank you for coming in today, we asked you to come in so we could get to know you a bit better than we can from your application and how you would fit in with us here. After this session with us, we'll take you on a quick tour and you'll meet some of the coaches, and some of our other staff, does that sound okay?

A: **Okay, sounds good – very standoff-ish, I think it would work for this purpose but this guy wouldn't be giving the best impression with that sort of response**

I2: So, to begin with, we just want to know what motivated you to apply for this role?

A: **Well I think I fit your job description well. Good...very assured – edging on being cocky. I'm working in a similar environment now and I have had great success there. To build on this cocky start, I would add in something about psych being the best thing in the world that can cure all your ailments!! You know I feel like moving my current programme to this set-up would help these kids pretty quickly. My current role is only part-time, and I'm looking for something more full-time, that I can spend my whole time doing rather than seeking additional private work. I've got a background in Tennis too, so it fits quite well. Really, I just feel like Sport Psychology could have a great impact here for your kids. Really not explaining and saying his one size fits all way is going to do it for me...something ive heard too many times before**

I1: Okay, so if you're successful, your role would be with our elite academy players, so as a psych, to what extent do you feel it is possible to influence the characteristics of our athletes?

A: **Again, I would really drill into this guys cockiness he started out with..." sport psych is the best, we're going to win medals and world titles etc etc" It can have a great influence, you know it can completely transform an athlete. I guess if you've tried everything else then you're turning to Sport Psychology. I honestly believe that it can have the effect that you guys are looking for. I don't think there is anything that we couldn't tackle, you used the term characteristics and I think sport psychology can influence all characteristics both in and out of sport, and I think that that influence can take effect pretty quickly. I've just finished**

working with one athlete who was struggling to come back from an injury and had confidence and anxiety issues, but through work with me, and utilising sport psychology he's now back to playing. I think yeah, Sport Psychology is everything and I think if you haven't got it, you need it, and you can't really get enough. **Maybe put in here a moderating statement like...I know it sounds too good to be true, makes him sound like he knows he's exaggerating but trying to make it believable**

I1: You alluded to it there, but we have a full support program here for our athletes, where do you see sport psychology fitting in here?

A: What, with the other sport sciences? **Quite abrupt "what?"**

I2: Yes

A: Well I think it's potentially the most important piece of the sport science puzzle, you know, if an athlete has been going through all of their physical training and nutrition and things like that, don't get me wrong, I think they are important, but if they have all done that together and similar to other athletes then it is their mentality that will set them apart and so I believe that at this stage of their development they need to be focusing the majority of their time on psychology and how to improve themselves within themselves rather than focusing on physical training so much – **For me this is really getting at your collab. part...really making him sound superior**

I1: So as the new role would you want to be first priority in terms of scheduling?

A: Well yeah, **I would still make a nod to the other guys, say that they still have a part to play or something along those lines...** I don't think your players can get enough sport psychology. I think that if you feel like there is a need to bring in a psych you know that it's needed here so I would, yeah, I would at least want set times where they come and see me, and I wouldn't really want anything to interrupt or cut our time short.

I1: Okay so what do you see are the day to day roles of a sport psychologist within a youth development environment like this? And what would your program of work look like?

A: Well I have worked in youth development environments before and have developed a way that I work so I would stick to that, I like to work individually with athletes, and really try to work with them on how to improve their game, you know, it's worked for me before and it's what I know **Get him to talk about**

how it will definitely work just as well here, then at least he is linking it to performance benefits our end. So, on a day to day basis I would observe their training sessions with their coaches, bring them in individually and work to improve the characteristics that come up in our conversations with each other. So that is really individualistic, maybe give examples of what this sort of thing will be...provides a bit more realism as most psychs will be able to give at least something they want to work on everyone will need something slightly different. I also see myself as being someone that the players can go to if they need to talk, you know I would set myself as that person. So yeah on a day to day I would begin to implement the programme I've used before, because I know it works, I would watch their trainings, and their matches when I could get to them. Go back to that point about needing to talk? Doesn't really explain that very well and it's something we would press on so maybe add it in more here at the end

I2: So how do you think your previous experiences lend themselves to this role?

A: Well as I've said, I work in an environment very much like this and sport psychology has shown to be effective with those kids again at least link it to the current role...how is this going to help us? That's given me the knowledge of what works, and what aspects of sport psych we would need to focus. So yeah professionally I think I have set myself up perfectly. I also have a background in tennis so that lends itself to this. Maybe add in something about his level of tennis or how good he was? Adds to his credibility but if he doesn't explain why that would fit nicely with your last skill about presenting themselves

Appendix 8:

Video Vignettes (study two)

On DVD inside front cover

Appendix 9:
Video Vignette Final Play Scripts

Control Script

Interviewer 1 (I1): Good morning, come in and take a seat, my name is Ian and I'm the head of performance support here, and this is Sarah, our head of coaching

Interviewer 2 (I2): Good morning, thank you for coming in, how are you?

A: Good morning, I'm Alex, I'm good thanks, how are you?

I1: I'm good thanks Alex. Okay so again thank you for coming in today, we asked you to come in so we could get to know you a bit better than we can from your application and how you would fit in with us here. After this session with us, we'll take you on a quick tour and you'll meet some of the coaches, and some of our other staff, does that sound okay?

A: That sounds great, from what I've seen so far, you've got a great set-up here, I'm excited to have a proper look around, and see the heart of this academy. I wish I had something like this when I was growing up

I2: So, to begin with, we just want to know what motivated you to apply for this role?

A: What motivated me to apply? Well I'm currently working within an academy in cricket that's got a similar set-up to the one here, and I really enjoy it, I love working with the different age groups that academies allow you to work with, and the amount of work and experience you can gain in a short amount of time, but unfortunately it's only a part-time role, and I'm looking for something more full-time, that I can devote my whole time to rather than seeking additional private work. What motivates me to this particular role is that my personal experience really lies in Tennis, you know, I used to play, and that's really where I started to gain my experience as a psych, working with local tennis clubs and groups. I think that tennis is such a personal sport and that you need a good knowledge of what these players experience, day to day and I think that through playing and working in Tennis I can understand that. So, I guess what motivated me was that I saw the job advert and I got excited by it, it just jumped out at me because I think it's a good fit for me here. I then asked a couple of friends that know about some of the other LTA academies and they told me what it was like, and I just wanted to apply even more.

I1: Okay, so if you're successful, your role would be with our elite academy players, so as a psych, to what extent do you feel it is possible to influence the characteristics of our athletes?

A: So, I think Sport psychology has great potential to influence performers, especially with athletes in academies. And I don't think it's just athletic characteristics either, their characteristics outside of sport can also be influenced and enhanced. I'm not saying it's a miracle cure or that I can provide a quick fix if there is any issue that you think there may be with any player, but I really believe that it can benefit performers. In my current role I worked with one athlete who injured his shoulder and was struggling to come back into bowling because he was nervous about doing it again, but through working with the player, the physio and myself, we managed to reduce his anxiety and got him slowly back to playing again and we rebuilt his efficacy so that he was performing at the same standard as before the injury.

I1: You alluded to it there, but we have a full support program here for our athletes, where do you see sport psychology fitting in here?

A: In terms of with the other sport sciences?

I2: Yes

A: Okay, well yeah, as I said I've worked with the physio in that example and I think that all the sport science professionals need to work as a co-operative team in order to really help an athlete, so in terms of fitting in, I would want to fit in with the team that you already have. It's important to me that an athlete gets the full support that can be provided so yeah, I think it would complement the current program.

I1: So as the new role would you want to be first priority in terms of scheduling?

A: Not at all, I think everyone should have an equal time. I understand that coaching will have the top priority and will take the majority of the players time. In terms of any individual work I prefer to work on a basis of players can come and see me, an open-door sort of policy, and then we can individually schedule future sessions around their pre-existing ones. In terms of workshops and group sessions I would like the scheduled in but I understand that sometimes things may overrun or get in the way of certain aspects of my work but that is unavoidable sometimes.

I1: Okay so what do you see are the day to day roles of a sport psychologist within a youth development environment like this? And what would your program of work look like?

A: Okay, so if I answer the second question first. So, I think it's important to collaborate with yourselves on the actual, final programme, but I would bring in the aspects of programmes that I have used before and we can tailor it to your needs. So, I believe that especially with the younger age groups, workshops are very effective in introducing psych to the athletes and beginning to get them thinking about their own performance and that's where the individual work comes from, they see these things in workshops and they think "Oh that sounds like me" and they want to talk about it further. For the older guys, individual work is more of a focus, to prepare them for the next stage of their careers and development. Obviously, that's how I see this working, but with your input we could build this into a programme that in my experience I see working, and you can get the programme that you were thinking of when you advertised this position. On a day to day basis, as well as the workshops which would focus on a different topic each week, and the individual sessions would take up a bit of time with regards to the older players. I would keep some time each day free for the open-door sessions in order to promote the players staying comfortable with the idea of coming to see me and opening up about any issues that may be there. Other than that, I think that it's important for me to observe their training sessions to see how they interact with other players and their coaches. Alongside training, I would endeavour to attend as many matches as I could where it was feasible, if not I would try and get some tapes of their matches to watch and to gain an insight of the players attitudes. So yeah, sorry if I went on but that's a quick insight into how I see a role in Sport Psych developing here.

I2: So how do you think your previous experiences lend themselves to this role?

A: As I said earlier I think I have experiences from a variety of sources really. I think that professionally, my work in academies, not only cricket but football as well has developed an understanding of what is important to work with performers of this age and within an environment like this I know the important aspects of developing programmes and working with colleagues. It's a different nature of work between my own private work and as part of an interdisciplinary team. Now whilst professionally my experience is in similar environments, personally I grew up playing tennis and still do recreationally but I used to play at quite a high level. I'm not saying this to brag, but that experience helps me to

know the pressures of tennis itself as a sport, you know it is such a mental sport and I think it's hard for people to know that when you're working with someone or a new set of players, knowing the specifics of the sport is crucial. Playing also gives me the understanding of what it's like to be a kid playing high level sport, I know the pressures to perform and stand out. And I've found that athletes are more open when you can be empathetic to their situations because you can draw on your own experiences.

Manipulation

Interviewer 1 (I1): Good morning, come in and take a seat, my name is Ian and I'm the head of performance support here, and this is Sarah, our head of coaching

Interviewer 2 (I2): Good morning, thank you for coming in, how are you?

A: Hi, I'm Alex, I'm good thanks

I1: Okay so again thank you for coming in today, we asked you to come in so we could get to know you a bit better than we can from your application and how you would fit in with us here. After this session with us, we'll take you on a quick tour and you'll meet some of the coaches, and some of our other staff, does that sound okay?

A: Okay, sounds good

I2: So, to begin with, we just want to know what motivated you to apply for this role?

A: Well I think I fit your job description well. I'm working in a similar environment now and I have had great success there. Now if you haven't got a Sport Psych here then it is obviously needed. You know I feel like moving my current programme to this set-up would help these kids pretty quickly. My current role is only part-time, and I'm looking for something more full-time, that I can spend my whole time doing rather than seeking additional private work. I've got a background in Tennis too, so it fits quite well. Really, I just feel like Sport Psychology could have a great impact here for your kids.

I1: Okay, so if you're successful, your role would be with our elite academy players, so as a psych, to what extent do you feel it is possible to influence the characteristics of our athletes?

A: In my experience, sport psychology is everything when trying to improve an athlete. It is what will set your players apart from the rest. It can have a great influence, you know it can completely transform an athlete. I guess if you've tried everything else then you're turning to Sport Psychology. I honestly believe that it can have the effect that you guys are looking for. I don't think there is anything that we couldn't tackle, you used the term characteristics and I think sport psychology can influence all characteristics both in and out of sport, and I think that that influence can take effect pretty quickly. I've just finished working with one athlete who was struggling to come back from an injury and had confidence and anxiety issues, but through work with me, and utilising sport psychology he's now back to playing. I think yeah, Sport Psychology is everything and I think if you haven't got it, you need it, and you can't really get

enough. I know it sounds like a big claim, but you know I think that every athlete needs sport psychology and that it is what will make a difference in their performances.

I1: You alluded to it there, but we have a full support program here for our athletes, where do you see sport psychology fitting in here?

A: **What, with the other sport sciences?**

I2: Yes

A: **Well I think it's potentially the most important piece of the sport science puzzle, you know, if an athlete has been going through all of their physical training and nutrition and things like that, don't get me wrong, I think they are important, but if they have all done that together and similar to other athletes then it is their mentality that will set them apart and so I believe that at this stage of their development they need to be focusing the majority of their time on psychology and how to improve themselves within themselves rather than focusing on physical training so much**

I1: So as the new role would you want to be first priority in terms of scheduling?

A: **Well yeah, I'm not saying it should be the only thing, but I don't think your players can get enough sport psychology. I think that if you feel like there is a need to bring in a psych you know that it's needed here so I would, yeah, I would at least want set times where they come and see me, and I wouldn't really want anything to interrupt or cut our time short.**

I1: Okay so what do you see are the day to day roles of a sport psychologist within a youth development environment like this? And what would your program of work look like?

A: **Well I have worked in youth development environments before and have developed a way that I work so I would stick to that, I like to work individually with athletes, and really try to work with them on how to improve their game, you know, it's worked for me before and it's what I know. I know it works and I know that it will get the same response here. So, on a day to day basis I would observe their training sessions with their coaches, bring them in individually and work to improve the characteristics that come up in our conversations with each other. So that is really individualistic, like some of them may have you know a need for some sort of arousal regulation work, or some may need, well you know everyone will need something slightly different. I also see myself as being**

someone that the players can go to if they need to talk, you know I would set myself as that person. So yeah on a day to day I would begin to implement the programme I've used before, because I know it works, I would watch their trainings, and their matches when I could get to them. And yeah, I would work individually with all of the players on the areas that present themselves, and I would be around for them if they felt the need to discuss anything further.

I2: So how do you think your previous experiences lend themselves to this role?

A: Well as I've said, I work in an environment very much like this and sport psychology has shown to be effective with those kids and I don't see why it wouldn't work the same here. That's given me the knowledge of what works, and what aspects of sport psych we would need to focus. So yeah professionally I think I have set myself up perfectly. I also have a background in tennis so that lends itself to this.

Appendix 10:
Participant Measures (study two)

Entry or Exit: Trainee sport psychology consultants perspective on the entry interview

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM
(to be completed after Participant Information Sheet has been read)**

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further scientific knowledge and that all procedures have been approved by the Loughborough University Ethics Approvals (Human Participants) Sub-Committee. Yes ☐ No ☐

I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form. Yes ☐ No ☐

I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation. Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study. Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and that I will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing. Yes ☐ No ☐

I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in strict confidence and will be kept anonymous and confidential to the researchers unless (under the statutory obligations of the agencies which the researchers are working with), it is judged that confidentiality will have to be breached for the safety of the participant or others. Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree to participate in this study. Yes ☐ No ☐

Your name _____

Your signature _____

Signature of investigator _____

Date _____

Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer following questions:

What is your gender?

___ Male

___ Female

What is your age?

What subject was your BSc gained in?

Where was this gained?

Where are you currently studying/did you study an MSc?

Do you have any practical experience working within Sport Psychology?

___ N/A ___ < 6 months ___ 6-12 months ___ 1-2 years

___ 2-5 years ___ 5-10 years ___ 10-20 years ___ 21-30 years

Sheet 2

For each of the areas below, rate the first interviewee and circle the response that best characterises how you perceived this individual.

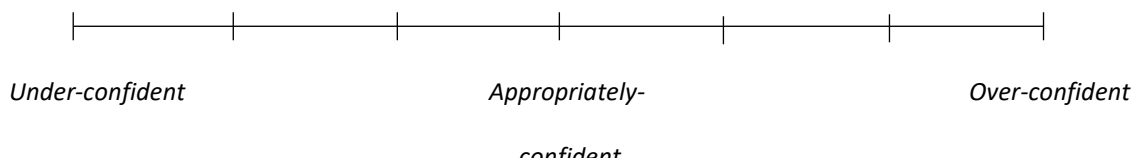
1. Consultant Affability

The ability of the candidate to build rapport with other individuals, develop trust and respect, and to produce a positive environment between themselves and others.



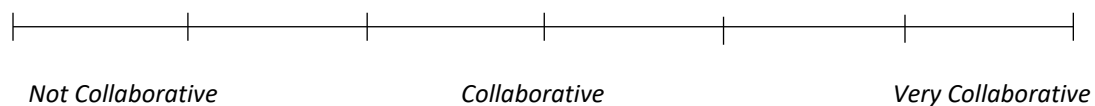
2. Confidence in Sport Psychology

The confidence that the candidate has in the effectiveness, usefulness, and potential outcomes of Sport Psychology within the prospective role.



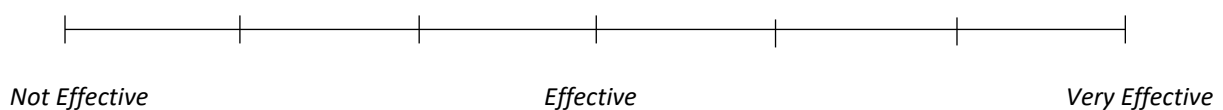
3. Finding Common Ground

The ability of the candidate to collaboratively and co-operatively work with employers, colleagues, and athletes, on programmes of work and within interdisciplinary teams



4. Presentation of Consultant Competencies

The ability of the candidate to effectively present their competencies and characteristics, such as athletic background, sport-specific knowledge, and experience, and how these relate to the current role.



Sheet 2

For each of the areas below, rate the second interviewee and circle the response that best characterises how you perceived this individual.

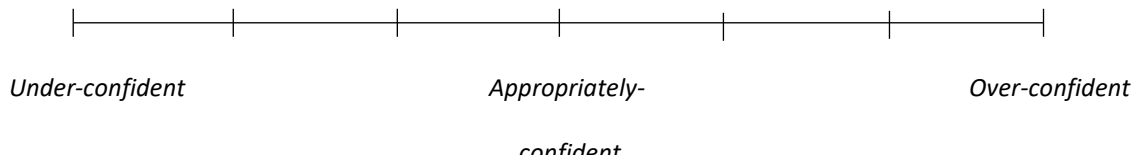
1. Consultant Affability

The ability of the candidate to build rapport with other individuals, develop trust and respect, and to produce a positive environment between themselves and others.



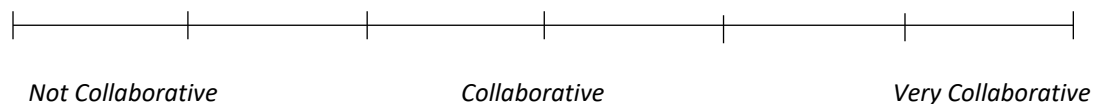
2. Confidence in Sport Psychology

The confidence that the candidate has in the effectiveness, usefulness, and potential outcomes of Sport Psychology within the prospective role.



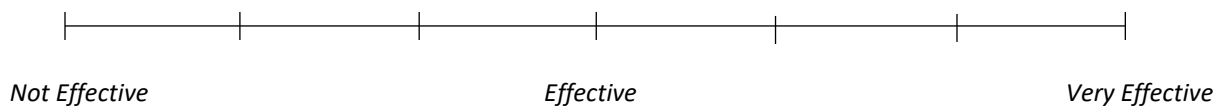
3. Finding Common Ground

The ability of the candidate to collaboratively and co-operatively work with employers, colleagues, and athletes, on programmes of work and within interdisciplinary teams



4. Presentation of Consultant Competencies

The ability of the candidate to effectively present their competencies and characteristics, such as athletic background, sport-specific knowledge, and experience, and how these relate to the current role.



Sheet 2

For each of the areas below, rate where you believe an interviewer would rate you at this current time.

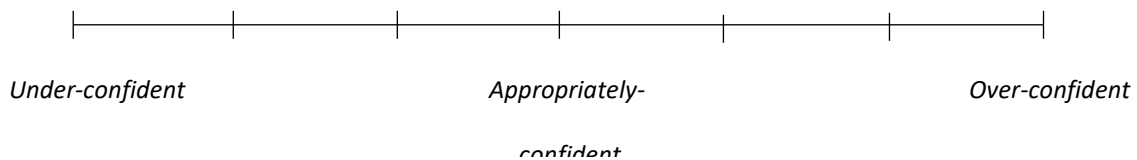
1. Consultant Affability

My ability of the candidate to build rapport with other individuals, develop trust and respect, and to produce a positive environment between myself and others.



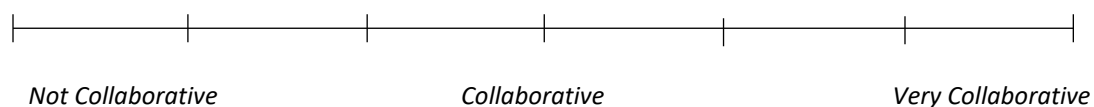
2. Confidence in Sport Psychology

My confidence in the effectiveness, usefulness, and potential outcomes of Sport Psychology within the prospective role.



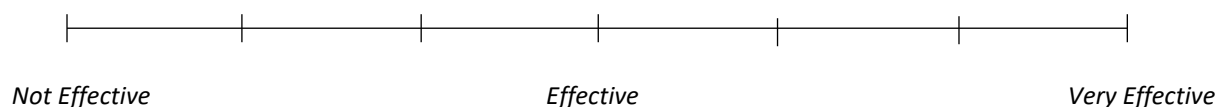
3. Finding Common Ground

My ability to collaboratively and co-operatively work with employers, colleagues, and athletes, on programmes of work and within interdisciplinary teams



4. Presentation of Consultant Competencies

My ability to effectively present my competencies and characteristics, such as athletic background, sport-specific knowledge, and experience, and how these relate to the current role.



Appendix 11:

Trainee Sport Psychologist Interview Transcript Example (study two)

I = Interviewer

P = Participant

Introduction and interview validation were not transcribed.

Video vignette 1

I: Are there any general observations that stand out to you?

P: uh he was a very confident individual wasn't he, um yeah probably in my opinion a bit too, it sounds like he's trying to force it down their neck a bit, I uh psychology is everything, I can uhh all it can look at all the characteristics, and um it sort of neglects all the rest of the sport science stuff like he talked about how nutritionists or whatever if they're not working then sport psychology can provide the answer to all of their problems that they may have or not have um and he was very fixated on what he'd done in the past and how that had worked to great success um and how he was going to do that again and stick to the same plan and he was yeah he was pretty confident that he was going to get the same response, but then he started talking about individual things, about individual needs, well which kinda doesn't really sort of fit with the idea of using the same thing and getting the same response in my opinion but that was pretty much it, he was a very confident individual

I: Okay, so do you think there were any strengths to his approach?

P: um if yeah if he, that confidence, possibly if he toned it down a little bit like can come sort of um can come across as he knows what he's doing basically that he has knowledge he's got the skill and stuff but the way that he went about it I I'd it would kind of put me off a bit on him and his sort of approach

I: So, were there any specific phrases that stood out to you?

P: Yeah, yeah, all his phrases like yeah sport psychology is everything um he wants set times stick to the same plan and get the same response he had great success in the past and I think he said something like it'll definitely work for your kids or whatever it was those responses

I: Would you class that confidence as a weakness to his interview approach?

P: Yeah, he was too forward, too um yeah.

Video vignette 2

I: Were there any general observations that stand out to you?

P: Um he was not to compare it to the first one too much but he was less um forward than the first one he seemed a bit more um he was still confident and sort of demonstrated a knowledge and of the area and of sport psychology and of his tennis and of his previous

experiences but he was a bit less sort of like in your face a bit less um yeah yeah a bit less in your face really um what else did I say umm he yeah he wasn't whereas the other one was the be all and end all he wasn't the be all and end all he was part of that interdisciplinary team I think he called it and he was really big on collaboration and um being in that team which I think would appeal to the employer in terms of obviously he's mindful of the whole rather than just the singular, um, and he seemed very understanding to that team and the flexibility the role might require in terms of like um when he might have access to players or when uh tailoring to the needs of the players I think he said, um, yeah overall to me him seemed a bit more professional than the first video.

I: Okay so they all appear to be strengths; would you say there were any weaknesses to his approach?

P: the only one I can possibly think of was like but depends on what the sort of employer is wanting I suppose because he was very accommodating in terms of like um say if they do want someone who is going to come in and change things a little quickly he wasn't keen on that idea, he was more of a growth over time sort of thing whereas um like I said if they want someone to come in and straight away change something up or produce change quickly then he wasn't going provide that basically, it depends what the employer wants.

I: And if you were the employer which would you choose?

P: Video 2

Presentation of four areas

I: Okay so we are now going to progress into some questions that act as more of a self-reflection exercise, for this I want you to imagine you are going to interview for a SPC job, and you get asked similar questions to the ones you have just seen, and for each of those four areas, how do you think an employer would score you?

P: Affability um probably if I was to score out of 7 like a 5/6 ish, like I feel like I'm, I'd be quite approachable, quite sort of um I'd be able to build rapport with other individuals and develop trust and respect, um, obviously that trust comes from sort of you don't just get that immediately, you have to build that relationship um but like I wouldn't go in there all guns blazing trying to change things up everything I would take my time to start with and um yeah I feel like I wouldn't try to change anyone else's ways of working I'd not accommodate my ways of working sort of to directly fit everyone else's but I'd be aware and sort of um accepting to their sort of methods because obviously they'd be there before me or whatever, but yeah I'd be able to sort of I like I'd be able to converse with them and be friendly

I: Where does that score derive from? What experiences have led to you giving yourself that score?

P: through sort of I think one's, not to go too deep but like upbringing and in terms of experience from a young age sort of developing into where I am now like um it's sort of that family background of being friendly to others and being like approachable and not sort of uh assuming others might be terrible people or whatever and wanting to try and sort of build relationships with other people rather than putting up barriers to not communicate with others um I suppose it kind of it's a bit more a focus on extraversion in terms of trying to make new friends or meet new people and sort of communicate with others in terms of that um and like I said that starts from a young age at school and stuff but then obviously in my experience I went to university I moved away from home and if you don't make friends at university then um it's probably going to be a difficult three years um not to say that I did it out of necessity, it was more just wanting to meet new people and build relationships with other people and again this year doing the Master's it's all new people, different people, so if you don't build that sort of relationship or rapport or talk to people then you're not going to sort of it's going to be a very difficult year in terms of where you go or who you talk to, or who you sit next to or so yeah if that answers the question

I: So, moving onto the confidence in sport psychology scale, if you'd like to go through the same process?

P: In terms of if I was in an interview...

I: How do you think you'd come across in terms of your confidence in sport psychology?

P: Um probably to be honest not as confident as I should be, in terms of um I'd try to sell it a little bit but in terms of my experiences and um what I've been able to achieve with say sports people so far like I don't feel like I have that confidence to go in and say yeah I'll be able to um change up this change up that whatever not to say that I'd undersell myself um but I wouldn't go and sort of claim that I'd be able to do wonders sort of yeah I think it's dependent on experience if I'm honest in terms of how confident you are and how I'd be able to sort of explain why SP would be useful and why and how it could benefit that person or club or whatever but in terms of my personal ability to do that at the moment it would probably be um less so than they would be expecting or that they'd want

I: So, do you think that is solely down to a lack of experience?

P: Yeah definitely, through the experience you have definitely sort of plays in how confident you are in terms of your what you can do what your outcomes can be off that

I: So, onto the finding common ground scale?

P: I'd like to think I'd be collaborative in that sort of area because I did sport science as a degree I feel that I have an appreciation of all like how all the different disciplines and part work to create the whole so then I'm not just going in there sport psychology is going to do this get rid of your nutritionist or whatever because I understand how everything fits in as a whole and how you need to um integrate them together rather than distinctly separately because I don't think that's the best approach either it's how they all work together, how the cogs get put together sort of thing so I'd like to think that I'd be able to work well with others and yeah and find common ground where things need to work or change or whatever

I: So, you'd put yourself towards the top of the table?

P: Yeah

I: Okay and in terms of being able to present your own competencies?

P: in terms of that um I think I'd be okay but I've never played I used to play football but I've never played at a very high level um so in terms of competence in that I'd be competent in I have knowledge in football but others buy in to that in my opinion if you've got a um a high level sporting background you're kind of already half way there in terms of you understand or others might think that you understand that sport a bit than someone else who hasn't got that sporting background. So say if you've got an ex professional footballer and someone who played Sunday league, the knowledge you have from being a professional is obviously heightened to that compared to a Sunday league player in terms of what goes on at the highest level so depending on what sort of job you're applying for the competencies that you have previously massively impacts sort of how you relate those things to the role that you're applying for, so in terms of myself um I'd probably say I'm in the middle but I feel like you need to have to demonstrate that more clearly you need to have a higher you need to have an appreciation of what is needed at a high level if that is the role your applying for

I: okay so if this was for a role that was at the same level you have played at; how do you think you would be able to present your background?

P: I'd have more background than someone who say hasn't played before, I'd be able to convey that sort of knowledge, I'd be able to understand the rules and what is required of a footballer and what is required of um the characteristics that are desirable that need to be worked on more so than someone that hasn't got that background

I: And do you think you could put that across in an interview?

P: I'd try to be descriptive in terms of yeah, I played tennis um this is um what I think is important in tennis this is what I appreciate to be like the key things and or describe and

explain why those are important and how sport psychology can sort of benefit those um characteristics

I: So, considering your self-ratings on those four scales, what do you think would help you to develop these skills to the ideal level?

P: um definitely practice in terms of um gaining experience at maybe a lesser level cause obviously one of the things I would say is a lack of confidence whereas the only way to get that lack of confidence you sort of need experience, um so I'm not sure sort of.

I: So, if you cannot gain actual experience, how do you think this could be developed?

P: I think it's an awareness of what is needed in that role, and as you go through that role or whatever your confidence will grow but to get it to a state at the start of the role where you can start it then basically then yeah any training, any experience you can gain, any other expertise from yourself, it's all about learning about from what's around you and sort of being aware of what you specifically what you need to do to improve to get to that level. there's no point in looking at everything, you need to look at the specifics of what you want and need

Appendix 12:
Participant Information Sheet (study three)

Adult Participant Information Sheet



Investigators Details:

T.Woolway@lboro.ac.uk

Mr. Toby Woolway
SSEHS,
Loughborough University,
Epinal Way,
Loughborough,
LE11 3TU

Prof. Chris Harwood
SSEHS,
Loughborough University,
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Loughborough,
LE11 3TU
C.G.Harwood@lboro.ac.uk

We would like to invite you to take part in our study. Before you decide, we would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the current study is to further examine the relationship between varying individual factors and Sport Psychologists' employment interview skills as identified within previous research within the current project.

Who is doing this research and why?

This study is part of a student research project supported by Loughborough University. This research will be conducted by the researchers as detailed above.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be required to complete an online questionnaire consisting of a demographic information section and 3 measures examining the study variables. The whole process should take no longer than 10 minutes.

Once I take part, can I change my mind?

Yes. After you have read this information and asked any questions you may have, if you are happy to participate we will ask you to complete an Informed Consent Form, however if at any time, before or during completion of the questionnaire, you wish to withdraw from the study please just contact the main investigator. You can withdraw at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing.

However, once the results of the study are aggregated, it will not be possible to withdraw your individual data from the research.

Will I be required to attend any sessions and where will these be?

You will not be required to attend any sessions.

How long will it take?

The expected time to complete the entire process is approximately 10 minutes.

What personal information will be required from me?

The study will require you to complete basic demographic items relating to age, gender and ethnicity. Additionally, you will be required to identify details relating to your education, professional accreditation, and basic information regarding your professional experience.

Are there any disadvantages or risks in participating?

There are no disadvantages or risks in participating.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Data will be anonymised at source as no identifying information is required from participants.

I have some more questions; who should I contact?

If you have any further questions, please contact Mr Toby Woolway through the contact details provided at the beginning of this form.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of the study will be disseminated and presented in a research paper.

What if I am not happy with how the research was conducted?

If you are not happy with how the research was conducted, please contact the Secretary of the Ethics Approvals (Human Participants) Sub-Committee, Research Office, Hazlerigg Building, Loughborough University, Epinal Way, Loughborough, LE11 3TU. Tel: 01509 222423. Email: researchpolicy@lboro.ac.uk

The University also has policies relating to Research Misconduct and Whistle Blowing which are available online at <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/committees/ethics-approvals-human-participants/additionalinformation/codesofpractice/> .

Appendix 13:

Online Survey Measures (study three)

Sport Psychology Interview Skills

Survey is Open

Changes may result in lost or corrupted responses.

p.1 Informed Consent

Add item

This project is looking to build an understanding of the required business skills within Sport Psychology.

The findings of the research will help to inform future training of Sport Psychologists, both those already working within the field and those trainees entering for the first time.

We are recruiting individuals that are either conducting applied work in the field of sport psychology, or those who are currently enrolled on an applied sport psychology training route (e.g. BPS QSEP Stage 2). The survey will take no longer than 10 minutes.

Add item

1 Please read and respond to each of the following of statements: *

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further scientific knowledge and that all procedures have been approved by the Loughborough University Ethics Approvals (Human Participants) Sub-Committee.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study, have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in this study.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that all the personal information I provide will be treated in strict confidence and will be kept anonymous and confidential to the researchers unless (under the statutory obligations of the agencies which the researchers are working with), it is judged that confidentiality will have to be breached for the safety of the participant or others or for audit by regulatory authorities.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree for the anonymised data I provide to be securely archived to a data repository at the end of the project	<input type="checkbox"/>

Add item

2 T What is your age?

Add item

Add item

3 What is your gender? *

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

Add item

Add item

4 T What is your nationality?

Add item

Add item

p.3 Education Information

Add item

This page requires you to respond to items regarding your educational background. Please provide as much detail in response to the items as possible.

Add item


5 T Please provide the subject title of your first degree (i.e. BSc/BA Psychology/ Sport Sciences; if you do not have a degree please enter N/A): *

Add item

Add item


6 If you have gained (or are currently gaining) a second degree (i.e. MSc, MA Sport Psychology), please provide the subject title of this degree (if you do not have a second degree please enter N/A): *

Add item

7  If you have gained a further degree (i.e. PhD) please provide the subject area this was gained in (e.g. Physiology, Biomechanics, Psychology; if you do not hold a further degree please enter N/A): *

Add item

Add item

8  Do you hold any professional accreditations/professional training relating to sport psychology (e.g., QSEP Stage 2, BASES, AASP, HCPC registered, or any other national licensing bodies)? If this training is ongoing please state "ongoing". *


Add item

Add item


p.4 Experience Information



Add item


 This section requires you to answer questions relating to your applied experience as a Sport Psychologist.

Add item

9  For how many years have you been practicing as a Sport Psychologist?


Add item

Add item


10  During this time, how many FULL-TIME applied Sport Psychology positions have you held? (Please provide as accurate an answer as possible) *

Add item

Add item

11  During this time, how many PART-TIME applied Sport Psychology positions have you held? (Please provide as accurate an answer as possible) *


Add item

a  For these part-time positions, how many days per month did the position require?

Add item


Add item

Add item

12  During this time, how many WORK EXPERIENCE/ VOLUNTEER applied Sport Psychology positions have you held? (Please provide as accurate an answer as possible) *


Add item

Add item

13  During this time, how many clients have you worked with on a consultancy basis?


Add item

Add item

14  Whether successful or unsuccessful, for how many positions have you had to go through a formal employment interview process? *

Add item

Add item

15  How many of these times have you been successful when going through a formal interview process? *


Add item

Add item



p.5 Scale 1



Add item



 The following section requires you to answer questions on a number of different scales.

Please answer as honestly as possible, and we would like to take this opportunity to remind you that this information will remain confidential.

16   Please read each of the following statements and rate the extent to which it describes your feelings about friendships. Please think about all your friendships (past and present) and respond in terms of how you generally feel in these friendships *




	1 Never true	2	3 Sometimes true	4	5 Always true
I like to get my friends' point of view on things I'm concerned about	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My friends sense when I'm upset about something	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When we discuss things, my friends consider my point of view	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Talking over my problems with my friends makes me feel ashamed or foolish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wish I had different friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My friends understand me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My friends encourage me to talk about my difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My friends accept me as I am	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel the need to be in touch with my friends more often	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My friends do not understand what I'm going through these days	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel alone or apart when I am with my friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My friends listen to what I have to say	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel my friends are good friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My friends are fairly easy to talk to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When I am angry about something, my friends try to be understanding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My friends help me to understand myself better	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My friends are concerned about my well-being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel angry with my friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can count on my friends when I need to get something off my chest	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I trust my friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My friends respect my feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get upset a lot more than my friends know about	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It seems as if my friends are irritated with me for no reason	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I tell my friends about my problems and troubles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If my friends know something is bothering me, they ask me about it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Add item




17   Please read each of the following statements and rate the extent to which it describes your feelings about your parents. *

	1 Never true	2	3 Sometimes true	4	5 Always true
My parents respected my feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I felt my parents were successful as parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wish I had different parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My parents accepted me as I was	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I had to rely on myself when I had a problem to solve	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I liked to get my parents' point of view on things I was concerned about	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I felt it was no use letting my feelings show	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My parents sensed when I was upset about something	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Talking over my problems with my parents made me feel ashamed or foolish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My parents expected too much from me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I got upset easily at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I got upset a lot more than my parents knew about	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When we discussed things, my parents considered my point of view	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My parents had their own problems, so I did not bother them with mine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My parents trusted my judgement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My parents helped me to understand myself better	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I told my parents about my problems and troubles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I felt angry with my parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I did not get much attention at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My parents encouraged me to talk about my difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My parents understood me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I do not know whom I can depend on these days	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When I was angry about something, my parents tried to be understanding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I trusted my parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My parents do not understand what I am going through these days	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I could count on my parents when I needed to get something off my chest	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I felt that no one understood me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If my parents knew something was bothering me, they would ask me about it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Add item




 Please read each of the following statements and respond with how confident you are that you can successfully display each ability during a formal employment interview for a role as a Sport Psychologist.  

Add item

18   Please rate how confident you are that you can successfully: *  

	1 Not at all	2	3	4 To some extent	5	6	7 To a great extent
Build rapport with the interviewer(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Present myself as appropriately confident in the usefulness of sport psychology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not exaggerate the potential benefits or time requirements of a sport psychology programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Market my skills and abilities during the job interview	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Demonstrate realistic potential outcomes of a sport psychology programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Present my philosophy of practice to the interviewer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop realistic expectations of the effectiveness of sport psychology support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Effectively present my personal competencies and how these relate to a role	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Demonstrate an ability to collaborate with potential employers and other employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop and gain the interviewer's trust and respect	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make the best impression during the job interview	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Describe how my personal characteristics relate to the role in an effective way	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Effectively describe how my experiences and knowledge of sport lend themselves to a role	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work with the interviewer to develop a consultancy programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Display my ability to work as part of an interdisciplinary team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Produce a positive environment between myself and the interviewer(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Add item

 Thank you for taking part in this research.  

The aim of the research is to further examine the relationship between a number of factors and individuals employment interview skills and perceptions of these skills. These factors were highlighted by participants in an earlier study within this project. We hope that understanding these links further will inform future professional development opportunities for sport psychologists.

Thank you once again for participating.

For any further information please do not hesitate to get in touch via:

t.woolway@lboro.ac.uk