

University of Southern Queensland

The Practice of Sport Psychology:
Telling Tales from the Field

A Dissertation submitted by

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ABSTRACT

The professional practice of sport psychology has received a tremendous amount of attention over the past two decades. Among the various studies and discussions to date, the most desirable and undesirable sport psychology consultant characteristics have been reported (Orlick & Partington, 1987); boundaries for sport science and psychology trained practitioners in applied sport psychology have been suggested (Taylor, 1994); and various models of delivery have been examined (Hardy & Parfitt, 1994). Recently, Andersen (2000) and Tenenbaum (2001) have called for a further examination of the process of sport psychology consultant-athlete interactions.

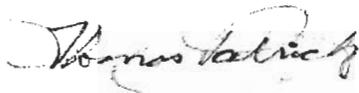
For example, Petitpas, Giges and Danish (1999) identified congruence, empathy and unconditional positive regard as important facilitative conditions in optimizing client-practitioner relationships. Many others have discussed the importance of establishing trust and respect as important factors relating to effective sport psychology service delivery (e.g. Halliwell, Orlick, Ravizza & Rotella, 1999; Ravizza, 2001). In order to further our understanding regarding the process of sport psychology practitioner-athlete interactions, a phenomenological inquiry was conducted in order to examine various lived experiences and associated meanings regarding the practice of sport psychology.

The focus of this study was to describe and interpret the socially generated and shared intersubjective meanings operative within the service delivery of applied sport psychology. To this end, various meanings emerged as a result of the study of the practice of sport

psychology. First, multiple identities were experienced by the practitioners and these created tensions both within the practitioner and with others in their immediate environment. Second, the practitioners' various roles and related actions were the result of negotiated realities that involved all members associated with their respective communities of practice. Finally, reflexive actions associated with practice occurred as the result of a number of contextual and internal considerations that occurred before, during and after incidents of practice. It was felt that by closely examining the nature of the interactions and individual perceptions of those involved in the process of sport psychology service delivery, a positive contribution could be made to the literature pertaining to the practice of sport psychology.

CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.



Signature of Candidate

September 19, 2005

Date

ENDORSEMENT



Signature of Supervisor/s

20th September 2005

Date

Date



26th SEPTEMBER 2005

Date

Date

DEDICATION

Anna-Marie,

You are my source of inspiration, patience, caring and love. You help make living my dream possible and I am so very lucky to have you in my life. Simply put...I love you! I look forward to changing roles and loving and supporting you in your upcoming graduate studies at the University of Victoria. A special thank you to Maggie, our wonderful eight month old golden retriever, for her unconditional love and for keeping my feet warm as I wrote the final chapters of my “big essay”.

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FIGURES

Figure 1. Construction of a tale from the field

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CHAPTER ONE

Focus of the Study

Considerations regarding applied sport psychology have long occupied the thoughts and writings of sport and exercise psychologists (e.g. Halliwell, Orlick, Ravizza, & Rotella, 1999; Hardy, Jones, & Gould, 1996; Poczwadowski, Sherman, & Henschen, 1998). To date, various approaches to psychological skills training have been presented (Morris & Thomas, 1995), a variety of consultation models have been discussed (Hardy & Parfitt, 1994; Perna, Neyer, Murphy, Ogilvie & Murphy, 1995), factors relating to the quality of the sport psychology practitioner-athlete relationship have been outlined (Petitpas, Giges, & Danish, 1999), and a range of attributes and traits that individuals should possess or develop to be effective sport psychologists have been suggested (Orlick & Partington, 1987).

Given the many psychological approaches and models of practice that have been reported within the sport psychology literature (e.g. Hill, 2001; Giges & Petitpas, 2000; LaRose, 1988), Fricker and Brockett (2002) suggested that the process of sport psychology service delivery “depends on the personality of the psychologist and the philosophy they hold for their practice” (p. 14). Similarly, Poczwadowski et al. (1998) commented that a consultant’s role should be clarified relative to the theoretical framework that is used.

With a tremendous range of applied practice represented, getting clear about the nature of applied sport psychology can be quite difficult, especially for the inexperienced or neophyte sport psychology practitioner.

For example, Orlick (1989) and Rotella (1990) stressed the need for flexibility and enter consultancy situations without any preconceived notions of how they will proceed. Sport psychology consultants have also been found to fulfill multiple roles in the work they do with athletes and coaches (Dunn & Holt, 2003; Werthner, 2000). They can often serve as a facilitator, educator, mediator, counsellor, friend, and problem-solver, and perform other tasks when required (Hardy & Parfitt, 1994; Singer, 1984). Within each role, important features and nuances must be considered for the delivery of sport psychology to be perceived favourably by both coaches and athletes.

In a recent book on *The Practice of Sport Psychology*, Tenenbaum (2001) determined there was no preferred manner of working with athletes, coaches and organizations that is preferable to others. As a result of reading the chapters, written by several experienced practitioners, Tenenbaum commented “their concerns and methods are not adequately represented in the published literature, and we lack sufficient knowledge to educate and prepare students who wish to become proficient in the practice of sport psychology” (p. 4). This was consistent with Andersen’s (2000) call for a further examination of the process of sport psychology so that future generations of researchers will recognise the importance of such research on practice. Furthermore, Simons and Andersen (1995) argue that a discussion of techniques themselves will not advance sport psychology as a discipline, but that an examination of the delivery of sport psychology techniques will lead to progress.

Acknowledging the Researcher's Voice

In traditional experimental design, Smith (1994) and others have suggested that the researcher's views can contaminate the study and "interfere with her/his role as neutral instrument in the project" (p. 254). However, Smith suggests that the presence of the researcher's views cannot be avoided and should be seen as a contribution to the research process itself. Given the interpretive nature of this study and its associated theoretical and epistemological underpinnings (to be thoroughly presented and discussed in subsequent chapters), it is important that I make known my interest for conducting this study. As Faulkner and Sparkes (1999) suggest "such information informs the reader more illustratively of any potential sets of interests that the researcher takes into the study that may or may not later be confirmed by immersion in the setting" (p. 56). Thus, the following represents a brief narrative of self pertaining to my work as both a practitioner and researcher within the field of applied sport psychology.

Locating My Practice within the Field

Poczwardowski, Sherman and Ravizza (2004) suggest "understanding one's personal and professional philosophy is among the essential prerequisites to an effective consulting practice" (p. 446). In their most recent article, the authors proposed a hierarchical structure of professional philosophy involving the following components: (a) personal core beliefs and values, (b) theoretical paradigm concerning behavior change, (c) models of practice and the consultant's role, (d) intervention goals, and (e) intervention techniques and methods.

Personal core beliefs and values. A number of central beliefs and values pertaining to human nature lie at the heart of my underlying and pervasive selves. First and foremost, I believe that human beings want to be good. Fundamental to this is the notion that one's actions are not simply an expression of their inherent motives but a representation of their personal values along with their subjectivities and early socialization experiences. For example, I would perceive one's lack of effort to be both value led, as well as a behavior that stemmed from their collective past social encounters. Although we are, for the most part, a sum of what we have experienced, one can, through a dedicated, determined effort, choose to break away from their current norms and related social learning to become more self-managed and less externally driven. A natural extension of this fundamental belief is that we must, over time, learn to be highly self-determined where we are personally responsible for our choices and actions but at the same time operate with an understanding of the importance that our environment places on the resulting actions that occur over time.

Second, I believe that we are all inherently free to choose but that there are some who are better positioned and privileged and hence have more freedom. For me, it is a balancing act with regard to the expectations that we develop about ourselves and others that we interact with and the necessity for one to accept their present circumstances without feeling restricted by them. For example, many developing athletes will have to balance the demands related to their roles as students, dedicated athletes and part-time employees, partners, careers etc. Over time, I have

learned to become more patient and supportive of athletes who tend to struggle with the level of stress they are experiencing given the demands that they face in balancing their multiple selves, as we have seldom seen athletes achieve their competitive goals when having to work along with attending school and training and competing in their respective sports.

A third personal belief is the notion that we continually contrive expectations about the future or become immersed in thinking about experiences that happened to us in the past. I believe that this has, in most western cultures, been socialized into us as a means of being “goal-driven” and success oriented. Related is the notion that we have become less able to immerse ourselves in the moment, on making the most of the time we have immediately in front of us. Ironically, this belief about human nature influences my own personal expectations about the ability of the athletes that I work with to be able to simply focus on the moment and continually deliver an optimal effort in both training and competitions. Authors such as Easwaran (2001) and Tolle (1999) have argued that becoming more conscious of our irrational thoughts and continually learning, over time, to become more “mindful” can pave the way for enhanced feelings of well-being as well as optimize our performances. This ability, however, must be systematically practiced for it is not inherent to our personal competencies in most western cultures. These beliefs continually find their way into the actions and judgements that constitute my professional practice. Similarly, so do a central set of personal values.

I would suggest that there are three unrelenting values that influence my practice. The first is the need to be humble. Perhaps the

best way to illustrate the importance of humility is to share a short vignette which to date represents my most enlightening moment as a practitioner in sport psychology.

We arrived home after an important international event where I had accompanied the team to provide psychological support at the competition site. As usual, I took a couple of days to recover and then resumed by usual routine of attending a couple of training sessions a week. During this stage of my career, I would partner up with the coach and lead a periodic performance debrief with the athletes in order to promote reflection and for the athletes and coaching staff to be sharing information together. The premise of this was that both the athletes and coaching team (including the various sport science staff) had to share responsibility for how the athletes were performing. This promoted a high level of responsiveness and collective responsibility that we felt would assist the athletes in qualifying for the 2000 Olympic Summer Games in Sydney.

I would always, at the end of the session, ask the athletes if there was anything I could do differently either at training or during the competition. This was a normal occurrence for me and given the high expectations that I had for myself both personally and professionally, I usually did not receive information from the athletes and coach that I did not already

know myself. However, there is always a first time for everything! The athletes proceeded to share with me that they felt that I was becoming tired and not “myself”. They suggested that I was not my usual supportive self. This was the first time that I had ever received information from an athlete or team that was not consistent with my own personal perception and reflection.

I listened carefully and immediately thanked them for their open and honest communication. I communicated to them that I would reflect on the reasons why this had happened and would make the necessary changes before the next competitive opportunity that I would be accompanying them to provide services. As I left practice for home, I came to the realization that I had become a bit too complacent and was not practicing some of the important preparation and recovery activities that I ask both the athletes and coaches to engage in. To me, it was a matter of thinking too highly of myself and forgetting about the important processes that helped me become an effective sport psychology practitioner in the first place. The end result was that I began to reflect on my professional practice with a renewed sense of congruency and personal accountability. The experience has made me become a far better practitioner today than I was just four years ago. (Researcher’s Voice)

I have always believed that the work I do, which is predominantly with international elite athletes and coaches, must incorporate an acknowledgement that I am working with a very highly motivated and competent group of individuals. This not only influences how I do my practice, but places a significant set of expectations on how I conduct myself as both a professional and a person. From a position of reflexivity, it asks me to continually challenge my personal set of beliefs in order to account for a multiplicity of viewpoints acknowledging that we are shifting “from the world as it is to the world as represented” (Gergen, 2000, p. 134).

Authenticity can best be described as behaving according to one’s values and beliefs. Thus, as I assist athletes and coaches with their pursuit of excellence, to continually learn from failure, to be mindful in all actions, and to be respecting and collaborative in their relations with others, I too must be committed to adhering to these principles to the best of my ability in both my professional and personal life. At the same time, I encourage others (and myself) to view authenticity as a continual process so that it does not, as a defining characteristic, become steeped in both expectation and perfectionism.

As important to me is the valuing of work ethic and/or effort. To me, effort is the most useful foundation that anyone can have and relates most specifically to living mindfully and being capable of letting outcomes take care of themselves. Elite sport, in particular, is wrought with failure in that the nature of an athlete and coach’s experience becomes, at times, singularly focused on the attainment of performance improvement. As a

sport psychology practitioner, I too have found myself becoming myopic in my view of progress, associating my worth as a consultant on the performance of the athlete as opposed to the important underlying processes associated with continual growth and consistent delivery of effort. This is not to suggest that one's personal reflections regarding their performance shouldn't consider whether the ultimate outcome was achieved, but that the critical evaluative factors should revolve around whether they feel they did all that they could do.

Theoretical paradigm. Over the years, I have grown into my current professional perspective consisting of an eclectic nature with regards to my professional practice. Poczwardowski et al. (2004) explain:

In recent years, despite voices of criticism from purists representing one specific kind of theoretical perspective, the counseling and psychotherapy literature has suggested that eclecticism, or developing one's own unique approach to working with clients is another legitimate approach to effectively help people to change their behaviour. (p. 452)

Poczwardowski et al. describe an eclectic practice as flexible, relying on a combination of different theoretical frameworks and uses methods and techniques that draws from many schools of thought. This is consistent with Hill's (2001) supposition that no one philosophy can account for all actions demonstrated by a practitioner. As a consequence there can be no *one* identity as a professional.

My work can be best situated within the humanist, positive psychology, and ecological paradigms. Thus, the nature of my practice

falls somewhere on a continuum between performance enhancement consultant and clinician, due, in large, to my academic qualifications and professional orientation. Bond (2002) explains:

My view is that there is a continuum of applied psychological services with an increasing need for psychological competence, training, and experience as one progresses from performance enhancement mental skills training through personal development training, lifestyle management skills, group dynamics to critical interventions. Obviously performance enhancement training requires good teaching skills but not a great deal of competence as a psychologist, whereas critical interventions require a great deal of skill and experience as a psychologist. (p. 24)

Poczwadowski et al. (2004) describe humanist therapists as emphasizing “freedom of choice to become the creator of one’s life and to make sense out of events that occur and circumstances that one encounters” (p. 452). This is the underlying premise of my practice as my central goal is to help athletes and coaches reach their potential as human beings and performers.

Poczwadowski et al. (2004) suggest the nature of one’s professional orientation is dynamic and evolves over time. One’s philosophical orientation constitutes only one of a multitude of factors that influences our practice. In a recent article by Gardner and Moore (2004), the authors draw from the work of Kanfer and Schefft (1988) in suggesting that sport psychology practitioners’ judgements are typically based on four

primary sources: (a) specific client characteristics and information, (b) scientific database of information, (c) professional folklore, and (d) the professional's individual experiences. Of interest to me are the notions of professional folklore, defined by the authors as the "cumulative experiences and skills passed on from professional to professional" (p. 90) and the capturing of an individual's experience. Sharing folklore and the meanings inherent within lived experience contributed greatly to the approaches and judgements that I made early on in my career.

As a neophyte practitioner in the field, the conversations that I had with my mentors and colleagues were influential in the development of my professional practice in sport psychology. These interviews were mostly informal exchanges of information that occurred at conferences, in competition settings, or during telephone conversations. Sharing stories from the field began to emerge for me as an important aspect of my development, as the professional folklore helped to inform my practice in situations where my own professional experience was in the formative stages. Reflective practice has been demonstrated as an effective means of facilitating personal development (Holt & Streat, 2001; Anderson, Knowles & Gilbourne, 2004), and I have felt that sharing one's professional experiences with mentors, peers and students could play a tremendous role to my continually evolving practice.

From an ecological perspective, much of the work I have done over the past eight years has been as a member of an interdisciplinary sport science team. In particular, this has significantly influenced my practice as I have had to view the delivery of sport psychology as involving other

appropriate professionals (e.g. coaches, retirement and transition personnel, etc.) and in some cases, even share sport psychology services with another sport psychologist who was hired to work with the National Team while I was working with three of the members through the National Training Centre in a particular region. Thus, it can be stated that I view my consultancy practice as organizational wide, where coaches, athletes and sport scientists are actively engaged in the consultancy process.

To summarize my current practice in sport psychology, I have chosen to draw from the work of Dr. Jeffrey Bond, (2002), formally with the Australian Institute of Sport (2002), who I feel articulated, the complexity and discontinuity that I believe is inherent within applied practice:

Very few things in life proceed exactly as planned or according to some predetermined recipe. Elite sporting competition is certainly evidence of the unpredictability that also typifies sport psychology practice. As professionals, we need to be flexible and adaptable. We must be opportunistic and prepared for the unexpected. No two situations or individuals are the same. We cannot embark upon a team service provision program with a predetermined sequence of sessions or topics. Inevitably, something will intervene. We must be prepared to back our professional judgement and, like the successful athlete, have the confidence that when the pressure is on, we will be able to respond with something special and get the result for our client. (p. 36)

Locating My Research within the Field

As my professional practice and theoretical orientation have evolved over time, so have my views of research and of my *self* as a researcher. It became clear to me, as I began my graduate education, that my undergraduate experiences were predominantly spent studying quantitative methods believing that there was a singular best practice or preferred psychological and physiological intervention method or technique. As I began completing further course work in research methods, I eventually began to broaden my knowledge with regards to more qualitative forms of inquiry.

It came as no surprise to me that my undergraduate degree in psychology made little mention of qualitative research. Psychology as both a discipline and a profession has been slow to embrace certain theoretical and epistemological perspectives. Laverly (2003) discusses Husserl's criticism of psychology as a science for "attempting to apply methods of the natural sciences to human issues" (p. 4). Thus, I felt that I was taking a leap of methodological faith by using a multiple baseline across participants' design for my Master of Science thesis, where visual inspection would serve to demonstrate whether a significant effect had been established after the intervention had been administered. Although I didn't realize it at the time, this initial movement away from the positivist tradition began a slow and progressive transformation towards my becoming a qualitative researcher, drawing from the interpretive and constructivist paradigms.

It wasn't until I began my doctoral research, however, that I came to understand the need to reconcile my former positivist self from my qualitative, interpretive self. I would suggest that this evolution is far from complete, for as I consider the nature of my practice to be eclectic, so do I consider my current view of qualitative research and the various traditions to be an eclectic mix, where certain views and ideologies are adhered to and borrowed from when I believe they are necessary are seem to "fit".

As I began my quest to uncover the lived experiences pertaining to the practice of sport psychology as a sort of continued collection and sharing of professional folklore, I was drawn to the literature of Max van Manen, a phenomenologist and Professor of Education at the University of Alberta in Canada. As my interest and exposure to both phenomenological inquiry and qualitative research grew, so did my awareness that I had stumbled on the realization that while I was drawing from post modern perspectives, I was in danger of exercising too much liberty with certain theoretical positions regarding hermeneutic phenomenology. Asher (2001) made a similar observation suggesting that as one pursues "pivotal issues in cutting-edge educational research and writing today...one fears that they are so "hip" that they run the risk of becoming hackneyed" (p. 4). Thus, a thorough discussion regarding my theoretical framework for this study is undertaken in Chapter Three, in order to effectively situate my self as a researcher within the phenomenological tradition.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology and the Study of Practice

van Manen (1999) suggests that studying practice may invite us to be observant of the ordinary phenomena in the life worlds that are often overlooked in the research. In order to study the experiences of applied sport psychology and the processes inherent within its practice, a hermeneutic phenomenological investigation was conducted in order to discover important meanings pertaining to the lived experiences of sport psychology practitioners engaged in professional practice.

Hermeneutic phenomenology can be viewed as a research method that can provide an understanding of the individual's experience that embraces a holistic approach to the person (van Manen, 1997). Moreover, our understanding regarding the delivery of sport psychology requires an examination of the interactions that are made between sport psychology practitioners, athletes and coaches. Brustad and Ritter-Taylor (1997) suggest that many of the primary issues of interest within sport psychology call for an interactionist perspective. Of importance is that we "direct our attention to the interactions that occur among individuals and the reciprocal forms of influence that take place over time" (Brustad, 2002, p. 26).

In keeping with the interpretive paradigm, the practice of sport psychology can, in part, be understood by accepting the premise that knowledge is socially generated, thus recognizing the multiplicity of ways in which knowledge is formed (Henning-Stout, 1994). Further to this, van Manen (1999) suggests that "the acknowledgement that much of knowing

what to do, ensues from the complex dimensions of practice: one's body, actions, relations, and the things of one's world" (para 22).

The merit of using a phenomenological analysis has been demonstrated in at least two recent examples within the sport psychology literature. Munroe, Estabrooks, Dennis and Carron (1999) conducted a phenomenological analysis in order to identify and describe the nature of group norms in sport teams. Poczwardowski, Barott and Henschen (2002) conducted an interpretive study investigating the relationship and meanings associated with athlete-coach relationships.

The Research Agenda

The general purpose of this study was to examine lived experience regarding the practice of applied sport psychology through conversations that were had with the sport psychology practitioner, athlete and coach. Three separate cases were studied in order to collect a wide variety of meanings that would be understood within each case, as well as across cases. The use of a hermeneutic phenomenological approach was chosen to uncover important features associated with practice. As Van der Zalm and Bergum (2000) suggest, although hermeneutic phenomenology "does not prescribe action for use in clinical practice, it does influence a thoughtful attentive practice by its revealing of the meanings of human experience" (p. 211).

This study uncovered the socially generated and shared intersubjective meanings operative within the service delivery of applied sport psychology (Brustad, 2002). An important aim of this study was to contribute to the literature regarding the practice of sport psychology by

collecting and interpreting lived experiences. As Schaefer (2002) proposed, “the process of studying an experience and relating it to prior knowledge fosters the development of new knowledge” (p. 287). It is here that the study contributed greatly to our knowledge about professional practice. In particular the following research questions and sub-questions were being investigated:

- What meanings exist pertaining to the practice of sport psychology through the reported lived experiences of athletes, coaches and sport psychology practitioners?
- What are the key features of their interactions as a result of the lived experiences of the participants?
- How do sport psychology practitioners, coaches and athletes interact with each other within training and competitive environments?
- How will this knowledge be meaningful for practitioners in sport psychology?

Limitations to the Study

This study will be limited to the interpreted explanations of the meanings inherent within the participant group consisting of a sport psychology practitioner, coach and athlete for each case. Arguably, the influences on the meanings shared by the participants can be said to be comprised of other sources including teammates, support staff, friends, family, colleagues, significant others, and the participants' prior experiences and personal histories with regards to sport psychology. This study may be limited in that the experiences of the participants will, in

some instances, be drawn from memory. It is possible that the explanations may not be entirely trustworthy. As well, the finding will depend on what the participants are willing to share with me, a researcher and practitioner, and whether they are willing to disclose such information openly. The potential limitations identified did not have a significant impact regarding the potential contributions that can be made from this study.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Related Literature

Some believe that a thorough literature review should be conducted at the beginning of the research process in that reading the existing literature can save time and help strengthen the study design (Creswell, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1994). Others advocate a delay of the literature review until the research is underway so researchers have an opportunity to gain some understanding of the phenomena of interest from the research participants' perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Gay & Airasian, 2000). By reviewing the published literature earlier, the researcher may be prevented from "truly listening, observing, and remaining open to new concepts and ideas" (Frankel & Devers, 2000, p. 251).

Given that the researcher has done some fieldwork, reviewing the literature prior to the completion of the analysis of the data may have been too influential in the determination of themes and meanings and thus "curtail inductive analysis – an important advantage of the qualitative approach" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p.75). However, it was noted that not reviewing the literature involved risk that "may not be welcomed with open arms by all members of the research community" (Sparkes, 2002, p. 226.). As Eisner (2001) suggests, "We need to walk the line between the risk inherent in innovation and the need to do work that has the quality it needs to persuade" (p. 143).

In order to achieve an appropriate balance, a brief review of literature was undertaken during the proposal stages of the dissertation.

After completion of the data collection and analysis for this study, the review of literature was revisited in order to foreground some of the important meanings that emerged and present an overview of the literature pertaining to the practice of sport psychology.

Sport Psychology: A Brief and Incomplete History

The study of the practice of sport psychology is still in its infancy when compared to other professions (e.g. law, medicine and education) having only emerged as a distinct practice over the last thirty to forty years (Simons & Andersen, 1995). However, it would be an oversight to suggest that an understanding of the professional practice of sport psychology has only just begun. Weinberg and Gould (1995) indicate that Coleman Griffith was the first to work as a sport psychologist in the 1930's with the Chicago Cubs of Major League Baseball. Bruce Ogilvie was a central figure of North American applied sport psychology and worked in the sporting community and with teams, athletes and coaches in the late 1960's and 1970's.

In the 1970's and 1980's, the U.S. Olympic Committee recognized the field in its own right and sport psychology began to flourish with many newly formed graduate programs (Andersen, Van Raalte & Brewer, 2001). Concurrently, the first academic journals pertaining to sport psychology were established during this time. By 1989, the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology established a certification criterion thus further improving the recognition of the field as a profession. Similarly, sport psychology had also moved towards professionalization in Australia and other European nations.

Sport psychology graduate programs are most often considered specializations within kinetics or physical education programs thus finding its permanent home in 'exercise sciences' (Andersen et al., 2001). Thus, an important question continues to persist regarding the practice of sport psychology: are professionals within the field performance enhancement consultants or psychologists?

Who are Sport Psychologists?

Sport psychology is defined by the American Psychological Association Exercise and Sport Psychology Division as "the study of behavioral factors that influence and are influenced by participation and performance in sport, exercise, and physical activity" (2004). The sport psychologist is defined as actively being involved in one or more of the following roles: teacher, researcher, and service provider/practitioner. The Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP) views sport psychology as the practice of extending theory and research into the field to educate coaches, athletes, and parents with the goals of facilitating optimal sport involvement and performance (2004). As Sachs (1999) suggests, "the majority of our work as applied sport psychologists does indeed take place within a psycho-educational framework" (p. 358).

Articles expressing interest and concern for the nature of sport psychology have existed since the introduction of scholarly research journals in the field of applied sport psychology. Some early discussions regarding the practice of sport psychology can be found in Harrison and Feltz's (1979) article on the professionalization of sport psychology and in Danish and Hale's (1981) commentary where the proper functions of a

sport psychologist are discussed and clarified. Many professionals in the field consider that we are in the preliminary phases of understanding what it is to practice sport psychology. As Newburg suggested (1992), "it is obvious that the domain of sport psychology is unclear" (p. 14).

Gardner (1995) suggests that sport psychology has only recently been accepted as a discipline and this has led to some confusion as to who sport psychologists are and what they actually do. There appears to be a delineation between sport psychology practitioners functioning as psychologists and educators (Brown, 1982). Thus, the practice of sport psychology can be situated between the human development framework and functions inherent within most psychology licensing laws (Danish & Hale, 1981; Brown, 1982). Although the continuance of this debate and its importance to the field is acknowledged, I do not wish to enter the discussion regarding qualifications and use of title here, as the emphasis of my review centers around the nature of practice and not a determination of whether we are psychologists or not.

Anshel (1992) argued that the practice of sport psychology is not an exact science and that it is difficult to predict effectiveness and proper practice of counseling techniques. He further suggested that both clinical psychologists and those trained within sport science programs are equally qualified to practice, as "no single area of professional practice dominate" (p. 274). To the contrary, Zaichkowsky and Perna's (1992) response to Anshel emphasized that an adequate scientific knowledge base in sport psychology supports practice and can therefore be used for the purposes of determining certification criteria.

Taylor (1994) adequately addressed important issues regarding boundaries for both sport science and psychology trained practitioners and suggests “regardless of whether professionals are trained in psychology or sport science, there is no guarantee that their training will make them competent to practice in a particular client group within sport” (p. 193). Taylor goes on to explain that achieving a mutual understanding of the significant contributions that psychology and sport science trained professionals can make in their respective areas will assist those within the field in working towards necessary cooperation and ultimate growth in applied sport psychology.

Importance of a Professional Philosophy

An important factor in the provision of psychological services is the determination or clarification of a practitioner’s service philosophy. Poczwardowski et al. (1998) define professional philosophy as the “beliefs about the nature of reality, the human being’s place in the universe, and more specifically, the nature of human behavior change and a human being’s basic nature” (p. 193). For example, Ravizza (2002) describes his approach as being based upon educational and existential principles and views his primary focus towards the enhancement of athletic performance while addressing the whole person. With regards to one’s philosophy informing practice, a study by Lloyd and Trudel (1999) demonstrated that the content and process of the mental training consultant’s sessions with athletes corresponded with their previously published perspective.

Bond’s (2002) philosophy contains the notion that elite athletes and coaches are more than simply elite “sport” performers. Thus, a concern

for the total person must be established, often requiring the importance and outcomes of certain performances to be put in perspective “The athlete is one part of their identity and they must keep a balance with the other aspects of their life (academics, social activities, family, volunteer work, etc.)” (Ravizza, 2002, p. 13). As Bond (2002) suggests, “we need to be sensitive to the real rather than superficial needs of athletes and coaches and we need to be able to respond with effective change strategies based on an holistic appreciation of the situation” (p. 23).

The Sport Psychologist-Athlete Relationship

Although one’s professional philosophy is important, Martin (2000) advocates that the quality of the client-practitioner relationship is ultimately more important than any philosophy or technique a practitioner chooses to use. Hardy et al. (1996) describe the consulting process as a “complex social interaction which actively involves athletes and coaches who usually have extensive sport psychology knowledge” (p. 290). Petitpas et al. (1999) suggests that the ability to build rapport, create a positive environment and provide practical suggestions is highly correlated with successful sport psychology consultations. In particular, “facilitative conditions and the working alliance model have clear implications for sport and exercise psychology interventions” (p. 223).

Facilitative Conditions

Stemming from Rogers’ (1957) six facilitative conditions, Petitpas (1999) identified congruency, empathetic understanding and the ability to accept the client as a person of worth unconditionally as important to the quality of sport psychologist-athlete relationships. This suggests that how

sport psychologists present themselves is an important factor regarding the ability for athletes and coaches to value the service and establish trust with the practitioner.

Orlick and Partington (1987) identified a number of important characteristics that were reported by Olympic athletes and coaches. With regards to congruency, the athletes and coaches in their study described the highest quality consultants as being easy to get along with and that they fit in well with the team. Hardy et al. (1996) summarized their findings by suggesting that consultants be “down to earth individuals who are able to help athletes by providing individualised feedback through long-term involvements” (p. 292). Moreover, effective consultants are often described as hard working individuals who deeply care about the athletes and teams with whom they work.

Related to congruency is the notion of gaining entry. Gaining entry with any group of athletes involves being able to “speak their language” by having an understanding of their sport and the pressures that accompany them (Ravizza, 2001). According to Andersen et al. (2001), “hanging out” with athletes and coaches in sporting context can assist sport psychologists in achieving a certain level of comfortableness. McCann (2001) suggests learning how to be accessible without being ‘in the way’ may be one of the greatest ways of slowly gaining entry with athletes and coaches.

Similarly, when athletes and coaches believe that the sport psychologist has an understanding of what they are going through, they will have more faith in the psychologist (Rogers, 1957). Halliwell et al.

(1999) express the need for sport psychology consultants to listen well and let the athletes and coaches explain their challenges in order to “feel their specific perspectives and needs” (p. 21). Athletes and coaches must feel a strong sense of commitment from the sport psychologist. Petitpas (1999) expressed the need for counselors to be non-judgemental so that the strength of the relationship is put beyond the achievement of outcomes associated with any treatment or performance opportunity. A mistake made commonly in society is to evaluate athletes’ or coaches’ performances by their outcomes (McCann, 2001). Unfortunately, it is easy to begin doing the same as a sport psychology consultant, deciding that we have served an athlete well only when they succeed and win. As McCann (2001) states, “wins and losses are not a relevant measuring stick” (p. 220).

The Working Alliance

Terry (1997) suggests that the most desirable mode of interaction for sport psychology service providers is one of equal expertise where “the sport psychologist provides a support service, ensuring that the athlete feels independent and the coach’s sense of primacy remains secure” (p. 10). Similarly, Hardy and Parfitt (1994), in their presentation of a model of “equal expertise”, state that the perceived needs of both performers and coaches were responded to more effectively by assuming that “performers and coaches both bring their own very valuable experiences and expertise to bear upon the problems that they face” (p. 133). Further, McCann (2000) describes his relationship with the athlete as a “working alliance”, and he has found that both the quality and confidence of the sport

psychology service can be improved upon by working together to come up with solutions that effectively address the problem.

Ravizza (2001) comments that elite athletes and coaches already possess knowledge and skills related to performance-enhancement. Thus, the consultant's role is "to provide a structure or framework for these existing techniques" (Ravizza, 2001, p. 198). McCann (2000) and others also suggest that elite athletes, who are the actual experts, should be considered the "senior" partners in the sport psychology consultant–athlete relationship (p.210). Finally, by establishing a working alliance, athletes' and coaches' personal needs can more successfully be met if sport psychology consultants assist athletes and coaches in making connections between sport demands and demands in other walks of life (Miller & Kerr, 2002).

The Nature of Practice

The role of the sport psychologist differs tremendously from one situation to another (Gardner, 1995). Singer (1984) attempted to generate a list of potential roles and functions for the sport psychologist. They include, but are not limited to scientist, scholar, intermediary, psycho diagnostician, analyst, optimizer, counselor, consultant, and spokesperson. Subsequently, Hardy and Parfitt (1994) identified a number of roles that sport psychology consultants can adopt including that of facilitator, educator, mediator, counselor, friend, problem solver and the general "odd jobs" person. Multiple roles are inherently a part of doing applied work in sport psychology (Andersen et al., 2001).

In particular, Singer (1984) suggested that the sport psychologist served in two primary capacities: “1) to help improve athlete and team performance; 2) to promote decency in sport and protect the welfare of athletes” (p. 59). Sullivan and Nashman (1998) suggest “sport psychologists work not only with athletes, coaches, and trainers, but also with administrators, media, and athletes’ families (p. 96). This is consistent with Gardner’s (1995) view of sport psychology from an organizational perspective “it is critical that team psychologists understand that they are working in an organization and need to fully comprehend the organization’s rules, administrative systems, goals, values, and reporting structure” (p. 148).

This approach can assist practitioners in achieving support from coaches and sport science team members when implementing an intervention. For example, Reid, Stewart and Thorne (2004) found that professional conflicts between other practitioners and coaches can have tremendous implications to the ability to service athletes effectively and can even result in athletes becoming concerned or anxious. Thus, sport psychology practitioners must achieve effective working relationships with athletes, coaches and other sport science team members in order to achieve an ongoing impact on performance.

Another essential aspect of practice revolves around the fact that sport psychology practitioners will be used in varying capacities as a program evolves and trust is established (Hardy et al., 1996). This evolutionary nature of sport psychology practice is also due to practitioners’ abilities to develop expertise over time (Morris & Thomas,

1995) and their emerging professional identities that results from these collective experiences. In their chapter entitled *Approaches to Applied Sport Psychology*, Morris and Thomas (1995) apply a five-stage professional development model to applied sport psychologists. Their framework, based on the work of both Berliner (1988) and Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986), discuss important features and approaches to practice associated with each stage.

A *novice* practitioner is “focused on a set of context-free rules and procedures that guide behavior which they tend to follow, relatively inflexibly” (p. 246). In a self-narrative study involving neophyte practice, Holt and Streat (2001) outlined important features inherent within the neophyte practitioner’s interactions with their client. An analysis of the narratives shared in this case demonstrated that the practitioner was very rigid and lacked confidence “I wanted to appear to be competent and not admit to uncertainty regarding the technical problems I had framed” (p. 199).

Stages two (*advanced beginner*) and three (*competent*) are characterised by the progressive use of context and episodic knowledge, eventually leading to the use of judgement regarding the information one attends to and what they choose to ignore (Morris & Thomas, 1995). However, it is with stages four (*proficient*) and five (*expert*) that one finds considerable support within the literature on the practice of sport psychology.

For example, Simons and Andersen (1995) interviewed eleven sport psychology professionals in order to garner important information on

practice, as all had extensive experience and long-term service delivery histories. Of importance to the evolutionary nature of practice, several of the participants reported a “gradual transition from early consulting styles that were largely technique oriented, to approaches that have become athlete centered and experiential” (p. 454). This was further demonstrated in a study by Lloyd and Trudel (1999) whose analysis of an eminent mental training consultant yielded a tremendous reliance on intuition when applying mental training for each athlete.

Intuition was also mentioned by Henschen (2001) in his chapter entitled *Lessons from Sport Psychology Consulting*. In speaking to the art of application, Henschen (2001) called for the use of intuition:

Intuition seems to be one of the most mysterious cognitive abilities of humans; each of us is blessed with varying degrees of this phenomenon. I attribute many of my successes to the use of intuition. Long ago, I learned to listen to my soft inner voices or to my feelings to direct some of my decisions. Again, I think intuition is probably a combination of knowledge and experience that is stored somewhere in the recesses of our memory. This information becomes available to each of us in a variety of situations, but we frequently fail to heed the prompting of this powerful, natural human ability. Instead of utilizing this gift, we do exactly what we try to teach our clients not to do – we employ our analytical thought processes. In other words, we

try to think our way to success rather than relying on intuition. (p. 84)

Given the previous description of practice, Henschen can be described as an expert in that his ability to grasp a situation intuitively and take action in a non-analytic and non-deliberative way was apparent (Morris and Thomas, 1995).

Other important characteristics associated with effective consultancy that appear well placed with proficient and expert practitioners include: having the confidence to make only a small number of suggestions when consulting; being able to recognise that at times doing nothing is the best intervention; and recognising that one is not right for every situation (Hardy et al., 1996). Hardy et al. comment:

“inexperienced and ineffective consultants at times fall into the trap of feeling that since they are serving as a consultant they must constantly give advice, motivate athletes, or psych teams up. In contrast, effective consultants have learned that if problems do not exist, then athletes do not want to be interfered with. Instead, they spend their time inconspicuously listening and observing. (p. 293)

It is also important to acknowledge that the athletic environment is incredibly complex thus requiring practitioners of sport psychology to achieve a critical understanding of the inherent organizational dynamics. Practitioners must pay attention to important contextual information that informs sport psychology service delivery. As was stated previously, more experienced practitioners begin to include contextual information into their

judgements during practice. Gardner (1995) advocates, “team psychologists understand that they are working in an organization and need to fully comprehend the organization’s rules, administrative systems, goals, values, and reporting structures” (p. 148).

Before entering any environment, Halliwell et al. (1999) recommend that athletes, the coach and the organization demonstrate a readiness to improve. In particular, “key decision makers in the organization must understand the potential benefits of the proposed program for their team or mission, and be ready to support your initiatives” (Halliwell et al., 1999, p. 24). This is especially true with respect to requiring the coach’s ongoing support.

Many have argued that having the coach’s support is critical in the effectiveness of the sport psychology service delivery effort (e.g. Ravizza, 1990; Hardy et al., 1996; Halliwell et al., 1999). For example, Hardy et al. (1996) reinforce the notion that sport psychology practitioners work alongside and through the coach thus positioning the practice of sport psychology as a “much more collaborative and non-sequential effort” (p. 290). Tod and Andersen (2004) extend this notion further “Coaches do not appreciate consultants who overstep their professional roles, and effective sport psychologists want to have a clear understanding of their responsibilities” (p. 311).

Sport psychology practitioners must also become flexible and adaptable in their approach. Elite performers, for example, often spend a tremendous amount of time away attending various competitions and training camps or playing with professional teams during their tenure as

National team athletes. It appears important for sport psychology service providers to foster feelings of independence with the athletes and coaches with whom they are working and it is believed that this “shared” approach to service delivery can more effectively promote client independence, a critical factor within sport psychology service delivery (Poczwardowski et al., 1998). As McCann (2000) suggests, “the teams and athletes I work with travel constantly, often competing on the other side of the world. Even with cellular phones, faxes, and e-mails, education and skill building to foster athlete independence is the only functional strategy when one may see an athlete just a few times a year” (p. 211).

Balancing roles within the context of a sporting environment creates occasional dilemmas as to the *when* & the *how* to be most effective. As McCann suggests (2001), practitioners become experts at the “ski-lift consult, the bus-ride consult, the 10 minute breakfast table team building session” just to name a few potential scenarios. What becomes necessary and more importantly can only be learnt through experience is the ability to detect “what is required when it is requested” (Hardy & Parfitt, 1994).

Ethical dilemmas and issues of confidentiality must also be appreciated when working in sporting contexts. For example, Ravizza (2001) suggests that practitioners be constantly aware of who is present, watching or potentially within earshot during a consultation. Statements made by athletes to the consultant could potentially be seriously taken out of context, misinterpreted or used against the athlete later on. Out of session contact is another example of a potential situation that could make athletes and consultants alike feel uncomfortable.

Knowing Oneself

Practitioners of sport psychology must continually develop an awareness of the influences affecting one's approach, thinking and feelings about issues pertaining to consulting and working with athletes. Understanding one's self and being open to growth and learning allows for the foundation of successful, purposeful work within the area of sport psychology. As Ravizza (2001) suggests, you have to be your self, and you have to bring your self to the consultation process.

Holt and Streat (2001) argued the need for reflective practice in applied sport psychology "only by addressing strengths and weaknesses of service delivery can practitioners progress on a professional level" (p. 201). Poczwardowski et al. (1998) also emphasized the importance for sport psychologists to manage the self as an intervention instrument in practice. In a recent article on reflective practice, Anderson, Knowles and Gilbourne (2004) proposed a number of strategies to assist sport psychologists "in making sense of their experiences, managing the self, and ultimately increasing their personal and professional effectiveness" (p. 199). For example, Anderson et al. suggest that if the purpose of the reflection is to explore personal meaning within the practitioner's inherent role, consideration should be given "to the influence of the practitioners' experiences, presuppositions, perceptions, and understanding of the context on their own and their client's feeling and actions" (p. 192). This can assist practitioners in the clarification of the nature and quality of the practitioner-client relationship.

Reported Reflections within the Literature

Anderson et al. (2004) identify self-narrative as another important form of reflection positioned within the qualitative genre allowing authors “to pull together elements of their own life history (a process that requires longitudinal reflection) with the aim of formulating a dialogue that others will find interesting and relevant” (p. 198). Although the genre of reflectively derived narratives are still gaining acceptance and are rarely published (Anderson et al.), the sport psychology community has had access to a growing number of published reflections and self-narratives in recent years.

Terry Orlick (1989) shared his personal experiences resulting from over fifteen years consulting with elite athletes. In particular, Orlick indicated that the needs of the athlete change over time, placing importance on following the athlete’s lead, “The problem with dropping preset packages on athletes is that you may get through your curriculum without ever really addressing the specific curriculum that is most critical to the athlete” (p. 360). A commitment to excellence was also shared as an important characteristic of Orlick’s best consulting experiences:

I am committed to doing the best I can do for these athletes because I really care about them as people; I respect their goals and am sincerely interested how they are doing. I feel I have something of value to offer and am confident that I can make a difference and am committed to doing so. I project belief in this capacity as well as in my own capacity to make a contribution. I am content to play a supportive

background role without becoming ego involved and never feel a need to share the limelight or credit. (p. 363)

In a study by Sullivan and Nashman (1998), the self-perceptions of the roles of United States Olympic Committee (USOC) sport psychologists in working with Olympic athletes were investigated. A number of important themes emerged from their analysis of the interviews with the sport psychologists. First, younger coaches were found to be more accepting of the role of the sport psychologist. Full acceptance was related to the coaches' perception of potentially losing influence or control over the athlete. It can be suggested that younger coaches may welcome the assistance of sport psychologists (and other professionals) in the preparation and development of their respective athletes. The authors also reported that the role of the sport psychologist in working with Olympic athletes is complex and various stressors, including those attributed to anxiety in wanting to do their best so that the athletes could be at their best were reported by the respondents.

Gloria Balague (1999) wrote about her experiences working with elite athletes and indicated that a major risk in working with elite athletes is "being in awe of the athlete" (p. 96). If sport psychologists communicate an admiration of the athlete it may influence the athlete to maintain their "greatness", thus preventing them in discussing their fears and weaknesses: "I know that when I saw 'the great athlete' rather than the whole person talking to me, I often missed the point and focused more on my performance than on listening to the individual's needs" (p. 97).

In his chapter entitled *Doing Sport Psychology at the Really Big Show*, Sean McCann (2000), who is a sport psychologist with the United States Olympic Committee, shared his experiences of doing sport psychology at a competition. McCann reported that practicality, flexibility and optimism were critical factors when doing sport psychology within competitive situations. In particular, it was suggested that the most critical skill a sport psychologist can develop is to be accessible without being in the way.

The consultant must understand the routines and habits of the athletes within their competitive environment and be sure to portray a loose and relaxed persona if they are present before or during the athlete's performance. Events such as the Olympics often create increased pressure with resulting performance consequences "Athletes and coaches, who are normally unflappable, suddenly start flapping" (p. 212). McCann views the fostering of independence as an important component in assisting athletes to effectively perform in the face of stress and the pressures that come along with performing at competitions:

Encouraging independence stems from both philosophical and practical concerns. On a philosophical level, I am opposed to what I call the guru-fication of sport psychologists. Guru status can benefit the guru, but is bad for the field and, almost invariably, bad for the client. The field is harmed by a perception that sport psychologists are only effective through unique, secret, or magical techniques. The guru-dependent athlete is harmed by the guru's

tendency to take credit for the successes of the athlete (but never the blame for the failures). The dependent athlete is also harmed by the lack of opportunities to develop problem-solving skills independently and the lack of opportunities to develop the confidence that he or she can solve performance problems. (p. 211)

Another personal account of sport psychology service provision for athletes at an international competition was provided by Judy Van Raalte (2003). Van Raalte suggested that it is difficult to be thoughtful about the work that is being done when consulting at a major athletic event but attempted to engage in reflective practice when time permitted. Also of importance was the author's awareness of maintaining credibility as a sport psychologist when going out to relax following a long day of work. Sport psychologists must present themselves in a professional manner at all times, and major games environments can provide few opportunities and places for recovery to occur.

Clearly, the practice of sport psychology is both complex and diverse. A best practice sport psychology program is different for elite sporting institutions with employed sport psychologists, independent consulting sport psychologists, or those that work predominantly in an academic environment (Fricker & Brockett, 2002). In their recent report on sport psychology for the Australian Institute of Sport, Fricker and Brockett found that personal attributes played an important role in knowing what approaches were suitable for particular athletes. Important personal attributes included: "good problem solving skills, flexibility, lateral thinking

(think outside the square), experience with youth sport, patience, honesty, empathy, unconditional positive regard for people, and the ability to earn trust and respect” (p. 7).

Moreover, Fricker and Brockett’s (2002) review referred to effective delivery of sport psychology as more of an art than a science. Understanding best practice is a continual process that involves sport psychology practitioners making sense of the needs of the athletes and coaches while understanding the referent norms inherent with the various contexts that they find themselves working within. It is expected that the field will continually evolve and become more diverse, while important themes associated with best practice continue to be uncovered as more research is published pertaining to the practice of sport psychology.

CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical Framework

Phenomenological Inquiry

It is important to provide substantive justification for the epistemological, ontological and methodological positions taken in order to demonstrate congruency throughout this study. In particular, Sokolowski (2000) shares an important position pertaining to the usefulness of developing a philosophical understanding:

When we engage in philosophy, we stand back and contemplate what it is to be truthful and what it is to achieve evidence. We contemplate the natural attitude, and hence we take up a viewpoint outside it. This move of standing back is done through the transcendental reduction. Instead of simply being concerned with the objects and their features, we think about the correlation between the things being disclosed and the dative to whom they are manifested. Within the transcendental reduction, we also carry out an eidetic reduction and express structures that hold not just for ourselves, but for every subjectivity that is engaged in evidencing and truth. (p. 186)

Phenomenology is an exercise of reason towards the disclosure of truth in a way that differs from the scientific and natural attitude (Sokolowski, 2000).

Phenomenology is the science that studies truth. It stands back from our rational involvement with things and marvels

at the fact that there is disclosure, that things do appear, that the world can be understood, and that we in our life of thinking serve as datives for the manifestation of things. (p. 185)

Concurrently, phenomenology is positioned to highlight the limitations of the truth, suggesting that the truth can never fully be disclosed. It can be said that my purpose, even my responsibility as a doctoral student, is to adequately frame my propositions and eventual reflections.

A state of affairs is turned into a proposition or a sense when we take that state of affairs as being proposed by someone. We change its status; it becomes not just the way things are, but the way someone has articulated and presented them. Such propositions, constituted by propositional reflections, then become candidates for the truth of correctness. They are said to be true judgments when they can be disquoted and blended with the direct evidence of things themselves.

(Sokolowski, p. 186)

Thus, it is important to present the subjective knowledge collected with a greater degree of internal consistency (Kerry & Armour, 2000) and it can thus be argued that “phenomenological research in the field of sport, a field in which meaning and movement are so inextricably bound, offers invaluable opportunities to provide tools for reflection” (p. 14). To begin my philosophical discussion, an epistemological and ontological

discussion of phenomenology will be provided in order to share an interpretive understanding of how I will access and determine what is true.

Being Authentic

It is imperative, for the purposes of this study, to locate the research within the phenomenological tradition. Kerry and Armour (2000) argue “that making explicit underlying philosophical assumptions and providing rich text examples of the data collection and analysis process ought to be a key feature of any published phenomenological research” (p. 12). Similarly, phenomenology tends to be described within the sport science literature with reference to second hand sources which ultimately moves one away from the important meanings that were inherent within the philosophical traditions associated with the key contributors of phenomenology such as Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty (Kerry & Armour).

Although it has been argued that the space constraints regarding the submission of work in scholarly journals can limit the discussion of the philosophical roots within the published research (Kerry & Armour, 2000), there are no such limits associated with a doctoral dissertation. To begin, the early philosophical development of phenomenology will be discussed while drawing from the work of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger.

Edmund Husserl and Phenomenology

Often referred to as the father of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl criticized psychology as a science, suggesting that human beings do not react automatically to external stimuli but respond to their own perception of what these stimuli mean (Lavery, 2003). Thus, meaning involves both

internal and external processes related to one's life experiences.

Sokolowski (2000) explains:

One of phenomenology's greatest contributions is to have broken out of the egocentric predicament, to have checkmated the Cartesian doctrine. Phenomenology shows that the mind is a public thing, that it acts and manifests itself out in the open, not just inside its own confines. Everything is outside. The notions of an "instrumental world" and an "extramental world" are incoherent; they are examples of what Ezra Pound called "idea clots." The mind and the world are correlated with one another. Things do appear to us, things truly are disclosed, and we, on our part, do display, both to ourselves and to others, the way things are. (p. 12)

The central notion of Husserlian phenomenology is therefore its identification that experience is the basis of knowledge, leading Husserl to introduce the concept of life world or lived experience. The aim of Husserl's phenomenology was to arrive at descriptions of an experience that account for what is being experienced, achieved through a process of transcendental phenomenological reduction (often referred to as bracketing or epoche) (Kerry & Armour, 2000). Also of importance to Husserlian phenomenology are the notions of intentionality and essences.

Intentionality. The term most closely associated with phenomenology is intentionality, "every act of consciousness we perform, every experience that we have, is intentional: it is essentially 'consciousness of' or an 'experience of' something or other" (Sokolowski,

2000, p. 8). Hence, the mind is directed toward objects. Sokolowski expands further:

There are no structural differences within consciousness; there is just awareness, pure and simple. We notice whatever impressions arise in us, and we then arrange them into judgments or propositions that take a stab at declaring what is “out there”. But for phenomenology, intentionality is highly differentiated. There are different kinds of intending, correlated with different kinds of objects. For example, we carry out perceptual intentions when we see an ordinary material object, but we must intend pictorially when we see a photograph or a painting. We must change our intentionality; taking something as a picture is different from taking something as a simple object. Pictures are correlated with pictorial intending, perceptual objects are correlated with perceptual intending. Still another kind of intending is at work when we take something to be a word, another when we remember something, and others again when we make judgments or collect things into groups. (p. 12)

Intentional acts are a perceiving of something, the making of a judgment of judgment or the valuing of a value (Kerry & Armour, 2000).

Essences. With regards to essences, Husserl’s phenomenology concerned itself with an identification of structures that were related to the experience. These structures or essences constituted consciousness and perception of the human world (Kerry & Armour, 2000). Importantly, to

reveal the essences of an experience is to present, in a systematic manner, the ways that “symbols representing the world are manipulated in the mind” (Koch, 1995, p. 828).

A final important feature of Husserlian phenomenology is the notion of phenomenological reductionism. Husserl argued that it was possible to achieve an unbiased view of one’s own subjectivity, that one could essentially “bracket out the outer world as well as individual biases in order to successfully achieve contact with essences” (Lavery, 2003, p. 6). But as Kerry and Armour (2000) argue, controversy exists as to whether phenomenological reductionism is achievable, and it is here that the other meanings of phenomenology emerge towards the creation of other branches of phenomenological inquiry.

Heidegger’s Philosophical Hermeneutics

Central to Martin Heidegger’s consideration of phenomenology is the concept of the hermeneutic circle. Essentially, one’s background, which is informed by their past collective experiences, influences their way of understanding the world. Heidegger believed that one’s background could never be made completely explicit “it is the recognition that these personal histories lead to a unique perception of different experiences and that this personal history cannot be bracketed out; it is fundamental for interpretation” (Kerry & Armour, 2000, p, 6).

Thus, our cultural, historical and social contexts create our history, and at the same time, we perceive the world from our collective experiences and background. This interpretive process, as described by Lavery (2003) and others (see as well van Manen, 1997), constitutes the

hermeneutic circle “which moves from the parts of experience, to the whole of experience and back and forth again and again to increase the depth of engagement with and the understanding of the texts” (p. 9). Kvale (1996) suggested that understanding is achieved when one has achieved a place of meaning free of inner contradictions, for the moment.

There are important implications with regard to the hermeneutic circle on interpretation. First, as the interpreter moves towards a sense of understanding, they bring their history and its associated meanings to bear on the current situation being considered. Second, the interpreter cannot dissociate themselves from the hermeneutic circle, thus, they are an active participant in the generation of knowledge, and cannot be bracketed from the process. It can be said that phenomenological “data” must be considered as experiences that exist within the researched and the researcher’s perspectives (Koch, 1995).

The debate between Husserl and Heidegger is best understood from an ontological perspective. It follows that research claiming to use a phenomenological approach must make explicit the ontological assumptions upon which it is based. The Husserlian tradition or eidetic phenomenology involves a reflective intuition to describe and clarify experiences as they are lived and related to consciousness. Whereas the Heideggerian tradition (or hermeneutic phenomenology), is ontological and involves an existence in the world where consciousness is historical and socio-cultural and expressed through language (or the text) (Kerry & Armour, 2000). van Manen (1997) suggests that strict followers of Husserl’s phenomenology suggest that phenomenological research is pure

description whereas interpreting relates to Heidegger's notion of phenomenological description.

As an extension of Heidegger's view of language and understanding as inseparable structural aspects of humans "being-in-the-world", Hans-Georg Gadamer viewed hermeneutic phenomenology as not only a procedure for understanding but as a way to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place. Gadamer also viewed our understanding as a result of our historicity of being and considered all understanding to involve prejudice (Lavery, 2003). Gadamer believed that understanding and interpretation are bound together and interpretation is always an evolving process (Lavery). In particular, "interpretation is placed in the context of a whole historical complex of relations that characterize the moment in which one lives and the progressive orientation which that situation implies" (Silverman, 1997, p. 271).

Ontology, Epistemology and Phenomenology

It can be argued that the phenomenological method is the phenomenological approach itself (Kerry & Armour, 2000). Similarly, Merleau-Ponty (1962) suggests that doing phenomenology is an intellectual process requiring one to understand it from the inside...that to know phenomenology is to do phenomenology. Kerry and Armour argue that phenomenology should be viewed as more than just a variation of qualitative research. One's approach to phenomenological inquiry must pay attention to the unique schools of thought that relates to either the Husserlian or Heideggerian phenomenology.

It can be stated that this study was situated within the hermeneutic phenomenological tradition and thus acknowledges the Heideggerian influence from both an ontological and epistemological perspective. In particular, my interest for this study stemmed from a need to further our understanding of the form and nature of sport psychology practice and also to examine my relationship to the practice of sport psychology, for I am studying the field with which I am a part. This acknowledges my interest in studying practice and the meanings inherent within it from the inside and allows me to understand the meanings as contextualized life events, similar to Gadamer's (1976) notion of fusion of horizons.

A Phenomenological Perspective of the Practice of Sport Psychology

An important aspect that has pervaded sport psychology since its inception is the existence of theories that have ignored the natural context of human action (Dzewaltowski, 1997). Importantly, Dzewaltowski argues that because the field has not fully explored the basic beliefs that underlie the practices of sport psychologists, meta-theoretical differences stunt growth in the body of knowledge and foster tension and division between researchers and practitioners. Dzewaltowski outlined a number of meta-theoretical approaches of knowing that could assist one in understanding the information that is embedded within a meta-theoretical framework of assumptions pertaining to sport psychology. It is from here that the need for a hermeneutic phenomenological study of the *practice* of sport psychology will be placed.

Much of the literature pertaining to the practice of sport psychology draws from dispositional assumptions "many personality trait theories and

biological approaches propose a dispositional world view that assumes that person-oriented characteristics regulate human action” (Dzewaltowski, 1997, p. 256). For example, an early study outlining the important characteristics demonstrated by “successful” sport psychology practitioners were reported by Orlick & Partington (1987). Although an understanding of the characteristics yields important information for the practitioner, it does not, however, acknowledge that the self is not stable and uniform over time. Further, it can be argued that a more ecological approach allows us to study practice with regard to how individuals encounter their environment. Dzewaltowski (1997) explains:

It is a focus of the phenomena of everyday life practices within the environment of physical activity and sport that will bridge the personal and environmental gap in sport psychology, merge science and practice, and create an autonomous area of study and practice. (p. 262)

Thus, to move from a dispositional framework is the work of phenomenology which then allows us to move beyond the biological, however difficult this may be.

Phenomenology has waged a heroic struggle against psychologism from the beginning. It tries to show that the activity of achieving meaning, truth, and logical reasoning is not just a feature of our psychological and biological makeup, but that it enters into a new domain, a domain of rationality, a domain that goes beyond the psychological. It is not easy to make this distinction. The ego is indeed both empirical and

transcendental, and one can limit one's consideration to the empirical side of things. Meaning and truth also have their empirical dimensions, but they are more than just empirical things. To treat them as simply psychological is to leave out something important. However, it is not easy to show what that extra something is. (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 115)

Merleau-Ponty (2002) explains that human subjectivity is irreducible in that we are made by society and thus, at the same time, make our society. Silverman (1997) discusses our need to move away from pre-existing discipline related understandings:

By going beyond scientism in physiological psychology, in linguistics, in sociology, and in history, we come to understand our own relation to them. The physiologist is vitally linked to behaviour; the sociologist is immersed in society; the historian understands history; and the linguist speaks a language. They are all dialectics in dialectical relation with one another, because they form the human context, which Merleau-Ponty called the phenomenal field. We cannot put the knowing subject in the object that he seeks to know. The linguist is in the reciprocal relation with the language he studies. (p. 99)

To understand the practice of sport psychology is to live in a life world of practice. Constructing meaning through experience and making sense of one's life world also involves an understanding of the social interactions associated with the practitioner as well. To this end, it can be

stated that sport psychologists construct practice based on their historical and social frames of reference. Of the relatively few examples of phenomenological forms of research found within the field of sport psychology, I could find none that studied the practice of sport psychology consistent with the phenomenological research tradition. To achieve an understanding of the life worlds regarding the practice of sport psychology required a hermeneutic phenomenological approach.

Identity and the Practice of Sport Psychology

If we achieve meanings through both internal and external processes, then it must be stated that our interactions with others contributes to our identity of self. Given that the natural contexts pertaining to the practice of sport psychology have received little attention, there continues to be a struggle between the academic discipline and the practice of sport psychology. As Martens (1987) exclaims “I have come to know quite intimately two very different sport psychologies – what I term academic sport psychology and practicing sport psychology. They have caused me to lead two very different lives” (p. 30).

Trying to account for and understand our professional identity with regards to practice is a necessary aim of this study. This places the study within the social psychological realm, that of the self and the various interactions that play out in the immediate environment. Marten’s (1987) sense of displacement has been captured through Sokolowski’s (2000) commentary of perception, memory and imagination as forms of intentionality:

Whenever we live in the kind of inner displacement just described, we live, so to speak, in two parallel tracks. We live in the immediacy of our surrounding world, which is perceptually given to us, but we also live in the world of the displaced self, the remembered or imagined or anticipated world. Sometimes we can drift more and more into one or other of these: we might get so wrapped up with what is immediately around us that we lose all imaginative detachment from it, or we may drift more and more into reverie and daydreaming, becoming practically, but never entirely, disconnected from the world around us. Furthermore, the imaginative intentions we have stored up within us serve to blend with and modify the perceptions we have. We see faces in a certain way, we see buildings and landscapes in a certain way, because what we have seen before come back to life when we see something new and puts a slant on what is given to us. Displacement allows this to happen. (p. 75)

All of our subjective and objective sets of experiences operate on us at all times, and it is argued that these can be described and understood through a phenomenological attitude (Sokolowski, 2000).

Sokolowski furthers his discussion of a phenomenology of self:

The things we experience present themselves as identities within manifolds of experience. Our own self, our “ego”, also establishes and presents itself to us as an identity in a

manifold of appearances, but the manifold in which we are presented to ourselves is different from those in which things are presented. We never show up to ourselves in the world as just one more thing; we stand out, each of us, as central, as the agents of our intentional life, as the one who has the world and the things in it given to him. Our power of disclosure, our being the dative of manifestation for things that appear, introduces us into the life of reason and the human way of being. (p. 112)

When we practice, we not only bring to our situation our own sense of self based on our histories and social context, but we disclose to others an identity that they, themselves construct. Given others' views of us and their own referent historicity, our self is presented as it appears to both ourselves and others as singular and distinct identities all at once.

Giddens (1991) provides a summative account of the self:

Self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography. Identity here still presumes continuity across time and space: but self-identity is such continuity as interpreted reflexively by the agent. (p. 53)

Dilemmas of the Self

Given that we currently exist within a post modern world (Gergen, 2000) or as Giddens (1991) describes, a period of late modernity, it is

important to continue a discussion of self from a more contemporary perspective. Gergen writes:

In the traditional community, where relationships were reliable, continuous, and face-to-face, a firm sense of self was favoured. One's sense of identity was broadly and continuously supported. Further, there was strong agreement on "right" and "wrong" behaviour. One could simply and unself-consciously be, for there was little question of being otherwise. With social saturation, the traditional pattern is disrupted. One is increasingly thrust into new and different relationships – as the network of associates expands in the workplace, the neighbourhood is suffused with new and different voices, one visits and receives visitors from abroad, organizations spread across geographical locales, and so on. The result is one cannot depend on a solid confirmation of identity, nor on comfortable patterns of authentic action. (p. 147)

The result of this postmodern predicament is that "we cross the threshold into a vertical vertigo of self-reflexive doubt. For the focus on how things get constructed is, after all, born of doubt – doubt of all authority and all claims to truth.

Additionally, as it becomes more difficult to be clear about who one is, a new consciousness, that of a consciousness of construction has emerged. Gergen (2000) writes:

As belief in essential selves erodes, awareness expands of the ways in which personal identity can be created and re-created in relationships. This consciousness of construction does not strike as a thunderbolt; rather, it eats slowly and irregularly away at the edge of consciousness. And as it increasingly colors our understanding of the self and relationships, the character of this consciousness undergoes a qualitative change. (p. 146)

As the field, and in particular, the applied practice of sport psychology continues its evolution; it faces challenges that must also be understood from a post modern perspective. Arguably, the practice of sport psychology has almost always existed in a complex reality, as the practices of sport psychology vary tremendously, and so do the situations that sport psychology practitioners find themselves in. Whether our contextual reality is growing more complex cannot be stated with any certainty. However, one could argue successfully that our current environment is that of social saturation, as our practice takes the form of: one-on-one meetings with an athlete; to working with a coach and athlete(s) with a team or training centre; to working as a member of a sport science team, and even working more loosely with a team that is geographically situated in another locale.

Yet as the social world is increasingly saturated, each form of relationship demands its demonstration of allegiance. Thus each assessment of sincerity is made against a backdrop of multiple, competing alternatives. Each

alternative that cries for attention will thereby drain the focal investment of seeming significance. Each comparison will inform one of the limits to his or her sincerity of commitment.

(Gergen, 2000, p. 219)

As we see, the self is now a construct that is full of tension, almost taking the form of a dichotomous existence. Given the challenges that are inherent with a late modernity, “characterising individuals’ phenomenal worlds is difficult, certainly in the abstract” (Giddens, 1991, p. 187). Importantly, to understand living in this world is to appreciate various tensions at the level of the self. In Giddens book *Modernity and Self-identity*, important dilemmas were presented that mediate our experiences of self.

Unification versus fragmentation. Giddens (1991) suggests that although modernity fragments, it also unites. Related to Goffman’s (1959) work on the presentation of self, the suggestion here is that the self is shaped as an individual leaves one encounter for another. Importantly, Giddens suggests that this contextual diversity, related to poststructuralist interpretations of the self, does not, necessarily, need to lead to a fragmentation of the self. Rather, an integrated self can be drawn from these discontinuous experiences and “create a distinctive self-identity which positively incorporates elements from different settings into an integrated narrative” (p. 190).

Powerlessness versus appropriation. A second dilemma, proposed by Giddens (1991) refers to an individual’s propensity to feel powerless in relation to their diverse social universe. Giddens explains:

If we understand such processes in dialectical fashion, however, and if we see that globalisation produces not just extensional but intensional change, a complex picture emerges. We cannot say that all forms of expropriation necessarily provide the possibility of reappropriation, certainly on the level of individual conduct. Many of the processes transformed by disembedding, or reorganised in the light of the intrusion of abstract systems, move beyond the purview of the situated actor. (p. 192)

Thus, powerlessness and reappropriation are intricately related depending on both the self, time and context. Experiencing powerlessness is informed by one's referent expectations coupled with the composition of the phenomenal world.

Authority versus uncertainty. In conditions of high modernity, there are no determinant authorities (Giddens, 1991). The implications, and in particular, for that of the practitioner within a sport context are important. Giddens explains:

Some individuals find it psychologically difficult or impossible to accept the existence of diverse, mutually conflicting authorities. They find that the freedom to choose is a burden and they seek solace in more overarching systems of authority. A predilection for dogmatic authoritarianism is the pathological tendency at this pole. A person in this situation is not necessarily a traditionalist, but essentially gives up faculties of critical judgement in exchange for the convictions

supplied by an authority whose rules and provisions cover most aspects of his life. (p. 196)

Dealing with the level of uncertainty is critical as we continually engineer our sense of self, as this is an evolving process. Of importance is that we understand that this process is full of dissonance and the potential for role strain is great as we construct our self with regards to our current situation or context.

What begins to emerge as we gain a different, perhaps novel understanding of the self is that in achieving meaning of identity, we must acknowledge that we may, in fact, feel meaningless. If we, as Giddens (1991) suggests, accept that we can keep feelings of personal meaningless at bay “because routinised activities, in combination with basic trust, sustain ontological security” (p. 202), then we must accept that this possibility lessens as one finds themselves within fragmented worlds that are wrought with a collective complexity of competing internal and external identities.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology of Self

To understand one's self and the nature of their practice, it asks of the researcher and the research process for an understanding of both the self and one's life world concurrently. As Ricoeur (1981) suggests, understanding one's world is the means of understanding oneself. Silverman (1997) elaborates:

The self must be the interpreter of its own interpreted signs. The signs are united into a system. The system is dependent upon a language in which there is coherence of

signs. Without that coherence, it would be unclear which self is in question. Although one can speak of a language of self, when a particular analysis is to be undertaken, a particular self must be interpreted. The language of the self is distinguished from the language of fashion and of fictional worlds. But the particular manner in which this self is distinguishable from that one is dependent upon an interpretational system. The system of signs is established through the on-going activity of interpretive experience, an experience based neither in the interpreter nor in the interpreted. (p. 340)

For Heidegger, the self is formed through the interpretation and the system of signs from which it is informed.

Through the use of a hermeneutic phenomenological investigation, the meanings that are inherent with the practice of sport psychology were investigated in order to achieve a “late modern” understanding of practice. It was proposed that the meanings would yield a greater understanding of how practice was viewed by the practitioner within their “self” and extrinsically through a collection of a more public set of meanings through the participants’ sharing of lived experiences with the researcher.

It was expected that the meanings that were elicited would relate to a socially constructed reality as would, at the same time, communicate the identities of the practitioner (and others) who were involved. It was proposed that these meanings would serve our field by facilitating novel features of practice by creating a reflexivity that includes an appreciation of

our phenomenal world. To put my own expectations in perspective, I feel it is appropriate to give Robert Sokolowski, Professor of Philosophy at The Catholic University of America and author of the book, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (2000) the closing comment:

Phenomenology can clarify the intentionalities at work in the natural attitude. It can show, for example, how logic differs from mathematics, and how both differ from natural science; it can show what each of these forms of intentionality is after, what evidences it aims at. Phenomenology assists prephilosophical experience by clarifying what such experience discloses and how it fits in with other forms of evidence. In doing so, however, phenomenology or philosophy does not substitute a new method for what is already there. All it does is to distinguish more sharply the intentions that have already established their own integrity. It removes confusions in these intentions and removes ambiguities in the speech that expresses them. (p. 208)

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences and associated meanings regarding the practice of sport psychology. Interviews with sport psychology service providers along with respective athletes and coaches were conducted in order to collect descriptions of practice. Subsequently, realist tales were written in order to present both the participants' and researcher's voice. An important aim of this research study was to contribute knowledge to both the field and myself, a practitioner in the chosen discipline, regarding the practice of applied sport psychology. This approach allowed me to not only achieve a reflection on practice, but at the same time, account for my self as researcher with regards to the interpretative processes that were used in the construction of the stories and the resulting analysis that occurred.

My interest in collecting the lived experiences and associated meanings regarding the practice of sport psychology stemmed from my professional need to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of my work in the field. In particular, I wanted to achieve a more thorough understanding of the processes involved in the delivery of sport psychology and how certain actions or judgments pertaining to practice were influenced by the participants' individual and/or collective life worlds that were present within the various situations being studied.

This study was guided by the following questions: (1) What is the meaning of sport psychology service delivery to the athletes, coaches, and sport psychology service providers? (2) What are the key features of their

interactions as a result of the lived experiences of the participants? (3) How do sport psychology service providers, coaches, and athletes interact with each other within training and competitive environments? (4) How will this knowledge be meaningful for practitioners in applied sport psychology?

Why Qualitative Methodology?

Qualitative research does not accept the view of a stable, coherent, uniform world (Gay & Airasian, 2000). I felt that that the meaning of practice would differ, given that people and groups have a variety of perspectives and work within a broad number of contexts. Moreover, good qualitative research can “illuminate the previously unknown or tenuously known, provide familiarity through rich description, and explode faulty understanding” (Stean, 1998, p. 334). Given the nature of the research questions, a qualitative research methodology was chosen in that it would help to uncover the underlying processes of practice that is often difficult to achieve using other forms of inquiry. Specifically, the use of interviews can further our understanding of the complex processes that lead to the achievement of certain outcomes (Stean, 1998).

Interpretive Inquiry

According to Gadamer (1979), all knowledge is interpretation. As Garratt and Hodkinson (1998) suggest, “humans make sense of the world by interpreting data from their own standpoint” (p. 519). According to this category of qualitative inquiry, we can benefit from taking the time to describe and interpret performers’ “life worlds” before we develop grand-

scale explanations (Peshkin, 1993). Interpretation can help to clarify complexity, develop new constructs, and contribute to problem solving (thus leading to new research) (Strean, 1998). Given that the aim of interpretivism is to understand the world experience from the point of view of those who live it (Poczwadowski, Barott, & Peregoy, 2002), the sport psychology service provider's, athlete's and coach's perspectives on the process of service delivery was examined.

It has been suggested that "thick descriptions", originally expressed by Clifford Geertz's (1973) writings on the nature of method, can lead one towards the construction of meaning by "getting below the surface to that most enigmatic aspect of the human condition" (Eisner, 1998, p. 15). Further, Eisner (1998) comments that "meanings are construed, and the shape they take is due, in part, to the tools people know how to use" (p. 36). As there are many ways to come to know, understand and explain the world, it has been suggested that one's initial assumptions be made known to the reader in order to position the research and understand the implications of the questions being asked (Sparkes, 1992). Eisner (1998) states, "since there is no form of representation that includes everything, in this particular sense, all forms of representation are biased" (p. 240). Furthering Eisner's supposition of knowing, Denzin and Lincoln (2003) argue the following:

All research is interpretive; it is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied. Some beliefs may be taken for granted, invisible, only assumed, whereas others are highly

problematic and controversial. Each interpretive paradigm makes particular demands of the researcher, including the questions he or she asks and the interpretations the researcher brings to them (p. 33).

Given the previous discussion, it must be declared that a constructivist-interpretive paradigm best describes the set of beliefs that formed the foundation for both the research process and my own set of valuing and knowing. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) suggest that the constructivist paradigm “assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent cocreate understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures” (p. 35). As a consequence it can be reasonably assumed that there are multiple meanings associated with the practice of sport psychology (or any other form of professional practice) and that the practitioner and their client(s) come to an understanding through discourse and shared experience.

Foundation of Truth and Knowledge

For conventional, positivistic researchers, there exists a “genuine” reality apart from the flawed human consideration of it (Lincoln & Guba, 2003). For foundationalists, “scientific truth and knowledge about reality reside in rigorous application of testing phenomena against a template as much devoid of human bias, misperception, and other idols as instrumentally possible” (p. 270). Similarly, realists, who are usually also foundationalists, view phenomena as existing outside of the mind.

Contrary to realism is the notion of relativism, upon which constructivists (as well as critical theorists, participatory/cooperative and poststructuralist inquirers) situate themselves. As Lincoln and Guba (2003) suggest:

The realization of the richness of the mental, social, psychological, and linguistic worlds that individuals and social groups create and constantly recreate and cocreate gives rise, in the minds of new paradigm post modern and post structural inquirers, to endlessly fertile fields of inquiry rigidly walled off from conventional inquirers (p. 272).

Lincoln and Guba position that constructivists tend towards the antifoundational notion of truth and knowledge, and agreements of truth stem from negotiations of what will be accepted as truth, created “by means of a community narrative, itself subject to the temporal and historical conditions that gave rise to the community” (p. 273).

This relational standpoint views our conscious experience as largely derived from social interchange (Gergen, 1999). In his book *An Invitation to Social Construction*, Gergen describes the emerging vision of the relational being:

There is a social world and it preexists the psychological; once the social world has made its mark on the psychological, the self exists independently of society. In this sense, each of the formulations continues to draw from the family of familiar binaries, self/other, inner/outer,

individual/society. If we are to locate a successor to individualism, it seems, we must achieve a more radical departure. We must undermine the binaries in which we find ourselves subject to others' influence but fundamentally separated. We must locate a way of understanding ourselves as constituents of a process that eclipses any individual within it, but is simultaneously constituted by its individual elements (p. 129).

Although the individual remains central to the interpretation of meaning, the contextual and relational processes take on a prominent role in the establishment of understanding and ultimately truth. This truth is thus "conceived in terms of disclosure that transpires in actual interpretative practices" (Schwandt, 2003, p. 307).

Phenomenological Inquiry

As was previously mentioned, social constructionism requires a naturalistic set of methodological procedures (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). In order to come to know the natural world, a phenomenological investigation was employed. Although phenomenology appears to be an individual enterprise, Gergen (1999) argued that "conscious experience is fundamentally relational; subject and object – or self and other – are unified within experience" (p. 128). van Manen (1997) views phenomenological research as the explication of phenomena as they present themselves to consciousness:

Anything that presents itself to consciousness is potentially of interest to phenomenology, whether the object is real or imagined, empirically measurable or subjectively felt. Consciousness is the only access human beings have to the world. Or rather, it is by virtue of being conscious that we are already related to the world. Thus all we can ever know must present itself to consciousness. Whatever falls outside of consciousness therefore falls outside the bounds of our possible lived experience. Consciousness is always transitive. To be conscious is to be aware, in some sense, of some aspect of the world. And thus phenomenology is keenly interested in the significant world of the human being (p. 9).

A phenomenological investigation attempts to demonstrate complex meanings that stem from the subjective experiences of everyday life (Merriam, 2002). Specifically, phenomenological research focuses on “describing the essence of a phenomenon from the perspective of those who have experienced it” (Merriam, p. 93). An important feature of phenomenological inquiry is that it leads to practically relevant knowledge (Van der Zalm & Bergum, 2000). In a phenomenological sense, knowledge does not inform practice, rather, reflection on practice results in knowledge, which in turn enlightens practice (van Manen, 1997). This “action knowledge” can help to address the differences between the scientist and the practitioner (Tenenbaum, 2001) and assist practitioners with the decisions (or judgements) informing their practice.

Philosophical Hermeneutics

“To find meaning in an action, or to say one understands what a particular action means, requires that one interpret in a particular way what the actors are doing” (Schwandt, 2003, p. 296). Therein lies the difference between interpretivism and hermeneutics. Assuming interpretivist philosophies suggest that the role of the interpreter is that of the uninvolved observer, Schwandt proposes that there are several ways that hermeneutics challenge the epistemological view of the interpreter’s task. First, “hermeneutics argues that understanding is not, in the first instance, a procedure – or rule-governed undertaking; rather, it is a very condition of being human. Understanding *is* interpretation” (p. 301).

Second, the interpreter’s own bias is not only impossible to escape, but necessary in achieving an understanding of others’ life worlds:

The fact that we “belong” to tradition and that tradition in some sense governs interpretation does not mean that we merely re-enact the biases of tradition in our interpretation. Although preconceptions, prejudices, or prejudgements suggest the initial conceptions that an interpreter brings to the interpretation of an object or another person, the interpreter risks those prejudices in the encounter with what is to be interpreted (p. 302).

Thirdly, understanding is said to be participative and achieved through conversation (Schwandt, 2003). Finally, the act of understanding involves only one step, that of practical experience in that acquiring understanding and applying understanding or not separate actions.

van Manen (1997) states that it is also important to differentiate between phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology: “it is possible to make a distinction in human science research between phenomenology (as pure description of lived experience) and hermeneutics (as interpretation of experience via some “text” or via some symbolic form)” (p. 25). Some even argue that phenomenological research is pure description while hermeneutics is interpretation that falls outside the parameters of phenomenological inquiry (van Manen).

However, for the purposes of this research study, I have chosen to follow van Manen’s (1997) account of hermeneutic phenomenology in that hermeneutic phenomenology involves both the description and interpretation of lived experience. As he indicates:

we may say that phenomenological text is descriptive in the sense that it names something. And in this naming it points to something and it aims at letting something show itself. And phenomenological text is interpretive in the sense that it mediates...it mediates between interpreted meanings and the thing toward which the interpretations point (p. 26).

Hermeneutic Phenomenology and the Practice of Sport Psychology

Brustad (2002) recently commented that the hermeneutic tradition could make a sizable contribution to the knowledge base with the discipline of sport psychology. Moreover he argued that the lived experiences of practice is legitimately worth learning about and is an extension of what is a growing amount of literature pertaining to the professional delivery of sport psychology. Given that the central aim of

this study was to further our understanding of the meanings inherent within the practice of sport psychology, a hermeneutic methodology was chosen as it falls under the constructivist paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 2003).

Hermeneutic phenomenology stems from the belief that human behaviour is related to the individual perceptions of the meanings inherent within their respective social contexts (van Manen, 1997). A key dimension of the hermeneutic tradition stems from the acknowledgement that humans construct meaning through experience and make sense of their world as a result of their interactions with others. The hermeneutic phenomenological tradition can be particularly relevant to the practice of sport psychology because it can help to show the complexity and reality of practice through “individual perceptions of the meaning inherent within social contexts” (Brustad, 2002, p. 32).

Research as a Relational Process

Qualitative research is currently experiencing a tremendous number of tensions as it moves away from foundationalism towards a more postmodern, multiparadigmatic existence (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003). Because of this, some emerging innovations in methodology now exist stemming from the need to uncover and record the ‘truth’ albeit it a relational construct. Sparkes (2002) refers to the current state of qualitative research as “the crises of representation” (p. 9). He goes on to suggest that “issues of representation, legitimation, reflexivity, and voice, to name but a few, now confront qualitative researchers in sport and physical activity throughout their projects. It is impossible to remain

untouched by them, and there are no simple answers to any of the dilemmas posed by these issues” (p. 24).

Specifically, Gergen and Gergen (2003) have suggested that reflexivity, multiple voicing, and literary representation be discussed and understood as one proceeds in qualitative inquiry. In order to appropriately situate this study relative to the theoretical assumptions and the respective choices and judgements that were made during the course of the research process, the innovations in methodology will be discussed as they pertain to the hermeneutical phenomenological inquiry.

Reflexivity

Smith (1994) suggested that reflexivity cannot be avoided and can, instead be viewed as an important component of the research exercise itself. Gergen and Gergen (2003) describe the process of reflexivity as follows:

Here investigators seek ways of demonstrating to their audiences their historical and geographic situatedness, their personal investments in the research, various biases they bring to their work, their surprises and “undoings” in the process of the research endeavour, the ways in which their choices of literary tropes lend rhetorical force to the research report, and / or the ways in which they have avoided or suppressed certain points of view (p. 579).

Moreover, Sparkes (2002) provided a comprehensive list of the factors to be considered by the researcher (and author) when engaging in reflection:

Researchers need to reflect on the political dimensions of fieldwork, the webs of power that circulate in the research process, and how these shape the manner in which knowledge is constructed. Likewise, they need to consider how issues of gender, nationality, race, ethnicity, social class, age, religion, sexual identity, disability, and able-bodiedness shape knowledge construction. These issues may affect interactions in the field; who gets studied and who gets ignored; which questions are asked and which are left unasked; how people are written in and out of accounts; and how “others” and the self of the research are represented (p. 17).

Through reflection, the reader is given information that they may use when considering biases that may exist. More importantly, the juxtaposition of self and subject matter can be used to enrich the research. Given that a wide variety of personal views of knowing will exist (i.e. the reader / audience can be situated in a number of paradigms), the reader can co-create their understanding with the researcher and participant as they read the stories and subsequent interpretation of the text.

Multiple Voices

Related to the notion of reflexivity is the need for the removal of the singular voice and replacement by the inclusion of multiple voices within the research report “perhaps the most promising development in this domain is in conceptual and methodological explorations of polyvocality (Sparkes, 1991). There is a pervasive tendency for scholars – at least in

their public writings – to presume coherence of self” (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 595). Post modern literatures on self, social construction and the like demonstrate that a singular self is intellectually and politically problematic (see Gergen, 1999; Gergen, 2000; Rossi 1999). Important to the research process is the determination of how authors account for their own voice(s). Gergen and Gergen explain:

One of the most difficult questions is how the author / researcher should treat his or her own voice. Should it simply be one among many, or should it have special privileges by virtue of professional training? There is also the question of identifying who the author and the participants truly are; once we realize the possibilities of multiple voicing, it also becomes evident that each individual participant is polyvocal. Which of these voices is speaking in the research and why? What is, at the same time, suppressed? (p. 580)

Moreover, Fine, Weis, Weseen, and Wong (2003) suggest researchers have an important responsibility to communicate to the reader who they are as both a researcher and a person:

Our obligation is to come clean “at the hyphen,” meaning that we interrogate in our writings who we are as we coproduce the narratives we presume to “collect,” and we anticipate how the public and policy makers will receive, distort, and misread our data. It is now acknowledged that critical ethnographers have a responsibility to talk about our

identities, why we interrogate what we do, what we choose not to report, how we frame our data, on whom we shed our scholarly gaze, who is protected and not protected as we do our work (p. 195).

It is here that I argue for a careful balance be maintained between evacuating myself as the practitioner self while at the same time, assuming the necessary roles, responsibilities and privileges of leading (or at least co-creating) the research process. Lincoln and Denzin (2003) further this view from an epistemological perspective:

The point is that the Other and more mainstream social scientists recognize that there is no such thing as unadulterated truth; that speaking from a faculty, an institution of higher education, or a corporate perspective automatically means speaking from a privileged and powerful vantage point; and that this vantage point is one to which many do not have access, through either social station or education (p. 617).

Sparkes (2002) writes that how researchers present themselves and others in their texts become increasingly important when it comes to how, when and whose voices will be included in the written work. Great care must be taken to clearly identify which “self” is present regarding the author’s many voices and where the participants’ views are presented alone. Moreover, the descriptive and interpretive processes should be clearly defined in order to provide clarity to the reader regarding the

authentic nature of the text that is being read and/or interpreted by the readers themselves.

The Design

Case studies can assist with the accumulation of knowledge associated with various psychological principles in an athletic environment (Smith, 1988). This study utilized a multiple-case (three cases) design. A multi-case study attempts to build abstractions from the analysis of each individual case study (Merriam, 1988). Each individual case study consists of an entire study through which “convergent evidence is sought regarding the facts and conclusions for the case” (Yin, 1994, p. 49). Given that the focus of this study was to examine the various meanings that emerged through the sharing of the participants’ stories within each, attempts were made to build a general understanding of the meanings that surfaced across all three cases. The use of multiple cases allowed me to examine the practice of sport psychology in a number of social contexts thereby enhancing the potential breadth and depth of the meanings that were found.

Gaining Access to the Participants and their Stories

In a phenomenological study, access is limited to finding individuals who have experienced the phenomenon and have given permission to be studied (Creswell, 1998). Dukes (1984) recommends studying 3 to 10 participants. I chose to secure a minimum of three separate cases that involved in depth interviews with a sport psychology practitioner, coach and athlete for each case studied.

This study utilized a purposive (or criterion-based) sample. Purposive sampling requires the researcher to establish the criteria necessary for participants to be included in the study (Merriam, 1988). Prospective participants were eventually accepted for participation in this study in accordance with the following criteria: 1) the sport psychology practitioner must have worked with a coach and an athlete where they were responsible for providing sport psychology services; 2) all three participants had to express a willingness to share their experiences associated with the practice of sport psychology and; 3). all participants must have been associated with elite sport. Elite sport was defined as having participated at national, international, or professional sporting events.

Initial contact was either made by phone or via email. Regardless of the mode of first contact, all sport psychology practitioners who were solicited for this study were sent an information letter (Appendix A) outlining my interests in doing the study, the temporal expectations regarding their participation in the study, and that their identities would be kept confidential at all times. The sport psychology practitioner and I then engaged in further dialogue in order to continue sharing the underlying reasons for doing the study. This helped to facilitate the informal setting required to instil a level of comfort for sharing their personal experiences with me and at the same time created a professional interest for them for participating in the study. It was proposed that engaging in professional discourse regarding the practice of sport psychology would produce a mutually beneficial experience, as providing for an opportunity for

reflection would not only benefit the research study, but the practitioner that was participating in the study as well.

My attempts to establish trust and rapport were imperative as I was asking the practitioner to identify a coach and an athlete that they had, or were continuing to work with professionally to also participate in the study and I also wanted to collect personally meaningful examples of practice. Moreover, Creswell (1998) has argued that it is important to have rapport with those being studied in order for the participants to “disclose detailed perspectives about responding to an action or process (p. 117). Fontana and Frey (2003) explain: “Gaining trust is essential to the success of the interview and, once gained, trust can still be very fragile. Any faux pas by the researcher may destroy days, weeks, or months of painfully gained trust” (p. 78).

If the sport psychology practitioner had any reservations at all with both myself or the goals of the study, both their participation and my ability to gain access to the coaches and athletes would have been unattainable, or the nature of the experiences that would be shared with me would be generic and superficial at best. Thus, careful consideration was given regarding how I presented myself to the participants. Every attempt was made to appear humble, open, and genuinely concerned with learning about their experiences (Sword, 1999). All interviews began with casual conversation in order to have participants feel at ease and comfortable with sharing personal and potentially sensitive information about themselves and the work they have done with others with me.

The interviews needed to be conducted carefully in order to protect the integrity of the data collection processes. This is especially important for phenomenological interviews, as “asking appropriate questions and relying on informants to discuss the meaning of their experiences require patience and skill on the part of the researcher” (Creswell, 1998, p. 130). Thus a thorough, patient approach was required.

The sport psychology service providers, athletes and coaches who expressed an interest in participating in the study were asked to sign an informed consent form (Appendix B). The interviews were conducted in person or by telephone one case at a time. Although telephone interviews lack the face-to-face non-verbal cues that researchers use to dictate the pace and direction of their interviews, it was determined to be the only viable method by which I could reach such a geographically diverse sample that was used for this study (Berg, 2001). All interviews were taped on an audiocassette.

Ethical Considerations

I submitted the research proposal for the study to the Ethics Committee with the Office of Research and Higher Degrees at the University of Southern Queensland. In order to protect the privacy and dignity of the participants, ethical issues were addressed and communicated in a letter of informed consent (Appendix B). All participants were given an opportunity to pose questions to me and I readily made myself available to discuss any matters of concern throughout the course of the study.

The participants were not subjected to any physical, social or psychological risk through their participation. Participation in this study was voluntary and participants could leave the study at any time without consequence. It was communicated to each participant before their interview that they were the owners of the tape that was used to collect the interview until they formally gave me a release to use the recorded interview for the study. The identity of the participants was protected and not communicated at any time. All audiotapes and digital files were labelled using codes, and great care was taken when writing the tales so that the participants' identities were never revealed.

Addressing Quality and Rigor

Creswell (1998) summarized the multiple views of verification that exist within qualitative inquiry. Of the various perspectives and terms suggested, trustworthiness and authenticity were employed for this study in order to establish credibility (Manning, 1997; Sparkes, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Trustworthiness parallels the empiricist concepts of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity, and addresses methods that ensure the research process will be performed correctly. Authenticity involves determining whether the research is deemed "meaningful" (e.g., learning by the researcher and respondents, usefulness, etc.) by considering a set of criteria that through consideration will facilitate making decisions appropriate to a particular time, context, and moment in the research process (Manning, 1997; Sparkes, 1998).

Trustworthiness

Patton (1999) recommends that multiple methods of data collection can enhance the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. For the purposes of this study, triangulation was achieved by including multiple perspectives. This was attained within each case by comparing the views of the sport psychology service provider along with an athlete and coach with whom they are working, or have worked with in the past, thus creating an intersection regarding the sources of data.

Trustworthiness of the data can also be achieved through peer review or debriefing (Creswell, 1998), and is useful in generating further insight and understanding (van Manen, 1997). Initial thematic analysis of the data and related stories were presented to a colleague, who was known to the researcher and who has experience with qualitative methods, in order to obtain their views on the processes and formative analysis that the researcher had undergone for this study. Although member-checking is another useful form of achieving trustworthiness, it was not possible for this study as the ability to remain in contact with the participants was very difficult due to the transient nature of their work.

For example, during the study, the sport psychologist left the sport institute to pursue his own professional practice and the coach interviewed in the first case no longer coaches for the national team. The athlete in case two had retired from his sport following the recent Summer Olympic Games and the coach in case three had taken a leave of absence from his coaching in order to return home to Europe with his family.

Authenticity

Lincoln and Guba (2003) suggest that fairness be considered in that all stakeholder views are apparent in the text. Direct quotes from all participants were included in order to portray the voices of all respondents (Manning, 1997). In particular, a thick and extensive use of quotes from the participants was used in order to give the reader a strong sense of the participants' voices (Sparkes, 2002).

Ontological and educative authenticity refers to whether individual research participants as well as those that surround them have achieved a raised level of awareness as a result of their participation in the study. Enhanced levels of awareness were reported by the participants during the debriefing process which occurred at the conclusion of each interview. When possible, the results of the study will be shared with the participants and I have chosen to present the research at the upcoming Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology conference where I will be leading a symposium entitled: The Practice of Sport Psychology: Telling Tales from the Field. The symposium will offer me the opportunity to share my story with regards to this study and will include a number of colleagues' stories of practice as well. It is hoped that the presentation of my research will further serve to influence a hermeneutic orientation by those who choose to both participate and attend the conference presentation.

Sequence of Methodology

Contacting Prospective Participants

A letter of introduction was sent to the prospective participants (Appendix A) explaining the nature of the research and indicated that they would be contacted by the researcher to ask whether they would like to participate in the study. Follow up correspondence was provided for the participants in order to allow them an opportunity to express any questions or concerns they may have had about the study or their participation. This process also provided me with an opportunity to begin developing some rapport with the participants (Berg, 2001).

The Hermeneutic Interview

The goal of the hermeneutic interview is to keep the researcher and the interviewee focused on the phenomenon being studied, thus allowing the interviewee, in essence, to become the co-investigator of the study (van Manen, 1997).

The art of the researcher in the hermeneutic interview is to keep the question (of the meaning of the phenomenon) open, to keep himself or herself and the interviewee oriented to the substance of the thing being questioned. (p. 98)

It is important that the interview be theme-oriented and not person-oriented (Kvale, 1983). Each interview began by having each participant verbally discuss his or her previous experience with sport psychology service delivery. Each participant was then asked to try to describe how he or she felt during the reported experience. Follow-up questions were asked of participants when it was necessary to clarify what the client was

relating (Creswell, 1998; Kvale, 1996) and the researcher attempted to encourage spontaneous descriptions without any direct influence.

The follow up questions that were asked resulted from my interpretation of the meanings of what the interviewee described and were meant to communicate the interpreted meaning back to the interviewee for clarification. The interview guide can be found in Appendix C.

A debriefing occurred at the conclusion of each interview where the researcher mentioned some of the main points discussed in the interview. Kvale (1996) suggests ending the interview by asking the participant if there is anything more they would like to mention before the interview has concluded in order to provide for an additional opportunity to deal with the issues that he or she may have been thinking about during the interview. Finally, a few minutes was set-aside at the conclusion of each interview to allow the researcher to reflect on the meanings that appeared to result from the lived experiences that were reported by the participants in this study.

Data Analysis

A theme is a tool for deriving meaning of the experience, thus giving structure to something by defining the fundamental nature of it. Themes can be found in conversations, transcribed taped conversations of experiences, and in other forms including diaries, literature and film (van Manen, 1997). Key themes are certain aspects of experiences that are reported with a degree of frequency.

As opposed to transcribing all of the conversations, I conducted a thematic analysis of the conversations by repeatedly listening to the

conversations and determining which passages revealed the experience of sport psychology service delivery. In keeping with van Mann's (2001) guidelines for producing lived experience descriptions, the value of a theme was determined by imagining if the nature of the experience would remain the same if the theme were removed "In determining the universal or essential quality of a theme our concern is to discover aspects or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is" (p. 107). Themes that met this criterion were deemed essential to the experience (Fitzpatrick & Watkinson, 2003; van Manen, 1997) while other phenomenon were deemed to be incidental to the phenomenon under study. Incidental themes "merely add to but alone do not capture the experience" (Fitzpatrick & Watkinson, 2003, p. 285) and were discussed, when appropriate, in chapter six.

I proceeded to construct an overall description of the meanings that emerged from the conversations from each participant and then composed a realist tale that was comprised of the shared experiences from the three participants with each case. As I went about writing each realist tale and continually analyzed the text for evidences of meanings, I reminded myself of the importance of remaining open to the presence of less common incidental themes that may have demonstrated some uniqueness in the participants and their experiences. Since qualitative methods are intended to capture the individual experience, it was important to not simply ignore any outlying or extreme reflections that represented distinct aspects of individual experience. In doing so, the goal of insight, which is central to

phenomenological research and to my theoretical framework, was achieved (Kerry & Armour, 2000).

Collaborative Analysis

A colleague was asked to review each story in order to examine, articulate, re-interpret, omit, add or reformulate the themes that were previously determined (van Manen, 1997). This collaborative analysis approach allowed for a much deeper and richer understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Stainton, Harvey, McNeil, Emmanuel, & Johnson, 1998) and it is proposed that involving others in the analysis would eventually assist with the transformation of knowledge into practice. I also continually presented my early interpretations to “critical friends” who were “used as a resource for challenging and developing the interpretations made by any of the researchers as they construct a logical, coherent, informed, and theoretically sound argument to defend the case they are making in relation to the data generated in a particular study” (Sparkes & Partington, 2003, p. 303). This also included a preliminary conference presentation in order to gain some feedback from my fellow colleagues in the field.

The Writing of the Tales

Literary stylings can serve as an interpretive activity and be combined with other methodologies to offset the criticism of singularity of voice (Gergen & Gergen, 2003). Given that hermeneutic phenomenology is interpretation of experience via text or dialogue (van Manen, 1997), it was decided that constructing stories of the participants’ lived experiences would allow for the meanings of the experiences to emerge through the

telling of the tales. In Sparkes' (2002) recent book *Telling Tales in Sport and Physical Activity*, the use of story was demonstrated to be an excellent means of representing the participants' voices, and there was some evidence that this form of qualitative writing was slowly gaining acceptance (although, it was suggested that this may not yet be the case in sport and physical activity). According to Sparkes:

It is now recognized that writing is an integral feature of the research enterprise whereby our findings are inscribed in the way we write about things. They are not detached from the presentation of observations, reflections, and interpretations. In short, it is now realized that there can be no such thing as a neutral, innocent report since the conventions of the text and the language forms used are actively involved in the construction of various realities (p. 12).

We are currently within the *postexperimental* stage (or *moment...* according to Denzin and Lincoln, 2003), and the use of a realist tale to both describe and interpret the participants' meanings was deemed both defensible and appropriate. The central assumption here was that knowledge cannot be understood from a fully objective viewpoint (Sparkes, 2002), and this was consistent with the underlying rationale of the hermeneutic tradition.

Through realist tales, the author attempts to evacuate him or herself from the description but is present in the analysis or interpretation of the text. The use of extensive quotations "are used to convey to the reader that the views expressed are not those of the researcher but are rather the

authentic and representative remarks transcribed straight from the mouths of the participants” (Sparkes, 2002, p. 44). Writing a realist tale for each case allowed the descriptive and interpretive processes to emerge that are inherent within the hermeneutic phenomenological tradition. In particular, the writing of the tale itself was meant to fulfill the descriptive component of phenomenological inquiry through the choice and use of text as interpretive responsibility. From an hermeneutic perspective, the central interpretive and/or analytical work has been included at the conclusion of each tale under the title “What I have learned from the story”.

This approach served two important goals. The first was to ensure that I had lived up to my responsibilities as a researcher through the provision of a thorough and comprehensive interpretation of the participants’ experiences as they were shared with me. Second, it provided me with a set of criteria for passing judgement on the use of story as a form of qualitative representation. Drawing from the work of Ellis (2000) and Richardson (2000), Sparkes (2002) provided an overview of some important criterion that has been used when making judgement on the significance and potential contribution for the use of story.

By asking the question “What I have learned from the story”, I was able to explore the potential contribution made regarding the experiences and subsequent realist tale that was written for each case. This not only assisted with the interpretive processes, but created a reflexive platform as well. Richardson (2000) asks:

Is the author cognizant of the epistemology of postmodernism? How did the author come to write this text?

How was the information gathered? Are there ethical issues? How has the author's subjectivity been both a producer and a product of this text? Is there adequate self-awareness and self-exposure for the reader to make judgements about the point of view? Does the author hold him- or her-self accountable to the standards of knowing and telling of the people he or she has studied? (p. 937)

Importantly, it is acknowledged that the choices that are made regarding the text that is selected and how one writes about the experiences are of critical importance "choice implies intention. Intention implies a kind of deliberation, and deliberation is at the center of our 'story' here: we have choices, and those choices can and will reveal different intentions" (Lincoln, 1997, p. 39). This places much importance on the writing of the research, as "writing and representation cannot be divorced from analysis, and each should be thought of as analytic in its own right" (Sparkes, 2002, p. 15). In Sparkes' (1994), reflections of his modified realist tale highlighting the experiences of oppression of a lesbian physical educator (Jessica), he expressed the delicate balance between being absent from the text once the participant's voice is introduced:

Of course, my "disappearance" is itself a textual illusion because I am ever present throughout the article as its author, and it is my guiding hand that selects the quotations and shapes the story presented. Therefore, my disappearance needs to be seen as a textual strategy, a conscious decision to focus attention on Jessica's words with

a view to drawing the reader into the storyline of oppression and evoking a response. Essentially, I wanted the reader to feel Jessica's oppression and begin to locate themselves in the dynamics of this process. (p. 52)

Final Methodological Reflections

“Relativism is not something that can be transcended but something that we must, as finite beings, learn to live with” (Sparkes, 2002, p. 220). Given the tremendous variety of paradigms and methods currently in use in the social sciences, the potential for understanding the complexity of human nature becomes increasingly promising. What is required, however, is the continued movement of relational knowing from the periphery towards the centre of acceptance in many scholarly fields. This is particularly true for study of sport and psychology. Lincoln and Denzin (2003) summarize the importance of this movement in the final chapter of their book *The Landscape of Qualitative Inquiry*:

What was centered is now decentered; what was margin and border is now taking center stage. The staggering array of new materials, new resources, new stories, new critiques, new methods, new epistemological proposals, new forms of validity, new textual improvisations, new performed interpretations – all demonstrate an undeniably new, if shifting, center to this work. What was marked formerly by the firm and rigid shapes of a Eurocentric geometry is now the fluid, shape-shifting of chemical flux and transformation, as margins move to the center, the center moves to the

margins, and the whole is reconstituted again in some new form (p. 637).

As new forms or variations of qualitative inquiry emerge, one must find a balance between moving our ways of knowing forward while avoiding an “anything goes” mentality (Sparkes, 2002). However, it is clear that “as things change so will the stories we tell one another, along with the criteria we use for reading stories” (p.224). From my point of view, these are exciting times for an emerging qualitative researcher.

CHAPTER FIVE

Tales from the Field

How this Chapter is Organized

The first part of each case will consist of a realist tale that is comprised of conversations involving a sport psychology practitioner, athlete and coach associated with each context. The purpose of each tale is to present extensive, high-quality, rich and persuasive descriptive data that was shared with me in a series of meetings in 2003. In these stories I have made every attempt to ensure the participants' voices are foregrounded and clearly heard (Rees, Smith & Sparkes, 2003; Rossi, 2003; Sparkes, 2002). Hence, the research arrangement was as follows:

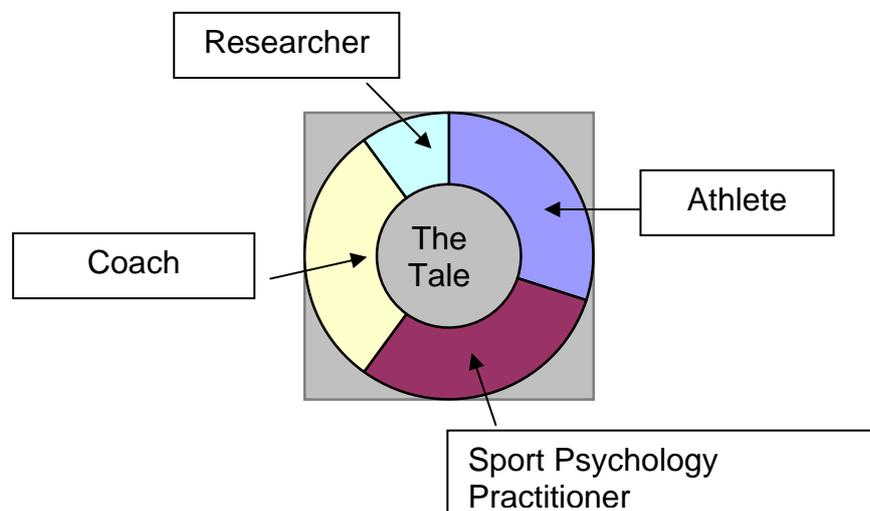


Figure 5.1 Construction of a tale from the field.

Interpretation occurred through both the telling of the tales (e.g. choice of text / quotes used in the story) (Sparkes, 2002) and with the presentation and subsequent discussion of the important themes that

emerged at the conclusion of each tale. To reiterate, these stories and subsequent interpretations have been interpreted by the researcher and a peer, as the ability to utilize member checking was not possible given the transitory nature of the participants.

With regards to the stories themselves, they were not presented in the same way due to the nature of the individual tales that were shared with me in each case. For example, in the first case, the individual accounts of practice did not refer to one single incident that was experienced by all three participants. Thus, the story in case one is a collection of three separate incidents of practice that occurred in a shared context (that of the sport institute) but consisted of three separate life worlds that all involved the same sport psychologist. In case two, all three accounts of practice made reference to a single incident that occurred at a World Championship, thus, the story was told in a manner that was driven by the incident itself as opposed to a more sequential presentation that was followed in the previous case. Finally, the third case involved a collection of lived experiences that directly related to the sport psychologist, with the sport psychologist and athlete making reference to an incident that occurred at a Summer Olympic Games. Thus the coach's lived experiences serve to highlight important features of their working relationship and the relationship between the athlete and sport psychologist as it pertained to the nature of practice.

Finally, given the past history within the field with regards to the use of title (e.g. Taylor, 1994), the practitioners (participants) were identified in a manner that was commensurate with their training and professional

qualifications so that the reader can use this information during their own personal interpretation of the stories and associated meanings of practice.

Case Number One:

Identity and Meaning at a National Sport Institute

The three conversations within the context of the national sport institute were related to the work of the resident sport psychologist at the sport medicine and sport science centre. Although the instances shared in this case were not in reference to the same experience from the three participants, their individual experiences established that the sport psychologist demonstrated a wide range of practice.

The sport psychologist's professional identity appeared to be comprised of his personal beliefs and the typical transactions between him and his environment, which were related to such factors as the time available to meet with the athletes and coaches and the history of their respective relationships (De Weerdt, Corthouts, & Martens, 2002). These nuances and characteristics have significant constructivist underpinnings (Hay and Barab, 2001) that will be elaborated upon throughout the telling of this tale.

Important Beginnings

I arrived in the home city of the sport institute the day before so I could settle in and become familiar with the area. I wanted to be rested and familiar with the area in order to be well prepared, as this was the only opportunity that I would have to interact with the sport psychologist in person. As I approached the sport institute the next morning, my first thoughts were about how impressive and expansive the infrastructure was. I began thinking instantly about the implications regarding the coordination

and delivery of sport psychology services to the athletes and coaches associated with the sport institute.

My rationale for choosing the sport institute for the first case was due, in large, that the sport psychologist at the institute was very experienced and I would benefit from his participation in the study as he appeared both willing and enthusiastic. Although we had never met in person, we had communicated extensively by email which I found useful in gaining entry to his world of professional practice.

We had scheduled a meeting first thing Monday morning. We sat down and began talking extensively about the field and his work at the institute which amounted to professional sharing that frequently occurs between colleagues within applied practice. Although these exchanges fell outside the boundaries of the interview, they proved beneficial in my ability to gain some rapport with him before we began the more formal interview process.

Interestingly, our initial time together appeared to move our relationship from researcher – participant to one of an emerging friendship. The difficulty I was having was attempting to maintain the objective self (my role as “the researcher”). This became apparent to me when I noticed that time was moving steadily along (at an alarming rate from a research collection perspective).

As the day unfolded, I felt this tension come and go between enjoying the moment and the need to “get the interview” in. I didn’t want to bring an uncomfortable and abrupt end to our relationship building, as I felt this was critically important regarding the eventual quality of our

conversation, so I just went along with the day. It wasn't until later in the afternoon that he expressed to me we were running out of time and wondered if we could do the interview the next morning. I had not anticipated spending an entire day engaging in professional discourse but upon reflection, I felt this was a critical process that allowed us to share some meaningful experiences together thus improving the potential breadth and depth of the conversation that we would eventually have together for the purposes of the research study.

A Conversation with the Sport Psychologist

As we sat down the next morning, the sport psychologist shared an incident that involved his work with an athlete who was training at the sport institute. In order to prepare for their meeting together, the sport psychologist spent time collecting information about the athlete and their recent past performances in training through a brief discussion he had with the athlete's coach. Given the increasingly demanding workload being experienced at the sport institute, this form of practice was becoming more and more common. The sport psychologist began by describing the initial stages of his session with the athlete:

Athlete self-refers, I note the appointment in our booking system, I check with the coach just to ask how so and so's going, the coach says could be doing better. Training's been inconsistent, coach questions consistency of application / motivation. The coach says very talented athlete. Coach doesn't know why but says that the athlete has always been a bit inconsistent. Anyway, the athlete makes the booking, comes in, and sits down in the chair. And I say,

“How are things going? What can I do to help, is there anything I can do to help?”

And she looks at me and starts getting teary and I say,

“What seems to be the issue?” and she says,

“Well, I’m a bit all over the place, I’m a bit up and down, I’m a bit inconsistent, I think I’m depressed. Not all of the time. Some days I feel ok and other days I feel lousy.”

So I asked her if she had been able to come up with any sort of pattern, anything that tips it off, is there anything that she can put her finger on that might explain why she has these periods feeling flat, a bit down, she said,

“No I can’t. I’ve tried. This has existed for a long time and I don’t know why”.

She said that’s why I’ve come to see you. She said, “Can you tell me?”

The sport psychologist laughed:

“I’m not a magician; I can’t tell you but let’s have a think about what’s going on”

We went through a number of potential sources for this sort of mood fluctuation... and I talked about her relationship with her boyfriend and she said no that’s going fine...(*Sport Psychologist’s Voice*)

The sport psychologist reported establishing that they would have to come to know the answer to her question together, an approach that stems from a more humanistic, existential professional philosophy (Poczardowski et al., 1998). However, this did not preclude the psychologist from directing questions to her that related to his knowledge and experiences pertaining to the concerns that she expressed.

Martin (2000) expressed that the distinction of “leading” or “following” is not important as the practitioner is not urging certain issues to the front, but simply listening with focused intensity for where the client is trying to go while at the same time remaining one step ahead by dealing with what the client is implying. The ultimate goal is to facilitate the delivery of an intervention that has a “fit within the value system of the athlete and be congruent with the meaning that the activity has for that individual” (Balague, 1999, p. 91). By developing an understanding of the athlete’s past history both athletically and personally, the sport psychologist was more apt to derive meanings that were personally useful for the athlete.

This became evident as the sport psychologist drew from his past experience by connecting past themes (in this case, a reported family breakdown) and trends of his own practice with the athlete’s current reported experiences and feelings in an almost “artistic, intuitive aspect to therapy that is difficult to understand and almost impossible to express” (Martin, 2000, p. 3). The sport psychologist shared his thoughts on the nature of the athlete’s presenting issue(s):

I was thinking about [the athlete’s presenting issue(s)] and I thought, well, sometimes family breakdowns can result in,

you know, a pattern of unstable emotions in kids, they feel obviously concerned about the breakdown, they wish their parents were back together, and there's not much they can do about getting them back together...but I've come across in some past cases, some very talented, international, world champion sort of level athletes who had suffered from cyclic depression with no apparent cause...good performers, at the top of their respective sports in many ways and who would still drop into this trough of depression and it's interesting that this young lady fitted the same pattern. And I, and I still don't know whether my explanation was helpful for her, I think it was because she seems to have settled down quite a bit, I think having sort of gained some insight, some understanding...(*Sport Psychologist's Voice*).

He then expanded upon the rationale for his suggestion to the athlete and offered further background information.

Over the past two decades I've probably had seven or eight of these world champion class athletes who have all shown this similar pattern and all of them battled on with it and they would hit the sort of depths of despair and somehow claw their way back out and get up for another performance and produce another great performance and sort of drop into the trough again so their life was just a roller coaster of emotional instability and all of them were confused and obviously upset by this, couldn't explain it, didn't understand it. And I don't know if I'm right or not, but after having a few of these come in struggling to find some sort of explanation of what was happening, you know, the little light bulb when off in my head as it does on rare occasions and I thought, maybe there is a pattern here, maybe it's something to do

with this “I’m dumb” tag, “I’m unintelligent”, “I’m not smart”. And so it explains a number of things if you think about it, it explains why they might lack a really solid self-esteem base...on the other hand, it might explain they were so intent on being good at something else, if I can’t be good at school then I’d better be good at my sport...(*Sport Psychologist’s Voice*)

It was interesting how the past cases were brought to bear on the current situation. Holt and Streaan (2001) speak of the importance of related knowledge and the effective practice of sport psychology. This played a critical role in this incident, as the sport psychologist drew from his professional individual experience. The sport psychologist eventually shared his thoughts about the importance of his past experience:

I’ve got to say in the early years...these didn’t all come at once; these came over a period of maybe a decade or so. And I can remember being personally and professionally a bit frustrated in not able to help the first couple of athletes who came in...in terms of coming up with some sort of understanding of what was going on it took me a little while. (*Sport Psychologist’s Voice*)

Certain realities began to emerge regarding the nature of the environment and its impact on the practice of sport psychology in this case. The sport psychologist did not resolve or make suggestions after the first visit with the athlete, but there appeared to be a need to bring things to a close in a relatively short period of time. In the end, he felt that he was able to help the athlete “gain further insight and understanding”

and thus the athlete become more aware of why they were feeling the way they did.

Upon the athlete's return for their next get together, the sport psychologist went on to share that the athlete reported feeling that their understanding did explain things and said that she was able to get some benefit out of the insight, thus assisting her in understanding her experiences and feelings and moving the athlete towards self-acceptance. They finished their next session together discussing some practical suggestions that the athlete could use to help manage things in the future when she began feeling "in a dark mood". The sport psychologist then shared a personal philosophy of practice:

I think as sport psychologists, we are obviously concerned about performance enhancement, but I'd like to think that we're probably more concerned about the personal enhancement because my experience here is that if you've got a strong person who's got some physical talent and is prepared to, you know, subject themselves to the training regime they'll be great athletes. You get a highly talented individual who is not personally comfortable then it is going to be very difficult for them to sustain a high-level athlete performance. So I'd like to think that not only are we capable of helping athletes develop that little bag of strategies that they take with them to deal with the, you know, the things that occur to them on a regular day-to-day training and competition basis but hopefully we are capable of sitting down with the athlete and helping them understand a bit about themselves and where they stand on things and where they want to go, where they've come from and where they want to go.

So, and that's the reason in this program that we've got here at the (sport institute) that we try to take as holistic an approach to our athletes and their performance enhancement as we can...our place is judged and funded on the basis of medals, the athletes are judged and funded on the basis of their competition results and so are the coaches and it would be very easy for us to head straight down that strict, practical, applied performance enhancement for the next competition approach at the expense of the person and what factors might be impinging on the person. So I'm hoping we have achieved a good balance between those two. And I think that to me it's a great argument for having people who've got reasonably good solid psych backgrounds, a good understanding of sport, are reasonably eclectic in their approach to things rather than somebody who is pigeon holed as, you know, I'm a mental skills trainer and I'm great at goal-setting, visualization...I see sport psychology as a bit broader than that. (*Sport Psychologist's Voice*)

The sport psychologist expressed a concern to remain cognizant of the whole person. As Balague (1999) suggests, "the whole person has to show up to compete well. If only the athlete is out there, it will not be as strong of a performance as the person is capable of achieving" (p. 94). He viewed this as paramount to his role in this incident, citing that the coach and the athlete would continue their efforts to remain more focused on enhancing performance and that he would continue working with the athlete on this issue without involving the coach:

From the coach's perspective the coach doesn't know all of that. I said to the athlete,

"What's the coach's typical reaction when you're having one of your off days?"

"Well, his typical reaction is to sink the boot...snap me out of it, get me going harder, challenge me...all the techniques that we know coaches have in their bag of tricks."

But of course if you think about it, if the coach knew what was going on, maybe he wouldn't pull out the baseball bat and try to get her more highly motivated, maybe he wouldn't. So I said to her this is ok for you to gain some insight and for you to start to put some practical strategies into your bag of tricks...should you talk to the coach about that? She said,

"I really respect my coach. We've been together for a while, a really long time and I don't know that I really want to talk about my personal family situation."

So I said,

"What's the best thing to do? Do you want to talk to your coach or do you want me to?" And she said,

"I'd feel more comfortable if you did." And I said,

"I'll tell you now that I won't talk about the details of what we've said, just that there are some issues at home that will at times cause some mood state fluctuation and you and I have discussed it and that we are working on it and we've put some strategies in place but there may be some days where she's a bit flat and it's not that she's being lazy and it's

not because she's not interested, it's because she's dealing with some complicated, personal stuff."

The coach was fine with that! (*Sport Psychologist's Voice*)

It is frequently acknowledged that the sport psychologist must have an effective working relationship with the coach as well as with the athlete (Hardy et al., 1996; Halliwell et al., 1999). It is important to practice in a manner that acknowledges the coach's critical and prominent role in the athlete development process. Sport psychology practitioners must be able to remain in the background allowing the coach and the athlete to continue on with the usual work that is the result of a tremendous level of knowledge and experience (Terry, 1997).

A Conversation with a Coach

I was coming to understand how the coach, athlete and sport psychologist worked together at the sport institute. The coach was comfortable giving up responsibility for individual-based concerns yet collaborated with the sport psychologist when it came to team (group) wide areas of development. For the most part, the typical experience (from the coach's perspective) involved the coach and sport psychologist discussing the approach they would use during their group sessions that were designed to assist with the team's preparation. This is consistent with Brustad and Ritter-Taylor's (1997) findings that "group sessions that have focused directly on identifying and enhancing team culture, leadership behaviors, communication patterns, and behavioral expectations have been favourably received" (p. 117).

The sport psychologist and I discuss things before hand...we're trying to elicit from the athletes the things that we thought would be important for performance...and so we'd come up with what we thought would be the topics we'd want to get through and the sort of outcomes we might want from them collectively and maybe even individually and then throw it out to the men to articulate what they thought was important. That way they had ownership of what is was that was important to them either collectively or individually for their performance. (*Coach's Voice*)

The coach also suggested that these opportunities could end up being cathartic for the whole group. Perhaps the best example of the coach's perspective on the use of sport psychology was described by the coach as follows:

He may have done some specific mental fieldwork with individual athletes. All I know is that those athletes that have been generally pleased with the outcome of their meetings with him (the sport psychologist). But most of my work has been, with my athletes with (the sport psychologist) has been with a group of athletes...I like to have a pretty slow build up to important (competitions), psychologically that is, on the other hand, physiologically it's all a part of the table of periodization I suppose, and as far as the mental thing goes, I like it to be a fine tuning come competition time...some of them bring really good qualities, and very good attributes for performance but some don't, as you know, and so what I was going to do with some of them to appreciate their deficiencies...so this is where we get the chance to use (the sport psychologist). (*Coach's Voice*)

The coach's underlying coaching (or leadership) philosophy mimicked the style of delivery demonstrated by the sport psychologist. Information must be transformed in a way that makes it personally meaningful thus allowing for the internalization of important principles and perspectives (Morris & Thomas, 1995). It was evident to me that the coach's view of sport psychology was that of a complementary service, and the opportunities with the sport psychologist were meant to enhance individual levels of self-awareness and stimulate some important reflection and discussion.

A Conversation with a Two-time Olympic Gold Medallist

The final conversation I had involving this case was with an athlete that was referred to me by the sport psychologist. The athlete had a very successful sporting career having achieved a number of gold medal Olympic performances and world championships. He had known the sport psychologist for over ten years, which provided me with some unique insights into the nature of their work as it involved a long-term client-practitioner relationship. Their relationship had evolved slowly over a very long period of time and was far less formal than the other examples of practice that were reported from the conversations with the sport psychologist and the coach.

The athlete shared that he hadn't had the fortune of working with the sport psychologist all that much over the years, as the sport psychologist was always in demand and the athlete was not associated with one of the "big sports" housed within the National sport institute. He did, however, look forward to their chats together at the sport institute and

really valued, what became to be, a friendship that was developed after a few years together:

But when I have been able to, um, I've gone in to see him just to go in and talk about life in general, he's one of the friends that I have at the sport institute, I put it down as an official visit, even if we talk about cars for half of the time.
(*Athlete's Voice*)

As is often the case, sport psychologists adopt a tremendous variety of roles, including that of a "friend" (Hardy & Parfitt, 1994). He went on to describe their relationship further:

We've spent a long time getting to know each other, really, on a social basis as much as anything...I think he said he was interested to see how I went 'cause he thought I was interesting and a bit different from the other athletes he dealt with because of my background and that kind of thing and the sport that I was in. So we sort of just got to know each other and talked about cars...we both knew we had a mutual liking of old cars, and uh, I guess he was present in the Olympic competition in Barcelona, where I had one of my largest disasters of my career, I went in there as World Champion and then lost my first match...that was a real shock for me...that really affected me for many years on a personal level but also on a competition level. (*Athlete's Voice*)

The level of interest expressed by the sport psychologist in the athlete and their sport was, most likely, an important component to the strength of their working relationship. Often, the smaller or "fringe" sports are very appreciative for any assistance or sport science support that they

can secure. Given this reality, their interactions were, for the most part, on the periphery of the institutional offerings that were inherent within the sport institute. It appeared that the hegemonic tendencies that are often found in sport have also played an important part in the nature of service delivery for this athlete. If the sport psychologist was not interested in working with the athlete, the level of service that was reported may have been much less than was given.

The athlete then went on to recall an incident with the sport psychologist to discuss the nature of their work together:

I was going in to see (the sport psychologist) just, you know we were training very hard before Sydney, a lot of hours, six or seven hours everyday at the institute and during lunch time if I didn't come home I made use of that time to go, if I could go and see (the sport psychologist), or one of the other specialists that I was training with. And I was sitting talking to him about my prospects, I was sort of feeling a bit down about it, and he said, and this is really I think based on the fact that he has known me for so long, he was there, he wasn't actually working with me...in Barcelona, he came along with the guy...that I had been working with...so he just tagged along basically, but he saw, he saw what happened, and he said,

"You know, I don't know that maybe you've ever got over the fallout from Barcelona. What do you think about that? I was just thinking of it, it just occurred to me a little while ago. Do you think maybe that nervousness and lack of confidence and fear of failure is because of that?"

And I said,

“I guess I’d thought of it before but to actually have somebody say I think that could be the problem or at least the contributor to it, um, I think was an important step.”

And he said, “Look what I think you might need to do, well it’s just a suggestion, you can think about it, is actually make a, like a mini ceremony. You don’t have to make it, you don’t have to go to great lengths, I mean you could do something like you could go somewhere...have a little ceremony and officially put it to bed kind of thing, or it could just be sitting down, going out for dinner with your partner and talking about it and saying you’re going to, or whatever’s reasonable for you but actually make a conscious acknowledgement that you are going to move on and look ahead now, not let that hang around in the back of your mind”

I didn’t ever do any particular ceremony but I thought about it quite a lot and I think that that could have been, I mean I think I was, uh, what do you call it, I think things were percolating away anyway towards that end. But actually to have (the sport psychologist) put his finger on it and say let’s get past that made me then think about well...I actually went into Sydney with the decision to retire after words regardless of the outcome, I’d sort of had enough of the disharmony and the (national) team, all the negative things I guess that go with training in any sport for a very long time and I thought that it’s just not worth it anymore, even if I win I’m going to retire, so that’s what I said to myself. I think that combined with what we talked about with (the sport psychologist) took a lot of pressure off (*Athlete’s Voice*)

In this incident, the sport psychologist appeared to be looking for the cause of the problem that stemmed from the athlete’s past. While this

can prove to be a less than desirable approach (Martin, 2000), there are two important features of this experience that are worth highlighting. First, the sport psychologist had observed the athlete's performance in Barcelona, thus complementing the sport psychologist's knowledge of the specific athlete characteristics and information. Second, it appeared that the athlete was already progressing to this understanding and appeared to be finding insights in incremental steps over an extended period of time. Thus, one can be left to wonder whether the sport psychologist provided any formal help at all, as they didn't mention any information that appeared related to the athlete's day-to-day experiences that may relate to the athlete's presenting issue. The closing thought I had was that the sport psychologist's predominant role was that of a critical friend.

What I Learned from the Story

The ways that sport psychology services were delivered varied greatly depending on the context through which the interactions between the athlete, coach and sport psychologist occurred. Brustad and Ritter-Taylor (1997) suggest "understanding the social context of participation should be the primary goal in the consulting process" (p. 116). It was clear that the various contexts that the sport psychologist found himself in were critically important in influencing the chosen approach of professional practice.

Constructing Practice

It can be said that the sport psychologist practiced in a manner that was both meaningful to him as an individual and to the other members involved. This *community of practice*, (akin to the work of Lave and

Wenger's (e.g. 1991) notion of situated learning), suggested that the meanings, beliefs, and understandings were negotiated and were the result of a reflection of certain shared understandings. In particular, the athlete and coach's views of sport psychology were taken into account when judgements were made about the most relevant form of practice in each instance.

It was clear to me that the sport psychologist practiced sport psychology in a manner that, in part, was constructed by the organizational realities and due to his relationships with referent others, in particular for this case, the coach and the nature of his work at the sport institute. For example, coaches can have a tremendous influence on the level access that is desired within a given situation. The inherent structure of the sport institute also influenced the nature of practice by imposing a more "clinical" style of delivery where rigid time and situational constraints influenced the nature of practice.

This "clinical" setting carries with it certain meanings pertaining to individual perceptions of having one's problem solved by meeting with the psychologist. An important feature regarding the effective practice of sport psychology is to make certain that the style and content of delivery has practical significance to all involved. Thus, the legitimization of the sport psychology service delivery occurs when all participants feel that there is value that results from the service. The practice of sport psychology, in this case, was not just an instance that occurred between individuals, but rather an experience that occurred "between different moments of access to participation in a community of practice" (Rømer, 2002, p. 234).

The Influence of Professional Identity

The sport psychologist's professional orientation was influential regarding the various meanings of practice that emerged from the incidents that were shared with the researcher. The sport psychologist made judgments based on the athlete's presenting problem(s) and previous life histories, his experience, and his need to portray a certain presentation of self to others. The sport psychologist appeared to be achieving a balance between satisfying the needs of others while at the same time remaining consistent with his own set of values and beliefs pertaining to practice.

What is apparent in these incidents is that the practitioner drew more from their cumulative individual experience, as they did not share any information that directly implicated the scientific database for empirically supported treatments. This places a clear emphasis on the value of reflective practice that was recently suggested by Anderson et al. (2004) in order to assist practitioners in exploring personal meaning in a certain situation. As Anderson et al. suggest, "consideration is specifically given to the influence of the practitioners' experiences, presuppositions, perceptions, and understanding of the context on their own and their client's feeling and actions" (p.192).

Knowing for Some Purpose

A predominant form of practice that was demonstrated by the sport psychologist had to do with the establishment and maintenance of a culture. According to Yamada and Maskarinec (2004):

from a discursive practices perspective, culture is regarded as systems of resources used by participants in the negotiation and discovery of every day interactions. Culture is the overarching context that shapes meaningful action in any given situation. (p. 86)

In the second instance that was reported by the coach, all of the participants were encouraged to share responsibility for the psychological development. The sport psychologist's predominant role was that of a facilitator. The coach wanted the athletes to take ownership over the ideas that would be discussed at their group sessions. This approach ensured that the ideas generated would have meaning to the athletes and coach, and the approach of the sport psychologist was to generate interaction between the athletes and their environment towards a codetermined nature of interaction (Kulikowich & Young, 2001).

The lived experiences shared regarding the practice of sport psychology in this first case resided predominantly in action as lived and in the various relations that were present in each specific instance (Van Manen, 1999). Anderson et al. (2004) posited that one must recognize "the nature of the workplace as self-focused and context specific" (p. 192). There is tremendous value for sport psychologists to take into account the characteristics of their environments and the various perceptions of those involved when determining their most efficacious forms of practice in a given situation.

Case Number Two:

A Crisis at a World Championship

The second case involved a colleague and mentor of mine who I first met while I was completing my undergraduate studies in psychology. He was currently working with a multiple time World Champion in preparation for the upcoming Summer Olympic Games and I felt both resources, along with the coach who was a former world champion himself, would yield other important meanings regarding the practice of sport psychology.

Background Information

As I set up the interview with the sport psychology consultant, he was careful to ask that confidentiality be respected regarding the incident that he shared with me during our conversation together. As it transpired, this case involved some difficult relations between the athlete and the coach, as the coach, who was recently appointed by the national governing body, did not have a constructive relationship with the athlete at the time that the incident occurred.

The sport psychology consultant described the current situation as very difficult and wrought with tension and conflict. Such circumstances resonated with me as a practitioner. According to Murphy (1995) "athletes operate in a stressful world with challenges that few of us can imagine" (p. 6). From an environmental perspective, the competition setting has been frequently reported as a source of organizational stress among elite sports performers (Fletcher & Hanton, 2003). Moreover, Woodman and Hardy (2001) found that coach-athlete tension was a common source of

organizational stress that had a negative impact on the team atmosphere around the competition. Feelings of stress were clearly evident in this case, as the sport psychology consultant reported that the athlete was not feeling supported as he approached the World Championship.

all I knew was that this was serious crisis mode, this was just major crisis mode and that the coach had essentially just checked out, and so the athlete felt abandoned (*Sport Psychology Consultant's Voice*).

In a study by Schinke and da Costa (2001), it was noted that high performance athletes in sport mention national sport organizations and personal coaches as factors related to successful performance at a major competition. The authors went on to suggest that “a decrease in personal autonomy via extended formally appointed SI (support infrastructure), an unfamiliarity with the hype experienced within games contexts, or both factors combined, can leave previously efficacious high-performance athletes with a belief that personal skills are less transferable to the immediate environments than prior to that level of challenge (i.e., previously efficacious high-performance athletes experience a dramatic decrease in their level of efficacy)” (para 8). The athlete went on to share some background information with me.

We've had a really serious meltdown with our coaching support services, which has been building over the past year. And it really came to a head this year in Europe. The way our sport works is, there is a qualification day. So there is a 150 guys competing for 40 spots that go on to the semi-finals. Normally for me, I could get through without even blinking. I went through that whole week working with the

sport psych consultant and the different coaches and stuff. Building on the confidence I have had with some really good races. And the stuff that was really falling apart with the coaching thing was really throwing a spin on my confidence and just the whole environment. And I ended up in the first runs after qualification in 55th place, after a run where you couldn't have picked anything else to go wrong. It had all kinds of implications because it was also an Olympic qualifier. So I not only needed to get in the top ten to get my Olympic spot, I needed to keep the other athletes from getting that, which would slam the door on me for the Olympics. So there were so many things going on. So after that first run being 55th, and not having coaches I could really rely on for support, that basically fell on the sport psychologist to try and put things back together, so that I could have a second run that would get me back up into the top 40. (*Athlete's Voice*)

The sport psychology consultant also commented on the tensions that were due, in large, to some past conflict that had occurred. Given this, the sport psychology consultant fulfilled a prominent role during the world championship. The coach reported feeling that he was left "on the outside looking in" and proceeded to provide me with an in depth description of the events from his perspective:

There were some fairly major internal problems with athletes and their relationships with the staff this year. I was aware that there were issues, and or problems. In a way I wasn't quite clear on what those issues were exactly 100%. But obviously detected a problem there, and obviously the sport psychologist was in the thick of solving those problems out. One thing that...I guess maybe I was expecting from the

sport psychologist was clarification of what those problems were. That wasn't forthcoming. I knew there were problems, he was dealing with problems, but there was no interaction between the two of us.

Since being back from Europe, we talked about those and he had his reasons why he did not discuss those problems. Obviously one, it was a World Championships; two, it was an Olympic qualification event, so that was his reasoning for not involving me there and then and trying to deal with the problems and solve the problems. So that was kind of a little frustrating for me. This was my first time that I had been away with a psychologist, and it kind of wasn't what I was expecting. I spent a lot of time as an athlete working with a psychologist, and I am not sure what I was expecting. And obviously I am now in a coach position, but I don't know whether I was imagining fluffy and cuddly stuff or how I kind of seen my psychologists and my coaches. To be put in that environment, it wasn't like that. And I don't know whether that was a big shock to me. That was kind of one of the issues. The major issue that happened I found difficult to deal with.

I was kind of feeling...knowing there were problems, still having to go about your coaching role, your admin role, all the hats that you are wearing in that position. Knowing there is a problem, or problems, but not really knowing what the problems are, to be able to deal with that....that was hard. Because it wasn't just something very simple, you know that I was doing, or not doing, or was there something major. So it was kind of the not knowing what to do, what to change or what not to change. There was really no clue given to that. I was feeling that there were major problems, but was clueless to what to do to try and make it better. So that is how I really

felt. We talked about it afterwards...he felt it didn't warrant dealing with there and then. Obviously if he had it probably would have blown the top off the whole event. He felt it was something he could deal with later. But, he did say that he did try to give me little snippets here and there...give me the heads up. But obviously I didn't catch on to that. Maybe in that kind of relationship you almost need to try to work out some communication. You can communicate with each other, with just little words or phrases, or...I don't know...I guess kind of like a secret language. You know what they mean without divulging everything in front of everyone or a person or whatever. So obviously, he was trying to give me a little heads up, but I was clueless. Probably that is something that you build up over time. Although it is a two year relationship, it is probably a few weeks really. It is probably less than six weeks over the two years. So that is a microscopic relationship really. (*Coach's Voice*)

Given the nature of the sport, the sport psychology consultant and coach had few opportunities to interact and develop the rapport that is usually essential in establishing an effective professional relationship. This created some frustration and confusion on the part of the coach, who did not feel a part of the decision making process. This clearly demonstrated that although the coach-athlete relationship was in crisis, as there was no demonstrated ability to proceed through the conflict towards the achievement of a shared understanding (Jowett, 2003; Poczwardowski, Barott & Henschen, 2002), the coach-sport psychology practitioner relationship was also experiencing difficulty.

The Incident

The sport psychology consultant and the athlete made mention of the same incident that took place at the world championship event. The sport psychology consultant mentioned that the emotion related to this incident had been building for quite some time (approximately a year and a half) as the dynamics between the coach and the athlete involved a tremendous amount of tension. It was clear that the athlete's preparation leading up to the World Championships was full of conflict and emotion that ultimately reached a peak following the athlete's poor preliminary run. The situation looked bleak and the next steps were left in the hands of the sport psychology consultant and the athlete. They needed to gain some perspective if the athlete was going to successfully turn things around.

The sports psychologist described their interactions as follows:

It was an interesting 2 hours for me. I was completely torn. Because for the most part he had done everything that he had set out to do in his career, except win a medal at the Olympics. So he's been to four Olympics and never won a medal, but essentially, he has done everything that someone could do. And so, any kind of discussion we had around you should do one more thing, didn't make any sense. Because that argument really didn't carry any weight for him and to talk about doing this for his own passion, that didn't seem to fit. Because he essentially has carried the association on his back for many years. It's essentially on the strength of his performance over the years that this sport has any kind of recognition in the world. He has felt and in the last few months has come to understand that he has been taken advantage of. People need him to do well, because it is important to what is going on. But when he asks for support,

it is not coming. There was a time when I necessarily didn't want to but into it. Because when we all hold that to some extent, we all feel that we are being treated unfairly and on and on. So initially, I didn't kind of put a whole lot of weight on the discussions when we had them. But over the last few months I got more of a sense of what that meant for him. And so, we sat there, and he is sitting there, absolutely devastated, and I could 100% fully understand why he would just walk away. And he literally, at one point was planning to just not go out and perform again and get a ticket to go home. And there is nothing that I really could say that made any sense and that would stop him from doing that. And so at one point we sat quiet for it seemed a very very long time, and I had to come to grips with myself. Because I thought of doing something that I never do, and I had no idea how it would be taken, but finally I just thought to myself, well, it was either win or lose. There's nothing left to do...it is all or nothing. It is no holds barred at this point. I turned to him and I said,

"Look, I am going to go out on a limb here a bit. I don't know what your response is going to be, and I am not even sure why I am going to do this."

I just looked at him and I said,

"Right now you are feeling completely sorry for yourself. You feel like the whole world is lined up against you. You are on this huge downward spiral. And you've cast in your chips."

I essentially confronted him in a way that I have never confronted another human being on earth, and it was scary for me. For one it was something that does not come easily to me. And second, I had no idea how he was going to

respond to that. It was kind of an amazing moment for me, as well. Because he sat there and looked at me as I was saying these things. You could almost see...it felt like somebody had opened the tap and all this black water was being drained from his eyes. Rather than become angry and hostile, you could tell that he accepted what he was hearing. When I finally shut up again, he said,

“You’re right. That is exactly how I feel”.

That moment, was what I think turned the whole thing around. And essentially, it was a huge reality check. And after that we had a bit more time. So we talked about the passion and the fact that we perform because we want to and we are not doing this for somebody else. We are not doing this because we have expectations on return. We are not doing this because we expect the association to do certain things for us. We are doing this because ultimately we want to and we love what we are doing. That is the only reason we do anything...at least if we are concerned with pushing ourselves towards excellence.

So I think the lesson for me was several things. It was a huge step for me in my confidence. And in not shying away from saying things that I was pretty confident needed to be said. Because I think, or at least for me, I am afraid to hit people between the eyes with what seems to be the truth. As so often I don’t, because I am afraid that it is going to further devastate someone. But I think that moment for me was significant in that I gained a bit of freedom to be truthful to what I saw and felt. Not be concerned about consequences. So in a sense it is very similar to being an athlete. If you’re afraid of the consequences, you often get stuck into inaction and I guess that was the parallel for me.

That I had to abandon the negative consequences that could occur, and go with my gut instinct. So from a practitioner's perspective that was a lesson for me. (*Sport Psychology Consultant's Voice*)

Although it has been argued that good therapy avoid abuses of confrontation towards the goal of utilizing positive approaches (Martin, 2000), there was a need to have the athlete face their current verbalizations before it was too late to begin preparing for the next race. The athlete recalled the incident in this way:

It was pretty uncomfortable. I was really angry both at my self for not being bigger than the situation but also, feeling like we pay these people a lot of money to be there and they were going out of their way to cause problems. So for me, we are sitting in the motor home and I think the first while...and I think it is hard to recollect, there was so much emotion at the time...I am pretty sure that [the sport psychology consultant] sat there for about 15 minutes listening to me be very angry. What I think helped diffuse it was having somebody to bounce that of and someone to listen to me without...he didn't interject or put his own weight on the situation, until I think he was sure that I had gotten everything I needed to get out, out. Which then made me feel like I had gotten it out, so then I think I was more receptive to him taking me back to the reasons why I am doing this sport. Regardless of the hiccups.

We speak a lot about the passion of the sport rather than, sort of the other things. Having those discussions, he would sort of try and raise my awareness to the possibilities, and I would give him back all the reasons why it was bullshit and why the situation sucked and it was impossible. And he

would say that's true, but we're here and there was a lot of him trying to get me to come back to the next run. It hasn't happened yet, there's still possibilities, making me aware of all the things that made me win races up until that point. Things like that, just so it got me settled down.

We're under a time constraint, because of the second run. We didn't have unlimited time. So part of it was imposed that I had to get out. I think it got to a point where I was less resistant to the idea of the possibility that I could get through the day. And I think that made it clear that I was less in need of ranting and was more back to process thinking and getting back to my plan. How many minutes...because I have it all mapped out, how many minutes before each step and how I need to do things. So, I was getting back to a point where, o.k. I'm at a 15 minute mark where I know I have to be doing something. I was more interested in getting that done than I was in venting. So I think that was what made it obvious that we were ready to go. And I think he actually stopped me a couple of times, cause those check point kind of came up and I think he recognized that I was still more angry than I was willing to get back on process. Which I am sure was helpful. Because if I had just raged out prematurely, I would have got back on task, but I don't think I would have been as clear minded. (*Athlete's Voice*)

Crisis place an important emphasis on the quality of the relationship between the sport psychology consultant and the athlete. The length of their relationship was deemed critical by the athlete, sport psychology consultant and the coach. This level of closeness that stemmed from reported feelings of trust and respect (Jowett, 2003) was significant regarding how sport psychology was delivered in this instance:

So really we sat down for two hours, and I had hired my own coach through all this crap, and he had a motor home, so we sat down in there for 2 hours just talking about all the stuff that had been going on. Because [the sport psychology consultant] and I had been working together for 3 years, it created a possibility for him to see through all this ranting and raving that I was doing over all the shit that was going on. He could kind of re-direct my energies into seeing the possibility of “A”...getting through to the qualification of the semi-finals but also getting through that to a point where I could win a medal or get on the podium on the final day. And without having that long term relationship and having him there, to sit down with I think that spiral would have...cause I was a long way out, I had to do a good second run in the and get in the top 40...I had to have the best run. To get all of those anxieties and pressures and angers over how poor the support structures was, and getting a handle on it was critical in getting that second run, which I ended up getting. Subsequent to that we had to sit down for two days before my semi-final and final and try and wade through all the emotions of that day and to try and get stable enough and save some energy so I could perform in the finals. (*Athlete's Voice*)

The sport psychology consultant also suggested that the nature of his relationship with the athlete freed him to confront the athlete in the manner that he did.

I would not have done what I did, if I did not have a relationship established with him. But he and I worked together for quite some time. So I had a pretty good sense of where we were coming from. So without that, I am quite certain that I wouldn't have done what I did. But there was

enough of a sense that chances are he would be o.k. If you are talking about a practitioner, or what we do as a practice, over the years that has become very important to me. We have talked about not doing short-term work, and I don't do short term work. If I can, I will avoid it, because, from a psychological, emotional perspective, you have to know where someone is coming from. Or else you can do more harm than you can even imagine. So that for me, it was a reminder again, that if you really want to accomplish something significant, if you really want to do good work, there has to be a long-term connection between athlete and practitioner. (*Sport Psychology Consultant's Voice*).

Although the coach would have preferred to be more involved, he too acknowledged that it was better for the sport psychology consultant to have been involved:

I think that is quite difficult. I mean...yeah I would have liked to have been more involved in what was going on. But, I am sure that the reason that he didn't do that was potentially the reaction from me that it might have brought. So in some ways I would have liked him, or would like him to inform me...better in the future, but also there is a part of me that thinks that maybe doing it for me...because of the reaction...it was a very difficult situation. I guess, the scenario was that the athletes weren't happy with the delivery with how myself and the other coach were delivering coaching. So obviously in that situation in a World Championship, it wasn't the best time to bring that up with the coaches. Which is basically the athlete's have no confidence in you...blah blah blah. Looking back at it, I believe he was right not to do that. Because our, myself and the other coach, how we're meant to feel when we were told

that. Now we have dealt with that and we've kind of turned the whole system on its head. Gone to more of an athlete lead system, delivering them what they want to be delivered. And stuff seems to be working out fairly well at the moment. It was an uncomfortable period for five or six weeks after we got back from Europe. Stuff was being torn apart and put down, and put back together again. But it seems to be working well at the moment. I am sure if it was something more of a minor situation, he does keep me...obviously there is communication between myself and [the sport psychology consultant], so it is not that he doesn't tell me anything and I don't tell him anything. Minor stuff on a day-to-day basis is communicated between us...between all of the staff.
(*Coach's Voice*)

In this incident, the sport psychology consultant served as an intermediary between the athlete and coach in order to "contribute to mutual understandings, morale, cohesion and general effectiveness of the unit. Such a role is quite demanding and difficult" (Singer, 1984, p. 54). While attempts were made by the sport psychology consultant to move all parties towards a shared understanding of the issues and facilitate potential solutions, there was clearly still a tremendous amount of work left to be done. Given the urgency of the situation, the sport psychology consultant made a judgement call and chose to confront the athlete while keeping the coach on the periphery of the situation. Thus, the sport psychology practitioner was concurrently fulfilling two roles. The first as a mediator concerned with the difficulties that threatened the coach-athlete relationship. The second as a counsellor assisting the athlete in overcoming their current problem (Hardy & Parfitt, 1994).

This approach is in contradiction to the notion that whenever possible, the coach should be included in the performance-enhancement sessions, as they will have more precise technical information that will prove important, especially within a competition situation (Bond, 2001). However, the sport psychology consultant acknowledged that the choice of practice was not typical but rather resulted from the circumstances that existed in this instance.

There are a few principals that I function from as a professional. One is that the life of an athlete cannot be compartmentalized. An athlete is a person. Let me say that differently, a person is all things at once. We can never separate their life as an athlete from their social life, from their work life or any other aspect of life they are involved in. It is all one package. So that is how I do my practice. So what happens away from a sport context is just as important to their performance as what we do in the sport context. In the same way so that is principle one.

Principle two is that for me an athlete is never alone. They can never function in isolation. They are part of a team. And in my definition, and this is what I have been preaching to the association, the team involves fellow athletes, coaching staff...it involves administration because so often the focus is not on the athletes. So the success, or not, on an association is determined on what the athletes are doing. For me that just makes no sense. An athlete is never alone. They are a product of all those pieces. So when you talk about a team, we talk everybody. We talk about athletes, we talk about coaching staff, we talk about administration. That for me is non-negotiable. So what that means is that when there is general health in the team, or even when there is

not, when it is reasonable, discussions will never take place in isolation. Those discussions need to, by definition take place with all those who are involved. That is a lesson that I learned the hard way.

Many, many, years ago. When I made a complete mistake as a sport psychologist, made a judgement error. It was done with the best of intentions. But, the result was completely horrendous. So I vowed then that I would never conduct any kind of training session unless it involved all people. In this particular incident, we were doing some crisis management and because of circumstances, I had to sit there with the athlete alone, but that is not my first choice.
(Sport Psychology Consultant's Voice)

What I Learned from the Story

A Dyad in Crisis

Jowett (2003) identified both closeness and coorientation as important relational aspects of coach-athlete relationships. In particular, *disconnection* and *contention* as important themes pertaining to disoriented states of affairs in a coach-athlete relationship in crisis. Levels of anger and frustration were reported by the athlete while isolation was indicated by the coach. These three themes also relate to a lack of closeness that suggested a negative emotional climate existed. Without closeness, the quality and functionality of a relationship is compromised. Equally important in this case was the evidence of some relationship difficulty implicated with the coach and the sport psychologist. The

constructs of closeness and coorientation (Jowett, 2003) can also be applied to the coach-sport psychologist relationships.

Closeness. Although the athlete reported feeling trust and respect with the sport psychologist, the coach indicated being isolated and frustrated which led the coach to feeling unattached preceding and during the reported incident. These positive and negative relational aspects of closeness were outlined by Jowett (2003) in her research regarding the coach-athlete dyad in crisis. Having a good working relationship with the athlete and the coach is an important feature of effective sport psychology service delivery (Halliwell et al., 1999) and coaches do not appreciate consultants that overstep their perceived professional roles (Tod & Andersen, 2004). In this example, it could be said that the sport psychologist did not have an optimal working relationship with the coach.

Coorientation. A second relational aspect suggested by Jowett was coorientation. Shared knowledge and a shared understanding are essential features of an optimal functioning relationship and are directly related to perceived levels of information exchange and felt influence (among other factors). In this case, the coach reported experiencing some confusion about what were deemed the “key issues” that were of concern by the athletes on the team. Although attempts to communicate the issues were made by the sport psychologist, the coach was unable to achieve clarity.

Power and Conflict

Expert power and uncertainty. Contextual tensions existed in this case regarding the distribution of power and the sport psychologist’s ability

to deal with uncertainty effectively. Expert power was described by Slack (1997) as power or privilege accrued to a person because of the special knowledge or skill they possess. The sport psychologist possessed a certain amount of power in that they were able to deal with the reported conflict in an effective manner. In particular, the level of uncertainty that existed after the athlete's preliminary run was very high. The sport psychologist handled the situation effectively and was able to facilitate an improved performance in the subsequent run. His ability to cope with uncertainty coupled with his proximity to the information flow further substantiated the level of power that was ascribed to the sport psychologist. The coach's frustration was due, in part, to his reluctance to relinquish the power that is normally afforded to the coach, especially during a post performance debriefing.

Interdependence. Given the high levels of interdependence that exist between athletes, coaches and sport psychologists, the potential for conflict is high, especially when communication is poor and role conflict exists (Slack, 1997). Communication by the sport psychologist and coach were frequently misinterpreted. This may have forced the sport psychologist to remain centered on the athlete, as the efficacy for involving the coach during the World Championships was not clear to him at the time. Although more participatory forms of decision-making have been promoted, the urgency of the situation necessitated a more direct, dyadic approach given that the time frame was minimal and the consequences were high.

Negotiation. In an article by Poczwardowski et al. (2002), the athletes and coaches in their study were often negotiating during the time they spent together. It could be said that in this experience of practice, the sport psychologist and the coach were constantly negotiating “to balance mutual expectations and needs” (p. 132). Bond (2002) suggested that “I always make a point of negotiating my roles and responsibilities, of clearly identifying exactly what it is the coach wants me to do for the sport, the team, the individual athletes within the team, the team staff, and for the coach” (p. 32)

How the sport psychologist situated himself in the delivery process appeared to involve a negotiated reality based on the needs expressed by the athlete and by the level of comfortableness demonstrated by the coach. This would also partially explain the acceptance demonstrated by the coach to allow the sport psychologist to assume a leadership role during the crisis that occurred following the preliminary run, as the coach reported feeling uncertain about the extent of the concerns and issues felt by the athletes at the time.

Dilemma of Identity

Two predominant identities were demonstrated by the sport psychologist in this case. As an intermediary or mediator, the sport psychologist was constantly assisting with conflict management in order to serve as an athlete advocate. Concurrently, the sport psychologist also served in the capacity of a counselor in assisting the athlete in resolving the emotion and disappointment that was felt after the athlete’s preliminary run. Thus, the meanings inherent within the different sets of identities

depended on the identity of the sport psychologist himself and upon the nature of the event that occurred in this instance.

The sport psychologist reported that his professional principles involved viewing the athlete as a whole person and pursuing an inclusive style of delivery where all those involved in a particular instance be included in the communication process. However, in this instance, a judgement was made to act in a manner that was inconsistent with his professional philosophy. The sport psychologist appeared to have an intuitive sense of the situation and he subsequently took action in what can be referred to as an expert stage of skill development (Morris & Thomas, 1995). It can be argued that the contextual tensions that existed within this instance of practice prompted the sport psychologist to take action in the manner that they did.

Judgement, in this case, appeared to be led by an athlete-centered approach and was most likely developed through the accumulative experience had by the sport psychologist. This was also demonstrated in a study analyzing the content that was revealed by an eminent mental training consultant, suggesting that the “consultant seemed to rely on his intuition to apply a mental training strategy that best fit the needs of each athlete (Lloyd & Trudel, 1999, p. 442). Intuition is seldom acknowledged as an important theme pertaining to practice. As Henschen (2001) suggests, “we frequently fail to heed the prompting of this powerful, natural human ability” (p. 84). Although it is important to act consistently with one’s philosophy, there are moments when it may be necessary to act on

our intuition, regardless of whether it is consistent with our philosophical foundation or our perceived role expectations.

Sport psychologists can fulfill a number of roles and can move from one role to another depending on the context that they find themselves in. Whether they are engaged in assisting athletes to perform to their potential or facilitating conflict management, it is important that practitioners embrace situational roles so that they can immerse themselves in the moment and not attach themselves to outcomes that may or may not occur in the near future.

Case Number Three:

Working Alliances in Action

I had known the sport psychologist in this case for approximately six years as we both worked with the same sport as sport psychology service providers. Thus, he was at ease in sharing his experiences with me, as he believed that it would be an important learning opportunity for the both of us (we had both discussed the importance of practitioners sharing their experiences with one another at past competitions). The level of trust that we had established not only contributed to his interest in participating in my study, but was important in my ability to gain access to the interview with the athlete in this case.

The sport psychologist and the athlete both spoke of an incident that occurred during the 2000 Summer Olympic Games. Given the nature of the relationship that existed between the athlete, coach and sport psychologist, and the nature of the incident itself, the coach that was interviewed was only able to share general information about the incident but was able to discuss the nature of sport psychology service delivery in this case and provided useful information about their relationship with the sport psychologist.

The athlete was one of the best in the world at her sport and respective disciplines. She was a very mature athlete and had only come to train with her current coach later in her career. The sport psychologist knew the athlete well but indicated that he seldom engaged in professional dialogue with her. Their interactions together consisted of general discussions about the state of the sport in the country that she was training

in and of some of their observations regarding the apparent needs of some of the athletes that she trained with on a day-to-day basis.

The athlete had performed very well as the Olympic Games approached. All indicators suggested that she would have a very successful Olympic Games experience. However, as the sport psychologist reported, this was not how things unfolded in Sydney.

We were at the Olympics, and she wasn't [performing] well. The previous summer she had set numerous World records and then reset her own World records. So to be at the Olympics and not performing well left her with some pretty big questions as to what she should do. And my approach always is to start with listening to what the athlete says rather than come in with the fixed format or intervention...without coming in with a set notion of what her diagnosis would be and therefore what the treatment should be, really I just make a point of listening.

This seems self-explanatory, but a lot of people come in with their model and they make the assumption that it is the Olympics so therefore she must be anxious. In any event, she and I talked for a while and she was questioning whether she would race the next event. And she decided to race the next event, but it was with some real difficulty that she made that decision. And she wasn't particularly anxious, and she certainly wasn't depressed, she was just indecisive.

So I listened to her, I think we spoke two or three times, over probably two days, between the one event and the other and concluded that she was going to race the event. So my sense was that she had made herself too responsible to all the people who had supported her and that she was losing her sense of why she was there and what it meant for her

and what she was trying to accomplish herself. So I went with her to help her get regrounded, to help her answer the question of whether she would race the next event. But of course, her national governing body was putting huge pressure on her to do it, and the coach was putting no pressure on her to do it, and she was really undecided because she was performing poorly. She wasn't performing as she was capable. So we talked with that perspective, and it wasn't the pressure, she wasn't anxious, she was just undecided. (*Sport Psychologist's Voice*)

The athlete's description of the same incident indicated a tremendous level of emotion and uncertainty existed:

I thought I was on top of it, and everybody else did. And then when I got to the Olympics it just...I don't know. To sum it up, I was probably just over trained. There was just nothing in my legs. No power. I raced in the heat as the defending champion, and that is usually where I broke World records, and I came out of that race with a poor performance. Not a poor performance, but I died about 10 meters from the wall. So then I talked to my coach about it, we said, your getting older, you should try and go out a little bit easier and see what happens. That was the plan for the semi-final. As it turned out, I went easy and died even sooner. Which left me panic stricken. After my event, I said to my coach,

"You know I don't really know what to make of it. Is it my head, is it a psychological thing? Or is it physiological, and it is in my legs". (*Athlete's Voice*)

The Relationship is What is Important

Given what was at stake, there was a tremendous level of concern expressed by the athlete. Importantly, the athlete spoke of having a tremendous working relationship with the sport psychologist and this helped him make a positive impact on the athlete's current situation.

I think he was a shoulder to lean on and an ear to listen to. I think often I was trying to understand myself a bit better. You know, I guess that is what psychologists do. They listen, and then while I am babbling on to you, then I figure it out for myself. But I think in the relationship between myself and the sport psychologist I also learned there is a lot about what made me successful. (*Athlete's Voice*)

The coach also made mention of the strength of their relationship and noted that he felt comfortable with how everyone in this case worked together. Essentially, a high level of trust existed with the sport psychologist.

I think that we are very honest with each other. Usually what he does is he tells me flat out what it is, or you know, we just talk. I feel that the sport psychologist really helps me qualify, really, broad issues about myself and my athletes. Like meaning, like life things. And I think from kind of a broad perspective, I think we try and narrow it down. So basically, I am chatting and all of sudden the sport psychologist says, yes, this is what it is, type of thing. You know you said that. The sport psychologist makes me like I am in charge. Rather than him telling me what to do. So I think that I have a big trust in the sport psychologist. (*Coach's Voice*)

The athlete-sport psychologist relationship contained features associated with the model of equal expertise (Hardy & Parfitt, 1994). This has also been referred to as a working alliance (Petitpas, 2001). The athlete went on to describe her relationship with her sport psychologist. Of importance was the notion that the athlete perceived herself as feeling empowered, especially as it pertained to her ability to be in charge of her training and development.

With the coach, and as much as you know there was a good relationship and he was a friend and everything, you still know that person is the coach and they are thinking about, holistically, as much as they can. But their focus is on the technical side of the sport. Where I think it was useful to have the sport psychologist he was, and even the sport physiologist ...I think it was helpful to have, and again the way the friendship had developed with the sport psychologist. I felt like I didn't have to analyze it amongst everybody.

I think that...I'm just trying to compare it to other experiences I had, when I came back to my home country at times, and they send the whole team down to the Institute of Sport, their idea of the Institute of Sport, and work with the team psychologist, as much as the poor guy means well, there is no way I could even talk with these people.

First of all, there was no relationship. I didn't know them too well and quite honestly, I've listened to this guy say what he had to say. But, I would think to myself, you know what, you've never even been exposed to the international arena too much. I would think, you being the psychologist, you really haven't been there, you haven't stood there and

achieved or even played this kind of level of competition before and at that stage, even dealt with anybody else who had. So what can you tell me?

That is sort of an arrogant attitude and such. Whereas, I didn't find that with the current sport psychologist. It wasn't that he was trying to spew out textbook answers. You know all the fancy stuff. The sport psychologist would...and the coach also has these qualities...they both don't feel like they're the coach or they're the psychologist, it feels like a two-way relationship. And you're just having a chat and I have as much control and they're questioning me as much as I am questioning them. I felt, especially with the sport psychologist, that at times we were picking each other's minds. And I think that is the kind of recipe or format if you want to call it that works best for me. And that is the same kind of thing that I had with my coach. If it had been different, I never could have competed under him. (*Athlete's Voice*)

The coach's level of trust for the sport psychologist was extremely high. The sport psychologist reported that he was very confident that any decision made would be fully supported by the coach. Ravizza (2001) expressed the importance of establishing a collaborative approach with the coach and indicated that it required time to clarify concepts and techniques so that everyone would be comfortable with them. The coaching staff must support and understand the approach being pursued by the sport psychologist so that a shared understanding is achieved.

Between me, the coaches and the sport psychologist, I would say we are a good team. We know each other. I would never say to the sport psychologist "don't talk to them

before the race". Because I know the sport psychologist wouldn't do that unless he thought it would be beneficial. So really I think there is a trust that the sport psychologist and I, or the other coaches and I have, that I am not going to prevent him from talking to my athletes. At all if I feel, like I need to say what, I will say don't do this, or leave them alone type of thing. I know they will. (*Coach's Voice*)

The sport psychologist felt that the coach had demonstrated a tremendous level of trust and empowerment to the athlete based on her level of maturity.

I think it was consistent with the way he had coached her all along, for him to say it was up to you. And it would have certainly changed in approach if he'd said, "well I expect you to..." and probably would not have been helpful. She was a very independent athlete. She trained whole years on her own. He would say, "ok. you need to go away, you need to go where she needed to go", and she be gone for sometimes an extended period and do workouts by herself. So it would be pretty unusual, and not even recommended that the coach would come in at this late date after years of working with her, and numerous world records, for him to say, "well, ok I think you need to do this". And so he didn't.

He gave her lots of autonomy and lots of room and he trusted her implicitly. And so if she wasn't there, she wasn't there. He relied on her report on that. So that was quite important. And most athletes don't have that kind of relationship with their coach. Or they haven't earned it or they don't interact that way. She had done a lot of training in the United States on her own, and before she came to the centre she was subsequently training under the guidance of

a couple of people, I guess she's probably named them, but she did more on her own than any athlete that I know. (*Sport Psychologist's Voice*)

In order to facilitate trust, levels of rapport and the ability to establish an effective working relationship was a significant factor in the sport psychologist's ability to relate to the athlete and draw from her past experiences while protecting the importance of the coach-athlete relationship. The coach indicated:

I spend lots of time with the sport psychologist, talking about performance, that ultimately we want to help the athlete perform better at a particular event. (Coach's Voice)

Andersen et al. (2000) refer to the process of initiating relationships as *hanging out* "Hanging out can help sport psychologists build rapport with their athlete clients" (p. 14). This is often correlated with the need for longer-term athlete-sport psychologist relationship. The sport psychologist viewed this as an important factor in the quality of his service delivery in this instance. Orlick and Partington (1997) identified being involved in long-term contact with athletes and teams (from a minimum of nine months and in many cases as long as two to three years) as an important factor pertaining to highly effective sport psychology consultancy. Petitpas (2001) suggests "a working alliance cannot be forced. It develops over time based on the abilities of the participants to listen to and understand each other" (p. 225).

I knew her well before we got to the Olympics, and that certainly helped, and often you don't have a working relationship with some of them when you are at an event like

that. As a team psychologist I don't know half of the team as well as I would know some of the people that I work with locally. She, of course, had worked with me for a couple of years, so that is what I mean by I knew her well. We had worked together as well, away from the performance environment, we had worked together, for instance, at the time, of a team mate's death, we went together to the hospital. We spoke about what we were going to say at the tribute to her life. And so on and so forth, so we...well just using the teammates death allowed us to work together on something away from sport. So I knew her well. And as well, I think her and I worked on...something else, there was another project that came along and she was involved and I was involved and we worked together on that. So I knew her in a couple of contexts outside the sport and I also knew her from meeting with her. Not on a regular basis but often enough to, as the hours accrue, you realize at the end of knowing this person that you spent a lot of time with this person. (*Sport Psychologist's Voice*)

Creating Space

Not only was the nature of the her relationship with the sport psychologist and coach an important factor in this case, but the environment that the sport psychologist facilitated went a long way in helping the athlete process her feelings about her disappointing performances early on in the Olympic Games. McCann (2001) spoke of the need to create environments that are conducive for working with athletes at the competition venue. As Andersen et al. (2001) suggest, the travel and training demands of competitive athletes do not permit the typical boundaries of time and space to occur. The key issue is to honour

confidentiality for the athlete when it is required while attending to important facilitative conditions that would improve the conditions for the sport psychologist – athlete interaction. The sport psychologist commented:

I needed to relax the atmosphere. We didn't meet in the pool area, we met on the grass, found some chairs, took them outside, under some trees. So, I wanted a relaxed environment. We certainly didn't want distractions, didn't want her manager, and didn't want anybody – the association around. Of course the conversation was confidential, but even the fact that she was having the conversation, would remain confidential and really her business. So I don't think that other people knew that she was undecided. And I don't think that other people knew that she was talking with her psychologist about whether or not she should race. So that is one thing that really stands out about it. We needed to get...well, it is pretty obvious stuff but, to help the person to feel relaxed in the moment. So we met, found a place in the cafeteria, we met another time in the trees, in the grass, whatever. We tried to do it away from the pool.

I probably did some...not completely trusting that she was going to get herself into a good space, to follow through with my recommendation for grounding, I probably did some relaxation work with her. I seem to recall doing that. I don't know if I did do that, it was three years ago, I think I did some breathing with her and then left her to follow from that. To make sure that we took away any state anxiety before she would start off, in what was a difficult time. I think we did breathing, I think we relaxed the environment. (*Sport Psychologist's Voice*)

Values Base and Spirituality

In this case, the sport psychologist was able to draw from the athlete's own past experience which assisted the athlete in being able to use her own personal framework as a reference. Of importance to the athlete's cognitive framework in this case was her sense of spirituality and faith. Balague (1999) suggested that sport psychologists should take note of an athlete's sense of spirituality: "if we suggest sport psychological interventions that do not fit within this meaning or that clash with their values, the likely outcome is not only that the intervention will not work, but that we lose the trust of athletes by showing that we do not understand something that is at the core of their identities and values" (p 92). This was clearly appreciated by both the sport psychologist and the athlete.

However, I then went to her psychological data, her framework. To help her resolve it and get committed. So we went to her cognitive framework, which in her case was prayer. And I encouraged her to reach clarity as soon as possible because it was going to drain her and make her tired and detract from her performance unnecessarily. And if she should decide to race to remember what she had said was guiding her all the way. And that is her faith in God and her belief. So I said the way out of this for yourself is to pray. To forget the coach, forget me, forget the association, just pray and figure out whether or not you get some clarity. So we've done that again – and I said so what kind of clarity did you get?

As a psychologist I talked to her about the cognitive set that was forming, because it was through that process where I

was trying to help her, to use her belief systems to get whatever performance she was going to get. Because she had set World records with the same framework. As I recall, she left the hotel, which was right across the street, to basically go and race. I think it was at the American competition, she'd done the first of the World records spree. So she did weights on Tuesday, she did a pretty hard race on Wednesday, they left for California, and I think she set a World record on Saturday, not at all expecting it. We went back over it, and I said, "So what was remarkable?" She recalled praying just before she left her room.

So it was in the realization that she wasn't grounding herself in the Olympics in the same way that she had been grounding herself previously during her great races. It was realizing that, that I thought we should help her appreciate the significance of prayer in the grounding process. So I think that facilitated her in coming forward, and I guess what did she get...she got bronze. So just one performance, but a good performance. Because it was the best she had, and she still doesn't know, I don't think anybody really knows in the end, physiologically, what went wrong. She was satisfied that she just didn't have it, and she was satisfied that she decided to race, and through prayer she decided to race. And what did she get from her psychologist; presumably from her psychologist she got reinforcement of the cognitive apparatus that helps her feel grounded and motivated. (*Sport Psychologist's Voice*)

The athlete expressed feeling that her religious beliefs were important and that the sport psychologist encouraged her to look to prayer

for clarity regarding her decision. He wanted the athlete to use prayer to connect with herself as she had done in the past.

Basically, the next day all I could do was the typical Christian thing that could help. I could just pray about it, see what was in my heart, and hope for the best. And I think after that race, the decision about the upcoming event and whether to race it or not, the sport psychologist was a useful person to bounce my thoughts off and try and see. I knew that from him I would get a fair response with regards to the Christian ethics of approaching it. Whether I am just copping out or whether I'm legitimate in what I am thinking. (*Athlete's Voice*)

What I Learned from the Story

Remaining Patient

Respecting athletes and coaches requires recognition of the value and expertise they already possess. Hardy et al. (1996) suggest "the consulting process is a complex social interaction which actively involves athletes and coaches who usually have extensive sport psychology knowledge (although it may not be formalised in the terms that sport psychologists use)" (p. 290). This includes an emphasis on the importance of working alongside and through the coach.

Being able to establish necessary levels of trust requires sport psychologists to be patient, as rapport and trust will be gained at varying rates depending on one's situation. Sport psychologists can find themselves, at times, having to relinquish important desired aspects of their perceived roles. In this case, the athlete's level of maturity and demonstrated independence left the sport psychologist with very little to

do. However, he was astute enough to continue engaging in dialogue with the athlete simply to be friendly and continue his efforts to either establish or maintain an effective working relationship. Hardy et al. (1996) suggest “by knowing that the nature of consultancy changes over time, effective consultants realise that they must often wait until the time is right” (p. 295).

Trust and equal expertise. The working alliance can be defined as a collaborative relationship where both parties are working together to address issues or contribute to the growth of the client (Petitpas, 2001). Martin (2000) describes the importance of clients leading their own development:

I was pretty insistent that the client be the problem solver, sometimes to the frustration of our clients who come to us for advice and solutions. One subtle but important implication of this is that we really do believe in our clients. We trust their ability to solve problems—a trust that clearly implies immense respect. (p. 96)

LaRose (1988) positioned that an important role of the sport psychology consultant is to provide a learning environment that enables athletes to become their own teachers and counselors.

By allowing athletes (and coaches) to solve their own problems, we facilitate circumstances where individual's can learn to make decisions consistent with their values and beliefs. In this case, the athlete's Christian values were of central importance to her and her ability to ascribe meaning to her thoughts and feelings. Allowing for diversity can be achieved more effectively if we empower

individuals to learn to solve their own problems as opposed to having to be viewed as an “expert” who has the answers.

Authenticity and Humility

Being authentic. Petitpas (2001) suggested three conditions that counselors should consider regarding the client-practitioner relationship: congruence, empathetic understanding and unconditional positive regard. Congruency has been described as genuineness or authenticity. According to Martin (2000), genuineness is easier to define by stating what it is not: “it is not phony and not artificial; it is not playing a role, pretending to be an expert; it is not acting as though you feel something you don’t” (p. 99). In this case, the sport psychologist was clearly deemed to be authentic by both the coach and the athlete. He appeared to understand the nature of the athlete-coach relationship clearly and made intervention decisions consistent with their qualities that defined their working together. It could be said that the sport psychologist struck a balance between being true to himself and his professional philosophy while at the same time practicing in manner that was considerate of the athlete and coaches needs.

Being Humble. Brown, Cairns and Botterill (2001) discussed the importance of humility by stating that it serves to separate one from their self-worth and identity thus preventing the projection of a superhuman image. Sport psychologists are encouraged to assume more background roles in order to maintain a sense of primacy for the athletes and coaches. This relinquishing of power is essential from a client-practitioner and

overall team perspective. Not only is empowering athletes and coaches good practice, but understanding the role of the sport psychologist in various contexts can help serve to clarify expectations for everyone involved. Andersen et al. (2001) suggest that due to the tremendous levels of familiarity and time spent with athletes, the potential for boundary blurring can exist. Thus, sport psychologists must continue to maintain a professional distance with the team and its members while at the same time establishing enough rapport to be viewed not only as a counselor but at times, a friend or confidant. It is suggested that humility is an important moderating variable that can ensure a proper balance is maintained.

CHAPTER SIX

Reflections

What the Stories Tell Us about the Practice of Sport Psychology

The purpose of this study was to capture the meanings of sport psychology service delivery through the collection and interpretation of various lived experiences of practitioners in the field. Brustad and Ritter-Taylor (1997) argued that understanding the social context should be a primary goal in the consulting process and I felt it important to attempt to enhance our knowledge of professional practice by examining further the nature of the interpersonal environment that sport psychology practitioners were working within. In particular, Brustad and Ritter-Taylor recommended that an important social psychological area for consideration revolved around interpersonal relational patterns.

Of the various themes that emerged from the analysis of the conversations, the following were deemed to be essential to the meanings of sport psychology service delivery to the athletes, coaches and sport psychology service providers. First, the practice of sport psychology was situated and the nature of these relationships was dependent upon how they were formed and defined by those in the immediate environment. As a consequence, sport psychology service providers portrayed multiple identities regarding their professional practice and the nature of certain professional relationships appeared to evolve over time. Second, it became clear that the overall quality of the relationship was an important factor as to whether the experience of sport psychology practice was perceived to be efficacious by all of the participants within a particular

context. In particular, the existence of tangible tensions that resulted from individuals not being able to fulfill their role was evident and will be addressed specifically within this chapter. Additionally, the roles and practices themselves resulted from a negotiation by the parties involved. Third, the practitioner's professional identity was not only constructed through a gaining of self-knowledge (Petitpas, 1999), but resulted from the transactions and perceptions of others within each of their respective environments. Thus, the professional identity of the sport psychology practitioner was informed by their relational self and suggests that there is a need to further explore the nature of the self and the usefulness of reflective practice for the field of applied sport psychology (Anderson et al., 2004).

With regards to the sport psychology practitioners themselves, they all appeared capable of taking "risk" and were comfortable with various levels of uncertainty as they described their lived experiences of practice. There was often a strong intuitive component present referent to the various judgments that were made pertaining to their practice. As well, a strong sense of humility was pervasive across the three cases. Although very experienced and successful, the sport psychology practitioners remained humble about their competence and potential effectiveness and at the same time, all provided suitable guidance when required.

The Practice of Sport Psychology is Constructed

Poczwadowski et al. (2004) argued that contextual factors have the potential to eventually influence not only a practitioner's judgements, but eventually the peripheral layers of one's professional philosophy. As a

result of the meanings that emerged from the interpreted realist tales, it can be stated that practice can best be described as discursive. To understand the practice of sport psychology requires us to move beyond the psychological imagination and incorporate a contextual understanding without deviating too far away from the centrality of the sport psychologist – athlete relationship.

Since Martens (though not necessarily because of him), applied sport psychology has embraced a technicist discourse that is a functional, performance-enhancing, tinkering-with-the-self discourse rather than an understanding-of-the-self-discourse. Thus, the work of many applied sport psychologists unwittingly sustains the systems of oppression and exploitation, and focuses on normalizing the individual's responses to such systems as if adjustment and accommodation are the only solutions to distress. In short, there is far more emphasis on the competitively aroused acute than on the structurally and ideologically induced, and the biographically chronic. (Ingham, Blissmer, & Davidson, 1999, p. 240)

In this study, it was apparent that the practice of sport psychology was the product of a set of negotiated realities. This constructionist view “invites a sharing of knowledge and open dialogue on possibilities” (Gergen, Lightfoot, & Sydow, 2004, p.395). Gergen et al. explain further:

As an orientation to my clients, constructionism encourages the same openness. I view myself not as someone who is

“treating” a person, with myself as the doctor and the client as the patient. Rather, I see us as working together in a dialogue. I don’t assume that I know the right way or that there is even a right way. Another way of saying this is that I consistently engage in a collaborative process with my clients. This inherently implies a nonhierarchical stance, in which we may both bring certain talents or contributions to the table. (p. 395)

Thus, the determination of one’s role and style result from a collaborative approach that can also evolve over time: “if all meaning grows from relationships, then whatever meanings my client assigns to her inner world are reflections of a relational history. And it is important to explore the extent to which they are sustained by current engagements in relationship” (Gergen et al., p. 395).

The Co-construction of Practice

Gilbourne’s (1999) position that a more mutual or empowering process may emerge if sport psychologists collaborate with the intention of sharing ideas and integrating their knowledge with the knowledge of others sheds light on the potential need for collaboration regarding sport psychology service delivery. Once a collaborative culture has been established, problem solving can be achieved in a more cooperative manner, and greater and more useful knowledge may result, thus assisting the athlete and coach with their respective roles and performances.

Given the nature of collaboration that existed within the training and competitive environments, multiple allegiances emerged (Nicholas,

Gerstein, & Keller, 1988). In order to account for this, sport psychology practice was constructed as a result of negotiated roles whose relevance was accepted by all. Team members had a responsibility to “clarify the nature of their loyalties and responsibilities” (Nicholas et al., 1988, p. 89) as it pertained to what is being communicated and with whom.

What was required in this circumstance was a movement towards what Gergen (1999) describes as *relational responsibility*. Gergen explains:

If all that we take to be true and good has its origin in relationships, and specifically the process of jointly constructing meaning, then there is reason for us all to honor – to be responsible to – relationships of meaning making themselves. The quest, then, is for means of sustaining processes of communication in which meaning is never frozen or terminated, but remains in a continuous state of becoming. (p. 156)

Many important characteristics regarding collaboration have been reported in the literature (Freeth, 2001; McCallin, 2001; Molyneux, 2001; Young, 1998). McCallin (2001) suggests that all team members must share a common worldview, and an important unifying factor for all is to be “client focused” (p. 424). As Gage (1998) comments, “every member of the team must have the same vision for the mission of the team and for the team’s direction with respect to treating each individual client” (p.24).

Furthermore, Miller and Kerr (2002) advocate that the power balance be shifted away from the coach in order to give the athlete more

responsibility in order to facilitate the development of independent, self-reliant individuals. Although a shared vision and understanding existed in the first and third case, there was a tremendous level of role incongruence reported by the coach in case two.

Given the dynamics of the situation reported in case two, the sport psychology consultant felt that it was critically important to assist the athlete within the competitive environment. Whilst this activity is usually commensurate with the role of a coach, the sport psychology consultant, in this case, knew that the athlete and the coach did not have the quality of relationship necessary to be effective in this situation. This left the coach feeling powerless and these feelings related not only to the historical nature of the relationship but to the athlete's emotional state that included anger towards his sport governing body and respective coaching staff. The athlete felt a higher degree of allegiance to the sport psychology consultant, and as the sport psychology consultant and athlete appeared to "join forces", the coach was left feeling disengaged which if left unresolved, could "undermine the integrity of the team in a modern professional climate where collaboration is required" (Reid et al., 2004, p. 211).

Giddens (1991) suggests that powerless exists in different contexts and at varying times given the dynamics of modernity.

The experience of powerlessness, considered as a psychic phenomenon, naturally always relates to aims, projects or aspirations held by the individual, as well as to the composition of the phenomenal world. Powerless

experienced in a personal relationship may be psychologically more damaging and consequential than powerlessness felt in relation to more encompassing social systems. Of course, these may feed into one another in various ways. Diffuse anxieties about high-consequence risks, for example, might contribute in a general fashion to feelings of powerlessness experienced by an individual in more local contexts. Conversely, feelings of personal impotence may become diffused 'upwards' towards more global concerns. It seems reasonable to posit that connections of this kind are likely to underlie a 'survival' mentality. A 'survivor' is someone who feels deprived of adequate social mastery in a threatening series of personal and social environments. (p. 193)

It could be argued that the coach did not, necessarily, adhere to a model of coaching that was congruent with the situation at hand, and this not only led to internal conflict, but also contributed to external conflict within the competitive environment. In this instance, the actions of the sport psychology consultant were completely appropriate, as the needs of the athlete took precedence over those of the coach in that moment. As Gergen (1999) suggests "in our daily relations, we act but it is often the public interpretation of our acts that determines the outcome" (p. 42). Importantly, it appeared that the coach and the sport psychology consultant in case two shared responsibility for the current climate allowing for them to maintain a necessary level of trust and respect for one another.

Young (1998) and Molyneux (2001) both discuss the issue of crossing professional boundaries and suggest that it is important for all team members to embrace their role and responsibilities in order to maintain respectful and trusting relationships. Given the nature of sport environments in general and especially in competitive situations, sport psychology service providers, coaches and athletes must remain flexible and adaptable in order to defer, at times, related needs associated with their perceived ideal roles (Molyneux, 2001).

Co-construction of roles and practice acknowledges a situated relevance that aims to satisfy all of the performers within a specific environment. Thus the coach, athlete and sport psychology practitioner co-construct meaning together. Important is the necessity for ongoing communication between all parties in order to sustain this level of interprofessional collaboration (Freeth, 2001), especially given the level of task interdependence and jurisdictional ambiguity that can exist in dynamic sporting contexts (Reid et al., 2004). Further, frequent interaction allows for ample discussion regarding the work with individual clients, and can often lead to the development of more creative intervention approaches (Molyneux, 2001). Thus, communication is an important component of effective interprofessional relations and can be critical in maintaining high functioning teams.

Revisiting the Researcher's Practice

A more personal reason for why I undertook this study was to form a clearer picture of applied practice in the field of sport psychology for myself. As selfish as this may have appeared, I felt that it was critical for

me to tie together the literature and real-world experiences of professional practice. Tenenbaum (2001) suggested that “what we teach and research is not what the field requires, nor is it what is actually done in practice” (p. 3). I was motivated to attempt to answer this question for myself and share the findings with my colleagues within the field.

By writing about practice, I was exploring my *self* in order to become more aware of my thoughts in terms of the multiple voices that are expressed in an expanding community of selves (Diamond, 1993). These perceptions of self include those of practitioner, researcher, educator, and coach in addition to a number of identities related to my personal life that could also be considered as influential to my work in the field.

As I reflected on the findings of the study and on the learning that resulted from the various interviews that I had during my research, I instantly began to realize how easy it was to get caught up in the day-to-day realities of practice and forego the regular and “necessary” input from respected peers and colleagues in the field. This is due, in part, to the fact that few practitioners of sport psychology are full-time professionals.

For example, I am currently working with three national team programs and a number of individual athletes while fulfilling my full-time academic responsibilities that include both teaching and research activities. An on-going dilemma for me resulted from my attempts to achieve a sense of balance while continually holding myself to a level of performance that would constitute “best practice”. Given my experiences over the past five years, which also included my responsibilities as a doctoral student, I am now questioning whether my current situation is

indeed sustainable over the long-term. However, given the current climate in Canadian sport, it is not clear to me whether there will be a financial commitment to the hiring of full-time practitioners or whether these roles will continue to be filled, most commonly, by academics and researchers situated at post secondary institutions.

For me, to be able to sustain a practice that is situationally relevant, it would appear that I will need to make a decision in the not too distant future about whether I will become an academic in the true sense of the word or whether I am most suited (and interested) in practicing sport psychology on a full-time bases.

Researcher as Practitioner

When I began my doctoral studies, I was in the process of transforming my self as researcher towards a more interpretive, hermeneutic existence. What resulted were a series of internal tensions between my formal “scientist” self and that of a more action oriented, qualitative inquirer. The first internal tension felt had to do with my shift towards becoming a “story teller” as opposed to a technical writer.

My identity as a qualitative researcher and story teller slowly emerged over time. In Kluge’s (2001) article, *Confessions of a Beginning Qualitative Researcher*, a similar transformative experience was reported:

For me, becoming a “qualitative researcher” required conceptual and analytic shifts in my understanding of research method and design and a paradigm shift in my identity as a scholar – from technical writer to narrative writer. The shifts have not completely resolved my conflicts,

though. I cannot yet consider myself a true “mountain goat” of narrative writing, cavorting over the rocks with ease. In fact, although I experienced the realization for the need to transform my identity, I continue to struggle to achieve rhythm and efficiency in writing narratively at this moment. My boots are still new – although they are not quite so stiff.

(p. 333)

The use of story for me as a researcher continues to be about finding a style that is informal and personal without losing a sense of my academic self. It’s essentially about learning to write in the first person after years of writing from a third person, more objective self, and this continues to be a “work under construction”.

Another central concern was to uphold my responsibilities as a researcher while acknowledging the importance of my experiences as a practitioner in regards to the analysis of the participants’ lived experiences. This was resolved as I accepted the premise that “stories exist within a community in which readers make something of them” (Carter, 1993, p. 8). Carter’s analysis of the place of story within the study of teaching captures my thoughts and feelings on the shared nature regarding the construction of meaning:

Stories, including those told by teachers, are constructions that give a meaning to events and convey a particular sense of experience. They are not videotapes of either reality, thought, or motivation. Thus, we cannot escape the problems of veracity and fallibility in our work by making

special claims for teachers' constructions of their practice.

(p. 8)

Thus, the stories that were shared with me will be understood through their telling by the participants, my analysis of their lived experiences, and the reader's own interpretive stance of the meanings that were reported.

From a phenomenological inquiry perspective, I found myself coming to a clearer understanding between describing an experience and interpreting what it was I had heard, read and written about as the research study progressed. van Manen (1997) comments:

What is hermeneutic phenomenology? There is a difference between comprehending the project of phenomenology intellectually and understanding it "from the inside". We tend to get a certain satisfaction out of grasping at a conceptual or "theoretical" level the basic ideas of phenomenology, even though a real understanding of phenomenology can only be accomplished by "actively doing it. (p. 8)

The Reflexive Self, Unreflexivity and the Practitioner

In chapter four, I commented on the reflexivity of the research process itself. However, with regards to the practice of sport psychology, many have argued for the importance of engaging in *reflective practice* in order to assist practitioners in effectively managing themselves in practice (e.g. Anderson et al., 2004; Holt & Streat, 2001). From a phenomenological perspective, theories of reflective practice may underestimate the complexity and intricacies of one's actions associated with practice.

When we view the practice of sport psychology as social practice, the relational aspects of the interaction(s) must be considered. As van Manen (1999) suggests “the relational dimension poses limitations upon the degree of reflection and distance one can take in a conversational situation” ((Un)reflective practice section, para. 2). Similarly, Quicke (2000) argues that it is improbable to unearth all assumptions and personal influences towards a reflexive account of events. However, we “can draw on thoughts which were immanent in the process but of which one was not fully conscious at the time. This is how things are with ‘reflection in action’; some reflection takes place during the action, some before and some after; and a great deal of reflection is reflection upon reflection...and so on” (p. 257).

For example, in case two, the sport psychology consultant reported experiencing uncertainty before he was to confront the athlete as this action was not necessarily consistent with his identity as a practitioner. It appears that in this moment, the practitioner demonstrated reflexivity before and during the action. Importantly, the sport psychology consultant demonstrated a reflexive account of his actions in the telling of his story of the incident to me, which is, in a sense, a reflection of his reflection. Given this, it can be said that a reflexivity of action is indeed possible and that the sport psychology was conscious of his action in the moment that the confronting action occurred.

Concurrently, the sport psychology consultant was aware of a sense of urgency in the moment given that the athlete had to perform again in only a couple of hours. As well, it was clear that the coach-athlete

relationship was dysfunctional, thus placing the sport psychology consultant's actions as critically important at the time. As a consequence, the sport psychology consultant was also incorporating important contextual information into his judgment of practice, leading to an adjustment of adjusting his practice so that it was situationally relevant.

In case three, the sport psychologist drew from his training as a clinical psychologist but then allowed the athlete's spiritual self to inform the nature of practice. This approach stemmed from his past encounters with the athlete, thus drawing from his historical experiences with the athlete. In deciding on his approach, he too shared a sense of reflexivity that occurred before his choice of action at the time the incident occurred.

The practitioners who participated in this study all appeared to engage in reflexive practice. However, it is not clear as to what level of consciousness was present during the incidents themselves. In other words, consciousness was frequently reported but this was told to me after the action occurred and it is thus not clear as to whether consciousness of their actions didn't occur simply as a result of our interviews together.

In the reflexive project of the self, the narrative of self-identity is inherently fragile. The task of forging a distinct identity may be able to deliver distinct psychological gains, but it is clearly also a burden. A self-identity has to be created and more or less continually reordered against the backdrop of shifting experiences of day-to-day life and the fragmenting tendencies of modern institutions. (Giddens, 1991, p. 185)

To summarize, multiple identities were experienced by the practitioners and these created tensions both within the practitioner and with regards to their relations with others in their immediate environment. Second, the practitioners' various roles and related actions were the result of negotiated realities with all members that were associated with the community of practice. Finally, reflexive actions associated with practice occurred as the result of a number of contextual and internal considerations that occurred before and/or during the incidents of practice. Given this, there are a number of important potential implications for the field of applied sport psychology if we view sport psychology service delivery as existing within a community of practice.

Implications for Research and Practice

The Use of Story: Folklore and Practice

My early mentored experiences were essential to my development as a practitioner of sport psychology. Further, the establishment of a professional association in my community where stories of practice were shared on a regular basis assisted me with my continual learning from the field in a manner that extended beyond my own personal experiences alone. As I suggested earlier, there is a need to move beyond a gaining of self knowledge resulting from reflective practice. Thus, it is recommended that as we continue the development of our professional identity, we take into account the following features: (1) that our professional identity consider our personal attitudes and beliefs; (2) that it results from the transactions between the practitioner and their environment; and (3) that it

is viewed as a continual process (De Weerdt, Corthouts, Martens, & Bouwen, 2002).

When viewing the practice of sport psychology as resulting from socially constructed meanings, reflective practice must involve an “ongoing reflection with others about the intersection of professional knowledge and experience” (Buysse, Sparkman, & Wesley, 2003, p. 267). Further, Buysse et al. propose a collaborative reflective process that appears useful for practitioners of sport psychology:

In a community of practice framework, new knowledge generated through collaborative reflection, observation, and systematic inquiry would be used, not only to extend professionals’ understanding and command of the own work situations, but also to advance the knowledge base for the field as a whole. (p. 268)

In particular, engaging in discourse with professional peers to analyze problems and consider alternate view points seems essential to achieving reflection for all members within a community of practice (Buysse et al.).

An Ecological Psychology Approach

A strong and ever growing requirement for sport science service delivery exists as the demands on the performance of national and international athletes grow increasingly higher. Even as recently as 2002, continued calls for the need to integrate appropriate sport science and medicine support into training in order to facilitate enhanced performance have been made (Tuffey Riewald, 2002). As Collins, Doherty, and Talbot

(1993) suggest, “the complexity of sport often calls for innovative, multifocussed solutions” (p. 291).

Although it is well known that many countries in the world continue to utilize sport scientists within their training centres and various athlete development systems, there is considerable variation in the manner of how various sport science practitioners and sport science teams function. Little has been found within the scholarly journals or other forms of publications pertaining to sport science service delivery. A recent example was published in *The Sport Psychologist* regarding the effectiveness of multidisciplinary service delivery (Reid et al., 2004). In particular, Reid et al. view multidisciplinary sport science teams “as a living system that impacts on service planning and delivery must be considered for successful functioning” (p. 205).

In this context, there is a need to view the practice of sport psychology from an ecological psychological approach in order for practitioners of sport psychology to appropriately situate themselves as members of performance enhancement teams. Dzewaltowski (1997) explains:

That is, successful intervention requires attention by the individual to build affordances within the proximal social and physical activity and sport environment. Individuals’ actions within their proximal environment creates action settings that afford sustained behaviour without long-term reliance on self-change skills. (p. 272)

Shared meanings of practice must be facilitated and understood by all professionals that are associated with a specific environment (training centre, national team, etc.). Moreover, it must be acknowledged that the nature of practice will change over time as the athletes, coaches and sport scientists continue their own personal and professional transformations.

Viewing the Practice of Sport Psychology as Facilitative

It appeared that much of the practice that revealed itself through the interviews suggested that the style of practice could be described as facilitative. By facilitative, I mean to say that the predominant role of the sport psychology practitioner is to collaborate with both coaches and athletes (predominantly) and to use contextual cues to inform their choice of practice involving both form and content. This fundamental role could be described as helping the athlete maintain a rhythm of preparation, performance consistency and reflection in order to optimize both performance and learning within their training and competitive environments. When possible, this role should be shared with both the athletes and coaches, thus acknowledging the primacy of their relationship within sporting contexts.

The practice of sport psychology also involved the creation or provision of space thus allowing for athletes to attain clearer forms of reflection. For example, the sport psychologist in case three found it efficacious to interact with the athlete in an environment that was away from the competition setting and this choice was deliberately made in order to afford the athlete with a more relaxing, private environment. In general, I felt that most of the examples of practice that I collected

demonstrated a very “hands off” style of delivery. There appeared to be a continual internal and external tension between feeling the need to help and doing nothing. Hardy et al. (1996) suggest,

Inexperienced and ineffective consultants at times fall into the trap of feeling that since they are serving as a consultant they must constantly give advice, motivate athletes, or psych teams up. In contrast, effective consultants have learned that if problems do not exist, then athletes do not want to be interfered with. Instead, they spend their time inconspicuously listening and observing. (p. 293)

This again demonstrates the importance of integrating the athletes and coaches perceived needs in conjunction with other important contextual factors (e.g. short-term performance implications vs. the protection of long-term, athlete empowerment) when making judgment regarding the actions within one’s practice.

Some Final Thoughts

What is best practice? Well...it depends. It involves understanding the situation. It, at times, involves a dilemma of identity or fulfillment of multiple identities and roles simultaneously. It most importantly is determined by the perceptions of all involved within a particular context of practice and is not, solely, to be determined by the practitioner him or herself. It is proposed that along with the pursuit of continued professional reflection and learning, we consider aligning ourselves with professional environments that relate with our current attitudes and beliefs of sport psychology practice and the optimization of athlete development. As

Hardy et al. (1996) suggest, one is not right for every situation. By choosing situations that most appropriately reflect the practitioner's way of working, shared meanings and understandings can be more readily achieved.

It is hoped that this study has provided strong evidence regarding the usefulness of phenomenological research for the study of applied sport psychology service delivery. Kerry and Armour (2000) suggest that researchers in the field of sport can explore and present subjective knowledge with a greater degree of internal consistency through the use of a phenomenological methodology. In particular, phenomenological inquiry allows the reader themselves to construct knowledge, as they consider their own history and related meanings of practice with those of the researcher and the participants within the study.

Future studies that examine practice and participants' life worlds could benefit by studying the interactions between athletes, coaches, and sport psychology practitioners as they occur. This could assist us in determining to what extent reflexivity occurs during practice. It would also afford the researchers with an ability to examine closely the language that is used during the interactions that occur from one situation to the next. Studying practice as it "happens" would allow us to look at the dialogue that occurs between the participants in a certain context and instance and then determine how actions pertaining to practice are situationally constructed.

Interest and research pertaining to the practice of sport psychology will continue indefinitely towards ensuring that we maintain an innovative

and relevant ability to assist athletes and coaches to live their dream. To this end, my research journey has been a most enjoyable and engaging experience. It is hoped that the reader, and in particular, the practitioner, will feel that a contribution has been made to their own practice and to the field in general.

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APPENDIX A: Information Letter

The Practice of Sport Psychology:
Telling Tales from the Field.

Dear Participant,

I have become sensitized to the importance of learning more about the professional practice of sport psychology through an ongoing dialogue with sport psychology professionals, coaches and elite athletes. Specifically, I am interested in documenting examples of “lived experiences” pertaining to the delivery of sport psychology.

This study will present a number of experiences and identify important features and potential implications regarding the practice of sport psychology. It is hoped that the current study will help to further inform our practice and that the interviews will become a learning experience for all involved.

I feel that having a learning conversation with you would contribute greatly to this research study. Of importance to the study is the inclusion of the perceptions and experiences of an athlete and coach with whom you have worked in the past (or are currently working with). Each participant will be interviewed once and possibly twice (if required). Interviews will be conducted in person or by telephone and will range in length from approximately 30-45 minutes. Interviews will be recorded on an audiotape. Identities of all involved in this study will be kept confidential.

Thanks in advance for any consideration given.

Best Wishes,

Tom Patrick, MSc, PhD Candidate
University of Southern Queensland
Telephone: (204) 786-9110
E-mail: t.patrick@uwinnipeg.ca

APPENDIX B: Consent Form, Sport Psychology Service Provider

The Practice of Sport Psychology:
Telling Tales from the Field.

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

This is to certify that I, _____, agree to participate in the study being conducted by Tom Patrick, University of Southern Queensland, dealing with the practice of sport psychology. I am aware that I was identified, by the researcher, as an excellent candidate for research in this area.

The research involves an interview designed to explore the lived experience regarding sport psychology service delivery. By virtue of the positive focus of the inquiry, no risks are perceived from participating in this study. The potential benefits of this study are increased self-awareness and an opportunity to pass important lessons and insights on to others involved in elite sport. Each participant will be interviewed twice by telephone or in person. Interviews will range in length from approximately 30 – 45 minutes and will be recorded on audiotape.

The opening question will be the following: “Tell me about a recent episode that represents the true essence of how you work as a practitioner in sport psychology.”

I understand that the researcher will ensure the following conditions of my participation:

- 1) I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I may withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason, without consequences. This includes after the interviews have taken place. I understand that the researcher may also terminate my participation at any time.
- 2) My identity will not be disclosed during my participation in the study or in the written results. I will be identified by number only and all potentially identifying information will be excluded from the written results.
- 3) All records, including transcripts and audiotapes, will be stored in a secure, locked location and will only be accessed by the researcher. All records will be destroyed five years following the completion of this study.
- 4) I may refuse to answer any of the interview questions.
- 5) The researcher will fully and clearly answer any questions that I have about the study.

- 6) At my request, results of the study will be provided to me and explained.
- 7) There will be no remuneration for my participation in this study.
- 8) I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.
- 9) I understand that the results of this study may be published in professional journals. However, no information will be presented that would allow individual participants to be identified.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact:

Tom Patrick
 Phone: (204) 786-9110
 Email: t.patrick@uwinnipeg.ca

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a possible participant in this research, please contact Dr. Tony Rossi at rossi@usq.edu.au

Participant: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX B: Consent Form, Coach or Athlete

The Practice of Sport Psychology:
Telling Tales from the Field.

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

This is to certify that I, _____, agree to participate in the study being conducted by Tom Patrick, University of Southern Queensland, dealing with the practice of sport psychology. I am aware that I was identified, by the related sport psychology service provider, as an excellent candidate for research in this area.

The research involves an interview designed to explore the lived experience regarding sport psychology service delivery. By virtue of the positive focus of the inquiry, no risks are perceived from participating in this study. The potential benefits of this study are increased self-awareness and an opportunity to pass important lessons and insights on to others involved in elite sport. Each participant will be interviewed twice by telephone or in person. Interviews will range in length from approximately 30 – 45 minutes and will be recorded on audiotape.

The opening question will be the following: “Tell me about a recent episode that represents the true essence of how you work with your sport psychology practitioner.”

I understand that the researcher will ensure the following conditions of my participation:

- 1) I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I may withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason, without consequences. This includes after the interviews have taken place. I understand that the researcher may also terminate my participation at any time.
- 2) My identity will not be disclosed during my participation in the study or in the written results. I will be identified by number only and all potentially identifying information will be excluded from the written results.
- 3) All records, including transcripts and audiotapes, will be stored in a secure, locked location and will only be accessed by the researcher. All records will be destroyed five years following the completion of this study.
- 4) I may refuse to answer any of the interview questions.
- 5) The researcher will fully and clearly answer any questions that I have about the study.

- 6) At my request, results of the study will be provided to me and explained.
- 7) There will be no remuneration for my participation in this study.
- 8) I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.
- 9) I understand that the results of this study may be published in professional journals. However, no information will be presented that would allow individual participants to be identified.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact:

Tom Patrick

Phone: (204) 786-9110 or Email: t.patrick@uwinnipeg.ca

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a possible participant

in this research, please contact Dr. Tony Rossi at rossi@usq.edu.au

Participant: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C: Tentative Interview Guide
Sport Psychology Service Provider

Interview Guide

Study: The Practice of Sport Psychology: Telling Tales from the Field.

Case No: _____
Time of interview: _____
Date: _____
Place: _____
Interviewer: _____
Interviewee: _____

(Initiate casual conversation and then briefly describe the study)

Questions:

Tell me about a recent episode that represents the true essence of how you work as a practitioner in sport psychology.

Mention some of the main points that were discussed and ask the participant if there is anything more they would like to mention before the interview has concluded.

(Thank the individual for participating in this interview. Assure him or her of confidentiality of responses.)

APPENDIX C: Tentative Interview Guide
Athlete

Interview Guide

Study: The Practice of Sport Psychology: Telling Tales from the Field.

Case No: _____
Time of interview: _____
Date: _____
Place: _____
Interviewer: _____
Interviewee: _____

(Initiate casual conversation and then briefly describe the study)

Questions:

Tell me about a recent episode that represents the true essence of how you work with your sport psychology practitioner (use the actual name).

Mention some of the main points that were discussed and ask the participant if there is anything more they would like to mention before the interview has concluded.

(Thank the individual for participating in this interview. Assure him or her of confidentiality of responses.)

APPENDIX C: Tentative Interview Guide
Coach

Interview Guide

Study: The Practice of Sport Psychology: Telling Tales from the Field.

Case No: _____
Time of interview: _____
Date: _____
Place: _____
Interviewer: _____
Interviewee: _____

(Initiate casual conversation and then briefly describe the study)

Questions:

Tell me about a recent episode that represents the true essence of how you work with your sport psychology practitioner.

Mention some of the main points that were discussed and ask the participant if there is anything more they would like to mention before the interview has concluded.

(Thank the individual for participating in this interview. Assure him or her of confidentiality of responses.)