

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF THE SPORT
PSYCHOLOGIST:
ATHLETES' AND PRACTITIONERS'
REFLECTIONS ON APPLIED EXPERIENCES
AND COMPETENCIES

Alison Joanne Pope-Rhodium

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The role of the sport psychologist is multifaceted. One element of this role is in using relating skills. This aspect has received little detailed attention in the sport psychology literature. In study 1 of the thesis, the roles of researcher and consultant were combined in an applied project with junior elite archers. Findings from study 1 included using both task and ego-oriented (Duda, 1996) forms of elicitation in baseline assessment, adapting a performance profile (Butler, 1989) to be archery-specific and emphasising transfer of skills to help in other life domains. Reflections of the consultant's role included questioning the training involved in the relating skills of applied sport psychologists in the UK. A key consideration was dealing with 'issues not directly related to sport/performance' that were raised in consultations. The perceived prevalence and impact of these issues were examined further in study 2 by assessing the perceptions of athletes and other practitioners. The findings confirmed that these issues are raised in consultations and have a perceived impact on athletes' training and competition performances. Various relating skills (including counselling skills) were highlighted as important to the role of the sport psychologist. The terminology used by respondents required clarification on practitioners' understanding of these terms in order to address further the role of relating skills for sport psychologists. Study 3 explored practitioners' use of relating skills, their understanding of various relating terms, perceptions of the importance of counselling skills and implications for the training of sport psychologists via focus group methodology. A definition of 'interaction' was developed to complement the unique qualitative analysis of data from the focus groups. Many themes emerged which included the importance of listening and interpersonal skills to the role of applied sport psychologists. Perceptions of different types of counselling existed and most of the practitioners possessed relating skills based on their 'craft' knowledge (McFee, 1993), this was contrasted with a notion of sport psychologists being 'formal' helpers (Egan, 1998) with 'professional' knowledge (Schön, 1983). There was a lack of clarity and diverging perceptions from the groups on various aspects of relating skills that sometimes caused underlying tensions to emerge. In conclusion, an integrated model of 'helping' for applied sport psychologists was presented which included the notion of adapting approaches and giving 'appropriate responses' based on a foundation of core relating skills developed from professional and craft knowledge. At the end of this thesis the researcher reflects on her conceptual and methodological journey, a route that encompassed different writing styles and legitimisation criteria. This journey includes a notion of development both as a researcher and consultant and in using different methodological and philosophical perspectives that were appropriate to the research questions.

*Dedicated
to my Mum, Joan,
and the memory of my late Dad, Cliff,
for giving me such great opportunities in life,*

To all my Mad Popes

&

*To my husband, Virgil,
for being my loving rock in life*

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Here comes Californ-I-A!

CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	ii
List of Figures	x
List of Tables	xi
CHAPTER ONE	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	2
1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW	4
1.2.1 Introduction	4
1.2.2 Psychological skills training	4
1.2.3 Performance profiles	5
1.2.4 Characteristics of effective sport psychologists	6
1.2.5 Perceptions of sport psychologists	7
1.2.6 Role of the sport psychologist	8
1.2.7 Models of practice	10
1.2.8 Extending the role of the sport psychologist	13
1.2.9 Counselling and sport psychology	13
1.2.10 What is 'counselling'?	17
1.2.11 Counselling skills	19
1.2.12 Methodological issues	20
1.2.12.1 Epistemological, ontological and methodological issues	20
1.2.12.2 Location of the research - A position statement	21
1.2.12.3 The scientist-practitioner link in sport psychology	22
1.2.12.4 Qualitative research in sport psychology	23
1.2.12.5 Inductive versus deductive analysis	24
1.2.12.6 Reflexive and reflective activity	25
1.2.12.7 Writing style	28
1.2.12.8 Legitimising qualitative research	29
1.2.13 Introduction to the thesis	31

CHAPTER TWO**STUDY 1**

34

2.1 INTRODUCTION

35

2.1.1 Hypotheses

35

2.2 METHOD

37

2.2.1 Subjects

37

2.2.2 Instruments

37

2.2.3 Procedure

39

2.2.4 Design

46

2.2.5 Data analysis

46

2.3 RESULTS

48

2.3.1 Diaries

48

2.3.2 Extension of the baseline measurement of performance profiles

48

2.3.3 SPSQ (Sports-related Psychological Skills Questionnaire)

53

2.3.4 CEF (Consultant Evaluation Form)

54

2.3.5 Mental Training Feedback Questionnaire

56

2.3.6 Reflections of the Consultant

63

2.4 DISCUSSION

65

2.4.1 Extension of the baseline measurement of performance profiles

65

2.4.2 Efficacy of the Consultancy

66

2.4.3 Use of PST

67

2.4.4 Transfer of Skills

68

2.4.5 Role of the Sport Psychologist

68

2.4.6 Integration of Research and Practice

69

2.4.7 Conclusions

70

CHAPTER THREE

74

STUDY 2

75

3.1 INTRODUCTION

76

3.2 METHOD

77

3.2.1 Subjects

77

3.2.2 Instruments

79

3.2.3 Procedure

83

3.2.4 Data Analysis

84

3.3 RESULTS	85
3.3.1 Issues discussed in Consultations	85
3.3.2 Skills of a Sport Psychologist	87
3.3.3.1 Perceived Effect of Issues Outside of Sport on Athletes' Ability to Train Effectively	92
3.3.3.2 Perceived Effect of Issues Outside of Sport on Athletes' Ability to Compete Effectively	93
3.3.4 Qualities of Sport Psychologists	95
3.3.5 Support from an 'Ideal' Sport Psychologist	100
3.3.6 Listening Effectiveness	107
3.3.7 Other Comments	109
3.4 DISCUSSION	111
3.4.1 Issues discussed in Consultations	111
3.4.2 Skills of a Sport Psychologist	113
3.4.3 Perceived Effect of Issues Outside of Sport on Athletes' Ability to Train and Compete Effectively	114
3.4.4 Qualities of Sport Psychologists	115
3.4.5 Support from an 'Ideal ' Sport Psychologist	116
3.4.6 Listening Effectiveness	116
3.4.7 Other Comments	117
3.4.8 Conclusions	117
 CHAPTER FOUR	 120
STUDY 3	121
4.1 INTRODUCTION	122
4.1.1 Focus group research	123
4.2 METHOD	127
4.2.1 Participants	127
4.2.2 Equipment	131
4.2.3 Development of Focus Group Questions	131
4.2.4 Procedure	132
4.2.5 Data analysis	135
4.2.6 Reflections-on-action/Being reflexive	140
4.2.7 Legitimation criteria	140

4.3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	143
4.3.1 Introduction	143
4.3.2 Summaries of qualitative analyses	144
4.3.2.1 Summary of listening skills	144
4.3.2.2 Summary of interpersonal skills	153
4.3.2.3 Summary of counselling skills	158
4.3.2.4 Summary of counselling	165
4.3.3 Detailed analyses	172
4.3.3.1 Broad dimension: Skills of a sport psychologist	172
4.3.3.2 Broad dimension: Conceptual understanding of the terms	181
4.3.3.3 Broad dimension: Role boundaries	210
4.3.3.4 Broad dimension: Importance of the various skills/terms	221
4.3.4 'Training'	228
4.3.4.1 Broad dimension: Knowledge development	236
4.3.4.2 Broad dimension: Conceptual understanding of terms	238
4.3.4.3 Broad dimension: Training standards	240
4.3.4.4 Broad dimension: Developmental training process	261
4.3.4.5 Broad dimension: Importance of training	262
4.4 INTEGRATED DISCUSSION	268
4.4.1 Listening and interpersonal skills	269
4.4.2 Different types of counselling	270
4.4.3 Further reflections on terminological use	274
4.4.4 Adaptability	276
4.4.5 Training	277
4.4.6 BASES	280
4.4.7 Concluding remarks	280

CHAPTER FIVE	281
5.0 CONCLUSIONS	282
5.1 INTRODUCTION	282
5.2 A MODEL OF 'HELPING' FOR USE BY APPLIED SPORT PSYCHOLOGISTS	285
5.3 THE ROLE OF THE SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST	292
5.4 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON A RESEARCH JOURNEY	293
5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS	297
5.6 FUTURE RESEARCH	298
REFERENCES	299
APPENDICES	

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	Thomas' (1990) model of performance enhancement	11
Figure 2.1	Performance Profile/Target	42
Figure 2.2	Inductive and deductive content analysis on the constructs elicited on the GAQ	49
Figure 2.3	Inductive and deductive content analysis on the constructs elicited on the Performance Profile	50
Figure 3.1	The athlete's perceptions of the support that an "ideal" sport psychologist should give	102
Figure 4.1	Raw data themes, higher-order themes and broad dimensions for listening skills	146
Figure 4.2	Raw data points, raw data themes, higher-order themes and broad dimensions for listening skills	147
Figure 4.3	Raw data themes, higher-order themes and broad dimensions for interpersonal skills	154
Figure 4.4	Raw data points, raw data themes, higher-order themes and broad dimensions for interpersonal skills	155
Figure 4.5	Raw data themes, higher-order themes and broad dimensions for counselling skills	160
Figure 4.6	Raw data points, raw data themes, higher-order themes and broad dimensions for counselling skills	161
Figure 4.7	Raw data themes, higher-order themes and broad dimensions for counselling	167
Figure 4.8	Raw data points, raw data themes, higher-order themes and broad dimensions for counselling	168
Figure 4.9	Raw data themes, higher-order themes and broad dimensions for training	230
Figure 4.10	Raw data points, raw data themes, higher-order themes and broad dimensions for training	231
Figure 5.1	An integrated model of helping based on professional and 'craft' based relating skills for sport psychologists in different contexts	286

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Mean archers' scores for discrepancies on the psychological constructs elicited on the GAQ and performance profile	51
Table 2.2	Mean archers' scores for how good they perceive themselves to be on the psychological constructs elicited on the GAQ and performance profile	52
Table 2.3	Analysis of scores on SPSQ from squad weekend 1 to squad weekend 4	53
Table 2.4	Means, standard deviations and ranges of archers' scores on the CEF	54
Table 2.5	The various uses of mental training outside of the sport and the reasons for their use	55
Table 2.6	The most and least perceived effective PST techniques used on squad	56
Table 2.7	The reasons given for achievement of season goals	57
Table 2.8	The reasons given for lack of achievement of season goals from those archers who had achieved some goals	58
Table 2.9	Perceptions of original season goals in helping the archers' archery	58
Table 2.10	Reported use of PST in training	59
Table 2.11	Reported use of PST in competition	60
Table 2.12	Reported usage of the 'Toolbox' of mental skills	61
Table 2.13	Perceived usefulness of the 'Toolbox' of mental skills	61
Table 2.14	Reported transfer of mental skills into other domains of life	62
Table 3.1	Qualifications of the accredited sport psychologists and trainees which were cited as relevant to being an applied sport psychologist	78
Table 3.2	The issues that were presented to the subjects in the section on 'issues discussed in consultations' of the questionnaires	80
Table 3.3	The qualities of a sport psychologist which the subjects were invited to rate	82

Table 3.4	The issues that have actually been discussed in meetings between athletes and sport psychologists	85
Table 3.5	Issues that athletes actually discussed or would like to discuss with a sport psychologist	86
Table 3.6	Perceived differences in skills of a sport psychologist	87
Table 3.7	The response categories of reasons for any differences in skills of a sport psychologist for sport and non-sport related issues	88
Table 3.8	The possession of 'additional' skills by the accredited sport psychologists and trainees	90
Table 3.9	Development of 'additional' skills	91
Table 3.10	The perceived effect of issues outside sport on athletes' ability to train effectively	92
Table 3.11	The capacity of issues to affect an athletes' ability to train effectively (athletes only)	93
Table 3.12	The perceived effect of outside issues on athletes' ability to compete effectively	93
Table 3.13	The capacity of issues to affect an athletes' ability to compete effectively (athletes only)	94
Table 3.14	The qualities that accredited sport psychologists (N=32) were most and least confident about offering when working with athletes	95
Table 3.15	The qualities that the trainees (N=27) were most and least confident about offering when working with athletes	96
Table 3.16	The views of the accredited sport psychologists (N=32) on the importance of the qualities of a sport psychologist	97
Table 3.17	The views of the trainees (N=27) on the importance of the qualities of a sport psychologist	98
Table 3.18	The views of the athletes who have no experience of working with a sport psychologist (N=21) on the importance of the qualities of a sport psychologist	99
Table 3.19	The views of the athletes who have experience of working with a sport psychologist (N=29) on the importance of the qualities of a sport psychologist	100

Table 3.20	The athletes' (with experience of working with a sport psychologist) perceived effectiveness ratings of their sport psychologist at listening to them talk about issues related to sport.	107
Table 3.21	The athletes' (with experience of working with a sport psychologist) perceived effectiveness ratings of their sport psychologist at listening to them talk about personal issues outside sport.	109
Table 4.1	The two different types of counselling perceived by sport psychology practitioners	271

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The role of the sport psychologist is multifaceted. A sport psychologist can have many role titles, for example, educational, clinical and research (Weinberg and Gould, 1999). Within the 'traditional', or more usual educational role that most sport psychologists have (Biddle, 1989; Biddle et al., 1992; Hardy and Parfitt, 1994), the most common form of applied support services that a sport psychologist offers is in performance enhancement and education of athletes with psychological skills training (PST) programmes.

Despite the role of the sport psychologist being primarily and traditionally educational, sport psychologists might have to deal with a range of issues that may or may not be related to sport and/or performance (e.g., Gould et al., 1989). Sullivan and Nashman (1998) stated "most sport psychologists perform numerous functions, including performance enhancement and counselling" (p.96). They argued that sport psychologists must be able to deal with concerns that cover both personal development and performance enhancement.

Hardy et al. (1996) stated that "it is important to recognise that there is no one method of effective consultancy; rather, there are multiple ways to be effective as a peak performance consultant" (p.296). However, the 'traditional' training of sport psychologists is mainly in performance enhancement (Brown et al., 1998), thus dealing with the 'numerous functions' (Sullivan and Nashman, 1998) of the role of the sport psychologist is difficult. Various authors have called for the traditional role of the sport psychologist to go beyond one of being purely educators of PST (e.g., Vealey, 1988; Bond, 1993, cited by Morris and Thomas, 1995; Hardy and Parfitt, 1994; Corlett, 1996; Bull, 1998).

Literature detailing relating skills for sport psychologists in being able to deal with these 'numerous functions' is relatively sparse. Some UK-based articles have referred to the role of counselling in relating with athletes (Biddle, 1989; Biddle et al., 1992; Hardy and Parfitt, 1994; Bull, 1995). This literature, however, lacks clarity on how counselling is defined, how this element is used in applied sport psychology and what training is involved for its use.

The British Olympic Association (1999) suggested, "Listening and counselling are important parts of any sport psychologist's work. However, many sport psychologists have had little or no formal training in this area" (p.3). They identified that there is a "very real

need for sport psychologists working with Olympic sports to identify training, or other means, by which they can continuously develop their counselling skills” (BOA, 1999, p.3). Petitpas et al. (1999) focused on the link between sport psychology and counselling psychology and suggested that the training of sport psychologists can borrow extensively from research and strategies in counsellor training.

Relating skills emerged as the focus for this thesis. Study 1 was a project in which the role of researcher and consultant were combined. This was completed with junior elite archers. In study 2 a questionnaire was developed to assess practitioners’ and athletes’ perceptions of the prevalence and impact of issues not directly related to sport/performance. The importance of various qualities of sport psychologists was also assessed.

Study 3 focused on the relating terms that emerged from the questionnaire in study 2. By utilising focus group methodology it aimed to explore practitioners’ perceptions of their relating skills and understanding of various relating terms. Published focus group studies were critiqued and a definition of ‘interaction’ was developed to complement the unique qualitative analysis of data from the focus groups.

The studies in this thesis show development of both the research and the researcher. This development is reflected by a methodological and conceptual journey encompassing different writing styles and legitimisation criteria, this journey is presented in the concluding chapter. Throughout the thesis the current debate on methodological and philosophical perspectives in sport psychology is highlighted.

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.2.1 INTRODUCTION

The following literature review covers various aspects of the role of the sport psychologist. It examines issues related to this topic, from using psychological skills training and performance profiles, looking at the issues that a sport psychologist might cover in work with athletes, through to extending the 'traditional' role of the sport psychologist and focusing on the relating skills associated with counselling. At the end of the review a section highlights the current methodological debate in sport psychology and related fields of inquiry.

1.2.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILLS TRAINING

Psychological skills training (PST) is a term developed by Martens (1979) and has gained popularity over the last two decades in applied research and practice. To reflect this increased interest 'The Sport Psychologist' journal and the 'Journal of Applied Sport Psychology' were established in 1987 and 1989 respectively. Both journals disseminate good practice and research in the applied field.

In a seminal paper in 1988 on the future directions in psychological skills training (PST), Vealey identified using a holistic perspective rather than the narrow, unidimensional performance model that she had been using up until that time. She argued that it was this latter model was also being employed by many other sport psychologists at that time. She advocated an approach which incorporated the idea that athletes are constantly interacting with their environment and undergoing personal development, rather than a narrow performance perspective.

Vealey (1988) distinguished between psychological 'skills' (the desired outcomes, e.g., increase in concentration) and the psychological 'methods' which can be implemented to achieve these skills. Hardy et al. (1996) argue that the methods which Vealey (1988) found to be prominent in North American sport psychology texts between 1980 and 1988 are "more than just 'methods', they are psychological skills in their own right" (p.12). Those methods were imagery, thought control, physical relaxation and goal setting. Hardy et al. (1996) felt that Vealey's (1988) terms were too restrictive and so extended their list of 'basic' psychological skills to include the terms imagery-mental rehearsal, self-talk, relaxation and goal setting.

Orlick and Partington (1988) studied the level of mental readiness and mental control experienced by Canadian athletes at the 1984 Olympic Games. They found that mental readiness was an influential factor on performance and identified common elements of success. These included: total commitment to excellence, use of daily goals, competition simulation and imagery training for quality training and quality mental preparation for competition. By identifying these common elements, sport psychology consultants' work with elite athletes can be facilitated. Orlick and Partington (1988) state "It...clearly illustrates the tremendous body of knowledge that can be tapped by an in-depth examination of a nation's best athletes." (p.129).

1.2.3 PERFORMANCE PROFILES

Performance profiles have increased in popularity with sport psychologists since Butler (1989) introduced the method into boxing in Great Britain (e.g., Butler & Hardy, 1992; Jones, 1993; Hardy and Parfitt, 1994). Butler based the performance profile on the theoretical framework of Kelly's personal construct theory (1955). Butler (1989) elicited constructs concerned with the skills necessary to box well, for example, "a good right jab".

During the performance profile procedure, the athletes are typically asked to list (in a small group brain-storm or individually) the qualities of an elite performance or performer in their particular sport. The athlete is then asked to rate him/herself on each construct and rate how he/she would like to be (ideal). This information is then placed on a profile to give a visual presentation of their self-assessment (see case study in appendix A for example). This tool represented a change in perspective of consultations from psychologist-based input to athlete-based input.

A performance profile facilitates an athlete's self-awareness of his/her performance and preparation and enhances the sport psychologist's and coach's understanding of the athlete's perspective (Butler, 1989). It allows the athlete to have more than a passive role in making decisions over which PST techniques to learn. The performance profile has been used by several authors (e.g., Jones, 1993; Palmer et al., 1995; Potter & Anderson, 1997) for many different purposes, one of which is baseline assessment.

Doyle and Parfitt (1996) assessed the predictive validity of performance profiling. They found support for the validity and predictive ability between profile ratings and performance, but suggested that the profile not be used unreservedly. Doyle and Parfitt (1996) concluded that a baseline collection period was necessary in order to reduce progressively stronger relationships between profile ratings and performance. They also

suggested that future studies should assess the practical utility of the profile through a profile-based intervention design. The first study in this thesis proposes to examine this practical utility through consultation work with elite junior archers.

The measure is not without its limitations however. Goal perspectives are associated with differential belief systems for achievement in sport (Duda, 1996). Predominantly task or ego-oriented individuals interpret and respond to sport in different ways (Duda, 1996). It may be suggested that the typical performance profile elicitation question “What are the qualities of an elite performer/performance?” could be viewed as a predominantly ego-oriented question. It may provide the impetus for the athlete to develop his/her list of constructs in a norm-referenced manner.

In contrast, a question such as “What do you have to do to be a better performer?” could be argued to be more task-focused in orientation. Such a question may imply that the onus is on the athlete to use effort to achieve success. This is consistent with research that has revealed a positive relationship between task orientation and the view that hard work and co-operation will help to get one ahead in sport (e.g., Duda et al., 1992). By accounting for both types of goal orientation, it is suggested that this may further aid elicitation of constructs than the typical performance profile question alone allows.

The first study reported in this thesis contrasts the two types of eliciting constructs. It synthesises the theoretical constructs of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), Kelly’s (1955) personal construct theory, James’ (1892) views on perceived importance and the perceived competence constructs developed by Harter (1982, 1992) to develop a baseline measure which accounts for a predominantly task-focused orientation. This is then compared with a traditional performance profile-style format of eliciting constructs (Butler, 1989) to assess any differences in the constructs obtained.

1.2.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE SPORT PSYCHOLOGISTS

Orlick and Partington (1987) and Partington and Orlick (1987a) interviewed 75 Canadian Olympic athletes and 17 Canadian Olympic coaches respectively to examine their perceptions of effective and less effective sport psychology consulting practices. The ‘most effective’ consultants were described as good listeners, likeable and able to quickly establish rapport, they were accessible and they cared. In addition to these characteristics, the best consultants were knowledgeable, had something ‘concrete’ to offer and were able to provide individual-specific input. The ‘worst’ or ‘least effective’ consultants were

characterised by having poor interpersonal skills, inflexible to individual needs and spent little time in one-to-one interactions.

Since this work by Orlick and Partington, other researchers (e.g., Gould et al., 1991; Anderson, 1999a) have identified factors that contribute to the effectiveness of sport psychology interventions. In a study with 30 British national level athletes from a range of sports, Anderson (1999a) examined characteristics of a 'good' sport psychologist and found a combination of professional and interpersonal skills were important. Specifically, she found being personable, a good communicator, providing good practical service, being knowledgeable and experienced in sport and sport psychology, honest and trustworthy and possessing professional skills were perceived as important. Petitpas et al. (1999) stated that research in this area has generally pointed towards the ability to build rapport, create a positive environment and provide concrete suggestions as being strongly related to successful sport psychology consultations.

1.2.5 PERCEPTIONS OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGISTS

Abbott et al. (1997) suggested that the perceptions of athletes, coaches and governing bodies should be recognised when considering the role of sport psychologists in providing support services. In a qualitative study with the above groups, Abbott et al. (1997) found four major categories of expectations of sport psychology support services: 1). those who perceived sport psychologists as clinicians who purely solve athletes' problems, 2). those who believed it was the role of the sport psychologist to teach PST unrelated to the technical skills of an athlete, 3). those who were not clear on what to expect from a sport psychologist and 4). those who had clear expectations of the role of the sport psychologist and the process of the services.

Abbott et al. (1997) concluded that consumers of the services of a sport psychologist had experienced a broad range of styles and levels of service. They suggested that sport psychologists may have little consensus over their role as a sport psychologist and that there is large variability in the quality of the services being provided.

Although there have been positive perceptions of sport psychologists reported in the literature (e.g. Gould et al., 1991), some negative perceptions have also been revealed (e.g., Linder et al., 1991; Van Raalte, 1990, 1992, 1993). For example, Van Raalte et al. (1992) studied the perceptions of American male athletes and suggested that the term 'sport psychologist' was controversial because it created a negative connotation of the profession. Van Raalte et al. (1990) suggested that the term 'psychologist' was one main cause of these

negative perceptions and that the word 'sport' could not modify this negative perception. They suggested further that the sport psychologist was not considered a person ranked high enough in expertise to deal with mental issues, therefore, their services would not be sought (Van Raalte, 1993).

Van Raalte et al. (1996) also examined the perceptions of British athletes on sport and mental health practitioners. The results were similar to the previous findings with US athletes, i.e., sport psychologists were perceived to be similar to mental health practitioners in general, but more similar to sport-related practitioners than other mental health consultants. Van Raalte et al. (1996) suggested that the perceptions of sport psychologists may indicate a shared confusion about the field and recommended that the public should be educated about the value of sport psychology consultations and the specific roles and competencies that they possess.

In another UK-based study, Brooks and Bull (1999) examined the perceptions of the sport psychologist by female university athletes. They found that the sport psychologist was perceived as possessing a high level of expertise in both mental and sporting issues. They suggested that "the term 'sport psychologist' is well-suited for female athletes and implies competence in both areas perceived as relevant to the profession" (p. 211).

1.2.6 ROLE OF THE SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST

The following section focuses on the role of the sport psychologist from the perspective of dealing with issues not directly related to sport/performance and how the role incorporates different approaches, e.g., educational and counselling.

There has been much debate, mainly in the professional American literature, about the certification procedures for sport psychologists (e.g., Anshel, 1992), the role of the sport psychologist (e.g., Danish and Hale, 1981; Nideffer et al., 1982; Weinberg and Gould, 1999), training issues for sport psychologists (e.g., Gross, 1985; Petitpas et al., 1999) and the future of sport psychology (e.g., Gould, 1990). There have also been many examples of the different ways in which sport psychologists work, for example, a special issue of the 'The Sport Psychologist' explored the topic of delivering sport psychology services to the 1988 Olympic athletes (e.g., Halliwell, 1989; May and Brown, 1989; Orlick, 1989). In this issue it emerged that issues that are both performance and non-performance related arise in consultations.

In an examination of US Olympic sport psychology consultants and the services they provide, Gould et al. (1989) found that, although less frequently used than

performance topics, non-performance topics were discussed in group seminars and, even more frequently, in individual athlete-coach consultations. Examples of the topics cited were personal self-esteem, interpersonal conflicts, communication training and family and marital considerations (Gould, et al., 1989).

One of the first articles to be published on applied sport psychology and the implications for the role of the sport psychologist in Great Britain was by Biddle (1989). He gave a history of sport psychology in Britain and discussed this development, including a code of conduct and a register of sport psychologists. On discussing consultations with athletes, Biddle (1989) stated that most work as “‘educational’ sport psychologists with no qualifications in counselling” (p. 27).

In terms of the training background of sport psychologists, Biddle (1989) referred to development which came mainly from physical education rather than mainstream psychology. The introduction of the code of conduct and registration system was an attempt to provide quality control over the consultation scheme by BASS (British Association of Sport Sciences, now known as BASES, British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences). Biddle suggested that there was a “move to greater professionalisation” (p. 32) through the code of conduct, system of registration, more links with other bodies, (e.g., the Sports Council) and the increase of applied sport psychologists working in the field with athletes.

Bull (1991a) also discussed the role of the sport psychologist in the UK in his self-help guidebook. He briefly described the work that sport psychologists in this country do, this included: practical consultancy for performance enhancement, satisfaction and enjoyment (focusing on psychological skills training or PST, team building, lifestyle management training, dealing with injury and coach education) and scientific research (he explained that most sport psychologists in the UK are based in academic institutions).

Biddle et al. (1992) later discussed applied sport psychology in Britain focusing, on this occasion, upon ethical and professional issues for the practising sport psychologist. They suggested that the role of the sport psychologist was mainly an educational one with some sport psychologists also being clinically trained. In an educational context, the sport psychologist helps to teach aspects of the psychological component of sport, including psychological skills training (PST) programmes.

1.2.7 MODELS OF PRACTICE

Models of practice have been published which attempt to structure the consultancy practices of sport psychologists (e.g., Boutcher & Rotella, 1987; Thomas, 1990, cited by Hardy et al., 1996, see Figure 1.1). They have packaged the performance enhancement process into systems of assessment and training. Such models have their limitations. Morris & Thomas (1995) argued that general models do not account for logistical difficulties such as finding quality time to work with individuals, the challenges of liaising with other professionals on the squads and working successfully with the coach. They go on to argue that the models imply that performance enhancement through PST is a series of simple, sequential steps.

Consultations are time-limited (Murphy, 1988). They must also deal with non-performance issues, which Orlick (1989) contends will 'inevitably' appear in consultations. These factors do not, however, appear in the general models. It is suggested that the role of the sport psychologist should go beyond just educating athletes and delivering PST and recognise the "complex, multifaceted and changing nature of consultancies" (p.295, Hardy et al., 1996). Hardy and Parfitt (1994) developed a model for the provision of psychological support to the national gymnastics squad of Great Britain. In the second, more successful phase of their consultation, they argued that the role of the sport psychologist should include different approaches, for example, facilitator, educator, mediator, counsellor, friend, problem-solver and sometimes general "odd-job" person (Hardy and Parfitt, 1994).

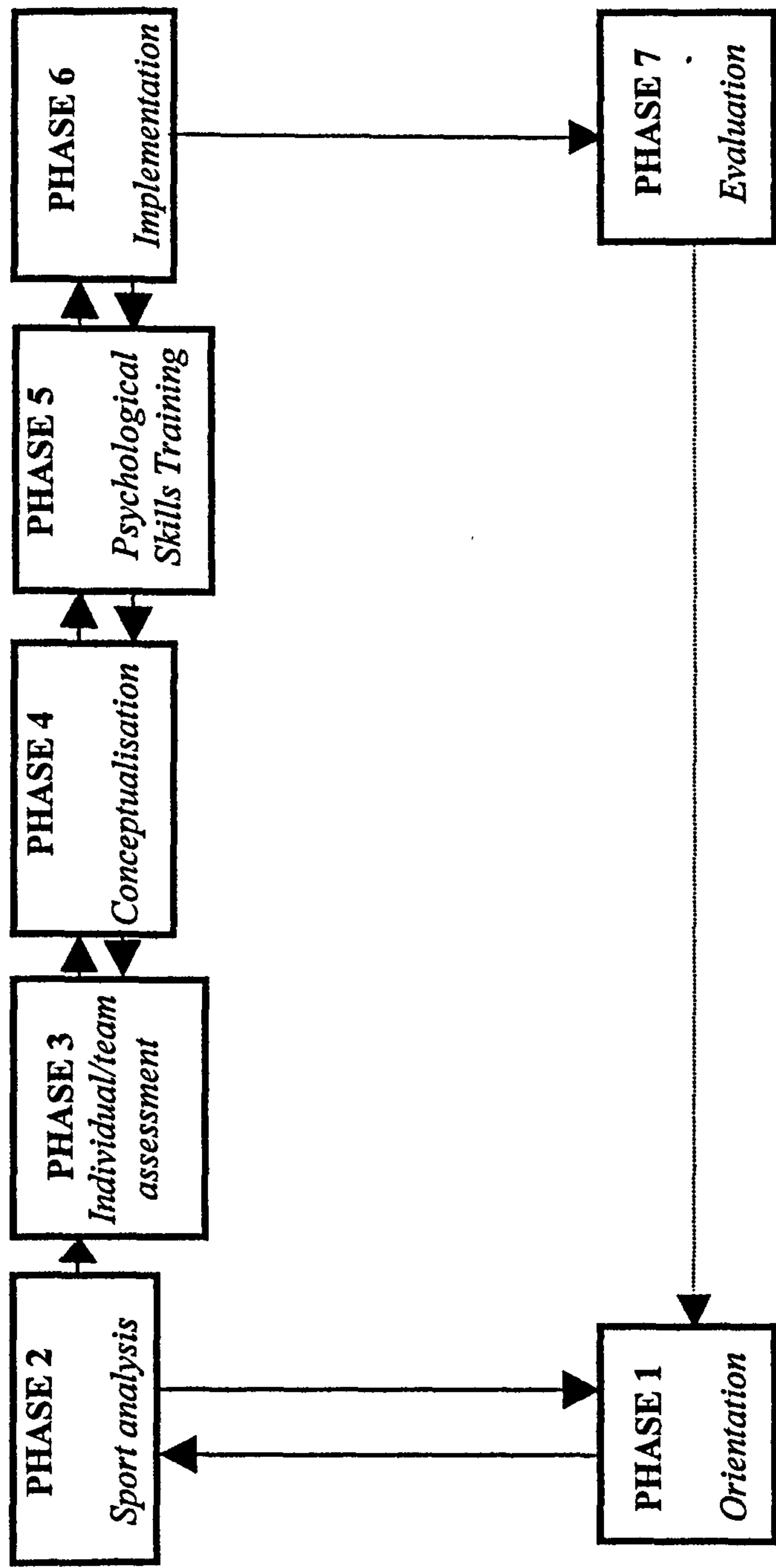


Figure 1.1 Thomas' (1990) model of performance enhancement (cited by Hardy et al., 1996)

Bull (1995) discussed the issue of dividing time in sport psychology consultations. He discussed several different philosophies, which may be considered when working with athletes, coaches and national governing bodies. Sometimes coaches or team managers dictate these approaches. Bull (1995) considered a 'winning philosophy' where the sport psychologist spends the majority of time with the athletes most likely to be the high-achievers. The advantages are that this will enhance the profile of the sport, the disadvantage is that it is an elitist policy, which does not allow all the athletes access to psychological skills training (PST) (Bull, 1995).

The 'egalitarian philosophy' (Bull, 1995) occurs when time is spread evenly between all the athletes who choose to take part in the sport psychology programme. Bull (1995) states that the advantage is that the sport psychologist would be perceived as helping all and, therefore, this helps to avoid resentment. The disadvantage is that time is spread more thinly across each athlete and the service may not be useful.

Bull's (1995) 'means test philosophy' describes an approach whereby the majority of time is spent with those athletes who appear to need PST the most. The advantages, Bull (1995) states, are that the time is spent productively and these athletes may show the largest performance improvements. The disadvantage is that it may not necessarily produce the most wins or medals. The rationale here is that those athletes who need most help do not possess the sufficient levels of mental toughness to achieve at the highest levels (Bull, 1995).

The 'investment philosophy' (Bull, 1995) occurs when the majority of time is spent with the youngest and most promising athletes. In a junior squad it could be argued that this is every individual on the squad. The advantages are that this can be viewed as an investment in the future of the sport and that younger athletes may be less sceptical of sport psychology per se. Arguably, acceptance may also be increased if mental training were introduced to them at the beginning of their sporting career in conjunction with all other aspects of their performance, i.e., technical, physical and tactical. The disadvantage, Bull (1995) suggests, is that the rewards may be long-term and credibility for sport psychology and PST may take a while to gain. Bull (1995) recognised that practising sport psychologists may work in ways that relate to these alternative philosophies and called for debate to help inform thinking on this topic.

1.2.8 EXTENDING THE ROLE OF THE SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST

Corlett (1996) argued in favour of extending the role of the sport psychologist from one of working in a purely sophist manner to one of being more Socratic. In the sophist approach the focus of intervention would be on the performance that is being affected rather than on what was causing the problem. In a Socratic approach, long-term interventions, which are not solely reliant on PST techniques to mask symptoms, are used. Taking his ideas from the philosophers of 5th-century BC, Corlett (1996) argued that sophists are technique-driven and focus on producing successful performance results via production of specific skills. He went on to state that the sophist can only offer 'bandages' to solutions without working out why the 'bleeding' occurred in the first place. Socratic practice, on the other hand, focuses more on the cause of problems and encourages rigorous self-examination and improved knowledge of self to personal happiness (Corlett, 1996).

Although Corlett (1996) acknowledged that not all sport psychologists work solely in a sophist manner, he argued that the expectations of athletes, coaches and administrators who use the services of a sport psychologist may "foster a shallow and cynical sophist athletic environment" (p.86) which is an easier route to take. He pointed out that using a more Socratic philosophy would help sport psychologists with problems "that cannot be solved meaningfully by mental training techniques" (p. 90). He concluded that "performance is not always about mental training" (p. 93) and giving short-term solutions to problems.

One aspect of the role of the sport psychologist is in using relating skills. It is argued (Corlett, 1996) that some relating skills (which do not focus solely on educating athletes with PST) may foster a less sophist approach to working with athletes. The relating skills of a sport psychologist can be linked to counselling and using counselling skills (Petitpas, 1999).

1.2.9 COUNSELLING AND SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

"Sport psychologists counsel athletes" (Corlett, 1996, p. 84).

Articles written for coaches, for example Mason (1993), refers to counselling as offering constructive advice or as a communication tool which coaches can use to 'positively correct' problems of their athletes. Where references to counselling in sport psychology exist is predominantly in the literature from the United States. Apart from articles that discuss athletic sports counsellors in the US (e.g., Petitpas et al., 1995) there is

still little discussion on the role of counselling for sport psychologists (e.g., Petitpas et al., 1999).

One article examined the role of USOC (United States Olympic Committee) sport psychologists in working with Olympic athletes (Sullivan and Nashman, 1998). They stated that “most sport psychologists perform numerous functions, including performance enhancement and counselling” (p.96). Sullivan and Nashman (1998) argued that sport psychologists must be able to deal with concerns that cover both personal development and performance enhancement.

Overall, little attention has been paid to the role of relating skills for sport psychologists in the UK. Examples include Hardy and Jones (1992) writing on future directions for the role of sport psychologists did refer to counselling. A model of psychological support briefly discussed the notion of the role of counsellor in sport psychology (Hardy and Parfitt, 1994). An article by Cockerill (1995) discussed how counselling in sport could be a paradigm for performance development. Syer (1991) gave a brief mention of ‘counselling discussions’ in his text. General articles on the role of the sport psychologist and counselling in the UK have appeared by Biddle (1989) and Biddle et al. (1992) and two articles written by Bull (1995, 1997) have discussed the role of counselling in sport psychology.

In 1992, Hardy and Jones (in a report commissioned by the UK sports council) recommended that the role of the sport psychologist be examined. With regard to this role, they suggested that one of the issues to examine were “the roles which need to be assumed by sport psychologists in different contexts (e.g., psychological skills trainer, counsellor, educator, researcher, therapist, etc.)” (p.40).

In discussing the roles and training of the sport psychologist other than the educational approach (educating athletes in PST and performance enhancement), Biddle et al. (1992) stated that many registered sport psychologists find themselves in counselling situations. However, they also commented “such sport psychologists may or may not be qualified in counselling techniques” (p.68). This statement may either reflect their inference of an omission in the ‘traditional’ training of sport psychologists (Brown et al., 1998), or may indicate that Biddle et al. (1992) were referring to two different types of ‘counselling’. They go on to state that

“these consultants must make judgements on when to refer an athlete to a clinically trained colleague, [for example], when do unusual eating habits

become a serious eating disorder? When does prolonged frustration become clinical depression?" (p.71).

When discussing the issue of referral in applied sport psychology consultancy, Bull (1995) referred to sport psychologists being in an counselling rather than a clinical role, when working with 'mentally healthy' (Morgan, 1988) individuals. He referred to this as an 'educationally-based counselling approach' as opposed to a 'medically-based clinical approach'. He appeared to be drawing a distinction between the counselling used by sport psychologists and counselling used by clinical psychologists. As shown in Bull's (1995) discussion and the above statement from Biddle et al. (1992), the issue of the role of 'counselling' in sport psychology appears to be lacking clarity.

Bull (1995) went on to suggest that there is a "grey area between when a problem can be dealt with by an educationally-based counselling approach and when a clinical intervention is necessary" (p. 129). Two mistakes that inexperienced consultants can make, Bull (1995) contends, are underestimating their counselling skills and then referring too soon and, conversely, overestimating their own abilities when the athlete should be referred to a clinician. Heyman and Andersen (1998) discussed the issue of when to refer athletes for counselling or psychotherapy. They referred to counselling as that which is used when referred to a professionally trained counsellor, whereas Bull (1995, above) appears to be referring to a different type of counselling, one of being 'educationally-based'.

Bull (1995) also referred to the 'counselling style' of a sport psychologist. These styles may be directive or non-directive and more relaxed. Bull suggests that the sport psychologist's counselling style should adapt in different situations. Using Bull's (1995) example, during a major championship a directive approach may appear to be the best option to take as time is limited, however, if the athlete is used to a more relaxed and non-directive approach in non-crisis situations this may prove problematic. Again, it is not clear from his discussion what these different 'styles' involve and what skills would be needed to use these different 'styles'.

Despite the thoughts offered in the above texts, the debate on this issue for skills is limited. There is little literature from the UK that focuses on the role of relating skills for sport psychologists. There would, however, appear to be a case for such debate as the British Association for Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES) have, on their list of attributes/skills of sport psychologists, the category 'basic theories of counselling technique'. But, in a recent document on an Olympic benchmark for psychological support

services, the Psychology Steering group of the British Olympic Association (BOA) stated that:

“Listening and counselling are important parts of any sport psychologist’s work. However, many sport psychologists have had little or no formal training in this area. Consequently, there is a very real need for sport psychologists working with Olympic sports to identify training, or other means, by which they can continuously develop their counselling skills” (BOA, 1999, p.3)

From this BOA statement it is not clear what they mean by ‘listening and counselling’. The BOA (1999) makes no reference to theoretically driven training but infer this notion through referring to ‘formal’ training. This is an area for further review if (as the BOA suggest) there is a “very real need for sport psychologists” to consider this topic. Study 3 in this thesis examines practitioners’ perceptions of these terms.

Petitpas et al. (1999) wrote about the implications for training when considering the sport psychologist-athlete relationship. They believed that the sport psychologist-athlete relationship is critical in successful interventions as it is in counsellor-client relationships. Petitpas et al. (1999) focused on the link between sport psychology and counselling psychology and suggested that the training of sport psychologists can borrow extensively from research and strategies in counsellor training.

Petitpas et al. (1999) suggested that if one accepts the idea that an emphasis on self-knowledge and adaptability (which distinguishes counselling training from other forms of training in many fields) is

“an integral part of preparation for any field (e.g., sport psychology) that requires the development of rapport and positive working relationships...it may be time for a paradigm shift in sport psychology training models from an emphasis on skill-based instruction to greater awareness of self and the processes involved in the sport psychologist-athlete interaction” (p.347)

Recent job opportunities for full-time sport psychology positions have also requested that “the successful candidate be required to provide counselling and psychological support services for individuals and groups” (job specification for senior sport psychologist advertised by the Sports Council for Wales, July 1999). Another read “the successful candidate will possess appropriate academic qualifications and counselling skills, have experience of working with élite performers and an interest and enthusiasm about applied sport science work” (job specification for sport psychologist advertised by

the Sports Council for Wales, September 1999). Again, it is not clear what the job specification means in terms of being able to 'counsel' athletes. It is important for the sport psychology profession to understand what is meant in the context of the role of the sport psychologist.

Anshel (1992) argued that sport psychologists who do have academic training in counselling could still be effective in relating with athletes, coaches and parents. However, Petitpas et al. (1999) argued that the current criteria of the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP) for counselling skills (they refer to the taking of one course in "basic intervention techniques in counselling" and a "supervised practicum in counselling, clinical, or industrial-organised psychology") would probably not be "enough training and experience to prepare individuals to consult effectively with athletes and coaches in the field" (p. 347). They concluded by hoping that their article created debate about current training practices in sport psychology "in order for the field to continue to grow" (p.355). Study 3 in this thesis examines practitioners' perceptions of training in this area.

It seems appropriate to conclude this section with a recent UK based study on the role of the sport psychologist. Anderson (1999a) examined the 'activities of sport psychologists and related issues' with 30 British national level athletes from a range of sports. She found athletes perceived that 'counselling' was one of the activities that sport psychologists do. 'Counselling' was a theme that Anderson (1999a) had categorised in her content analysis from the athletes' perceptions of the role of the sport psychologist which included: chatting or talking to the sport psychologist, problem solving and empowering the athlete. These 'sub-' and 'second order themes' reflect what activities Anderson (1999a) considered to be 'counselling'. However, the literature from other fields (e.g., counselling) has indicated that this term may have a different meaning.

WHAT IS 'COUNSELLING'?

People use 'counselling' to describe many different activities (Sanders, 1996). Examples that Sanders (1996) cites are: giving guidance in educational settings, being disciplined in medical settings and armed forces, getting financial help by 'debt' counselling, advice and information from agencies or any form of helping that has not already got a title, for example, tutoring.

In writing about sports medicine, Ray et al. (1999) state that many definitions of counselling exist and that "there is no universally accepted definition of counselling" (p. 4).

They talk about a spectrum of different types of counselling from psychiatrists providing psychotherapy, to people with no psychological or medical training giving advice. Ray et al. (1999) talk about the boundary between counselling and education being difficult to determine and state that during the practice of duties, the sports medicine expert can be forced into a counselling role.

Sanders (1996) differentiates between helping and counselling, he refers to counselling and non-counselling ways of helping. He suggests that some counselling ways of helping are acceptable in the British culture, for example being sensitive, being respectful of privacy and being trustworthy. He contrasts this with good ways of helping (those of friends, parents or doctors) which would not be good ways of counselling, i.e., they would be non-counselling helping. Examples of this form of helping include having an ever open pocket, always being available and being distant and expert (Sanders, 1996).

Sanders (1996) uses the term 'informed helping' to describe 'helping in a counselling way'. He states that basic helping incorporates an awareness of helping and counselling skills, awareness of the goals and ethical standards of counselling and the role of self-development. Basic helping, that which is aspired to on introductory counselling courses, helps to develop awareness of the helper resulting in abilities being improved as a helper (Sanders, 1996).

There are many different theories of counselling, however, most basic counselling skills courses in the UK offer a brief introduction to the client-centered approach of Carl Rogers (1951) as a theoretical basis. Utilising a theoretical approach, even at a basic skills level would, Sanders (1996) suggests, lead to 'informed helping'.

Although it may be one of the 'vaguest' (Ray et al., 1999) definitions of counselling, the term 'helping' has been explored by some authors (e.g., Murgatroyd, 1985; Egan, 1996; Egan, 1998). Egan (1996) categorised helpers into four levels of involvement:

1. First-level helpers (counsellors, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers)
2. Second-level helpers (consultants, health care professional, lawyers, clergy, police, teachers)
3. Third-level helpers (managers, supervisors, hairdressers, bartenders)
4. Fourth-level helpers (friends, family)

Later Egan (1998) talks about a distinction between formal and informal helpers. Those he originally called first-level helpers he terms 'formal helpers', whose formal role

is to help people. The other levels of helpers, be they professional people in their own right or not, he calls 'informal helpers'.

The British Association for Counselling (in their latest directory of counselling) define counselling as:

"a process which involves the helping skills of caring, listening and reflecting. It's based on listening to the client and a trusting relationship between the client and the counsellor. It's not the same as the advice giving service of, say, the Citizen's Advice Bureaux. A counsellor will be supportive but give little or no direct advice since the aim of counselling is to help us to develop our own insight into our problems. They help us re-find our own resources within (resources we often forget we've got) and so enable us to approach our lives and problems in a fresh way" (p. iii).

In their guidelines for ethics and practice of counselling the BAC (1999) also state "counselling involves a deliberately undertaken contract with clearly agreed boundaries and commitment to privacy and confidentiality" (paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3)

1.2.11 COUNSELLING SKILLS

The distinction between counselling and using counselling skills is viewed as important in counselling circles (Sanders, 1996). The BAC also clearly differentiates between counselling and using counselling skills. One way in which they do this is by publishing a different set of guidelines for counsellors (1998) and 'for those using counselling skills in their work' (1999). The BAC (1999) have defined that counselling skills are being used:

"when there is intentional use of specific interpersonal skills which reflects the values of counselling,

and when the practitioner's primary role (e.g. nurse, tutor, line manager, social worker, personnel officer, helper) is enhanced without being changed;

and when the client perceives the practitioner as acting within their primary professional or/caring role which is not that of being a counsellor"

(BAC, 1999, paragraph B)

Sanders (1996) defined counselling skills as:

"...interpersonal communications skills derived from the study of therapeutic change in human beings, used in a manner consistent with the goals and values of the established ethics of the profession of the practitioner in question. In addition, the user of counselling skills will find that their own professional skills are enhanced by the process" (p.8)

Although clear definitions of counselling skills and counselling exist in some texts (as above) such clarity does not exist in the sport psychology literature in relation to the role of the sport psychologist. Study 3 examines practitioners' perceptions of these and other terms linked to relating skills for sport psychologists.

1.2.12 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

A review of the debate on methodological issues is covered in the next section. It traces the history of the discussion in sport psychology literature and related fields and the increasing emergence of qualitative research in sport psychology. The studies in this thesis include different methodological and epistemological perspectives, thus discussion of these issues seems pertinent at this point.

1.2.12.1 Epistemological, Ontological and Methodological Issues

Different legitimisation criteria are needed for both qualitative and quantitative research because they do not share the same epistemological principles (Hill et al., 1997). Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) state that epistemological issues include: assumptions about forms of knowledge, access to knowledge and ways to acquire knowledge. Sparkes (1994, 1998) suggests that an understanding of the epistemological assumptions that underlie paradigms is important when completing qualitative research.

The two main assumptions that underlie social research are the positivist and the interpretive paradigms (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) (other paradigms exist, for example, the criticalist paradigm, but it is not within the scope of this review to consider this approach). Sparkes (1994) and Jackson (1995) both explain a paradigm as analogous to using a particular set of lenses or spectacles through which to view the world and making sense of it in different ways. The positivist and interpretive paradigms can be compared in terms of their epistemological, ontological and methodological perspectives.

The positivist paradigm has been the dominant perspective for research in sport psychology (Jackson, 1995) and other related fields of inquiry, for example health psychology (Lyons, 1999). It is based on an assumption that there is a reality 'out there' that can be objectively studied free from individual bias (Lyons, 1999) and is waiting to be 'discovered' by the scientist (Jackson, 1995). In terms of its ontological perspective (the nature of reality) it has an external-realist ontology (Sparkes, 1994) that views reality as mind-independent.

The interpretive paradigm has a fundamentally different perspective on the world (it sees the world through different lenses) than that of the positivist paradigm. It views the world as a collection of multiple realities not one. In terms of its ontological perspective, it views the mind as central and therefore mind-dependent. Reality is viewed as a social construction, therefore it can be perceived in different ways according to the perceiver (Jackson, 1995). Throughout the process of interpretive research the researcher (rather than just the methods employed, as in the positivist paradigm) is the main research tool (Sparkes, 1994; Holloway, 1997).

The emphasis of discussions on qualitative research in sport psychology has been on methodological or 'technical' issues, for example, types of analysis. Some researchers argue that an expansion in the use of qualitative research should be matched by an increased understanding and writing about epistemological and ontological assumptions of their approach (Jackson, 1995). This type of writing is rarely documented in sport psychology literature. Gilbourne (1998) recommended that the debate within sport psychology (as in other related fields) needs to move beyond solely referring to the technical or methodological views of inquiry and consider the aspects of ontology, epistemology and the "paradigmatic location" of the research.

Salter (1997) argued that British sport psychology is in danger of entering a "conceptual and methodological cul-de-sac" (p.248) if the majority of sport psychologists continue to adopt a "naive realist position with regard to their work...instead of questioning the unique demands of the sporting context" (p.248). He feared that sport psychology will 'stagnate' if this issue is not resolved. He criticised the approach of 'narrowly defined science' for sacrificing external or ecological validity and sport psychologists attempting to "generate table thumping assertions of ultimate truths" (p. 251). He argued that sport psychologists should broaden their 'conceptual horizons' in order to account for the fact that sporting behaviour does not exist in a 'vacuum'.

1.2.12.2 Location of the research - a position statement

For reasons of clarity and to help orient the reader, it seems necessary at this point to highlight the different perspectives used in this thesis. The research in this thesis reflects a pluralist approach that incorporates epistemological and methodological perspectives from different paradigms.

- In study 1, the research is a blend of quantitative and qualitative approaches that are described as primarily post-positivist. This study, however, also contains elements of

interpretivism in the final section of that chapter, 'the reflections of the consultant', thus it uses legitimisation criteria from both paradigms.

- In study 2, the research is a blend of quantitative and qualitative approaches. This study could be described as post-positivist (Sparkes, 1998) and uses legitimisation criteria from this paradigm.
- In study 3 the approach is purely qualitative which embraces both post-positivist and interpretive perspectives and uses legitimisation criteria from each paradigm.

1.2.12.3 The Scientist-Practitioner link in sport psychology

Martens has written two papers on his view of science and practice. In 1979 he wrote an article called 'From Smocks to Jocks' in which he called for more field research that sacrificed internal validity for external validity. In 1987, in the first edition of 'The Sport Psychologist', he distinguished between two sport psychologies - academic and practising sport psychology. He argued that these two types were diverging because of "an unjustified belief in orthodox science as the primary source of knowledge" (p.29). He called for an emphasis on idiographic approaches, introspective methods and field research in order to synthesise experiential knowledge from applied research.

Martens (1987) used Polyani's (1966) reference to 'tacit knowledge' when he talked about orthodox science dictating methods that do not incorporate tacit knowledge or intuition. He argued that field studies that collect data using the approach of orthodox science are "no better than laboratory experiments" (p.51). The studies that gather the richest data, Martens argued, are those "in which the investigators are an active part of the study and in which their tacit knowledge plays a vital role in problem formation, methodology and interpretation of results" (p.51).

Martens (1987) asserts that the gap between research and practice is due mainly to "different epistemologies concerning the nature of legitimate knowledge" (p.52). He goes on to distinguish between basic and applied research where "basic science is concerned with discovering how something works, and applied science is concerned with solutions to practical problems" (p.53). Applied research draws upon basic science but also includes experiential knowledge.

In 1994, Vealey also wrote about the integration of science and practice. She highlighted that there was debate in the literature that challenged the positivistic (or orthodox) model as the sole means of developing knowledge in sport psychology where practitioners are merely appliers of knowledge rather than developers (Vealey, 1994).

Vealey revisited this theme in 1997 and argued, as Martens (1987) had earlier, that any rift between science and practice in sport psychology may only be rebuilt if the basic assumptions held about research (for example, how beliefs are justified and how knowledge development is legitimised) are critically examined (Vealey, 1997). She stated that

“Dualism in sport psychology has been fuelled by a scientific status hierarchy that has valued and rewarded empiricism over humanism, research over practice, and traditional psychometrics over insightful assessment aimed at significant human development” (Vealey, 1997, p.49)

She also agreed with Martens (1987) in suggesting “the most useful knowledge requires the integration of science and experience” (p.49). Speaking at an ISSP (International Society for Sport Psychology) conference in 1997, she called for “a greater broadmindedness to stretch the limits of conventionally approved scientific methods” (p.50) and to broaden the definitions of what science, methods and legitimate knowledge are (Vealey, 1997).

1.2.12.4 Qualitative research in sport psychology

Over the last 12 years an increase in qualitative methodology has emerged in sport psychology. One of the first papers to emerge using this methodology was by Orlick and Partington (1988). They interviewed Canadian Olympic athletes to assess their level of mental readiness and mental control prior to the 1984 Olympic Games. Their data was qualitatively analysed which involved reading the transcripts and the researchers independently listing common ‘success elements’. The data was presented in the form of verbatim citations.

The ground-breaking work of Scanlan and her colleagues (1989a, 1989b, 1991), who completed research with former elite figure skaters, has been recognised for its original contribution (Jackson, 1995; Gould, 1997; Biddle et al., in press). This work has become a ‘template’ (Biddle et al., in press) for other qualitative research in sport psychology in terms of using semi-structured interviews and content analysis consisting of inductive analysis and a hierarchical synthesis of categories. Since Scanlan et al.’s (1989a, 1989b, 1991) work was published, many other qualitative research papers, using the same data collection and analysis procedures, have emerged in the sport psychology literature, for example, Gould et al. (1992), Gould et al. (1993), Gould et al. (1996), James and Collins (1997) and Hanton and Jones (1999).

1.2.12.5 Inductive versus deductive analysis

The issue of inductive content analysis used in qualitative research in sport psychology has been the focus of some recent methodological debate (e.g., Krane et al., 1997; Biddle et al., in press). Inductive content analysis is “a type of analysis in which researchers derive themes and constructs from data without imposing a prior framework and without counting” (Holloway, 1997, p.35). Deductive content analysis involves using prior knowledge to place some theoretical framework on the analysis.

Biddle et al. (in press) have argued that since the work of Scanlan et al. (1989b) outlined the differences between inductive and deductive analysis “the sports-based qualitative literature has been dominated by claims that inductive focused analysis has been undertaken” (p. 47). The claim for initially using inductive analysis is included in many qualitative studies in sport psychology, for example, Côté et al. (1995), Gould et al. (1996) and Palmer et al. (1999).

Biddle et al. (in press) query the claims for ‘inductiveness’ when the combination of pre-set semi-structured interviews precedes content analysis. On this topic, Krane et al. (1997) take a more global stance, they state “it is unrealistic to expect any researcher to begin a study without the requisite knowledge to understand the phenomenon under consideration” (p. 216). They argued that Scanlan et al. (1989b) must have had some preconceived notion of certain categories emerging from the data; in fact, they go on to state that it would be “impossible” to conceive otherwise.

As an example, in their study of adherence to fitness training in elite netball players, Palmer et al. (1999) claim to use inductive data analysis, however, they appear to use terminology on this topic in a misconstrued manner. They state that “naturalistic inquiries involve inductive analysis of data obtained from the sample and development of grounded theory” (p.316), however, naturalistic inquiries can also include deductive data analysis. They go on to say that “...this study needed to be inductive and to use existing exercise-adherence literature as a priori knowledge to guide the research, as advocated by Burwitz et al. (1994)” (p.316). If the views of Krane et al. (1997) are enacted here, then the above rationale could appear to be contradictory. Finally, Palmer et al. (1999) mention that “...the method of naturalistic inquiry was preferred over a content analysis...”, however, the literature does not appear to preclude content analysis in naturalistic inquiries.

One approach that incorporates both notions of inductive and deductive analyses is interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA, Smith, 1996). IPA was developed in health

psychology, but Smith et al. (1999) indicate that IPA can also be employed in other areas of psychology. This approach aims to examine the participants' perceptions of a particular phenomenon from their own perspectives whilst acknowledging that it is impossible to do so directly or completely (Macran et al., 1999). Macran et al. (1999) refer to any understanding being "inevitably coloured by the conceptions that the investigators use to make sense of the participants account" (p. 420). Smith et al. (1999) talk about the research process being a 'dynamic process' where "access depends on, and is complicated by, the researcher's own conceptions and indeed these are required in order to make sense of that personal world through a process of interpretative activity" (p.219).

Although Smith does not refer to the notions of completing inductive or deductive analysis in his work (indeed this debate is not frequently addressed in these terms in other similar fields, e.g., health), it can be argued that his ideas, on the effect of the researcher's perceptions of the world which may 'colour' the analysis, can be classified as an acceptance of deductive potential. By the very act of asking certain questions and having knowledge of literature, it is argued by Krane et al. (1997) and Hammersley (1999) that all qualitative analysis incorporates elements of initial deductiveness, even if this element is not conscious.

A distinction is made here between 'initial' deductiveness and a deductive analysis which occurs after the primary analysis. This distinction is made because some researchers have reported completing deductive analysis after inductive analysis in order to "provide a validity check in verifying that all themes and dimensions were present in the transcripts" (Hanton and Jones, 1999, p. 6).

1.2.12.6 Reflexive and Reflective activity

The notion of not being able to be completely inductive during data analysis links in with the idea of being reflexive. Reflexive activity was completed in this thesis during study 3 when reflecting on the effect of the self on the research was initiated.

Reflexivity is not a practice that is used within orthodox psychological research (Smith, 1996). Smith (1996) states that orthodox research would neglect reflexivity or regard it as an obstacle to the research by interfering with the role of the researcher as a 'neutral instrument'. Smith (1996), however, draws attention to reflexivity as "an inevitable consequence of engaging in research with people and...it can be harnessed as a valuable part of the research exercise itself" (p. 195).

Barry et al. (1999) argue that researchers need to be aware of “the fact that by our involvement with participants, we influence the direction of the research” (p. 30). In order to alleviate this potential bias and reduce the momentum of deductiveness, being reflexive during the research process can emphasise an “awareness of the researcher’s own presence in the research process” (Barry et al., 1999, p. 30). In her paper ‘Accounting for Presence of Self: Reflections on doing Qualitative Research’, Sword (1999) illustrates how her personal involvement cannot be separated from the research process. She argued that “no research is free of the biases, assumptions, and personality of the researcher” (p. 277) and by reflecting on the research process, the legitimacy of findings are enhanced.

The idea of reflecting has become more popular in sport psychology over the last few years (e.g., Anderson, 1999b; Palmer et al., 1999; Knowles and Gilbourne, in press). Salter (1997) refers to the importance of considering the reflexive nature of the work of sport psychology researchers. He argued that the concept of being reflexive is “central to all psychological theorising and yet is largely ignored” (p. 257). He endorsed the importance of acknowledging the biases that can be generated from processes of construction as researchers actively create the data which is not merely ‘stumbled across’ by accident.

On reading texts about qualitative research methods and increasing awareness of the presence of the self, the term most often used is ‘reflexivity’ and the keeping of a reflexive journal is often highlighted. (It is noted that Palmer et al. (1999) referred to keeping a reflexive journal in the method section of their paper, however, no further reference is made to this data source in either the results or discussion). Authors sometimes refer to reflection synonymously with this notion of reflexivity (e.g., Holloway, 1997, refers to keeping a reflexive journal or diary and then reflecting on the research process). In other forms of literature reference is made to ‘reflective practice’ (Schön, 1983). This literature does not refer to ‘reflexivity’ in the same way as the qualitative methodology literature, the focus for Schön (1983) is the reflections of practitioners. This exercise is argued to help them gain deeper understanding of their practice and find ways of improving it (Schön, 1987).

At the end of study 1 in this thesis, the researcher/consultant reflects on her consultancy practice with the junior archers. These reflections were used to help formulate the research questions in the next study (2).

Schön (1983) refers to ‘reflection-*in*-action’ and ‘reflection-*on*-action’. ‘Reflection-*in*-action’ refers to the tacit knowledge that is developed through “spontaneous, intuitive

performance of the actions of everyday life” (p.49). Reflection-in-action or in-practice are the intuitive changes that are made by a practitioner during the “art” of practice (Schön, 1983). Reflection-in-action refers to the automatic, intuitive knowledge gained through practice, whereas reflection-on-action refers to the conscious act of trying to recount previous actions. ‘Reflection-*on*-action’ is a conscious retrospective contemplation of practice. It is this type of reflection that is synonymous with being reflexive.

Reflection-in-action is possible to describe, as Schön (1983) has shown in his book ‘The Reflective Practitioner’. Schön, however, concedes “when a practitioner displays artistry, his intuitive knowing is always richer in information than any description of it” (p. 276). He goes on to state that such a gap between artistry or intuitive knowing and its description need not hinder reflection-in-action, “incompleteness of description is no impediment to reflection” (p.277). Descriptions of reflection-in-action (incomplete as they may be) may be sufficient to enable the reflector to criticise current understandings and produce new actions to help solve problems or improve situations (Schön, 1983).

Central to Schön’s ideas on reflective practice is his views on ‘knowledge’. Schön (1983) refers to ‘professional knowledge’ as a context where professionals are

“hungry for technical rigor, devoted to an image of solid professional competence, or fearful of entering a world in which they feel they do not know what they are doing, they choose to confine themselves to a narrowly technical practice.” (p.43)

He referred to these professionals as being on ‘high ground’. He contrasts this with those who choose the ‘swampy lowlands’ or messy but important problems, who also “speak of experience, trial and error, intuition, and muddling through” (p.43). Schön (1983) refers to this as ‘practical knowledge’.

A similar notion to Schön’s ‘practical knowledge’, ‘artistry’ or ‘knowledge-in-action’ (Schön, 1983) is that of ‘craft knowledge’ (McFee, 1993) or ‘tacit knowledge’ (Polyani, 1966) which can also be contrasted with ‘professional knowledge’ (Schön, 1987). Practical knowledge or craft knowledge is gained from practical experience rather than any formal training (professional knowledge). Unlike professional knowledge, craft knowledge is rarely made explicit and it refers to the intuitive and spontaneous aspects of practice (Brown and McIntyre, 1988). It is suggested by these authors that these are characteristics of competent practitioners that have developed by tackling complex, uncertain and unique real-life problems in everyday interactions with people. These ‘lowlanders’ work in a way

which does not necessarily reflect a widely accepted theory but one in which their core ideals are reflected (McFee, 1993).

1.2.12.7 Writing style

“Qualitative researchers are story tellers”
(Holloway, 1997, p. 9).

At the end of studies 1 and 3, the conclusions to this thesis and in the appendix (see ‘reflections’, appendix D), the style of the text alters to incorporate the voice of the author. Such an adaptation of writing style was deemed necessary at these times in order to successfully write about personal reflections from the researcher’s/consultant’s and participants’ perspectives. There is a sense that some of this text is written as a ‘confessional tale’ (Van Maanen, 1988).

Several researchers have written about writing style in the academic literature (e.g., Geertz, 1988; Van Maanen, 1988; Sparkes, 1995). The ‘scientific’ style of quantitative research has been criticised for having “style of no style” (Sparkes, 1995). Geertz (1988) talks about scientific tales as being ‘author-evacuated texts’. Although such a writing style may be appropriate in quantitative texts, many qualitative texts are also written in these ‘author-less’ ways. By having different epistemological positions from quantitative research and focusing on subjective experiences, qualitative research readily lends itself to different writing styles.

Van Maanen (1988) has discussed different writing styles in research. He distinguishes between different types of ‘tales’ that can be told through research. Realist tales are characterised by a virtually complete absence of the author in the text (Van Maanen, 1988). They are dominant in qualitative research in sport (Sparkes, 1995). Sparkes (1995) is critical of realist tales and states that

“there is a marked absence of the narrator as a first-person presence in the text that becomes dominated by a “scientific” narrator who is manifest only as a dispassionate, camera-like observer” (p. 162).

Realist tales can be modified to include the author’s position (Sparkes, 1995).

Confessional tales are highly personalised, autobiographical type of accounts that talk about the research as it ‘actually’ happened. Van Maanen (1988) talks about them being complementary to realist tales rather than using them ‘instead of’. The voice of the author is ‘heard’ through this style of writing.

Biddle et al. (in press) write:

“If...different ways of writing leads to different ways of knowing about phenomena of interest in sport and exercise psychology, then there might be something to be gained by qualitative researchers engaging with alternative genres of representation” (p. 64)

The key to which writing style to use, is whether it is appropriate or not. The notion of appropriateness may depend on, for example, the perspectives of the reader and the journal to which the work is submitted, i.e. who is going to read it? (Golden-Biddle and Locke, 1997). However, the appropriateness of writing style should be dependent, not on these factors, but on the epistemological perspectives and legitimisation criteria used by the author. As Sparkes (1995) stated: “...those who feel increasingly uncomfortable about producing author-evacuated tales might consider writing more of themselves into the text when and where they feel this to be appropriate” (p. 171).

1.2.12.8 Legitimising Qualitative Research

“Qualitative research should be judged against criteria appropriate to that approach”
(Smith, 1996, p.191)

There is currently debate on the issue of criteria for judging the merit and methodological rigour of qualitative research in the sport psychology field and other related domains. This next section highlights elements of this contemporary debate.

Dominant in the sport psychology qualitative literature (if legitimisation criteria is cited) are references to trustworthiness criteria (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that quality in qualitative data should be assessed differently from quantitative research. They developed a different set of criteria which catered for the different perspective of qualitative research. Trustworthiness criteria was established (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) to be a qualitative equivalent to validity. Qualitative research is thought to be ‘trustworthy’ when it reflects the perceptions of the participants. Within the criteria for trustworthiness are the following elements: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility equates to internal validity in quantitative research and can be established via prolonged engagement with the participant, persistent observation of the participants, triangulation of methods or researchers and member checking. Transferability corresponds to external validity and generalisability and can be established by producing ‘thick description’ of the data in context. Dependability can be likened to reliability and

refers to the data being consistent and accurate, this can be achieved through an audit trail and demonstrating competence of the research team. Confirmability (or conceivability, Hardy et al., 1996) is the equivalent of objectivity and can be demonstrated by producing an audit trail of the methods and analysis. Although qualitative research cannot be totally objective many researchers believe that showing the origins of the data and being reflexive can help to demonstrate dependability.

In sport psychology literature, Hardy et al. (1996) state that although there are many appropriate methodological ways to collect and analyse 'qualitative data, "...all these methods and data analysis choices should be evaluated relative to the trustworthiness criteria [of Lincoln and Guba]" (p.266). In one sense such criteria appears to allow some researchers to be comfortable with assessing their research with criteria which can be neatly linked with quantitative notions. However, both Sparkes (1998) and indeed Guba and Lincoln themselves (1998) have criticised the trustworthiness criteria above for paralleling positivist criteria in judging adequacy in qualitative research. The researchers who accept that there cannot be complete objectivity and yet still strive for validity are described as 'post-positivist' (Sparkes, 1998).

Biddle et al. (in press) argue that other forms of criteria may also be used to legitimise qualitative research that may sometimes be more appropriate. Gilbourne (1998) suggests that trustworthiness criteria is useful in several respects to the 'technical' aspect of qualitative research, but rejects the idea that this criteria is sufficient alone to legitimise all qualitative research, for example, in his own collaborative action research. Gilbourne (1998) states that it is "curious" that sport psychologists have not yet queried the notion of trustworthiness as this criteria has been challenged by qualitative researchers from other social science disciplines such as education and health care. Lyons (1999) asserts that "no one set of evaluation criteria exist to evaluate all qualitative research" (p. 248). Similarly, Popay et al. (1998) argue, "we recognise that there is no absolute list of criteria as to what constitutes good qualitative research" (p. 344).

There is no suggestion here that trustworthiness criteria should not be invoked to legitimise qualitative work (indeed it is in this thesis), this review merely serves to highlight an awareness of the growing debate that exists in the literature. For some qualitative researchers trustworthiness criteria is suitable (e.g., Hardy et al., 1996), for others it may be suitable within certain paradigms (post-positivist), but not sufficient in other paradigms (interpretive) (e.g., Sparkes, 1998).

It is suggested by Sparkes (1998) and Biddle et al. (in press) that criteria should be used consistently and clearly. Sparkes (1998) states that the methods or procedures used in research should be “put in their place and recognised for what they are and the job they can do in specific contexts for certain purposes” (Sparkes, 1998, p. 374). Sparkes (1998) goes on to state that:

“the emergence of a multitude of criteria for judging the qualitative research process and product clearly signals that there can be no canonical approach to this form of inquiry, no recipes or rigid formulas; as different validation procedures or sets of criteria may be better suited to certain situations, forms of representation, and desires for legitimisation.” (p. 380)

As stated previously, the studies in this thesis use legitimisation criteria predominantly from the post-positivist paradigm. In studies 1 and 3, the criteria could be described as post-positivist (e.g., validity and trustworthiness) whilst also containing elements from interpretive work to further legitimise the work, for example, illuminating criteria (Heron, 1996), coherence (Hill et al., 1997) and applicability of the results (Hill et al. 1997).

The debate within sport psychology and other related fields in relation to appropriate terminological usage and criteria is ongoing (e.g., Smith, 1996; Holloway, 1997; Morse, 1999; Biddle et al., in press). This ongoing debate also includes the issue of knowledge and whether subjective knowledge (from qualitative data) is valuable or not (Bain, 1995).

1.2.13 INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

The material presented in this thesis explores the role of the sport psychologist. The research reflects a desire to understand how the role of a sport psychologist impacts on applied experiences and examines the competencies needed by applied sport psychologists today.

In study 1 the role of researcher and consultant are combined. The consultancy practice uses a predominantly PST-only approach with the junior squad coupled with an ‘egalitarian philosophy’ (Bull, 1995). This philosophy enabled all the archers to spend equal time with the consultant. The consultation period covered four separate squad training weekends. Baseline assessment was based on a unique set of measures that drove a PST programme with a foundation of goal setting. The transfer of PST skills from sport to other ‘life’ domains was incorporated (Danish et al., 1992).

At the end of study 1, reflections of the consultant are presented. From these reflections of practice during the junior project it was realised that a traditional PST-only approach could not be justified in an applied setting where people do not function in a 'sporting vacuum' (Salter, 1997) where influences outside the sport may have the potential to distract. This caused the researcher/consultant to call into question training issues, the 'traditional' role of the sport psychologist and the role of relating skills for sport psychologists.

The question of addressing issues other than those related to sport or performance enhancement was noted. In study 2, a questionnaire was devised which addressed dealing with these 'other' issues. The qualities and competencies of sport psychologists from the perspectives of accredited sport psychologist, trainees and athletes were also examined. From study 2 the research focus developed on to the topic of relating skills, i.e., listening skills, interpersonal skills, counselling skills and counselling.

In study 3, focus groups consisting predominantly of accredited sport psychologists were conducted. This exercise explored their perceptions and understanding of relating skills terms and the perceived implications for the training of sport psychologists. During the research process and at the end of study 3, the researcher kept a reflexive journal that attempted to reflect on the effect of the self on the research. These reflections (and the reflections of the participants in this study) are shown in appendix D.

As the research moves on there is a sense of a conceptual and methodological journey. A reflective section at the end of the conclusion to the thesis explores the researcher/practitioner's applied progress and also captures the researcher's own development. These reflections add to the legitimisation of the work (O'Hanlon, 1994).

CHAPTER TWO

STUDY 1

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the research findings from a study within the sport of archery. Archery is a closed sport performed both indoors and outdoors. Only one category of bow type (recurve) out of several is used to shoot in the Olympics. To attract more audience interest at the Olympics the format of the shooting tournament recently adapted from just shooting what is called a FITA round, i.e., 144 arrows at four separate distances (from 90 metres to 30 metres for men, and from 70m to 30m for women) to having head-to-head clashes at 70m for both the individual and team shooting events. The opportunity arose for the researcher to work with the national junior (under 18s) elite squad.

Study 1 was completed with the Great Britain junior elite archery squad whilst the researcher was also serving as a consultant to the squad. The emphasis was on examining the role of the sport psychologist whilst using a predominantly psychological skills training (PST) approach with the junior archers within a practice limited by time. The aims were:

- to extend a baseline measurement of performance profiles
- assess the efficacy of the consultancy
- to assess the archers' perceptions of a consultation that highlighted transferability of skills
- and to reflect on the role of the sport psychologist whilst working with an elite squad

2.1.1 HYPOTHESES

Due to the nature of the design of this study, i.e. not withholding or withdrawing interventions or using controls, it cannot be stated with certainty that any change in scores on the instruments were caused by the interventions, however, in order to offer some indication, a repeated measures design was utilised in which the archers acted as their own controls. There was an elongated baseline phase during which there was no intervention. Measures were taken at the beginning of this phase (weekend 1), just before interventions were introduced (weekend 2) and at the end of the interventions (weekend 4). Based on this design, the hypotheses were as follows:

1. The discrepancy scores from the General Archery Questionnaire (GAQ) and performance profile will be significantly lower in squad weekend 4 (post-intervention) than in squad weekend 1.

2. The 'self as now' scores from the General Archery Questionnaire (GAQ) and performance profile will be significantly greater in squad weekend 4 than in squad weekend 1.
3. The Sports-related Psychological Skills Questionnaire (Nelson & Hardy, 1990) scores will be significantly greater in squad weekend 4 than in squad weekend 1.

2.2 METHOD

2.2.1 SUBJECTS

Fourteen junior target archers on the Great Britain Olympic Élite squad, seven female and seven male. Mean age = 16.29 years old, S.D. = 0.83, range = 14-17 years old. Mean personal best FITA score = 1203, S.D. = 51.16, range = 1136-1287. Mean number of years shooting = 5.32 years, S.D. = 1.77, range = 3-9 years.

2.2.2 INSTRUMENTS

General Archery Questionnaire

This instrument was designed as a baseline assessment tool and represents a synthesis of the theoretical perspectives of Bandura (1977), James (1892) and Kelly (1955). It is a modification of the performance profile used by Butler (1989) originally with boxers. The subjects were first asked to "List the key factors that you have to be good at to be a better archer". This list pertains to their 'efficacies', i.e., the subskills that make up their construct of themselves as better archers (Kelly, 1955) and those which they believe they need to attain (and may be capable of attaining) in order to reach their specific outcome, i.e. to be better (Bandura, 1977). They are then asked to rate their current level of competence on each of their listed subskills or 'efficacies', i.e., "How good are you at it now" (from '1' 'not very good at all' to '10' 'the best I can be').

Finally, the Jamesian discrepancy perspective (James, 1892) is introduced on the basis that the effect of each specific efficacy on self-esteem will vary as a function of the importance of each construct. The subjects were asked to rate each efficacy in terms of its individual importance to themselves ('1' being not very important at all, and '10' being very important). It is argued that this is more personally meaningful than asking the archers to assess how important each construct is to an élite archer, as Palmer (1995) did. The archers may not yet perceive themselves as élite archers or may even be thinking of one specific élite archer other than themselves if asked to consider this.

This questionnaire moves away from the original performance profile (Butler, 1989) in that it does not restrict the subjects to just making a comparison between themselves and their "ideal" archers. It follows one of the procedures of Palmer (1995) by not restricting the number of constructs that can be elicited, as Butler et al. (1993) did. It also asks for the archers' assessment of the importance of the constructs. Jones (1993) had

asked the athlete he was working with to rate the importance of each construct, but he gave no theoretical reason for its inclusion.

Original Performance Profile (Butler, 1989)

The archers were asked to consider individually “*What are the qualities of an elite archer?*”. If they had difficulty in eliciting constructs they were asked to consider specific archers that they knew and admired or archers that they did not necessarily know personally but perceived as being role models.

The archers were then asked “*How good would you rate yourself at the present time on each of these qualities you have listed?*” on a scale from ‘1, not very good at all’ to ‘10, the best I can be’.

The archers were asked to reflect on the importance of each to themselves and not to an ideal archer, i.e. “*How important is this quality to you and your archery?*”, on a scale from ‘1’ (not important at all) to ‘10’ (very important).

Sports-related Psychological Skills Questionnaire (S.P.S.Q.) (Nelson and Hardy, 1990)

A 56-item measure consisting of seven psychological skills that are thought to underlie sport performance: imaginal skill, mental preparation, self-efficacy, cognitive anxiety (the control of cognitive anxiety), concentration skills, relaxation skills and motivation. There are eight items in each skill category, with possible scores on each skill ranging from 8 to 48 and Cronbach’s alpha being greater than 0.78 in each case.

Consultant Evaluation Form (CEF) (Partington and Orlick, 1987b)

Used to evaluate perceived effectiveness of the sport psychologist working with the squad. An additional sheet was added to the questionnaire to allow information on their perceptions of specific aspects of the sport psychology programme to be obtained.

Mental Training Feedback Questionnaire

This was a 24-item questionnaire with a combination of open and closed questions designed to obtain information from the archers after the end of the competitive season on issues such as: goal attainment, the archers’ use of and adherence to PST in training and competition, the perceived usefulness of the ‘Toolbox’ concept, the transfer of PST to help with other aspects of their lives, their perceptions of the sport psychology programme, and any recommendations they had for future mental training programmes. This questionnaire

was validated via piloting the questions with the research team, junior athletes and senior archers.

2.2.3 PROCEDURE

Framework of the Consultation

Each of the 'basic' psychological skills listed by Hardy et al. (1996) formed the basis of foundation workshops, i.e., goal setting, relaxation, imagery (called imagery and mental rehearsal by Hardy et al., 1996) and self-talk. Concentration training and use of coping strategies were also used in workshops. This study emphasised the PST technique of goal setting as the main framework for the consultation process through which all the other PST techniques were used with each archer. The goal setting programme was driven from the unique baseline of quantitative and qualitative measures.

Within the main framework of goal setting was the Life Development Intervention perspective (LDI) (Danish et al., 1992). This encourages the archers throughout the training season to transfer the mental skills learnt on squads into skills that they can utilise elsewhere in their lives. The philosophy behind using such a theme is that by helping the athletes cope with other aspects of their lives (e.g., school, work, relationships, finding time to relax and meet friends) then this will indirectly facilitate their athletic performance.

The national junior squad archers were amateurs, either in full-time education or employment (this situation is typical for all the top archers in the UK apart from one exception who has recently turned full-time, but not professional). The strategy of being able to transfer mental skills learnt on squad was recommended to the junior archers because of the limited amount of time they were able to devote to their archery and to help them feel more in control of other aspects of their lives. This is also linked with Vealey's (1988) notion of a holistic perspective that does not advocate the use of PST education only. Although the archers were encouraged to transfer their psychological skills across to other domains, the focus for the actual interventions was not on 'other' areas of their lives, only PST in relation to their archery performance. This PST focus was influenced by the necessity to educate the archers in a short time frame.

The issue of adherence to PST has been examined by Bull (1991b). He suggested that sport psychology interventions should attempt to individualise the programme. Bull (1991b) found that time constraints and a disruptive home environment were barriers to adherence to PST programmes. Despite the time constraints for the current project, each junior archer received individualised PST advice in addition to attendance at group

workshops. Using this approach incorporated Bull's (1991b) ideas on adherence whilst utilising his 'egalitarian philosophy' of practice (Bull, 1995). In the egalitarian approach every archer receives equal amounts of time from the sport psychologist. This philosophy of practice was primarily imposed by the coach and administrator of the squad so that each archer received help on the mental aspect of their sport.

The sport psychology programme consisted of having contact with each archer individually and in groups at four different squad weekends (Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) at Lilleshall National Sports Centre. Each were approximately one month apart and ran through the winter training phase of the British outdoor competitive archery schedule.

The sport psychologist kept field notes during the squad weekends. The reflections of the sport psychologist are written in the first-person in order to give 'authorial voice' to the text (Geertz, 1988; Van Maanen, 1988).

Squad Training Weekend 1

Prior to meeting the squad, the archers were sent the GAQ and performance profile elicitation questions and the SPSQ. This was in order to avoid their perceptions of what the 'right' responses were and possibly being influenced by the consultant's introduction of sport psychology. This was in direct response to one national archery coach who had previously commented that the archers merely "write down what they think you want to hear".

Once at the training squad, the archers met and were introduced to the members of the staff and each other. The archers were asked to complete consent forms gaining their permission for information to be used in the research and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. Each archer was asked to list what their objectives for the next four squad weekends were and to say what they wanted from the psychologist as their "mental training coach".

The sport psychologist saw each archer for 45 minutes during the course of the weekend when the coaches deemed it suitable for them to leave the group shooting sessions. During this 45 minute session further baseline assessment took place. A semi-structured interview was used to gain background information on each archer and examine the archers' constructs generated from the GAQ and performance profile-type questions. This was to ensure that the psychologist fully understood the meaning of each and how they came to include those particular constructs.

At the end of the session the archers were given notebooks in which to keep a diary of all their training (technical, physical and mental), plus any other activities that they completed (archery and non-archery related) over the course of the time between squad weekends 1 and 2. This was asked of them in order to look at their training programme, to gauge their perceived level of mental training activity and to ascertain the level of non-archery activities. Finally, the archers were given a sheet with the advice from the senior squad members about using mental training for archery.

In between squad weekends 1 and 2 the archers were sent a postcard from the sport psychologist to remind them to keep completing the diaries.

The GAQ and performance profile constructs were amalgamated and placed onto one visual profile (see figure 2.1). The layout of this visual profile was an inverted version of Butler's (1989) original format in which the '10' was placed on the outside of the profile. The profile in the present study was made archery-specific by placing the '10' on the inner ring, thus representing a target face to which the archers might more easily relate. Each segment of the profile corresponds to a construct developed by the archer and the corresponding scores are shaded onto the profile to represent the area for improvement. A separate profile was used for each measurement point (i.e., training squads 1,2 and 4). (See case study synopsis in appendix A for example).

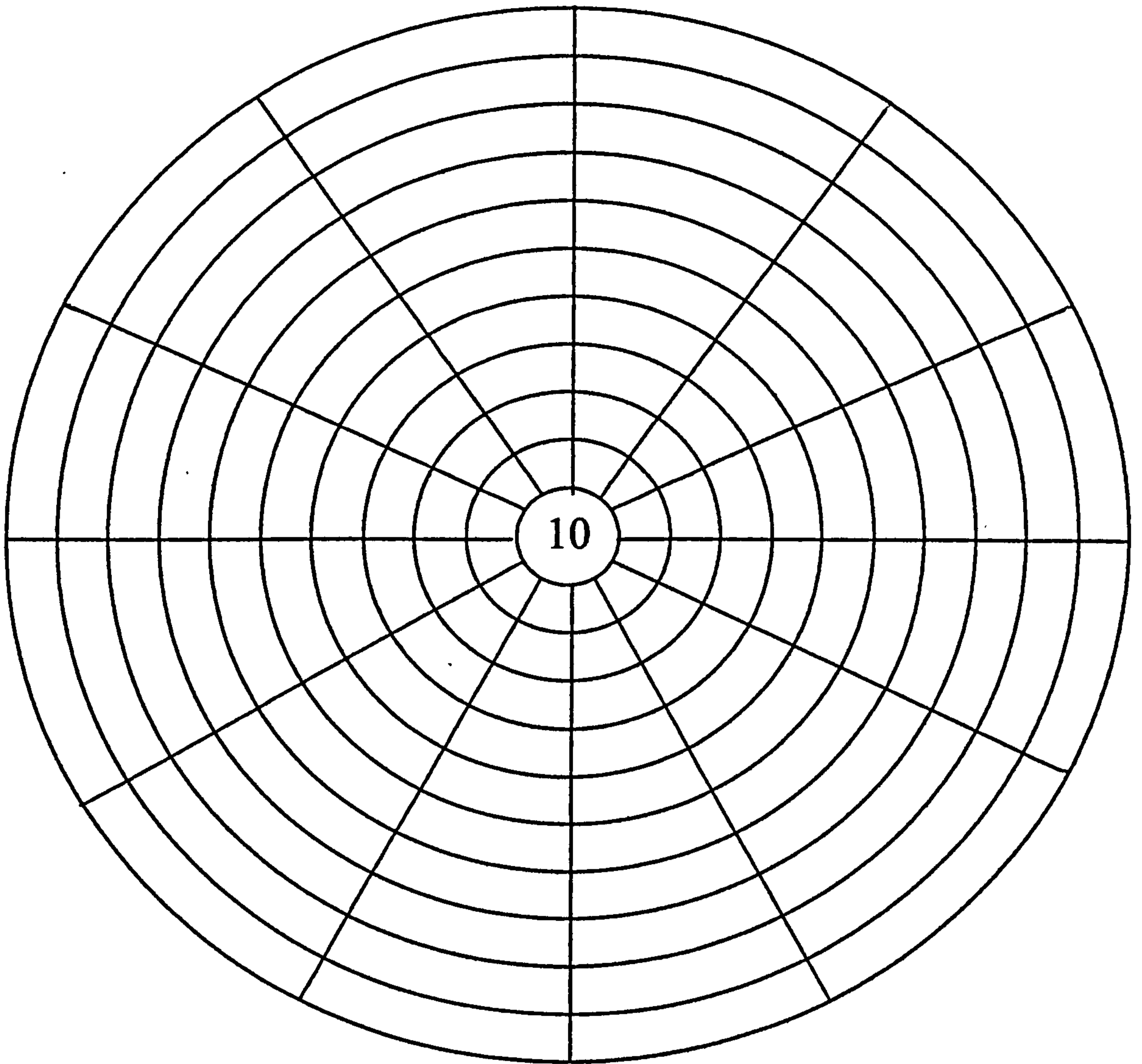


Figure 2.1 Performance Profile/Target (with the '10' in the middle to represent a target face)

The results of the SPSQ were analysed in time for the next squad as all the baseline assessment measures were to be used to facilitate the participatory goal-setting programme.

Squad Training Weekend 2

On the first evening of the squad the archers were required to complete the GAQ and performance profile-type formats prior to any educational sessions.

The first group workshop session was on goal setting. Each archer received a booklet detailing how goal-setting may be used to help structure their training, how to set S-M-A-R-T goals and how to start goal-setting for each aspect of their training. Two other workshop sessions included relaxation and imagery training. The relaxation training was

based on the principles of progressive muscular relaxation (PMR, Jacobson, 1938) and included elements of focusing on deep breathing and counting down from 20 on the exhalations. It was stressed to the archers that they were learning how to relax and what it felt like to be relaxed. A full version of relaxation training was not to be used directly before shooting, however, a shortened version could be adapted into their pre-performance routine to aid physical relaxation and concentration. It was also highlighted that such relaxation might prove useful during other times of stress, for example, prior to exams. Simple forms of relaxation that were highlighted were use of deep breathing, and releasing tension from the shoulder area.

The imagery training was in conjunction with the relaxation training to form a multimodal package for the group and stressed the importance of containing stimulus and response propositions in line with Lang's (1984) bioinformational theory and attempting to incorporate the different senses. Stimulus propositions are divided into two types of information: one is descriptive elements of the external environment, for example, the wind, competitors, and the other is a semantic elaboration of the event, for example, being at the European championships in a head-to-head situation. Response propositions are statements that described the archer's response to the event, for example, increase in heart rate, accompanied by the body movements required to shoot. Although different archers would produce different imagery experiences, the workshop could only inform them on how to develop this practice. Developing personal imagery scripts was followed during many of the individual interviews (see case study in appendix A for example).

At this squad a concept of a 'Toolbox of psychological/mental skills' was introduced. It was explained to the archers that at each squad the sport psychologist would give them skills to learn and put into the 'Toolbox' and that they should refer to their toolbox of skills when they needed to. It was suggested that times of need may occur when preparing for shooting in training or at a competition. The concept of a 'Toolbox' of skills is one that sport psychologists often refer to (anecdotal evidence).

Throughout all the contact with the archers it was stressed that each of the psychological skills on the squads could be transferred to help with other activities in their lives, for example, examinations. This was to emphasise the LDI perspective (Danish et al., 1992) inherent in all the psychological skills training presented to them.

In the one-to-one sessions with each archer, the new scores for the GAQ and performance profile formats were clarified again. The remaining time in each individual consultation was spent going over the archers' goal-setting programme using the

information obtained from the baseline assessment and the measures reported at this squad weekend.

The scores which were plotted onto the visual performance profile/target (see figure 2.1) were a representation of the discrepancy between the two scores of 'self as now' (representing self-efficacy) and importance (to reflect the Jamesian perspective, James, 1892). These discrepancy scores were subtracted from 10 in order to plot a score which was archery-specific on the profile/target. Those psychological constructs that had the largest discrepancies were selected as a priority for the archers' training goals (seen on a profile as the largest shaded area). The results of the SPSQ also helped indicate any specific areas that might benefit from practice and development.

Each archer was asked to have technical, physical and psychological goals. Non-psychological goals were kept separate for the coaches and physical training expert to use with the archers. The technique goals were identified by the baseline assessment and agreed upon through a process of triangulation with the coaching staff. Any physical goals were again identified by the baseline assessment (if included by the archer) and were agreed upon by the physical training expert on the squad. The aim of the goal setting was to assist coping abilities for archery endeavours. Scholastic/work and social demands were encouraged to be taken into account when considering the goal setting programme.

The archers were given goal-setting diaries on which to record their goals for each week. They were asked to send the first two weeks worth of sheets to the sport psychologist in order that she could give quick feedback on the goals that they were setting rather than wait for the next squad training weekend. Each archer was given a stamped-addressed envelope in order to encourage the archers to return the diaries.

Squad Training Weekend 3

Group workshop sessions covered concentration training, positive self-talk and another practical imagery session. The first workshop focused on the use of pre-performance routines (which Orlick and Partington (1988) had found to be a distinguishing characteristic of successful Olympians) in conjunction with positive self-talk. Pre-performance routines can include both physical (Boutcher, 1990; Boutcher and Crews, 1987) and psychological elements. A demonstration was set up with one of the coaches (a top senior archer himself) in order to show the juniors how to develop a routine that covered both elements. This involved the coach talking through each movement he made from picking up his bow to standing on the shooting line and releasing an arrow. He was

encouraged to verbalise any thoughts he had during this process. This development of pre-performance routines enabled the archers to focus on task-specific behaviour, positive thoughts and feelings and, in some cases, develop their imagery scripts even further to be incorporated into this routine. The workshop also highlighted the importance of Nideffer's (1976) work on attentional focus and the notion of being able to 'switch' from, for example, a broad attentional focus to a narrow one whilst going through the pre-performance routine.

The one-to-one sessions focused on using the baseline data and used the data collected in weekend 2 to continue with individualised PST. The goal-setting diaries of each archer were reviewed and suggestions for improved use were given. Again the goals were set and assessed under the guidance of the coaches and fitness expert where it was appropriate.

In between squads 3 and 4 the archers were sent another postcard from the sport psychologist to encourage them to keep working hard on their goals and mental training. They were reassured that any specific questions they had, or areas that they wanted to cover, would be addressed at the next (and final) squad training weekend.

Squad Training Weekend 4

Group workshop sessions included having discussions with Olympic archers about their experiences of shooting in international competition and how they cope, suggesting ways in which coping strategies could be used in competition and going over the techniques again which were covered in squad weekends 1, 2 and 3.

The workshop on coping highlighted the notion of anxiety not necessarily being an element of performance that has to be perceived as negative and can even be facilitative (Jones and Swain, 1992). All the components highlighted in previous workshops, for example, brief relaxation, imagery and pre-performance routines were highlighted as ways to cope. The two coping categories of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping (Folkman and Lazarus, 1980) were taken into account in explanations of coping. Emotion-focused coping is often the most appropriate when the problem is not able to be changed immediately, for example, prior to shooting in an important event when there are no practical obstacles from the archer shooting well.

The one-to-one sessions included further individualised PST. Many of the archers received personalised tapes of their imagery scripts. Re-test of baseline measures also took place. The archers were asked to complete the modified CEF (Consultant Evaluation Form,

Partington and Orlick, 1987b) to evaluate their perceived effectiveness of the sport psychology consultant and PST techniques used on the squad.

At the End of the Outdoor Competitive Season

Six months after the last training squad, the archers were sent a Mental Training Feedback Questionnaire with a stamped addressed envelope to increase the response rate. A questionnaire was utilised rather than an interview due to the archers living in different areas of the country and not due to meet up in one place again until the start of the next winter training phase.

2.2.4 DESIGN

As the present study was conducted whilst the researcher fulfilled the role of sport psychology consultant, the more traditional A-B-A or A-B-A-B designs, consisting of baseline data collection, treatment and withdrawal of treatment, were therefore not appropriate. Shambrook and Bull (1996) also point out that it is impossible to guarantee any return to baseline phase due to contamination by the intervention, i.e., it cannot be guaranteed that the individual will not practice the mental training techniques once they have been implemented. The present study utilised a repeated measures design in which the same baseline measures of the GAQ and Performance Profile constructs were taken twice before intervention. The SPSQ was only re-tested in the last weekend due to the constraint of time during the squads.

2.2.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The data was a combination of both quantitative and qualitative information. The qualitative data served two purposes: one, to gain a more detailed view of the reasoning that underpinned the quantitative data, and two, to provide in-depth accounts and reflections of the consultation and science-practice process and the archers' perceptions on various issues.

Sections of the qualitative data were subjected to content analysis. This procedure gained triangular consensus through collaboration with a sport psychology researcher who was trained in the use of qualitative analysis techniques. A senior national archery coach also contributed to this process. This added to the validity or 'trustworthiness' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of the process.

The reflections of the consultant were used in order to give insight into this applied work and reflect on the lessons learned from this experience. The criteria of illumination (Heron, 1988) may be open to different interpretations (Gilbourne, 1998). However, it is argued that these legitimisation criteria can be used by allowing both the reader and researcher to give an opinion on the illuminating quality of the research. The researcher can put forward the notion that the work is illuminating in the exploration of the role of the sport psychologist from the perspective of a researcher/consultant who was involved in the “swampy lowlands” (Schön, 1983) of applied practice. This criterion is similar to the criteria of the applicability of the results (Hill et al. 1997), i.e. the usefulness of the findings for future practice and research.

It is argued here that the reflections of the consultant can also be legitimised in the same way that reflections of the researcher are, i.e., that it is a form of legitimisation criteria in itself. Sword (1999) has stated, “disclosure of how one is inherently enmeshed in the research enhances the legitimacy of findings and new insights” (1999). Similarly, reflections of the consultant describe how the practitioner affected the work with the archers and these reflections help to give new insights into further areas for research.

2.3 RESULTS

2.3.1 DIARIES

Inspection of the diaries that the archers kept between squad weekends 1 and 2 revealed that four out of the 14 were using some form of mental training prior to interventions introduced by the sport psychologist in the current study. Where details were given, the training included listening to a relaxation tape for half an hour twice a week, visualising achievement of long-term goals, and mentally rehearsing shots.

2.3.2 EXTENSION OF THE BASELINE MEASUREMENT OF PERFORMANCE PROFILES

The constructs elicited to facilitate the selection of appropriate goals for archery training via the use of both the GAQ and performance profile are shown in Figures 2.2 and 2.3. These two figures show inductive and deductive content analyses of constructs from the two instruments. As can be observed from both figures, the higher-order sub-themes and the higher-order themes have virtually identical named categories for each measure. Despite this similarity, there is a difference in the number of raw data themes for each measure and the number of responses within each one and in the content of the raw data themes themselves.

There are 48 raw data themes in Figure 2.2 for the GAQ and 44 in Figure 2.3 for the performance profile. Within these raw data themes, the frequency of responses for the different constructs on the GAQ was 105 and was 89 for the performance profile. 24 of the raw data themes overlap between those on the GAQ and those on the performance profile. 24 raw data themes appear on the GAQ analysis that do not appear on the performance profile analysis, and 20 raw data themes appear on the performance profile content analysis that are not on the GAQ analysis.

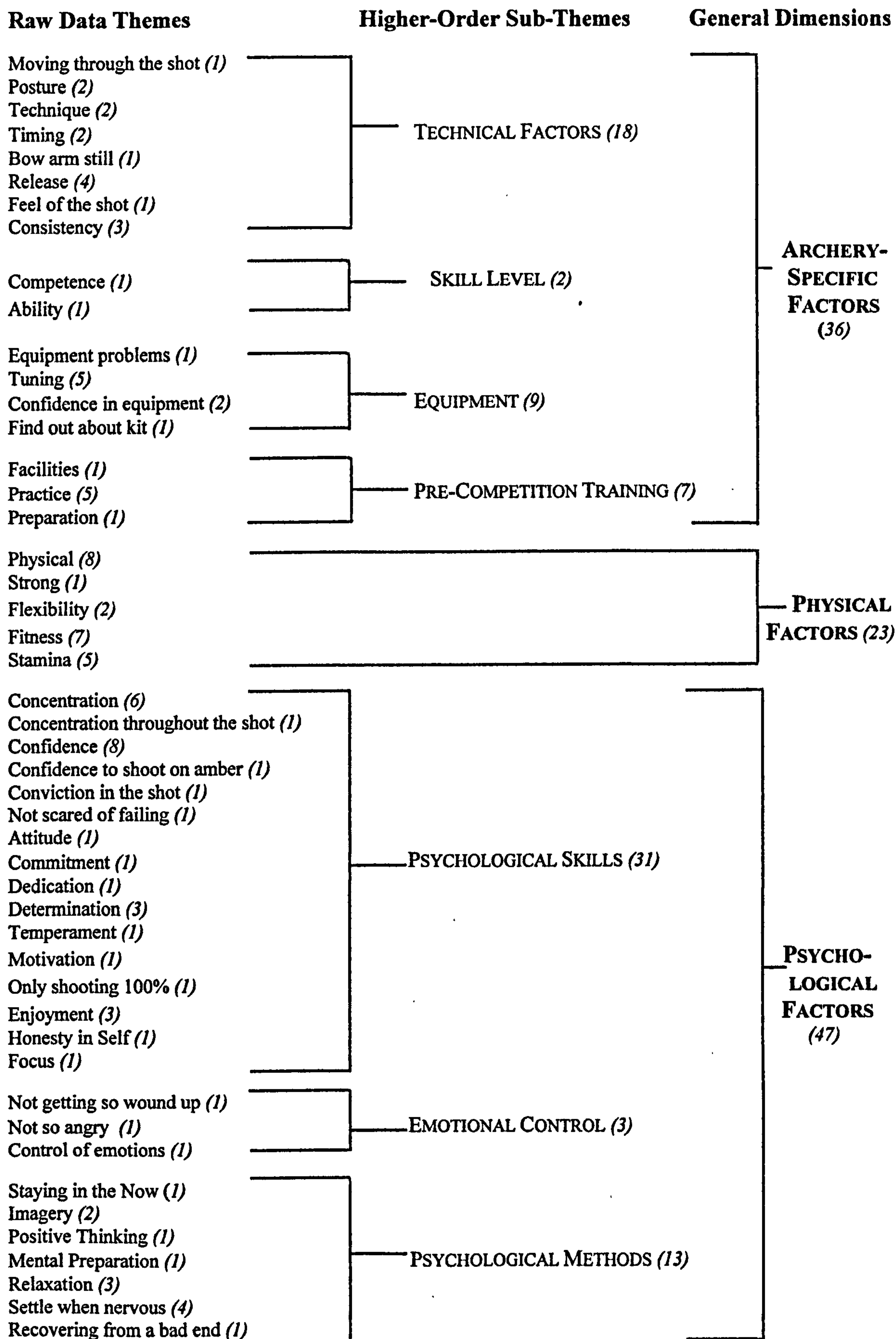


Figure 2.2 Inductive and deductive content analysis on the constructs elicited on the GAQ (Figures in brackets represent the number of responses within each theme)

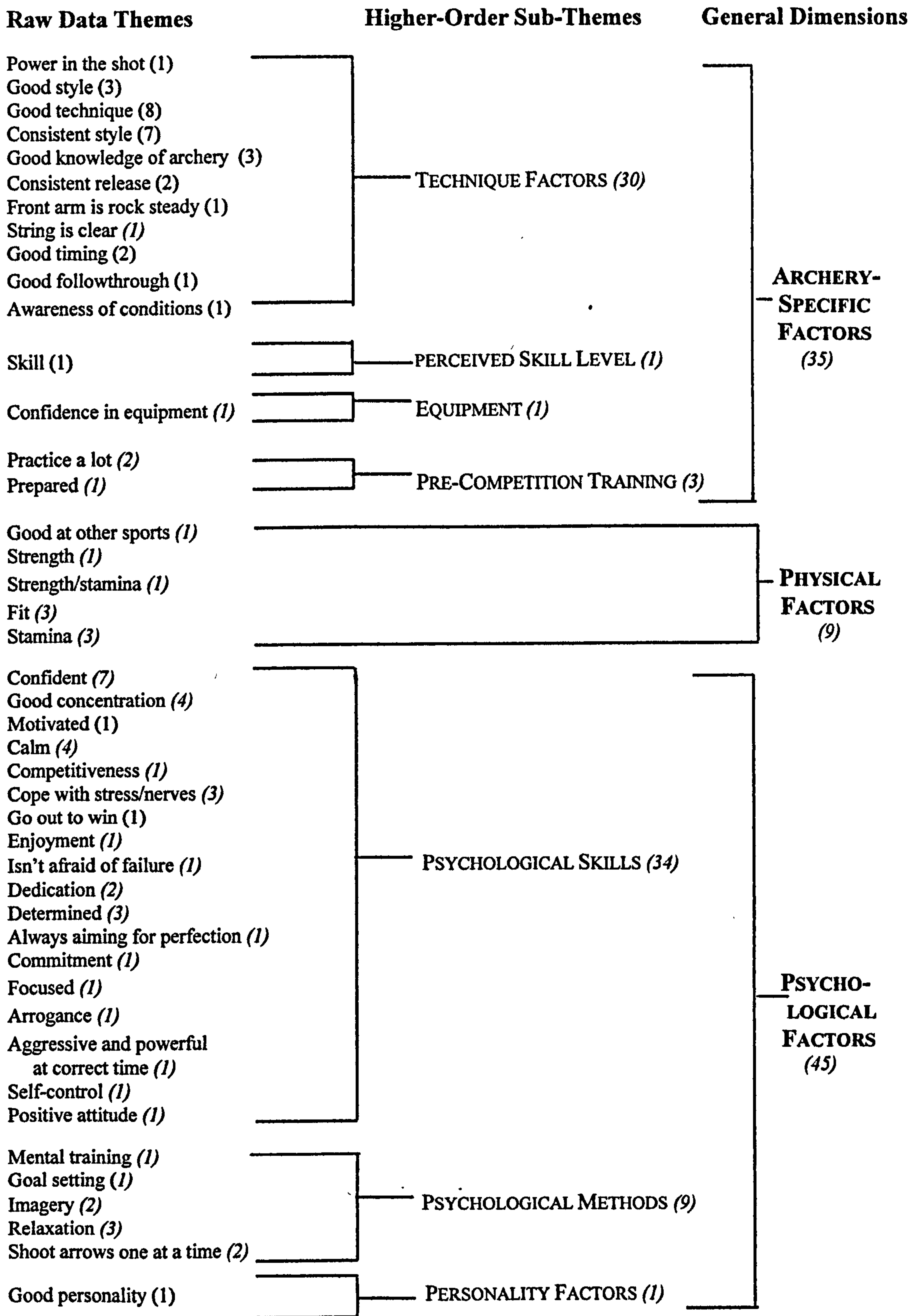


Figure 2.3 Inductive and deductive content analysis on the constructs elicited on the Performance Profile (Figures in brackets represent the number of responses within each theme)

Using both content analyses in Figures 2.2 and 2.3, the constructs elicited from the GAQ and those from the performance profile were integrated for quantitative analysis. This followed the applied procedure used with the archers, i.e. constructs from both measures were used for the purpose of facilitating goal setting and both were placed on the visual profile. Only the higher-order theme of psychological factors was subjected to quantitative analysis as this was area of concern for the sport psychology interventions. The analysis assessed the changes in the discrepancy scores and the 'self as now' ratings on both measures from squad training weekends 1, 2 and 4. Discrepancy scores were calculated by subtracting the 'self as now' scores from the importance scores (see case study in appendix A for further explanation of scoring). The mean scores for discrepancies and 'self as now' scores are shown in tables 2.1 and 2.2.

Table 2.1 Mean archers' scores for discrepancies on the psychological constructs elicited on the GAQ and performance profile

	Squad 1	Squad 2	Squad 4
Discrepancies on GAQ & Performance Profile	2.17	2.08	0.97

A significant difference was found between the discrepancy scores of the psychological factors for squad weekends 1, 2 and 4 using a repeated measures analysis of variance ($F=17.42$, $p=0.0001$). Further analysis using one-way ANOVAs revealed no significant difference in discrepancy scores between squad weekends 1 and 2 ($F=0.24$, $p=0.633$), but revealed that the discrepancy scores were significantly lower in squad weekend 4 than in squad weekend 1 ($F=22.34$, $p=0.0001$). This supports hypothesis 1, i.e. that the discrepancy scores from the GAQ and performance profile are significantly lower in squad weekend 4 than in squad weekend 1 which indicates that, generally across the group, self-esteem has increased.

Table 2.2 Mean archers' scores for how good they perceive themselves to be on the psychological constructs elicited on the GAQ and performance profile (scores ranged from 1-10)

	Squad 1	Squad 2	Squad 4
'Self as Now' on GAQ & Performance Profile	6.46	6.44	8.05

A significant difference was also found between the 'self as now' scores of the psychological factors for squad weekends 1, 2 and 4 using a repeated measures analysis of variance ($F=47.55$, $p=0.0001$). Further analysis using one-way ANOVAs revealed no significant differences in 'self as now' scores between squad weekends 1 and 2 ($F=0.02$, $p=0.898$), but, showed that the 'self as now' scores were significantly higher in squad weekend 4 than in squad weekend 1 ($F=48.61$, $p=0.0001$). This supports hypothesis 2, i.e. that the 'self as now' scores from the GAQ and performance profile are significantly greater in squad weekend 4 than in squad weekend 1, which indicates that, generally across the group, self-efficacy has increased.

2.3.3 SPORTS-RELATED PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE (SPSQ)

Table 2.3 Analysis of scores on SPSQ from squad weekend 1 to squad weekend 4 (range of scores = 8 to 48)

	Squad Weekend 1	Squad Weekend 4	P-Value
Imaginal Skills	29.57	36.00	0.001 (t-test)
Mental Preparation	27.86	35.79	0.001 (t-test)
Self-efficacy	32.57	36.43	0.046 (t-test)
Cognitive Anxiety	30.46	35.43	0.011 (t-test)
Concentration Skills	36.39	39.57	0.078 (Wilcoxon)
Relaxation Skills	30.07	36.71	0.007 (Wilcoxon)
Motivation	39.14	41.21	0.048 (Wilcoxon)

For the SPSQ scores in table 2.3, t-tests were used when the scores were normally distributed and Wilcoxon tests were used when the scores were not normally distributed. The results in Table 2.3 show that the archers' SPSQ scores for squad weekend 4 are significantly higher than those in squad weekend 1 on all the dimensions of this measure apart from the scores for concentration skills. This supports hypothesis 3, i.e., that the SPSQ scores are significantly greater in squad weekend 4 than in squad weekend 1.

2.3.4 CONSULTANCY EVALUATION FORM

Table 2.4 Means, standard deviations and ranges of archers' scores on the CEF

ITEM	MEAN	S.D.	RANGE
<i>The perceived effectiveness of following were rated out of 10:</i>			
Useful knowledge	8.79	1.19	6-10
Individualised mental training programmes	9.11	0.74	8-10
Open, flexible	9.29	1.14	6-10
Positive, constructive attitude	9.46	0.63	8-10
Trustworthy	9.86	0.36	9-10
Easy to relate to	9.57	0.51	9-10
Fitted in with others on squad	9.57	0.65	8-10
Helped draw upon strengths	9.18	0.95	7-10
Helped overcome weaknesses	9.19	0.75	8-10
Clear, practical strategies	9.18	0.82	8-10
Good feedback	9.31	0.95	7-10
Made herself available outside squad time	9.36	0.74	8-10
<i>The following were rated from -5 to +5:</i>			
Effectiveness of PST to their archery	3.65	1.31	0 to 5
Effectiveness of PST to other aspects of their lives	2.08	2.18	-4 to 4
Effectiveness of group sessions	3.12	0.77	2 to 4
Effectiveness of individual sessions	4.15	0.69	3 to 5
Effectiveness of goal-setting	3.38	0.94	2 to 5
Effectiveness of sport psychologist	4.42	0.64	3 to 5

The results in Table 2.4 show positive feedback from the archers in terms of their perceptions of the sport psychologist working with the squad. None of the scores are below six out of ten. The lowest mean score (8.79) is concerned with usefulness of knowledge about mental training that seemed to apply directly to archery.

It appears that the individual sessions (mean = 4.15) were perceived as being more effective than the group sessions (3.12). The goal setting seemed to be an effective aspect of the programme (3.38) and the overall rating of the sport psychologist was favourable (4.42 out of 5).

In the section on the effectiveness of mental training, in response to the question “What have you used outside of archery?” there was a wide range of answers, reflecting the notion that transfer of skills occurred, as shown in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5 The various uses of mental training outside of the sport and the reasons for their use

Mental training techniques used outside of archery (if given)	Reason for use/ Domain in which it is used (if given) (Number of responses in brackets)
Imagery	<i>“For school”</i> (1) Reason not given (2)
Relaxation	<i>“For school”</i> (2) <i>“For exams”</i> (2) Reason not given (1)
Goal setting	<i>“For motivation”</i> (1) <i>“...To help me get my school work in order and completed.”</i> (1) Reason not given (1)
Concentration	Reason not given (1)
<i>Techniques not listed</i>	<i>“For my swimming”</i> (1)
"	<i>“Assignment work for college”</i> (1) <i>“For school”</i> (1)
"	<i>“For driving”</i> (1)
"	<i>“For exams”</i> (1)
"	<i>“For life situations”</i> (1)

The PST techniques of imagery, relaxation and goal setting were the most commonly reported transferable skills. The domains in which skill transferability was

achieved included school/college work and exams, for driving, for other sports and in general life situations.

The most and least perceived effective PST techniques are shown in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6 The most and least perceived effective PST techniques used on squad

MOST EFFECTIVE	NO. OF RESPONSES	LEAST EFFECTIVE	NO. OF RESPONSES
Imagery	7	"None of them"	5
Concentration	3	No response	4
Relaxation - general	5	Relaxation - general	1
Relaxation - counting down	1	Relaxation - Progressive muscle relaxation	1
Goal setting	3	Imagery	1
"All of them"	1		

Any comments or recommendations that they had to improve the quality or effectiveness of the sport psychology service being offered included:

"A sport psychologist should be on every British team attending internationals to help improve performance and the relationship between archer and psychologist"

2.3.5 MENTAL TRAINING FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

Attainment of Goals

Ten of the archers achieved some of their original season goals (set on squad 2) and four did not achieve any of them (one archer dropped out half way through the shooting season due to injury). Where they did achieve their goals, their reasons were classified into technical, psychological, a combination of the two and parental support categories. The number of respondents in each category are shown in Table 2.7 with verbatim citation examples from each.

Table 2.7 The reasons given for achievement of season goals (N=10). (Although N=10, the total number responses exceed 100% (10) as the archers may have given more than one reason for achievement of the goals)

TECHNICAL	PSYCHOLOGICAL	COMBINATION OF TECHNICAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL	PARENTAL SUPPORT
N=4	N=8	N=3	N=1
<i>"I got M.B. [Master Bowman, one of the goals], due to training I put in during the year"</i>	<i>"I was more positive due to the mental training, using self-talk and imagery of tournaments"</i>	<i>"I got my 1200 star mostly due to help at squad weekends. The coaches sorted my style out and the mental training helped me to keep cool and relaxed when I knew I could get it"</i>	<i>"My parents supported me and helped me"</i>

Out of the three archers who did finish the shooting season, but did not achieve any of their season goals, the reasons that they gave were that exams were distractions from shooting, they didn't push hard enough throughout the whole season to reach the goals, they didn't practise enough, they shot the indoor season and they put too much pressure on themselves to achieve big scores.

Those archers who did achieve some but not all their season goals attributed their lack of attainment in some aspects to various reasons (see Table 2.8).

Table 2.8 The reasons given for lack of achievement of season goals from those archers who had achieved some goals (N=10). (Although N=10, the total number responses exceed 100% (10) as the archers may have given more than one reason for lack of achievement of the goals)

WEATHER	TECHNICAL	PSYCHOLOGICAL
N=4	N=2	N=6
<i>"The wind got the better of me in the shoot-offs"</i>	<i>"I don't think I practised as much as I could have done"</i>	<i>"I don't feel I had enough confidence or control mentally to achieve these goals. Perhaps they were too high and I expected too much"</i>

13 of the 14 archers believed that when they looked back, their original season goals were at the correct level of difficulty in order to push themselves towards achievement, even if they did not achieve them all or any of them. One archer reported that the goals seemed too hard when they were set, but that: *"...they were so high I worked harder and got what I wanted"*.

Table 2.9 shows the archers' perceptions of their original season goals in helping their archery.

Table 2.9 Perceptions of original season goals in helping the archers' archery (N=13, due to 1 non-response)

"LOOKING BACK, DO YOU THINK THAT THE ORIGINAL SEASON GOALS HELPED YOUR ARCHERY IN ANY WAY?"		
YES	SOME OF THEM	NO
N=7	N=5	N=1
<i>"They helped my training to be more disciplined"</i>	<i>"They did give me a goal to strive for...but the score level became a barrier and not a positive thing to aim for."</i>	<i>"When I didn't qualify, I didn't seem to have anything else to really go for in the season"</i>

Use of PST when training

Most of the archers reported using PST in training to some extent. The results are shown in Table 2.10.

Table 2.10 Reported use of PST in training

REPORTED USE OF MENTAL TRAINING SKILLS WHEN TRAINING			
ALL OF THE TIME	SOME OF THE TIME	HARDLY AT ALL	NOT AT ALL
N=0	N=11	N=3	N=0
	Techniques used: Imagery (10) Relaxation (6) Concentration training (4) Positive thinking (1) <i>"...used mental training as I had limited time (due to 'A' levels)"(1)</i>	Reasons for low adherence: <i>"Lack of time" (2)</i> <i>"I did at first, then just faded out of practising it"</i>	

PST in competition

As with the PST use in training, most of the archers reported using PST 'some of the time' in competition. The results are shown in Table 2.11.

Table 2.11 Reported use of PST in competition

REPORTED USE OF MENTAL TRAINING SKILLS WHEN IN COMPETITION			
ALL OF THE TIME	SOME OF THE TIME	HARDLY AT ALL	NOT AT ALL
N=0	N=10	N=4	N=0
	Techniques used: Imagery (5) Relaxation (4) Concentration (4) Goal setting (1)	Reasons for low adherence: <i>"...With competition pressure...I didn't want to start using mental training and thinking of that as well"</i> <i>"I did at first, then just faded out of practising it"</i> Lack of practice	

The techniques were not just used for one purpose, they could also be used in many different situations, for example, imagery was reported to be used as a confidence booster and also as a concentration aid.

Four archers indicated that they mainly used PST when their shooting was going badly, because during other times, such as in the 'flow' state (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), the archers do not want to consciously think about what they are doing, for example:

"When it's going well, I just shoot, I don't have to think about it, it just happens...I use imagery only when shooting badly"

Overall, nine of the archers felt that they had not completed enough mental training in the season. Four archers believed that they had done just about the right amount of mental training over the season. None thought that they had done too much.

The 'Toolbox of Mental Skills' Concept

On the concept of the 'Toolbox' of mental skills approach the archers' usage and perceived usefulness of this idea are shown in Tables 2.12 and 2.13.

Table 2.12 Reported usage of the ‘Toolbox’ of mental skills

“DID YOU USE THE ‘TOOLBOX’ OF MENTAL SKILLS THAT WE TALKED ABOUT ON SQUAD?”			
ALL OF THE TIME	SOME OF THE TIME	HARDLY AT ALL	NOT AT ALL
N=1	N=2	N=6	N=4

Table 2.13 Perceived usefulness of the ‘Toolbox’ of mental skills

“DID YOU FIND THE IDEA OF A ‘TOOLBOX’ USEFUL?”		
YES	SOMEWHAT	No
N=3	N=5	N=4
“WHY?”		
<i>“It reminded me not to just focus on one skill only”</i>	<i>“...I felt it was not suited in all situations”</i>	<i>“I found it difficult to realise which mental skills I needed and when...I got confused”</i>

Transfer of Skills

The use of mental skills in other domains was emphasised throughout the programme. The subsequent use is reported in Table 2.14.

Table 2.14 Reported transfer of mental skills into other domains of life

<i>“HAVE YOU USED ANY OF THE MENTAL TRAINING SKILLS FOR ANY OTHER AREAS OF YOUR LIFE OTHER THAN ARCHERY?”</i>	
YES	NO
N=10	N=3
How have you used mental training in other situations?	Can you outline why you did not use mental training skills in non-archery situations?
<p>Relaxation (8), e.g. in exams, driving tests, interviews and presentations to large groups</p> <p>Goal setting (5), e.g. to help with school work <i>“I plan more now, I actually write things to be done down!”</i></p> <p>Imagery (3), to help in other sports, interviews and exams <i>“I focus on being calm, good, confident and I visualise performing well”</i></p>	<p><i>“Not...needed to use them”</i></p> <p><i>“Life’s too short to worry”</i></p> <p><i>No big exams yet, probably use for GCSEs [later]”</i></p> <p><i>“I didn’t need to”</i></p> <p><i>“I don’t take other sports as seriously, they are for fun and help me to cope under stress”</i></p>

The Psychological Skills Training on Squad

All the comments from the archers about the PST on the squads in terms of its delivery and their overall impressions and opinions were very favourable. Their comments reflected the diverse range of individuals on the squad who had different likes and dislikes and training needs.

For some, the group sessions seemed essential. The information given at these group sessions and the need for baseline assessment seemed to be appreciated by most of the archers as essential components of the programme. Some archers needed a lot less help from the sport psychologist than others and this was reflected in their comments:

“...I can see how it allowed everybody to have a taste of all part of mental training, but I must concentrate on myself now”

2.3.6 REFLECTIONS OF THE CONSULTANT

Throughout the work with each archer it was increasingly felt by the consultant that it was necessary to ‘counsel’ the archers on issues not directly related to sport or performance. Although the life development perspective (LDI) of Danish et al. (1992) was used to emphasise transfer of mental skills into other domains, the amount of time dominated by these issues was underestimated. The field notes reflect the initial frustrations:

“I felt very much that that session [just finished with one of the archers] was an eye-opener for me. I felt like we had just wasted the whole session talking about her boyfriend and not about archery. There’s things to get through. But now she’s gone, I’ve realised that it was the most important thing for her to discuss at that time. She needed me to listen and I did. Now, hopefully, she can get on with her training outside [in the hall] feeling that something has been resolved in her mind” (Field Notes)

Despite this feeling of needing to ‘counsel’ the archers I felt insufficiently trained to do so. My background was as an educational sport psychologist with no practical skills training in counselling skills. I did not feel that this was enough if athletes were going to want to discuss issues other than PST and I was expected to know what to say in reply. I was starting to question the ‘traditional’ role of the sport psychologist in whether it gave me sufficient skills to be able to deal with a range of issues that archers raise in consultations.

It was not just non-performance issues that were underestimated during the work with the squads, I questioned the appropriateness of always delivering PST to each archer (which is what the coaches seem to want).

“There seems to be so much more to being a good sport psychologist than being able to teach people how to use mental training. I’ve just been asked to talk to the girl’s team about their relationships with each other.”(Field Notes)

“Politics is an area brought up by archers at almost every squad. They can’t escape it, and yet it can destroy a good day of training here. I need to help them so that they have someone that they can talk to about this, but then I shall talk to the administrators and coaches about their feelings. Archers should try to stay out of politics as much as possible.”(Field Notes)

“One archer just needed to talk about a peak performance. It seems like such an anti-climax for him. He wanted techniques to help him, but I felt he just needed to talk about the experience, including the highs and the lows during

and afterwards. It's going to take time, but he seemed to feel like a weight was lifted off his shoulders. He feels pressure now to perform again." (Field Notes)

"Many archers seem to want a 'prescription for success'. I think they still think I'm a 'shrink' or a magician with a bag of tricks to work wonders. I did explain that I'm not. It's frustrating...and yet that is how I think they see me." (Field Notes)

These latter comments, in reflecting the archers' perceptions, may have been due to the way in which I introduced sport psychology and PST to them, especially the 'toolbox' concept which was not (as discovered later) understood well or found to be useful by many of the archers.

Time limitations were common and, unfortunately, necessary if all the archers were to be seen individually, as requested by the coaches and squad administrator. Often the sessions felt like they were cut short when the allotted time of 45 minutes was over. The sessions were sometimes carried out very late at night (past midnight) as shooting sessions ran on late into the evening. It was not felt appropriate by the coaches and sport psychologist for the sessions to interrupt simulated competitions on squad, so sessions sometimes felt 'squeezed' into the schedule for the training weekend.

"...I'm having to stop the sessions quite abruptly it seems, so that the archers can go and shoot some more. The administrator has just had to pop her head in and call "time" on us. At least it gives me the opportunity to observe them whilst they are shooting and I get to walk up and down the field with them." (Field Notes)

The individualistic nature of each consultation was more evident each time I spoke to an archer. Their personal preferences and initial competence at various mental skills and strategies they used for their shooting clearly illustrated that although each junior archer could learn about techniques in the foundation workshops, the application of each technique would have to be different to accommodate their individuality.

"Goal setting is seen by some to be a real chore. I need to think of different ways in which I can make it less 'hassle' or they're not going to do it at all." (Field Notes)

A case study synopsis is presented in appendix A as an example to illustrate the individual work completed with one archer.

2.4 DISCUSSION

The emphasis of study 1 was on examining the role of the sport psychologist whilst using a predominantly psychological skills training (PST) approach with the junior archers within a limited 'real life' consultation. The aims were:

- to extend a baseline measurement of performance profiles
- to assess the efficacy of the consultancy
- to assess the archers' perceptions of a consultation that highlighted transferability of skills
- and to reflect on the role of the sport psychologist whilst working with an élite squad

2.4.1 EXTENSION OF THE BASELINE MEASUREMENT OF PERFORMANCE PROFILES

Figures 2.2 and 2.3 illustrate the constructs obtained from asking the questions "What do you have to do to be a better archer?" (from the GAQ) and "What are the qualities of an élite archer?" (performance profile), initial inspection of these content analyses indicated that the two questions do elicit similar constructs. However, further analysis reveals that there are both quantitative and qualitative differences. Raw data themes emerge from the GAQ analysis that are not replicated from the performance profile feedback and vice versa. Therefore, these differences between the two forms of elicitation point towards the suggestion that both types should be used when implementing a performance profile format for baseline measurement.

These differences may be explained by the differentiated conceptual orientation of the question structure. For example, "What do you have to do to be a better archer?" could be viewed as a predominantly task-oriented question (Duda, 1996). This may encourage some of the archers to think about their archery 'careers' in a self-referenced manner. This appears to be more immediate in the sense that it questions what they need to do right now to be better. It may relate to goals that they can specifically work towards in their training. It is assumed here that all élite athletes want to be better in some way.

In contrast, the question "What are the qualities of an élite archer?" appears to be a more ego-oriented question (Duda, 1996). It may encourage ego-oriented thinking because the archers may have to compare themselves with others to assimilate such qualities. Any interpersonal comparison may relate to an archer or archers (real or constructed) who are

already at the standard that the archer wants eventually to reach, this stage may be many years away. Such a question may help some ego-oriented archers to elicit the qualities that they desire for themselves, but it may not be realistic to suggest an immediate goal-setting programme for training purely on the basis of such long-term ideas. Long-term goals are essential to help keep athletes focused on what they eventually want from their sport participation, but they may not represent realistic targets to aim for in the forthcoming season. They could be broken down into shorter-term goals, but the focus of training needs to be on achievable moments in the present, not on an ideal scenario that may or may not be possible.

By using both types of elicitation questions, each goal orientation is catered for. The archer is not limited to making a predominantly task or ego-oriented judgement that may or may not align with his/her dispositional goal orientation. The inclusion of the importance dimension facilitates the selection of an appropriate training goal programme through theoretically driven prioritisation. This practical approach is based on the theoretical ideas of James (1892) that feature more recently in the work of Susan Harter (1992).

In addition to using both types of elicitation questions, it is recommended that the visual profile be inverted for use in archery. By placing the '10' in the middle of the profile allows it to be more sport-specific due to its representation of a target face where the 'gold' or '10' is also in the centre. The junior archers in study two appeared to relate well to this. The GAQ can also be used in other sports and called the 'General Performance Questionnaire' that can be used in conjunction with the more traditional elicitation procedure of the original performance profile (Butler, 1989).

2.4.2 EFFICACY OF THE CONSULTANCY

GAQ and Performance Profile Scores

Due to the nature of the design (i.e. not withholding or withdrawing interventions or using controls) it cannot be stated with any certainty that the interventions did cause any change in scores. However, the lack of significant differences during the baseline phase and significant differences from baseline to the final intervention phase does offer some indication that the interventions had some positive effect on the psychological states and perceptions of the archers. Despite the interventions being personalised to each archer (and thus slightly different for each one), each subject did attend the foundation group workshops and took part in participatory goal setting, relaxation, imagery and concentration training. All were engaged in discussions on coping strategies.

Archers' Perceptions of the Practice

From the CEF (Consultant Evaluation Form) and the feedback questionnaire, the archers' perceptions on the consultation practice were positive. As with the seniors (in study one), the individual sessions were perceived as more effective than the group sessions. A comparison of the scores obtained in the present study with those from other studies using the CEF shows that the author was rated above all the ratings of consultant's working with Canadian Olympians (Orlick & Partington, 1987) and all but one of the scores for Hardy & Parfitt's (1994) work with gymnasts (that of being open and flexible). These results suggest that the programme was favourably received and point towards perceptions of effectiveness as a consultant.

SPSQ

The results of the SPSQ indicate significant improvement from squad 1 to 4 (post-intervention), thus largely supporting hypothesis 3. The only change that was not statistically significant was in concentration skills. The archers already scored (on average) 75% of the maximum score for this factor (36 out of 48) so any trends that indicated improvement might be expected to be less pronounced and may be the result of a ceiling effect. The high initial score may be a reflection of the saliency of attention skills within the sport of archery.

2.4.3 USE OF PST

The diverse range and uses of techniques used by the archers suggests that PST should be personalised for each individual. This supports the earlier work of Orlick (1989), Morris & Thomas (1995) and Bull (1991b). For example, some archers perceived certain techniques as being the most effective for them, whereas others perceived the same techniques as being the least effective.

The idea of the toolbox was not successful because ten of the archers used the idea 'hardly at all' and 'not at all' and nine archers found the idea only 'somewhat useful' or 'not useful at all'. Reasons for these negative perceptions included the notion that it was difficult to know which skills to use and one archer reported becoming confused in attempting to use the toolbox. Although three archers used the concept at least 'some of the time' and found it useful, most did not. It seems, from these results, that the idea was either

not presented well by the consultant or it is only useful for packaging the idea of PST together, not for practical use of PST by this group of junior archers.

2.4.4 TRANSFER OF SKILLS

From Tables 2.5 and 2.14 in the results, it is shown that many of the PST techniques were transferred into domains other than archery and for many different purposes. This suggests that it is useful to emphasise the LDI perspective (Danish et al., 1992) in consultations, specifically the factor of transferability. It could be argued that the archers would not have transferred the PST techniques had they not perceived a use for them and found them to be effective.

2.4.5 ROLE OF THE SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST

All the way through the project the sport psychologist faced constraints that mediated the consultation process. The use of an 'egalitarian philosophy' and having to 'spread limited time thinly' (Bull, 1995) did not help this problem. It seems there is a need for a balance to be struck between educating young archers in the psychological aspects of the sport and being as efficient and effective as possible as a consultant. One possible way to alleviate this (if the situation of only four squads worth of contact per year is still used) is to have group and individual sessions for all the archers in the first two squads and then allow the archers to be selected on the basis of the opinions of the sport psychologist, the coaches and the choice of the archer in the squads to follow. This empowers both the coach and the archer by helping all parties feel that they are contributing to the programme rather than relying totally on the 'expert's' knowledge, i.e. the sport psychologist. It also helps those who do not wish to participate in the programme to opt out.

Adherence levels to the PST dropped for some as the competitive season moved on. This may have reflected the inability of the sport psychologist to attend all competitions due to financial constraints on behalf of the governing body. Contact time may be argued to be important to help remind and motivate the athletes to adhere to the PST. The drop in adherence may also be indicative that some of the archers did not want to participate in the PST programme.

Non-performance issues are areas that may be overlooked when time is limited in a consultation, especially if the consultant's approach is one of purely educational sport psychology. Orlick (1989) has noted that non-performance factors are likely to be raised at some point in consultations with athletes. The field notes from the present junior study

indicated that considerable periods were devoted to these issues, even when time was a limitation. This devotion of time was felt to be under-estimated and the consultant felt insufficiently trained to deal with the issues.

Sport psychologists' personal competencies need to be considered when dealing with such issues, as effectiveness may rest on their capabilities. For example, in the present study one female archer spent virtually a whole individual session discussing the problems she was having with her boyfriend. The effect was that she could not concentrate on her archery training and made it clear that she would rather not be at the national training squad that weekend.

It may be suggested that to go beyond one's level of competence does a disservice to the athletes who devote their lives to their sport (amateur or not), it may prove detrimental to the athletes and may involve overstepping the code of conduct within which a sport psychologist works. It is suggested that the skills of counselling may be undervalued in this context. Bull (1995) points towards the current BASES (British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences) criteria for assuming the role of an on-site consultant in Great Britain. These criteria presently do not necessitate any formal training in counselling skills. This may be an issue that would benefit from further review.

2.4.6 INTEGRATION OF RESEARCH & PRACTICE

A blend of orthodox and interpretive research philosophies has been used in the present study. The orthodox philosophy was used to test the hypotheses that positive change would occur from pre- to post-intervention. Elements of an interpretive philosophy sought to understand the experiences and behaviour of the archers via the use of qualitative methods.

It may be suggested that links exist between an interpretive research philosophy and a certain type of practice known as 'Socratic' (Corlett, 1996). Both focus on the experiences and behaviours of individual athletes and attempt to understand these elements using more in-depth methods than do orthodox research or sophist practice. Socratic practice "encourages rigorous personal examination and improved knowledge of self as the only meaningful pathway to personal happiness" (Corlett, 1996, p.84). Socratic practice attempts to understand the athlete and to help him/her to develop understanding in the self. In contrast, sophist practice is "technique driven and concerned solely with specific skills that produce successful performance results." (Corlett, 1996, p.84). Sophist practice is thought to be a quick fix solution for performance enhancement (Corlett, 1996).

An interpretive research philosophy can be associated with a Socratic philosophy of practice. However, the constraints of 'real-world' research may help to mould the depth of practice philosophies allowed towards more sophist tendencies. As Corlett (1996) points out, sport psychologists would not view themselves as working in purely sophist ways, but

"...by the very nature of its mandate and the expectations of those who make use of its services, sport psychology has the potential to foster a shallow and cynical sophist athletic environment." (P.86)

As shown in the present junior study, constraints of the working environment do mediate the underlying philosophy of the consultant. If sport psychologists are to work in ways other than 'quick fixes' and 'patch ups', however, then they might attempt to reduce these constraints as much as possible.

The gap that is reported between researchers and practitioners (Jackson, 1995) may be alleviated by integrating philosophies of research (e.g. orthodox and interpretive) and the philosophies of practice (e.g., Socratic). By this integration research data could be made more meaningful and more accessible to applied practitioners.

2.4.7 CONCLUSIONS

The present study has not examined whether one intervention was more efficient than another at improving performance or producing positive perceptions. It has not addressed the mechanisms by which interventions may work. This study has (amongst other aims) attempted to reflect on the role of the sport psychologist under the constraints of working with an élite squad. The findings of these reflections were that working in the 'real world' of constraints does not always readily lend itself to working within closed models of practice (e.g., Thomas, 1990, cited by Hardy et al., 1996).

This study also examined the individualistic and diverse nature of consultations and outcomes in sport psychology. It was found that an archer's individual needs can be very different from another's, thus a consultant should work to meet these needs, as Orlick and Partington, (1987), Partington and Orlick (1987) and Bull (1991b) indicated.

The present study aimed to extend an established baseline measurement and has recommended that both task and ego-orientations are considered when eliciting constructs for a visual performance profile. In assessing the impact of emphasising transferability of skills it was revealed that PST can be transferred across domains and proved useful in these areas.

In assessing the archers' views of the efficacy of the consultancy they responded in very positive ways. This study examined a series of practices within archery which were undertaken from an integration of the roles of researcher and practitioner and showed that the role of researcher and practitioner can be combined if the needs of the athlete comes first.

Sport psychology is another piece of the "jigsaw of performance" and cannot be considered in isolation when working in the applied setting. The archers in this study perceived various reasons for the achievements of their season goals, not just psychological. A needs analysis (at baseline stage) is essential to establish whether PST and sport psychology in its wider capacity (i.e. dealing with injuries, life events, communication difficulties) is the treatment of choice in the particular situation in which the sport psychologist is about to work (Hardy & Parfitt, 1994).

The causes of low adherence to PST programmes must be continued to be studied (e.g. Bull, 1991b). It is evidence of adherence to PST that may ultimately sway the judgement of sporting governing bodies towards increasing the amount of time that sport psychologists spend with athletes throughout the whole year, including the competitive season.

The balance between educating young athletes, working under various constraints, and being an efficient and effective consultant is challenging. Educational workshops do serve some purpose as they can facilitate discussions within the group and give athletes ideas that they may not have thought of before. However, the archers' responses from the questions about the 'Toolbox' of PST techniques (presented at foundation workshops) illustrate that some of the junior archers found the idea confusing, they did not know which to use and when. This suggests that practitioners should view workshop effectiveness (or the presentation of ideas within these workshops) with caution (as Bull, 1991b, suggested).

When time is limited it may be the easier option to only teach PST techniques to a group or in a one-to-one consultation. However, the present study with the archers has illustrated that issues not directly related to sport or performance enhancement are also important factors to consider in the development of athletes. It is suggested that it may be necessary to venture beyond the role of PST educator when possible. The role of the sport psychologist is more demanding and complex than teaching PST techniques and assessing athletes, as Hardy et al. (1996) have indicated. Having a code of conduct beyond which sport psychologists must not go is essential, however, it is suggested that a list of competencies (e.g., the BASES supervised experience profile) may need to be adapted in

order to accommodate the changing emphasis and possible expectations of the role of sport psychologists today.

There are several directions that the research could take after the present study. For example, it would be interesting to continue examining the intervention aspect of the study. Assessing whether one intervention is more efficient than another at improving performance or producing positive perceptions could be achieved by using control groups who do not receive the interventions and assessing their performances and/or perceptions. One problem here would be in using an élite group of athletes (or any group that wished to use the services of a sport psychologist). It would be unethical to use a controlled study in such a situation that would involve withdrawing or withholding interventions to one or more athlete groups. This type of study would have to be carried out with athletes who had not requested the services of a sport psychologist for performance enhancement. However, motivational problems may arise and affect the results if the subjects are not willing to use the mental practices.

Addressing the mechanisms by which the interventions may work could also be addressed in the same manner as outlined above. The same limitations also apply, however. Addressing the research questions by utilising multiple baseline assessments or a repeated measures design via case study may alleviate these limitations, but causal explanations cannot be given using such methods.

The examination of the constructs elicited using the GAQ and using the performance profile could be continued in different sports and with a much larger sample size. It would be interesting to assess if there were any quantitative and qualitative differences in the constructs obtained (as in the present study). One aspect that may be addressed is using the two forms of elicitation in a different order to assess if this might make a difference to the constructs produced.

It is suggested that the life development intervention aspect (Danish et al., 1992) may help increase adherence to PST by encouraging athletes to use PST for situations other than those linked directly to their sporting performances. By encouraging this focus it may help the athletes use PST more than if they only utilised it for training and performing in sport and encourage to PST adherence. Again, causal explanations may be achieved by using control group studies using subjects who are encouraged to transfer PST into other aspects of their lives and those who are not. Much useful information could also be obtained by using more 'in-depth' forms of enquiry, for example, case studies that may utilise both quantitative and qualitative data.

The direction of the thesis after this study changed to examine further the role of the sport psychologist in more depth from the perspective of others (including other practitioners). It was felt a pertinent area for the researcher to examine after reflections on her applied work during the study. Issues outside sport had been researched in the field before, however, how this impacts on the role of the sport psychologist had only previously been explored in wide-ranging reviews (e.g., Biddle et al., 1992; Bull, 1995).

The next study in this thesis assesses the perceived prevalence and impact of 'other' issues on the training and competition performances of athletes and considers the role of the sport psychologist in relation to this notion.

CHAPTER THREE

STUDY 2

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous study concluded that the role of the sport psychologist is more demanding and complex than teaching PST techniques and assessing athletes. Archers discussed issues which were not directly related to sport and/or performance enhancement and the consultant felt insufficiently trained to deal with these issues. The discussion in study 1 suggested that the role of the sport psychologist should, in turn, shift to accommodate this emphasis.

Study 2 examines the topic of issues not directly related to sport and/or performance enhancement, the perceived impact of these issues on athletes' ability to train and compete effectively and the role and skills of the sport psychologist. Abbott et al. (1997) suggested that the perceptions of others (e.g., athletes, coaches and governing bodies) should be recognised when considering the role of sport psychologists in providing support services. The current study uses accredited sport psychologists, trainee sport psychologists and athletes as subjects and a questionnaire designed specifically for this survey.

The aims of study 2 were to:

- 1). assess the prevalence of issues referred to in consultations which are directly and indirectly related to sport
- 2). explore the perceptions of accredited sport psychologists (ASPs) and trainees on the skills of a sport psychologist in relation to dealing with sport-related and non-sport related issues
- 3). assess the perceived effect of issues outside of sport on athletes' ability to train and compete effectively
- 4). assess the perceived importance of qualities of sport psychologists and the confidence that ASPs and trainees have in offering these qualities
- 5). examine the kind of support that athletes want from their 'ideal' sport psychologist
- 6). allow the athletes to reflect on experiences of working with a sport psychologist and recall how effective they were at listening to them talk about issues related to sport and personal issues outside sport

3.2 METHOD

3.2.1 SUBJECTS

Four groups of subjects (total N=109) were sent questionnaires: BASES (British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences) Accredited Sport Psychologists (ASPs) (accredited for support services), trainee sport psychologists on the BASES supervised experience programme, athletes who had not worked with a sport psychologist before (referred to herein after as 'athletes with no experience') and athletes who had worked with a sport psychologist ('athletes with experience').

Accredited Sport Psychologists

All the Accredited Sport Psychologists on the BASES register for scientific support (62 at the time, not including the researcher) were sent a questionnaire. 32 ASPs responded by completing the questionnaire, a 51.6% response rate). The mean age for this sample was 39.65 years, SD = 9.37, the range was 27-57 years. 23 (71.9%) were male and 9 (28.1%) were female. The subjects reported that they were involved in a total of 44 different sports. The sports most frequently cited were: athletics (13 involved in this sport), tennis (12), golf (12), football (8), squash (6) and motor racing (6). 30 of the 32 ASPs had worked with athletes who were of international standard. 4 (12.5%) of the subjects had been BASES accredited for scientific support for less than one year, 11 (34.4%) for 1-2 years, 3 (9.4%) for 3-4 years, 7 (21.9%) for 5-10 years and 7 (21.9%) for over 10 years.

The qualifications of the ASPs which they listed as relevant to being an applied sport psychologist are shown in table 3.1.

Trainees

27 BASES trainees completed the questionnaire (see 'Procedure' for details on contacting the trainees). The mean age for this sample was 28.63 years, SD = 7.69, the range was 22-62 years. 12 (44.4%) were male and 15 (55.6%) were female. The subjects reported that they were involved in a total of 34 different sports. The sports most frequently cited were: swimming (8 involved in this sport), golf (6), rugby (6), and tennis (5). 13 of the 27 trainees had worked with athletes who were of international standard. 6 (22.2%) were in year one of supervised experience, 12 (44.4%) were in year two and 9 (33.3%) were in year three.

The qualifications of the trainees which they listed as relevant to being an applied sport psychologist are shown in table 3.1.

Table 3.1 *Qualifications of the accredited sport psychologists and trainees which were cited as relevant to being an applied sport psychologist*

Named qualification	Accredited Sport Psychologists (N=32)	Trainee Sport Psychologists (N=27)
Completion of a Ph.D.	20 (62.5%)	5 (18.5%)
Educational qualifications, e.g. B.Ed., M.Ed., PG cert.	16 (50%)	2 (7.4%)
Coaching qualifications	10 (31.3%)	8 (29.6%)
Ph.D. in progress		8 (29.6%)
Undergraduate qualification in sport science, sports studies, human movement	7 (21.9%)	11 (40.7%)
Undergraduate qualification in psychology	5 (15.6%)	10 (37%)
Postgraduate qualification in sport science, sports studies, human movement	9 (28.1%)	14 (51.9%)
Postgraduate qualification in psychology	3 (9.4%)	3 (11.1%)
Other psychology qualification, e.g. clinical training	8 (25%)	1 (3.7%)
Counselling/counselling skills training	7 (21.9%)	8 (29.6%)
On the BOA register (British Olympic Association)	5 (15.6%)	0
Performance experience	3 (9.4%)	3 (11.1%)
AAASP certification (Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology)	2 (6.2%)	0
Fellowship of the BPS (British Psychological Society)	1 (3.1%)	0
On the USOC register (United States Olympic Committee)	1 (3.1%)	0
Work experience	1 (3.1%).	0

Athletes with no experience of working with a Sport Psychologist

21 'athletes with no experience' completed the questionnaire. The mean age for this sample was 24.95 years, SD = 7.78, the range was 17-45 years. 16 (76.2%) were male and 5 (23.8%) were female. They represented eight different sports: canoe-polo (8), archery (3), rugby (3), basketball (2), rowing (2), athletics (2), football (1) and volleyball (1). All the canoe-polo players were of international standard, i.e., represented Great Britain and all the other subjects were of national, county or club standard.

Athletes with experience of working with a Sport Psychologist

29 'athletes with experience' completed the questionnaire. The mean age for this sample was 27.24 years, SD = 9.59, the range was 16-51 years. 17 (58.6%) were male and 12 (41.4%) were female. They represented five sports: archery (20), triathlon (4), canoe-polo (2), cycling (2) and golf (1). All the subjects were of international standard apart from two of the triathletes and one of the cyclists. For those who were of international standard the range of experience at this level was 1-12 years.

3.2.2 INSTRUMENTS

Questionnaires were designed for the four subject groups (see appendix B). Many of the areas covered in the four questionnaires were the same, but the inclusion of certain questions was tailored according to the sample. The following headings reflect the main areas of investigation in the questionnaires.

Issues discussed in consultations

Each of the four questionnaires contained a section about the various issues that may be discussed between athletes and sport psychologists in consultations. The ASPs and trainees were asked to state 'Yes' or 'No' via tick boxes whether they had or had not ever discussed the issues (presented in table 3.2) with athletes.

The 'athletes with experience' were also asked if they had actually discussed these issues in consultations, but not before they were asked that if the above issues arose would they like to discuss them.

The 'athletes with no experience' were asked to think about what issues they would like to discuss in consultations with a sport psychologist.

Table 3.2 *The issues that were presented to the subjects in the section on 'issues discussed in consultations' of the questionnaires*

a. Coach-related issues
b. Issues to do with politics in their sport
c. Issues to do with their friends
d. Issues to do with their spouse/partner
e. Issues to do with their family
f. Financial issues
g. Issues to do with team officials
h. Issues to do with competition officials, e.g. referees
i. Issues to do with their team or squad mates
j. Issues to do with training facilities
k. Issues to do with competition facilities
l. School or college issues
m. Work-based issues
n. Issues to do with time pressures
o. Other issues (please specify)

The issues that were included were obtained from qualitative literature on antecedents of stress and anxiety (e.g., Gould et al., 1991; Scanlan et al., 1991) which have uncovered some of the stressors which are not directly linked to sport or performance enhancement. Some of the issues were also taken from study two of this thesis in which issues not directly related to sport and/or performance enhancement were referred to by archers in consultations.

Skills of a Sport Psychologist

Only the ASPs and the trainees were asked about the skills of a sport psychologist. The subjects were first asked "*Are there any differences between the skills possessed by a sport psychologist which are required to deal with athletes' sport-related issues and those required to deal with their non-sport related issues?*" They were given 'yes' and 'no' tick boxes in which to place their response. If they answered 'yes' the respondents were asked, in a filter question, to explain their answer. If the subjects answered 'no', they were directed to the next section of questions.

For those who had answered 'yes' to the first question in this section, these respondents were then asked if they possessed any of the additional skills required to deal with non-sport related issues. The respondents were given a choice of 'yes', 'no' and

'some' tick boxes. If the respondents answered 'yes' or 'some', they were then asked to complete the filter question of "*Where have you developed these skills?*".

Perceived effect of issues outside of sport on athletes' ability to train and compete effectively

The ASPs and trainees were asked a). whether they believed that issues outside sport ever influence an athlete's ability to train effectively and b). whether these issues influenced an athlete's ability to compete effectively.

Both groups of athletes were asked the same questions with the emphasis on their ability to train and compete effectively. If the athletes replied 'yes', they were then asked to proceed to a filter question which required them to list the issues that influenced their ability to train effectively and then rate the capacity of each issue to influence training on the following scale:

1 = Very high capacity to influence training/competition performances

2 = High capacity to influence training/competition performances

3 = Moderate capacity to influence training/competition performances

4 = Low capacity to influence training/competition performances

5 = Very low capacity to influence training/competition performances

The respondents were also asked to list the issues that influenced their ability to compete effectively and then rate each issue on its capacity to influence competition performances using the scale above.

Qualities of Sport Psychologists

All four subject groups were asked to rate the importance of certain qualities of a sport psychologist, see table 3.3, using the following scale:

1 = Very important, 2 = Quite important, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Less important, 5 = Unimportant

This list of qualities was developed from the BASES competency/attributes profile for supervised experience (current at the time of design), sport psychology literature that focused on the effectiveness of consultants (Orlick & Partington, 1987; Partington & Orlick, 1987) and additions by the researcher based on applied sport psychology experiences.

The ASPs and trainees only were invited to rate how confident they felt about offering each of the qualities listed in table 3.3, using the following scale:

1 = Very confident, 2 = Confident, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Less confident, 5 = Not at all confident

Table 3.3 *The qualities of a sport psychologist which the subjects were invited to rate*

Qualities
Possessing knowledge about applied sport psychology
Being a good listener
Being able to deal with personal concerns
Being accessible
Being able to relate to athletes and coaches
Being creative
Being open and honest
Being punctual
Being energetic and hard working
Possessing knowledge about coaching issues
Possessing knowledge of other sport sciences, e.g. physiology
Having the ability to inform and educate athletes and coaches
Having the ability to provide feedback for athletes and/or coaches
Being at ease with people
Being able to organise group activities
Being able to assess an athlete's needs
Being flexible enough to meet individual needs
Being able to assess a group's needs
Being able to understand the psychological demands of various sports
Having worked in a variety of sports
Having experience of being a sport performer
Being a natural leader
Being charismatic
Being patient
Having experience of being a coach
Having accredited status
<i>Please list below any other qualities that you think a sport psychologist should possess</i>

Support from the 'ideal' sport psychologist

Both groups of athletes were asked to consider what support an 'ideal' sport psychologist should give them.

Listening effectiveness

The athletes with experience (N=29) were asked to draw upon their experiences of working with a sport psychologist and reflect upon how effective they thought their sport psychologist was at listening to them talk about a). issues related to sport and b). personal issues outside sport. For both sets of questions, the following scale was used:

Very Effective Effective Neutral Ineffective Very Ineffective

A follow-on question asked them to outline the reasons for their answers.

The final section for each subject group allowed for expansion on any points or to make comments on the questionnaire.

3.2.3 PROCEDURE

The questionnaires were piloted by accredited sport psychologists, trainee sport psychologists, the research supervisory team and athletes who had and athletes who had not had experience of working with a sport psychologist. The original wording for the question to the ASPs and trainees about the skills of a sport psychologist used the terms 'non-performance enhancement issues' and 'performance enhancement issues'. These were, however, perceived to be too 'clumsy' and 'wordy'. After the piloting of the questionnaires these were changed to 'non-sport related issues' and 'sport-related issues' respectively.

The names and addresses of the ASPs were obtained from the BASES register of sport psychologists who were accredited for scientific support. Each was sent a questionnaire with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and a stamped-addressed envelope in an attempt to increase response rate. As the BASES trainees' addresses were confidential, they were contacted by sending each of the ASPs on the accreditation list (for support) three copies of the trainees' questionnaire and asking each ASP to hand them out to their trainees.

3.2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The respondents' answers to closed questions and most of their answers to open questions were coded using SPSS for Windows (Version 6) and analysed with the same package. The answers to the question on the 'ideal' qualities of a sport psychologist were subjected to qualitative content analysis. Triangulation of the raw data themes in this analysis was developed through independent inspection and subsequent agreement of these themes by three sport psychology researchers. This served to increase the validity or 'trustworthiness' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of the qualitative data. Some verbatim citations exist in the results section which serve to elaborate the meaning of the codes used and illustrate some of the frequency data.

3.3 RESULTS

3.3.1 ISSUES DISCUSSED IN CONSULTATIONS

The data in table 3.4 shows that the accredited sport psychologists (ASPs), trainees and the athletes with experience of working with a sport psychologist reported that issues that are both directly related to sport and those outside sport are discussed in meetings between athletes and sport psychologists.

Table 3.4 *The issues that have actually been discussed in meetings between athletes and sport psychologists (figures in parentheses are percentages)*

<i>“Have any of the following issues been discussed in meetings between yourself and athletes?” (for ASPs and trainees) or “between yourself and a sport psychologist?” (for ‘athletes with experience’)?</i>			
Issues	Accredited sport psychologists (N = 32)	Trainees (N = 27)	‘Athletes with experience’ (N = 29)
Coach	32 (100%)	24 (88.9)	11 (37.9)
Politics of the sport	28 (87.5)	18 (66.7)	4 (13.8)
Friends	29 (90.6)	21 (77.8)	7 (24.1)
Partner	26 (81.3)	13 (48.1)	3 (10.3)
Family	31 (96.9)	20 (74.1)	7 (24.1)
Finances	27 (84.4)	18 (66.7)	5 (17.2)
Team officials	30 (93.8)	17 (63.0)	7 (24.1)
Competition officials	29 (90.6)	16 (59.3)	3 (10.3)
Team-mates	31 (96.9)	25 (92.6)	15 (51.7)
Training facilities	30 (93.8)	20 (74.1)	10 (34.5)
Competition facilities	31 (96.9)	20 (74.1)	10 (34.5)
School/college issues	30 (93.8)	18 (66.7)	4 (13.8)
Work-based issues	28 (87.5)	19 (70.4)	7 (24.1)
Time pressures	32 (100)	23 (85.2)	16 (55.2)

From table 3.4, there appear to be large differences between the perceived prevalence of issues for the ASPs, trainees and ‘the athletes with experience’.

Other issues, which were added in the open section by the respondents, were:

performance	eating disorders	career
drugs	life	press
sex	selection	injury
mental health	disability	retirement
criminal activities	transfer to other clubs	conflict
psychology education	organisational issues	

The data in table 3.4 shows the perceived prevalence of issues for both groups of athlete for issues that would like or have liked to discuss with a sport psychologist and those issues that the 'athletes with experience' actually discussed with a sport psychologist.

Table 3.5 *Issues that athletes actually discussed (or would like to have discussed) with a sport psychologist*

	<i>“Would you liked to (have discussed/ discuss) any of the following issues with a sport psychologist?”</i>		<i>“Have any of the following issues been discussed “between yourself and a sport psychologist?”</i>
Issues	‘Athletes with no experience’ (N=21)	‘Athletes with experience’ (N = 29)	‘Athletes with experience’ (N = 29)
Coach	9	17	11
Politics of the sport	3	11	4
Friends	3	11	7
Partner	1	8	3
Family	4	10	7
Finances	5	13	5
Team officials	12	15	7
Competition officials	13	9	3
Team-mates	18	19	15
Training facilities	12	18	10
Competition facilities	11	15	10
School/college issues	7	6	4
Work-based issues	5	13	7
Time pressures	12	22	16

The results in table 3.5 above show that the 'athletes with experience' generally perceived talking more about issues directly related to sport (e.g., team-mates, training facilities, the coach) than those issues not directly related to sport (e.g., friends, family, work) in consultations. This was also true when asked whether they would like to have discussed these issues. The frequencies for all the issues they would have liked to discuss were higher than the frequency for those issues that they did actually discuss with a sport

psychologist. This may suggest that (given the opportunity) the ‘athletes with experience of sport psychology’ would have discussed issues both directly and indirectly related to sport with a sport psychologist (although more so for issues directly related to sport).

For those ‘athletes with no experience of sport psychology’, their preference for those issues they thought they might like to discuss with a sport psychologist was for issues directly related to sport with some responses for discussing those issues not directly related to sport.

3.3.2 SKILLS OF A SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST

The data in table 3.6 shows that most of the ASPs and trainees (78%) perceived that there is a difference between the skills possessed by a sport psychologist which are required to deal with athletes’ sport-related issues and those required to deal with their non-sport related issues. There is a significantly larger number of respondents (46) who replied that they thought there are differences in skills, compared to those who did not believe that there are (12). This is significant at the $p < 0.00005$ level using a binomial test. Although there was no category for ‘both yes and no’ one trainee did respond with this answer.

Table 3.6 *Perceived differences in skills of a sport psychologist*

<i>“Are there any differences between the skills possessed by a sport psychologist which are required to deal with athletes’ <u>sport-related issues</u> and those required to deal with their <u>non-sport related issues</u>?”</i>			
	YES	NO	BOTH YES & NO
Accredited Sport Psychologists (N = 32)	26 (81.3%)	6 (18.7%)	0
Trainees (N = 27)	20 (74.1%)	6 (22.2%)	1 (3.7%)
TOTAL (N = 59)	46 (78.0%)	12 (20.3%)	1 (1.7%)

For the respondents who replied that they thought there were differences in skills, the response categories are shown in table 3.7. This table shows that a cluster of interpersonal skills was cited as the reasons for this difference. The category of counselling/counselling skills was the most commonly cited reason (40.6%) for the differences in skills for the ASPs, skills based reasons were next with a 28.1% response rate. ‘Performance/sport related reasons’ (38.5%) was the most common category for the

trainees, counselling skills was next with a 34.6% response rate. The trainee's data, who had replied 'both yes and no' to the question about differences above, was not included in the table below (table 3.7) because he had stated that he would not distinguish between sport-related and non-sport related issues.

Table 3.7 *The response categories of reasons for any differences in skills of a sport psychologist for sport and non-sport related issues (figures in parentheses are percentages)*

Reason Category	Accredited Sport Psychologists (N = 32)	Trainees (N = 26)
Counselling/Counselling Skills	13 (40.6%)	9 (34.6%)
'Other' Skills	9 (28.1)	7 (26.9)
Knowledge	9 (28.1)	4 (15.4)
Performance/sport related	8 (25.0)	10 (38.5)
Clinical	6 (18.8)	2 (7.7)
Perception of a Holistic Perspective	4 (12.5)	1 (3.8)
Coping Strategies	2 (6.3)	0
Code of conduct	2 (6.3)	0
Time	1 (3.1)	0

To aid understanding of the reason categories in table 3.7, examples of each category are given below. The examples were chosen as representations of the data, this was verified using triangulation with another researcher.

Counselling/Counselling Skills

"Non-sport issues require counselling skills" (ASP)

"Unless the person has acquired some knowledge of counselling and is supervised...in this work...the skills held by most sport psychologists would not be sufficient to deal with many non-sport related issues" (ASP)

"When the issue is outside of sport, the psychologist's role is one of counselling" (Trainee)

"A personal crisis may require more counselling-type skills and expertise" (Trainee)

'Other' Skills

"[We] may be more reactive when dealing with non-sport issues" (ASP)

"Dealing with issues totally unrelated to performance environment requires special skills" (Trainee)

"You must refer if you do not possess the additional skills" (Trainee)

Knowledge

"Sport psychologists who only possess knowledge of mental skills training cannot function effectively in the real world of sport" (ASP)

"A broader knowledge of psychologist is required for non-sport issues" (ASP)

"We must know when to refer" (Trainee)

Performance/sport related

“Sport issues tend to be mental skills related (or are perceived to be)” (ASP)

“Sport psychologists tend to stick to a performance brief only” (ASP)

“The problem is sport-related because they have come to see you within the context of sport” (Trainee)

“Sport-related issues typically revolve around education regarding mental skills” (Trainee)

Clinical

“Non-sport issues (clinical problems) would require appropriate qualification and training” (ASP)

“Clinical issues are clearly outside of a sport psychology trained professional” (ASP)

“Some non-sport related issues require skills from clinical psychology, e.g. eating disorders, drugs misuse” (Trainee)

Perceptions of a Holistic Perspective

“Non-sport issues require a broader approach and consider the athlete as a whole human being” (ASP)

“If a holistic approach is not taken, then sport psychology is relatively simple and narrow” (ASP)

“My approach is holistic or humanistic so both non-sport related issues and sport-related issues are important and relevant” (Trainee)

Coping Strategies

“Sport-related issues involve coping skills training” (ASP)

Code of conduct

“Code of conduct prohibits work outside areas of competence” (ASP)

Time

“I spend more time on issues outside sport psychology than direct performance enhancement issues” (ASP)

From the 12 respondents who did not perceive that there were any differences in skills, four expanded on their answers:

“No, in terms of skills per se (e.g. counselling, etc.). Where there might be a difference is in terms of expertise/competence.” (ASP)

“No, all of an athlete’s life has the potential to interact with their sporting life.” (ASP)

“No, because if you see your athlete holistically you wouldn’t necessarily separate them. I think counselling skills are important for both aspects.” (Trainee)

“No, ‘sport’ can blinker a more holistic approach...The skills the psychologist brings to the individual should be of possible aid to

the individual first and foremost; the distinction between sport and non-sport related issues does not, in my mind, exist.”
 (Trainee)

Those respondents who perceived that there are differences in skills were asked if they possessed these ‘additional’ skills. The results are shown below in table 3.8. The respondent’s data, who had replied ‘both yes and no’ to the differences question above, was included. These results suggest that the ASPs were firmer in their confidence of their ability, whereas the trainees were more vague by predominantly answering that they only possessed ‘some’ of the skills.

Table 3.8 *The possession of ‘additional’ skills by the accredited sport psychologists and trainees*

<i>“Do you possess the additional skill(s) required to deal with <u>non-sport related issues?</u>”</i>		
Reply	Accredited Sport Psychologists (N = 26)	Trainees (N = 21)
YES	11	3
SOME	14	18
NO	1	0

The data in table 3.9 shows where the respondents (who answered 'yes' or 'some' to the question on 'additional' skills) developed these skills. The results show that most of the skills, from both the ASP and trainee groups, were developed during counselling skills training.

Table 3.9 *Development of 'additional' skills* (figures in parentheses are percentages for each respondent group)

Where the skills were developed	Accredited Sport Psychologists (N = 25)	Trainees (N = 21)
Counselling skills training	16 (64%)	19 (90.5%)
Life experiences	9 (36)	2 (9.5)
Educational courses (not specified)	7 (28)	8 (38.1)
Work experiences, e.g. as a teacher /lecturer	6 (24)	2 (9.5)
Through work with athletes	5 (20)	6 (28.6)
Discussions with supervisor and/or peers	5 (20)	4 (19.0)
Coaching	4 (16)	0
Clinical training	3 (12)	2 (9.5)
Psychology courses	3 (12)	5 (23.8)
Research	3 (12)	1 (4.8)
Own sporting career	2 (8)	0
Hypnosis/hypnotherapy courses	2 (8)	0
Innate communication skills	1 (4)	0
Management training	1 (4)	0
Personal therapy	1 (4)	1 (4.8)

3.3.3.1 PERCEIVED EFFECT OF ISSUES OUTSIDE OF SPORT ON ATHLETES' ABILITY TO TRAIN EFFECTIVELY

The data in table 4.10 clearly shows that all the sport psychologists and trainees reported that issues outside sport can influence an athlete's ability to train effectively. When the athletes were asked if outside issues ever affected their ability to train effectively 84% reported that they did, but 16% of the athletes did not believe that they did.

Table 3.10 *The perceived effect of issues outside sport on athletes' ability to train effectively (figures in parentheses are percentages)*

<i>'Do you believe that issues <u>outside</u> sport ever influence an athlete's ability to train effectively?'</i>					
	Accredited Sport Psychologists (N = 32)	Trainees (N = 27)	Athletes who have no experience of working with a sport psychologist (N = 21)	Athletes who have worked with a sport psychologist (N = 29)	TOTAL (N = 109)
YES	32 (100%)	27 (100)	15 (71)	27 (93)	101 (92.7)
NO	0	0	6 (28.6)	2 (6.9)	8 (7.3)
TOTAL	100% YES 0% NO		84% YES 16% NO		

On listing the issues that affected their ability to train effectively, both groups of athletes reported work (n=32, 64% of those athletes who had responded that issues outside of sport do affect training effectiveness), family and/or friends (n=17, 34%) and finances (n=14, 28%) as the most common issues. Other issues that they reported were time (n=10, 20%), training facilities (n=8, 16%), and their partner (n=7, 14%).

In terms of the capacity of the most common issues to affect training, the majority of athletes (12, 24%) scored work as having the highest capacity. The results are shown in table 3.11.

Table 3.11 *The capacity of issues to affect an athletes' ability to train effectively (athletes only)*

Capacity	Issues		
	Work (n=32)	Family/friends (n=17)	Finances (n=14)
Very high	12	5	2
High	9	6	9
Moderate	8	3	1
Low	2	2	0
Very low	1	1	2

3.3.3.2 PERCEIVED EFFECT OF ISSUES OUTSIDE OF SPORT ON ATHLETES' ABILITY TO COMPETE EFFECTIVELY

The data in table 3.12 shows that all the sport psychologists and trainees reported that issues outside sport can influence an athlete's ability to compete effectively. When the athletes were asked if outside issues ever affected their ability to compete effectively 54% reported that they did, but 46% of the athletes did not believe that they did. The ASPs and trainees (the professionals) differ significantly from both groups of athletes, $\chi^2 = 34.4$ (1 d.f.), at the $p < 0.000005$ significance level.

Table 3.12 *The perceived effect of outside issues on athletes' ability to compete effectively (figures in parentheses are percentages of each group)*

<i>'Do you believe that issues <u>outside</u> sport ever influence an athlete's ability to compete effectively?'</i>					
	Accredited Sport Psychologists (N = 32)	Trainees (N = 27)	Athletes who have no experience of working with a sport psychologist (N = 21)	Athletes who have worked with a sport psychologist (N = 29)	TOTAL (N = 109)
YES	32 (100%)	27 (100)	10 (47.6)	17 (58.6)	86 (78.9)
NO	0	0	11 (52.4)	12 (41.4)	23 (21.1)
TOTAL	100% YES 0% NO		54% YES 46% NO		

On listing the issues that affected their ability to compete effectively, both groups of athletes reported work (n=14, 28% of those athletes who had responded that issues outside of sport do affect competition performances), family and/or friends (n=12, 24%) and finance (n=8, 16%) as the most common issues. Other issues that they reported were personal issues (not specified) (5, 10%), psychological factors (5, 10%) and transport (3, 6%).

In terms of the capacity of the most common issues to affect competition performances, the majority of athletes (10, 20%) scored work as having the highest capacity. The results are shown in table 3.13.

Table 3.13 *The capacity of issues to affect an athletes' ability to compete effectively (athletes only)*

Capacity	Issues		
	Work (n=14)	Family/friends (n=12)	Finances (n=8)
Very high	10	2	3
High	1	3	2
Moderate	2	2	1
Low	1	4	1
Very low	0	1	1

3.3.4 QUALITIES OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGISTS

Table 3.14 shows the qualities that the ASPs were most and least confident about offering when working with athletes. The ratings were obtained from a set list of qualities (see method). The results for confidence show that the ASPs were most confident about having the ability to inform, educate and relate to athletes and coaches. They were least confident about being charismatic and being a natural leader.

Using a Friedman test to examine simple differences, the top five qualities that the ASPs were most confident about offering differed significantly from the bottom five qualities that they were least confident about offering, $\chi^2 = 75.69$ (9 d.f.), at the $p < 0.00001$ significance level.

A follow-up test (Wilcoxon) to examine where the significant difference occurred was completed on the quality ranked fourth equal (for those qualities the ASPs were most confident about offering) and the quality ranked fifth (for those qualities the ASPs were least confident about offering) (see *s in table 3.14). These two data points were chosen as they were the closest figures to each other from the two sets of data, thus if these two were significantly different it can be assumed that the others, which were further apart, were also significantly different from each other. The analysis showed that the qualities of being open and honest and being accessible were significantly different from each other ($z = 3.50$, $p < 0.0005$).

Table 3.14 *The qualities that accredited sport psychologists (N=32) were most and least confident about offering when working with athletes (1 = Very confident, 5 = Not at all confident)*

The 5 qualities <u>most</u> confident about offering (Ranked)	Mean confidence score	The 5 qualities <u>least</u> confident about offering (Ranked)	Mean confidence score
1. Having the ability to inform and educate athletes and coaches	1.19	1. Being charismatic	2.19
2. Being able to relate to athletes and coaches	1.22	2. Being a natural leader	2.03
3. Having the ability to provide feedback for athletes and/or coaches	1.25	3. Being creative	2.00
4= Being a good listener	1.28	4. Possessing knowledge of other sport sciences	1.97
4= Being open and honest	1.28 *	5. Being accessible	1.94 *

Table 3.15 shows the qualities that the trainees were most and least confident about offering when working with athletes. They were most confident about being a good listener, being punctual and being open and honest, they were least confident about possessing knowledge of other sport sciences, having worked in a variety of sports and having experience of being a coach.

Using a Friedman test, the top five qualities that the trainees were most confident about offering differed significantly from the bottom five qualities that they were least confident about offering, $\chi^2 = 79.71$ (9 d.f.), at the $p < 0.00001$ significance level.

A Wilcoxon test revealed that the qualities of having experience of being a sport performer and being able to assess a group's needs (see *s in table 3.15) were significantly different from each other ($z = 3.43$, $p < 0.005$). If the data from tables 3.14 and 3.15 are compared it is noted that the trainees are generally less confident than the ASPs.

Table 3.15 *The qualities that the trainees (N=27) were most and least confident about offering when working with athletes (1 = Very confident, 5 = Not at all confident)*

The 5 qualities <u>most</u> confident about offering (Ranked)	Mean confidence score	The 5 qualities <u>least</u> confident about offering (Ranked)	Mean confidence score
1. Being a good listener	1.41	1. Possessing knowledge of other sport sciences	2.85
2= Being punctual	1.48	2= Having worked in a variety of sports	2.63
2= Being open and honest	1.48	2= Having experience of being a coach	2.63
4. Being energetic and hard-working	1.56	4. Being creative	2.59
5. Having experience of being a sport performer	1.59 *	5. Being able to assess a group's needs	2.52 *

Table 3.16 shows data from the ASPs (N=32) in their importance ratings of the qualities of a sport psychologist. Being a good listener was rated by all the ASPs (mean score of 1.0) as a very important quality of a sport psychologist, being able to assess an athlete's need and having the ability to provide feedback for athletes and/or coaches were the next most important qualities, whilst being a natural leader and having experience of being a coach were the least important qualities.

Using a Friedman test, the top five qualities that all four respondent groups perceived were most important differed significantly from the bottom five qualities that

they perceived as least important, $\chi^2 = 134.54$ (9 d.f.), at the $p < 0.00001$ significance level.

A Wilcoxon test revealed that the qualities of having the ability to inform and educate athletes and coaches and being creative (see *s in table 3.16) were significantly different from each other ($z = 3.25$, $p < 0.005$).

Table 3.16 *The views of the accredited sport psychologists (N=32) on the importance of the qualities of a sport psychologist (1 = Very important, 5 = Unimportant)*

The 5 <u>M</u>ost important qualities (Ranked)	Mean importance score	The 5 <u>L</u>east important qualities (Ranked)	Mean importance score
1. Being a good listener	1.00	1. Being a natural leader	2.81
2= Being able to assess an athlete's needs	1.03	2. Having experience of being a coach	2.50
2= Having the ability to provide feedback for athletes and/or coaches	1.03	3. Being charismatic	2.47
4= Possessing knowledge about applied sport psychology	1.13	4. Possessing knowledge of other sport sciences	2.00
4= Having the ability to inform and educate athletes and coaches	1.13 *	5. Being creative	1.94 *

Table 3.17 shows data from the trainees in their importance ratings of the qualities of a sport psychologist. Being a good listener, having the ability to provide feedback for athletes and/or coaches and being able to assess an athlete's needs were the most important qualities as all the trainees had given these the rating of 'very important'. Being a natural leader and being charismatic were the least important qualities.

Using a Friedman test, the top five qualities that all four respondent groups perceived were most important differed significantly from the bottom five qualities that they perceived as least important, $\chi^2 = 140.21$ (10 d.f.), at the $p < 0.00001$ significance level.

A Wilcoxon test revealed that the qualities of being able to assess a group's needs and having worked in a variety of sports (see *s in table 3.17) were significantly different from each other ($z = 3.82$, $p < 0.00001$).

Table 3.17 *The views of the trainees (N=27) on the importance of the qualities of a sport psychologist (1 = Very important, 5 = Unimportant)*

The 5 <u>Most</u> important qualities (Ranked)	Mean importance score	The 5 <u>Least</u> important qualities (Ranked)	Mean importance score
1= Being a good listener	1.00	1. Being a natural leader	3.04
1= Having the ability to provide feedback for athletes and/or coaches	1.00	2. Being charismatic	2.81
1= Being able to assess an athlete's needs	1.00	3. Possessing knowledge of other sport sciences	2.52
4. Being able to relate to athletes and coaches	1.15	4. Having experience of being a coach	2.41
5= Possessing knowledge about applied sport psychology	1.19	5. Having worked in a variety of sports	2.26*
5= Being able to assess a group's needs	1.19 *		

Table 3.18 shows data from the athletes with no experience in their importance ratings of the qualities of a sport psychologist. Being patient, open and honest and being able to relate to athletes and coaches were the most important qualities, whilst having experience of being a coach and being charismatic were the least important.

Using a Friedman test, the top five qualities that all four respondent groups perceived were most important differed significantly from the bottom five qualities that they perceived as least important, $\chi^2 = 100.08$ (10 d.f.), at the $p < 0.00001$ significance level.

A Wilcoxon test revealed that the qualities of being at ease with people and being to organise group activities (see *s in table 3.18) were significantly different from each other ($z = 3.41$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 3.18 *The views of the athletes who have no experience of working with a sport psychologist (N=21) on the importance of the qualities of a sport psychologist (1 = Very important, 5 = Unimportant)*

The 5 <u>Most</u> important qualities (Ranked)	Mean importance score	The 5 <u>Least</u> important qualities (Ranked)	Mean importance score
1. Being patient	1.24	1. Having experience of being a coach	3.05
2= Being open and honest	1.29	2. Being charismatic	2.95
2= Being able to relate to athletes and coaches	1.29	3. Being a natural leader	2.86
4. Being a good listener	1.33	4. Having experience of being a sport performer	2.76
5= Being able to assess an athlete's needs	1.48	5. Being able to organise group activities	2.71*
5= Being at ease with people	1.48*		

Table 3.19 shows data from the athletes who have experience of working with a sport psychologist in their importance ratings of the qualities of a sport psychologist. Being open and honest and being a good listener were the most important qualities whilst having experience of being a coach and having accredited status were the least important.

Using a Friedman test, the top five qualities that all four respondent groups perceived were most important differed significantly from the bottom five qualities that they perceived as least important, $\chi^2 = 132.18$ (9 d.f.), at the $p < 0.00001$ significance level.

A Wilcoxon test revealed that the qualities of being at ease with people and having experience of being a sport performer (see *s in table 3.19) were significantly different from each other ($z = 3.97$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 3.19 *The views of the athletes who have experience of working with a sport psychologist (N=29) on the importance of the qualities of a sport psychologist (1 = Very important, 5 = Unimportant)*

The 5 <u>Most</u> important qualities (Ranked)	Mean importance score	The 5 <u>Least</u> important qualities (Ranked)	Mean importance score
1. Being open and honest	1.28	1. Having experience of being a coach	3.45
2. Being a good listener	1.34	2. Having accredited status	3.34
3. Being able to assess an athlete's needs	1.41	3. Being a natural leader	3.07
4= Being flexible enough to meet individual needs	1.52	4= Having worked in a variety of sports	2.90
5= Being at ease with people	1.52	4= Having experience of being a sport performer	2.90

Other qualities that were added in the 'open' section by the respondents were:

- Knowledge of sport (including awareness of sport and sport science experience)
- Other relating qualities (including sense of humour, confident, humble, non-judgmental, proactive, passionate)
- Knowledge of psychology (including knowing when to refer, keeping current in the field, being strong in psychology theory)
- Other skills (including measurement skills, communication skills, able to work with different age groups)
- Self-management (including being reflective and having a strong support network)
- Experience (having experience of competition at the highest level)

3.3.5 SUPPORT FROM AN 'IDEAL' SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST

Both groups of athletes were asked to consider what support they thought an 'ideal' sport psychologist should give them. The results are shown in figure 3.1. 72 raw data themes were obtained from the respondents' answers with 'listen' having the highest frequency (n=7). 20 higher-order sub-themes were constructed from the raw data themes. Emotional control, general mental preparation, relaxation skills, confidence building, focusing, coping control cognitive restructuring, goal setting and anxiety control formed the higher order theme of mental training advice. Mental training advice, personal needs approach and continuing professional development were higher order themes that

combined to form the general dimension of professional knowledge (n=50 raw data themes).

The higher order theme of relating skills was constructed from the higher order sub-themes of support, give time and understanding, honest and non-judgmental, help feel at ease, work positively with coach, help on 'other' issues, facilitate self-awareness, listening skills and facilitate athlete independence. The higher order themes of relating skills and positive portrayal of self formed the general dimension of personal skills (n=37 raw data themes).

The higher-order sub-theme of affinity to the sport and international competition formed the general dimension of craft knowledge of competition environment (n=2 raw data themes).

Raw Data Themes

Higher Order Sub-Themes

Higher Order Themes

General Dimensions

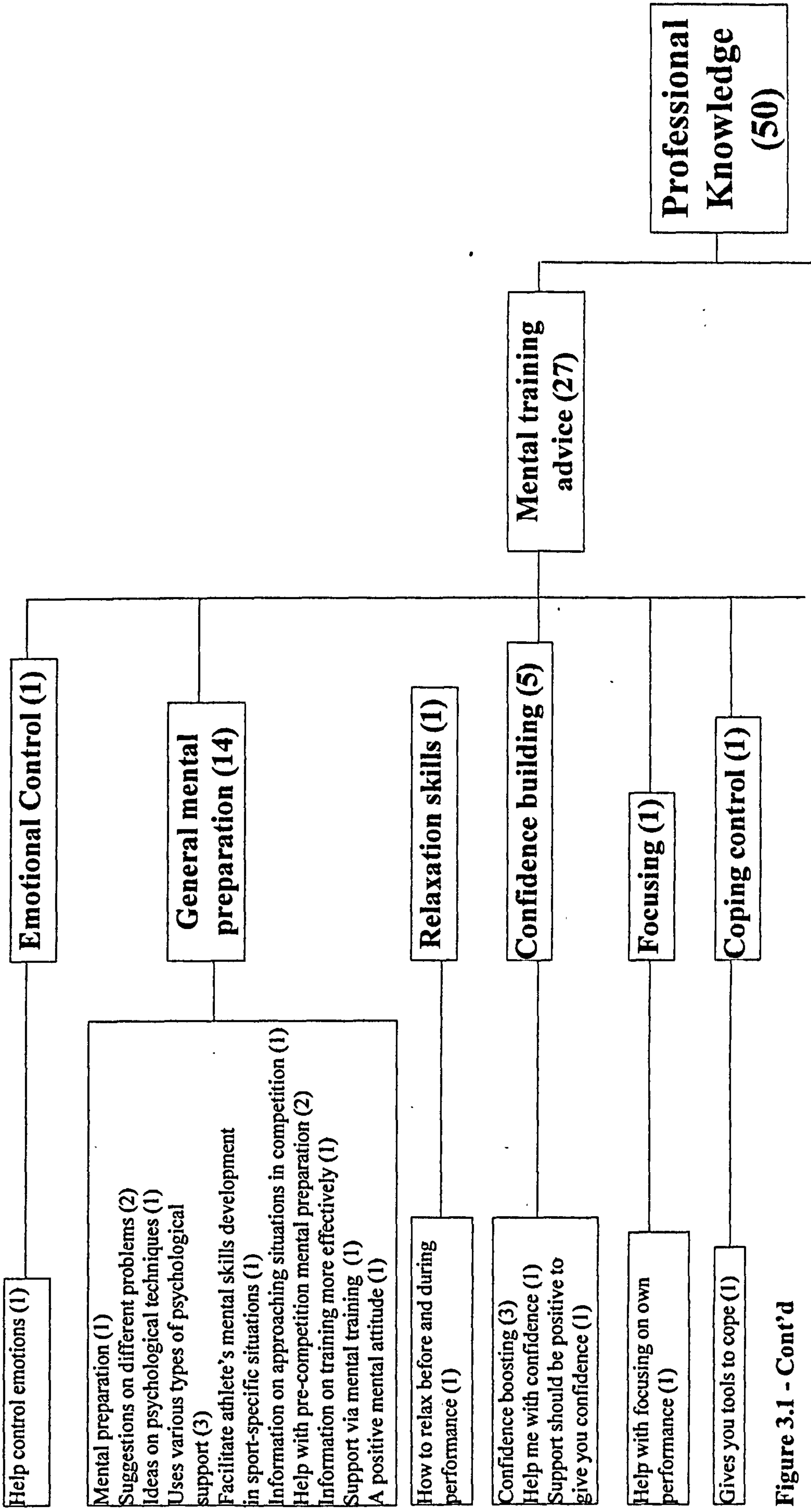


Figure 3.1 - Cont'd

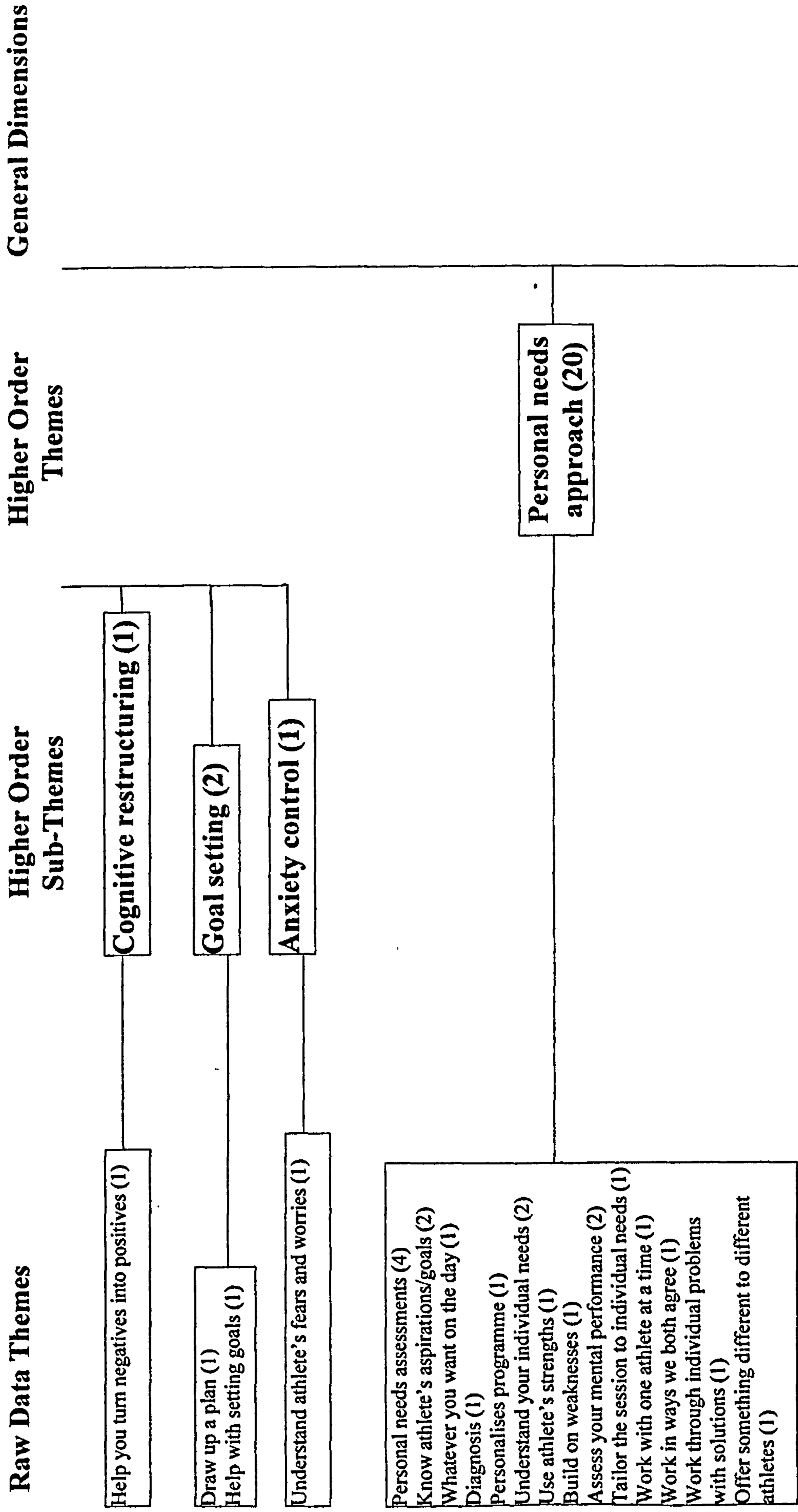


Figure 3.1 - Cont'd

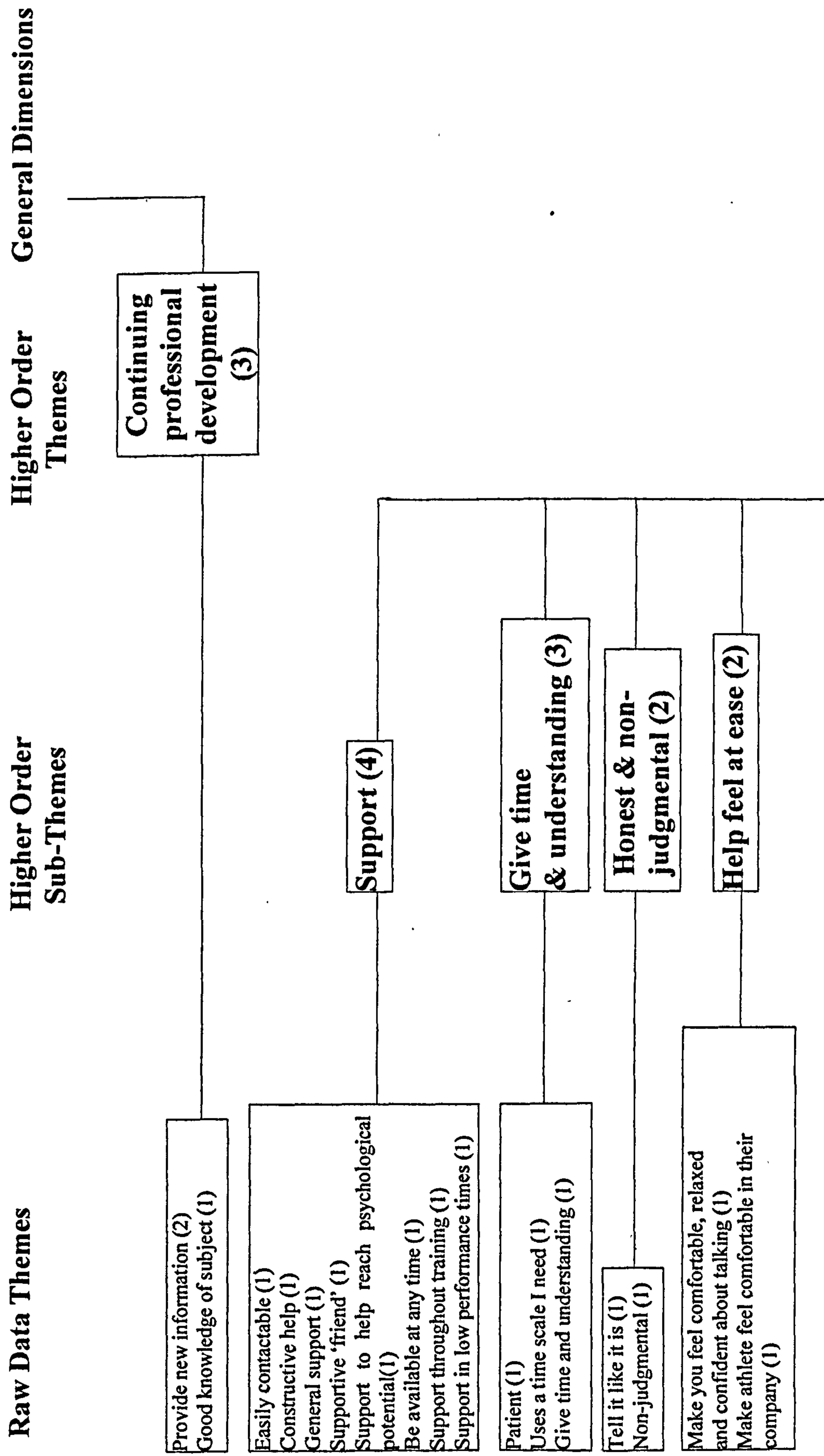


Figure 3.1 - Cont'd

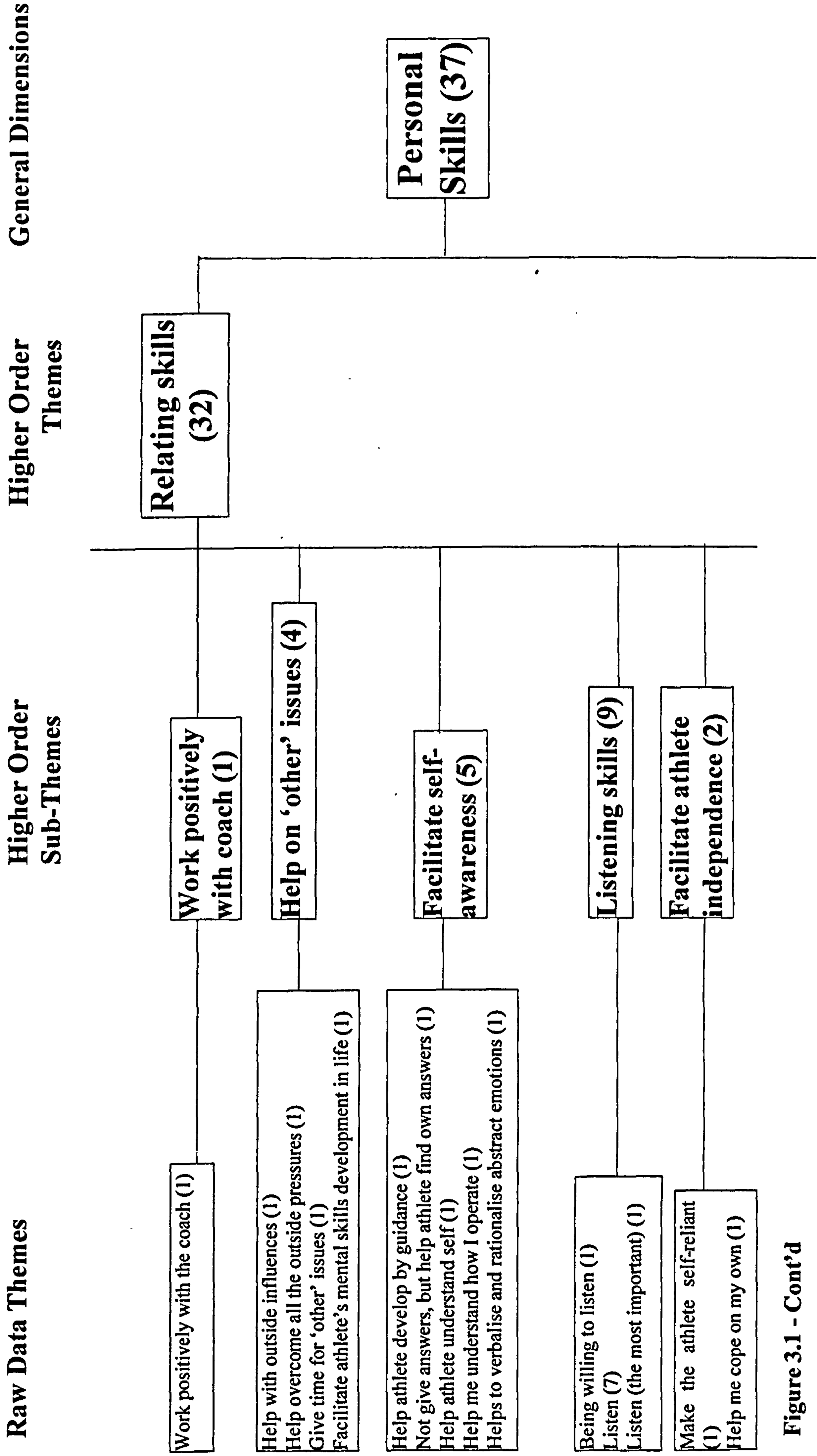


Figure 3.1 - Cont'd

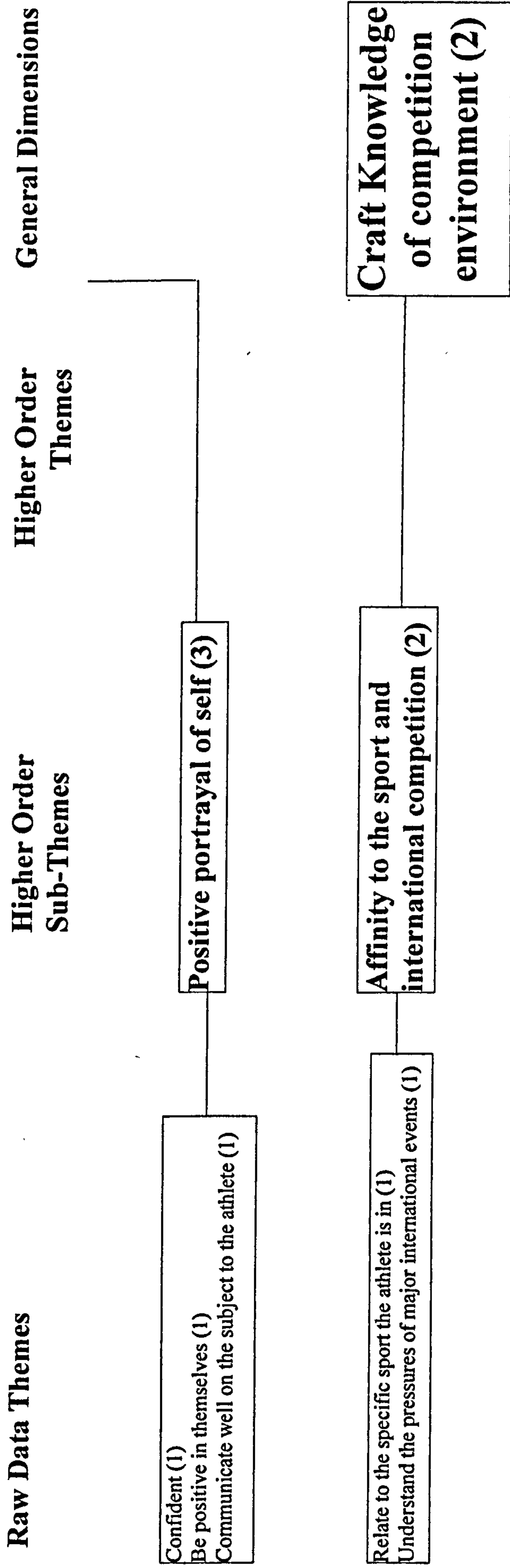


Figure 3.1 - The athletes' perceptions of the support that an "ideal" sport psychologist should give

3.3.6 LISTENING EFFECTIVENESS

The data in table 3.20 shows how effective the athletes (who had experience of working with a sport psychologist) thought their sport psychologist was at listening to them talk about issues related to sport. 15 athletes rated their sport psychologist as 'very effective' and 12 athletes rated their sport psychologist as 'effective' at listening to them talk about issues related to sport.

The examples, taken from the athletes' reasons for their ratings, show that they believe that a 'very effective' listening sport psychologist makes people feel relaxed and allows them to talk freely. An 'effective' listening sport psychologist is perceived as not rushing the athlete. It is interesting to note that many of the examples from both these categories also refer to the problem-solving nature of the consultation in terms of 'talking' and 'sorting out' problems, suggesting solutions and providing new techniques. Two of the examples are negatively phrased, i.e., "Sorting out a problem can be missed when too helpful and non-productive" and "[It's] difficult when sport psychologist is not in the sport itself" and yet still categorise the effectiveness of the sport psychologist at listening as 'effective'. One athlete perceived the sport psychologist to be 'neutral' in effectiveness of listening.

Table 3.20 *The athletes' (with experience of working with a sport psychologist) perceived effectiveness ratings of their sport psychologist at listening to them talk about issues related to sport. Examples of the reasons for their answers are also given.*

<i>"In your experience, how effective was your sport psychologist at <u>listening</u> to you talk about issues related to sport?" (N=28)</i>		
Very Effective	Effective	Neutral
15	12	1
<i>"Asked what I wanted, tailored approach to suit me"</i>	<i>"Knew when to refer. Can tackle problems in more than one way"</i>	<i>"More inclined to give information than listen"</i>
<i>"Very good at making people feel at ease and relaxed"</i>	<i>"Sorting out a problem can be missed when too helpful and non-productive"</i>	
<i>"...allowed me to talk freely, not trying to put words into my mouth"</i>	<i>"Provided new techniques and suggestions on how to improve"</i>	
<i>"Take in what I said, ask questions and suggest solutions"</i>	<i>"[It's] difficult when the sport psychologist is not in the sport itself"</i>	
<i>"Being listened to helped me understand what action to take to improve"</i>	<i>"Never rushes me"</i>	

The data in table 3.21 shows how effective the athletes who had experience of working with a sport psychologist thought their sport psychologist was at listening to them talk about personal issues outside sport. 4 athletes perceived that their sport psychologist was 'very effective' at listening, 9 athletes perceived that their sport psychologist was 'effective' at listening, 5 were neutral, 1 perceived that the sport psychologist was 'ineffective' and 1 perceived that the sport psychologist was 'very ineffective' at listening to them talk about personal issues outside of sport.

The examples, taken from the athletes' reasons for their ratings, show that they believe that a 'very effective' listening sport psychologist on personal issues outside sport is 'very friendly', listens, uses a 'low pressure technique' and is more effective once got to know the individual. The athletes who perceived their sport psychologist as 'ineffective' and 'very ineffective' at listening to personal issues outside of sport placed the emphasis on themselves rather than the sport psychologist in their explanations of their ratings, i.e. either they didn't bring the issues into the discussion at all or they recognised that they didn't want to talk about these issues anyway.

Table 3.21 *The athletes with experience of working with a sport psychologist's perceived effectiveness ratings of their sport psychologist at listening to them talk about personal issues outside sport. Examples of the reasons for their answers are also given.*

<i>"In your experience, how effective was your sport psychologist at <u>listening</u> to you talk about personal issues outside sport?" (N=25)</i>				
Very Effective	Effective	Neutra l	Ineffective	Very Ineffective
8	9	6	1	1
<i>"She spoke to members of my family and things have been slightly easier since"</i>	<i>"[Showed] understanding towards other commitments and training"</i>	<i>"I have not needed to talk about personal issues"</i>	<i>"I didn't bring them up, they're not important"</i>	<i>"I didn't want that"</i>
<i>"She will still sit, listen and help, even when I whinge"</i>	<i>"Talking through work issues made the effect of them less, if not totally disappearing"</i>			
<i>"More effective when psychologist gets to know individual"</i>	<i>"...doesn't force topic back to sport. Recognises that personal issues affect performance"</i>			
<i>"Very friendly and low pressure technique"</i>	<i>"Gave me time to talk about my life and used these to give a more personal, 'worthwhile' and effective programme"</i>			

3.3.7 OTHER COMMENTS

When asked to expand on any points in the questionnaire, many of the sport psychologists and trainees discussed training issues for sport psychologists. Topics offered by individuals included clinical issues, the gap between academia and practising sport psychologists, gaining chartered status, the question of experience of coaching and performing, going beyond just having knowledge of applied techniques, e.g., having knowledge of politics of the sport, increasing the profile of sport psychology and accreditation in sport, having a holistic perspective, having people skills and understanding sociological constraints. The themes that arose the most frequently in this section were about counselling and/or counselling skills and training.

"There is great and, as yet, unexploited potential to apply skills within a counselling paradigm to sport psychology. Current BASES accreditation processes do not recognise or acknowledge

this resource...In terms of applied work with athletes, I probably use...90% of what I have learned through a range of counselling programmes” (A.S.P.)

“It is important that all trainees go through some sort of accredited counselling modules...I feel that some trainees having come through a sport science route are particularly lacking in background knowledge of different techniques and methods.” (A.S.P.)

“In general, I feel that currently many sport psychologists feel (and are) ill-equipped to deal with many personal issues which arise.” (A.S.P.)

“A sport psychologist should be able to deal with issues [e.g. work, family] as part of their role, NOT in addition to or separate from sport-specific stuff. Counselling/listening skills are therefore essential for a sport psychologist” (Trainee)

“At a talk recently it was implicit that it’s important to be in an almost ‘counselling’ role with athletes. Steve Bull said that “We all want to get down to some ‘textbook’ PST, but invariably end up being a ‘sounding board’” (Trainee)

“I do feel that some sort of counselling training is crucial as so much of the individual athlete consultation often becomes very personal and taken down the emotional non-sport-related and interpersonal issues route...” (Trainee)

One ASP considered the ethical implications:

“I believe there are boundaries and ethical issues involved in taking on work people are not qualified to do. I think many issues can be dealt with even if the person is relatively inexperienced if there is good enough support or supervision available, and the chance to refer onto other people” (A.S.P.)

Only one athlete commented in this section, she wrote:

“A list such as those in question 2 [the issues discussed in meetings with sport psychologists] would have helped me realise what a sport psychologist can do/cover. My coach could have been a major issue for me to talk about, but I didn’t consider my coach as important!” (Athlete with experience of sport psychology)

3.4 DISCUSSION

The aims of the present study were to:

- 1). assess the prevalence of issues referred to in consultations which were directly or indirectly related to sport
- 2). explore the perceptions of accredited sport psychologists (ASPs) and trainees on the skills of a sport psychologist in relation to dealing with sport-related and non-sport related issues
- 3). assess the perceived effect of issues outside of sport on athletes' ability to train and compete effectively
- 4). assess the perceived importance of qualities of sport psychologists and the confidence that ASPs and trainees have in offering these qualities
- 5). examine the kind of support that athletes want from their 'ideal' sport psychologist
- 6). allow the athletes to reflect on experiences of working with a sport psychologist and recall how effective they were at listening to them talk about issues related to sport and personal issues outside sport

3.4.1 ISSUES DISCUSSED IN CONSULTATIONS

The results indicated that issues, which are both directly and indirectly related to sport and performance enhancement, are discussed in meetings between athletes and sport psychologists. This supports the findings of Gould et al. (1989) and Sullivan and Nashman (1998) on the role of US sport psychologists. This information impacts on the role of sport psychologist in dealing with these issues or referring them on to other experts, e.g., counsellors, clinical psychologists.

Although the aim of the first question in the survey was designed to simply assess the prevalence of issues in consultations, it is interesting to note the difference between the perceptions of the ASPs, trainees and athletes. A high percentage of ASPs (over 84% for each issue) reported that the issues listed were actually discussed in meetings with athletes. This compares with the percentages of the trainees that range from 48-93%. This wider range could indicate that trainees are less experienced than ASPs in conducting consultations and would therefore have less chance to report the prevalence of many issues. It may also indicate that the trainees were less comfortable about talking to athletes on

some issues (due to their inexperience) and therefore do not attempt to refer these issues themselves in consultations.

Examining the 'athletes with experience' responses indicated a lower range again, from 10-55%. The reasons for this lower range are similar for those of the trainees, i.e., that the athletes may have had less opportunity than the ASPs (who may have worked with various athletes) to discuss these issues, or that they did not feel comfortable talking about certain issues. Indeed, when asked if there were some issues that they would not like to discuss, issues that were indirectly related to sport, i.e., politics, friends, partner and family were mentioned. Possible explanations are that these athletes viewed the role of the sport psychologist to be performance or sport-related only. Van Raalte et al. (1996) found in their study of the perceptions of British athletes of sport and mental health practitioners that sport psychologists were perceived to be more similar to sport-related practitioners than other mental health consultants. This may help to explain the perceptions of the athletes in the current study, i.e., that they did not wish to talk about these issues whilst working with a sport psychologist because they did not perceive it to be in the sport psychologist's role to tackle non-sport related issues.

When the 'athletes with experience' were asked about the issues that they would like to have discussed with a sport psychologist, the frequency of responses for each issue was greater for this category than for those issues that were actually discussed. Although the responses were generally greater for sport-related issues than non-sport related issues (when asked about the issues they actually had discussed and those that they would have liked to have discussed), the data points towards the notion that some athletes wished to discuss issues which are both directly and indirectly related to sport.

This data does not imply that sport psychologists should necessarily deal with these issues if this is not their approach to working with athletes, rather it indicates that the role of sport psychologist should be adaptable in attempting to respond appropriately to the issues that an athlete talks about irrespective of the topic. Even if the athlete is later referred on to another expert for further help, it is within the interest of the athlete to be able to give an appropriate response and then, where applicable, advice on the topic. It is suggested that 'inappropriate responding' to athletes' concerns, whatever the topic, may cause more distress to the athlete. Egan (1998) states "poorly done, helping can actually harm others" (p. 13).

Knowing the information gained from this question is important in terms of the implications for applied sport psychologists and the training of future sport psychologists. If issues which are not directly related to sport and performance enhancement are discussed

in consultations then it is clear that the role of the sport psychologist is not merely to teach PST and deal only with issues directly related to performance enhancement. This statement confirms what Hardy et al. (1996) and Bull (1998) have previously stated. The role of a sport psychologist is more demanding and complex than teaching PST techniques (Hardy et al., 1996). There is more to being a sport psychologist than just educating athletes in PST techniques (Bull, 1998). It may be suggested that sport psychologists need, at least, to be able to respond appropriately to whatever an athlete has said, even if the next stage of intervention is to refer that athlete on to a suitably qualified expert.

3.4.2 SKILLS OF A SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST

The results indicate that most of the ASPs and trainees (78%) perceived that there was a difference in the skills possessed by a sport psychologist which are required to deal with athletes' 'sport-related issues' and the skills required to deal with athletes' 'non-sport related' issues. Amongst the reasons for why they gave this answer, a cluster of related interpersonal skills were given including counselling, counselling skills and 'other' skills. Several respondents also gave knowledge and performance/sport-related reasons. The performance/sport-related reasons pertained to notions that sport issues are perceived to be linked to MST (mental skills training) and that is what sport psychologists predominantly do, teach these skills to athletes.

In reference to an answer on 'non-sport' issues, some respondents used the term 'clinical'. Some respondents did not expand on this answer, whereas others made reference to specific issues, for example, eating disorders. It is argued that it is necessary to have a boundary between clinical psychology and sport psychology unless the sport psychologist is also clinically trained (see BASES code of conduct for sport psychologists).

Those respondents who did not perceive a difference and expanded on their answers explained that the skills for dealing with issues that are sport and non-sport related are the same. Indeed for some the distinction between these issues did not exist. They held a holistic perspective (like Vealey, 1988) which, for some, views the athlete as a person first and foremost, rather than an athlete first and a person with second, i.e., only dealing with their concerns at a sporting level. Counselling skills were also mentioned by those who did not perceive a difference in skills and was viewed by some as an important component of being a sport psychologist irrespective of the issue being discussed.

It is suggested that the differences in the answers between these two groups may reflect the idea that most ASPs and trainees perceived counselling skills are used for issues which are personal in nature and not necessarily related to sport and/or performance

enhancement. However, those who held a holistic perspective viewed counselling and/or counselling skills in a way that reflects how these skills can be used for helping athletes no matter what the subject matter is.

In response to the section regarding the possession of these 'additional' skills, the ASPs seemed more confident in stating that they possessed these skills than the trainees. It may be suggested that the ASPs were more confident in their ability of dealing with issues other than those that are sport-related. The most common category for where these 'additional' skills were developed was in counselling skills' training. Many people did not give details of their training, but where they did it ranged from discussion with their supervisor and attendance at a one-day workshop, lectures at undergraduate level through to a diploma in counselling.

3.4.3 PERCEIVED EFFECT OF ISSUES OUTSIDE OF SPORT ON ATHLETES' ABILITY TO TRAIN AND COMPETE EFFECTIVELY

All of the ASPs and trainees perceived that an athlete's ability to train and compete effectively can be affected by issues outside of sport. It may be suggested that the implications from this data highlights the necessity of sport psychologists to be able to deal with such issues (as well as issues within sport or issues which directly influence performance enhancement). The idea of being able to respond appropriately to whatever the athlete has said is introduced here. Responses that do not reflect effective listening skills or that "probe" too deeply into certain issues are deemed inappropriate because they either 1). do not meet the needs of the athlete by not being able to listen effectively, or 2). start to "delve" into areas that the sport psychologist is typically not trained to deal with (Brown et al., 1998), this could lead to distress for the athlete (Egan, 1998).

It is suggested that 'responding appropriately' refers to being able to use listening skills for such issues (and sport issues) in order to be able to listen in a non-judgmental way, empathise with the athlete, and facilitate the thinking of the athlete. If referral to an appropriate other is necessary then that should occur. It is suggested here, however, that if these issues are prevalent in consultations, as shown above, they have an impact on training and competition performances, also shown above, and there are certain professional skills which may help to deal with them (including sport-related concerns of the athlete), then the traditional role of the sport psychologist, i.e., that of PST educator (Hardy and Parfitt, 1994; Hardy et al., 1996) may need to adapt.

It is interesting to note that not all of the athletes perceived that issues outside of sport affect their ability to train and compete effectively. 16% thought that they did not

affect training and 46% thought that they did not affect competition performances. Unfortunately the questionnaires did not cover their reasons for these perceptions, however, speculation includes the idea that they are very good at shutting these factors out and having appropriate focus of attention when training and performing.

Most of the athletes who completed this questionnaire were of international standard in their sport and, it may be suggested, able to focus their attention on appropriate cues when necessary (Orlick and Partington, 1988). This does not mean that these issues do not, in reality, affect their training or competition performances, the data simply reflects their perceptions of this relationship. The athletes were reflecting on their own experiences, whereas the ASPs and trainees were asked about whether they thought issues outside sport ever influence an athlete's ability to train and perform. One other suggestion in interpreting this data is that the athletes may not like to admit that such issues could influence their ability. To them this may reflect a form of negative thinking which is typically something that top athletes like to avoid (Orlick and Partington, 1988).

3.4.4 QUALITIES OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGISTS

a. Confidence in offering various qualities

Broadly, the data suggests that the trainees were lower in confidence than the ASPs, indicative of their lack of experience in working with athletes. The trainees were the most confident about being a good listener, and their personal characteristics, for example, being punctual, open and honest and being energetic and hard working. From their work with Canadian Olympic coaches, Partington and Orlick (1987a) found that coaches wanted to work with sport psychologists who were positive and confident. This is clearly an important attribute for sport psychologists to possess not just in terms of confidence in what they know but also in how they present themselves and convey that message across to athletes and coaches. As Hardy et al. (1996) have argued, 'effectiveness' is not just addressed via the possession of knowledge; there are many personal and situational variables that have an influence on 'effectiveness' of a sport psychologist.

b. Importance of various qualities of sport psychologists

For the ASPs and trainees the three most important qualities of sport psychologists were the same: being a good listener, being able to assess an athlete's needs and having the ability to provide feedback for athletes and/or coaches. It is interesting that the quality of possessing knowledge about applied sport psychology was also one of the five most important qualities for the ASPs and trainees, but not in the top five highest rankings of

importance for either group of athletes. The athletes focused their top ratings of importance primarily on qualities relating to personal and interpersonal characteristics, e.g. being patient, open and honest, relating to athletes and coaches, being a good listener, being flexible, being at ease with people and being able to assess an athlete's needs. In Orlick and Partington's (1987) work with Olympic athletes both knowledge and interpersonal skills were important qualities of "best consultants". Anderson (1999) also examined characteristics of a 'good' sport psychologist and found a combination of professional and interpersonal skills were important characteristics.

3.4.5 SUPPORT FROM AN "IDEAL" SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST

The content analysis from the open question in this section revealed that both groups of athletes wanted their 'ideal' sport psychologist to possess have good professional knowledge, be able to teach them PST (psychological skills training), use a personal needs approach, seek to continue their professional development and have craft knowledge (McFee, 1993) of competition environments. They also wanted the 'ideal' sport psychologist to have personal skills of their own which included relating skills, for example, giving support, help make the athlete feel comfortable and at ease, being honest and non-judgmental and being able to listen.

From all the raw data themes, 'listening' was a dominant theme in terms of frequency of response. One athlete proposed that to listen was the most important attribute of a sport psychologist. Again listening here is an athlete-driven theme and may reflect that it is amongst the most important qualities of a sport psychologist.

The results of the present study suggest that sport psychologists should be well rounded in the sense of possessing knowledge of PST and sporting environments and also being able to relate to athletes using interpersonal and listening skills. Petitpas et al. (1999) emphasised the sport psychologist-athlete relationship and how critical it is to successful sport psychology interventions. They go on to discuss the merits of using counselling skills in sport psychologists and the implications for training US sport psychologists. Such issues are a further area to explore with sport psychologists in the UK.

3.4.6 LISTENING EFFECTIVENESS

The 'athletes with experience' appeared to perceive that the sport psychologists were more effective at listening to them talk about sport issues than personal issues outside sport. However, the athletes also appeared unclear in what 'effective listening' meant.

Some did not seem able to distinguish between effective and less effective listening because, for example, when the athletes stated their sport psychologists were 'effective' listeners they made comments such as: the sport psychologists were "too helpful and non-productive" and "[It's] difficult when the sport psychologist is not in the sport itself".

When the athletes responded that a sport psychologist was "ineffective" at listening to them talk about personal issues outside sport, the focus of their answers were on the athletes not wanting to discuss these issues, not on the listening effectiveness of the sport psychologist.

Sometimes athletes may not want to be "just" listened to, they may want concrete advice about PST or some aspect of their mental training. This illustrates a need for a sport psychologist to be able to work in different ways according to the needs of the individual athlete (as shown in study 1). It is shown from this section of the questionnaire that athletes may not have been clear on what constitutes effective listening. All respondents earlier highlighted the importance of listening, but it is not clear what sport psychologists mean when they say they 'listen' or use listening skills. This area is to be examined in the next study.

3.4.7 OTHER COMMENTS

In the last section of the questionnaire the respondents were asked to expand or comment on any issues referred to by the survey. Many of the sport psychologists and trainees discussed training issues for sport psychologists. The theme, which was referred to most frequently in this section, was about counselling and/or counselling skills and the training implications for sport psychologists. The respondents discussed the advantages of counselling skills, the belief that current BASES (British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences) accreditation does not recognise this resource, the importance of such training, and a feeling that ASPs are generally not equipped to deal with personal issues (with the suggestion from some that they should, to some extent, be able to). The respondents also used the terms counselling and counselling skills in ways that did not indicate what they meant by these terms. These areas are considered further in the next study.

3.4.8 CONCLUSIONS

It has been shown from the results of the present study that:

- Issues other than sport and/or performance enhancement are discussed in consultations.

- Many of the athletes may not have perceived the role of the sport psychologist to include discussing non-sport related issues.
- Most respondents in this sample perceived that athletes' training and competition performances are affected by issues outside of sport.
- Most ASPs and trainees perceived that different skills are needed to deal with these issues, a few did not agree, however, irrespective of the topic of conversation listening skills/counselling skills and various interpersonal skills were cited throughout as being important attributes for sport psychologists to possess.
- The athletes cited professional knowledge, craft knowledge (McFee, 1993) and personal and relating skills as important attributes for sport psychologists to possess.

A link between listening skills and counselling skills is clear from any text on basic counselling skills (e.g. Sanders, 1996). It may be suggested therefore that the respondents were implicitly acknowledging the importance of counselling skills. Some respondents explicitly expressed their perceptions of counselling skills by suggesting that they were important, but often overlooked in sport psychology.

The traditional role of a sport psychologist has been questioned for several years (e.g., Bond, 1993, cited by Morris and Thomas, 1995; Hardy and Parfitt, 1994; Hardy et al., 1996, Miller, personal communication, 1997; Bull, 1998). From the data, it seems therefore important for a sport psychologist to be able to deal with issues that do not solely pertain to educating an athlete with PST, giving mental training advice or only dealing with issues directly related to performance enhancement. One proposal is to put forward the notion of 'appropriate responding'. If issues, which require more of a listening approach than the 'traditional' approach of a sport psychologist, arise (whether they be directly or indirectly linked to performance enhancement) sport psychologists should arguably be able to respond appropriately and be aware of the skills being used.

In the present study, several respondents used the terms 'counselling' and 'counselling skills'. These are two terms viewed as distinct by the British Association of Counselling (1998; 1999) and authors (e.g., Sanders, 1996). It is not clear if such an understanding of the different terms is held in the field of sport psychology. Some respondents also discussed the term 'listening' and the broader theme of 'interpersonal skills'.

The next study will examine the perceptions of sport psychologists via focus groups on their understanding of the various terms used to refer to relating, i.e., listening skills, interpersonal skills, counselling skills and counselling, which arose from the current survey. The implications for the training of sport psychologists will also be examined, as

the current BASES accreditation system does not reflect the apparent importance of such skills (Miller, personal communication, 1997). Indeed, the Psychology Steering Group of the British Olympic Association (1999) have stated that

“Listening and counselling are important parts of any sport psychologist’s work. However, many sport psychologists have had little or no formal training in this area. Consequently there is a very real need for sport psychologists working with Olympic sports to identify training, or other means, by which they can continuously develop their counselling skills”.

CHAPTER FOUR

STUDY 3

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In study 2, the data suggested that listening, interpersonal and counselling skills were perceived as important relating elements of the role of the sport psychologist. Some respondents suggested that these relating skills were important qualities of a sport psychologist irrespective of the topics that are raised in consultations with athletes. The BOA (1999) has also recognised the importance of relating skills (listening and counselling), but has stated that most sport psychologists in the UK gain little or no formal training in this area.

Sport psychologists are traditionally trained to deal with performance enhancement (Brown et al., 1998). The results from study 2 highlighted that issues other than those directly related to sport are raised in consultations and can affect training and competition performances. In discussing how to deal with these issues (and issues related to sport or performance), several practitioners (trainees and sport psychologists) focused on counselling or counselling skills. As stated above, all the respondents regarded listening as important in order to relate with athletes and listening is a fundamental counselling skill (Sanders, 1998), thus it is important to examine what practitioners understand what they mean by these terms.

The role of a sport psychologist has been questioned for several years (e.g., Bond, 1993, cited by Morris and Thomas, 1995; Hardy and Parfitt, 1994; Hardy et al., 1996, Miller, personal communication, 1997; Bull, 1998). The 'traditional' role of many sport psychologists is one of educating athletes in PST and performance enhancement (Biddle, 1989; Weinberg and Gould, 1999). A discussion on relating skills, however, has received little attention in sport psychology texts. Study 3 focuses on the perceptions of practitioners on their understanding of several terms linked to relating skills. The aims of the study are to explore how practitioners use their relating skills by examining what they understand by terms which have been shown to be important (in study 2) and are fundamental to relating in other fields (e.g., counselling). It also enquires into the perceived importance of counselling skills and implications for training of sport psychologists.

This study uses the methodology of focus groups, which have received little research attention in sport psychology (e.g., Gould et al., 1999). The following section reviews focus group research and highlights the work completed in sport psychology.

4.1.1 FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH

Focus groups can be traced back to the 1920's (Kitzinger, 1994), but until the last 15 years relatively little was being written about focus groups apart from in advertising and marketing publications (Krueger, 1995). Since the 1980's focus groups have developed higher profiles in other areas and have been used for several years by North American politicians to aid their presentation strategies (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999). In the last few years, politicians in the UK are increasingly using focus groups. Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) cite an article from *The Observer* that quotes Tony Blair as saying "there is no one more powerful than a member of a focus group" (Ferguson, 1996, *The Observer*, p.46). The general interest in the increasing use of focus groups has grown considerably in the last few years, for example, Barbour and Kitzinger (1999) even claim to have edited a book titled: 'Developing Focus Group Research' in "response to the unprecedented popularity currently being enjoyed by focus groups" (p.1).

Academic research interest has also increased in the last few years (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999). This has developed mainly in the areas of social anthropology, media/cultural studies and health research and the social sciences (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999). In 1995 a special issue of the journal 'Qualitative Health Research' was devoted to the topic of focus groups. Such a high interest in focus groups has not, as yet, emerged in sport psychology literature, with a current database search only yielding references to a few citations (Crone-Grant and Smith, 1997; Guinan, 1998; Gould et al., 1999).

Focus groups are group discussions exploring specific topics. They are facilitated by a moderator (often the researcher in academic contexts, less often in marketing research) who is sometimes aided by an assistant moderator to help with running the groups and data collection. Focus groups are characterised by interaction between the participants during which the researcher discovers how individuals think and feel about certain issues. The interactional component of focus groups distinguishes them from group interviews or one-to-one interviews. The idea is that group processes can help people to explore and clarify their views with their peers in a way that would be less easily accessible in a one-to-one interview without group interaction (Morgan, 1988).

Despite a range of texts available on planning, moderating and analysing focus groups (e.g., 'Successful Focus Group: Advancing the state of the art', Morgan, 1993; 'The Handbook for Focus Group Research', Greenbaum, 1998; 'The Focus Group Kit, vols. 1-6', Morgan and Krueger, 1998) one common criticism of research using focus groups is their inappropriate use. Wilkinson (1999) argues that the advice in these books is "often

disregarded” (p. 76). Amongst other criticisms, one form of inappropriate use occurs when the data presented does not include interactions.

Several researchers have questioned the lack of reference to the interactional component of focus groups (e.g. Carey and Smith, 1994; Kitzinger, 1994; Morgan, 1995; Wilkinson, 1998, 1999). It is this element that distinguishes it from other qualitative methods and yet there is little mention of it in publications. For example, both Kitzinger (1994) and Wilkinson (1999) in reviews of 40 and 200 focus group studies respectively found no reference to conversations between participants and few studies that included quotations from more than one participant at a time. Carey and Smith (1994) referred to the importance of the context in analysing the data and stated “Researchers who use focus groups and do not attend to the impact of the group setting will incompletely or inappropriately analyse their data” (p.124). Despite the importance of interactions in focus group data, no definition, especially for the purposes of analysis, currently exists in the literature.

In the sport psychology literature to date there is no mention at all of the interactional nature of focus groups, for example, Gould et al. (1999) referred to using ‘focus group interviews’. They gave a brief outline of their procedures that included using focus groups because they were “useful for understanding abstract topics and discovering new insights” (p.128). They stated, “focus group methodology, like all qualitative methods, is particularly well suited for obtaining in-depth responses from participants” (p.129) and “focus groups allow the investigator to seek clarity and ask participants to verify statements made during data collection” (p.129). In their discussion, Gould et al. (1999) stated that “coaches [their participants] were open and honest and fed off one another, without being swayed by any one particular individual’s comments. The focus group leader was also able to probe and ask for clarification” (p.138).

All the benefits and characteristics cited by Gould et al. (1999) to justify the use of focus groups could also be achieved by using other qualitative methods. Gould et al. (1999) did not make any reference to interactions in their justifications of the method of choice or in their results section. They also did not give any examples of interactional nature in their results section and give only verbatim citations from individual comments.

Focus group methodology is a term that has received much misuse (Krueger, 1995). Krueger (1995) states that “mislabelling has occurred with virtually all social science research procedures and one should not be surprised that it occurs with focus groups” (p.525). He goes on to argue that this mislabelling can lead to confused protocols, sloppy procedures and bad data.

The interactional and defining nature of focus groups can be both an advantage and a disadvantage to the research. It is an advantage in that the group dynamic will be a “synergistic factor” (p. 224) in helping participants give information about their perceptions (Carey, 1994). Some people have found that focus group discussions can generate more critical comments from the participants than interviews and may be used to elicit discussion on even sensitive topics (Kitzinger, 1994). Kitzinger (1994) talks about focus groups encouraging a “greater variety of communication” (p. 108) than is often found in more traditional interviews. She refers to “tapping into” these different forms of communication in order to address the knowledge and attitudes that participants have. She states that this is not always identified within thoughtful answers to direct questions. Her examples include anecdotes and jokes and Kitzinger (1994) argues that these forms of communication can

“reach the parts that other methods cannot reach’ - revealing dimensions of understanding that often remain untapped by the more conventional one-to-one interviews or questionnaire” (p. 109).

Some researchers refer to focus groups as quick and cheap (e.g., Bertrand et al., 1992). However, other authors (e.g., Krueger, 1995) argue that it is a myth to suggest that focus groups are quick and cheap because they are “time intensive and require skilled researchers” (p. 530). The data can be complex and subsequent analysis can be time-consuming depending on who the final report is for, i.e., if it is to be used in marketing then the analysis may not be as detailed as for an academic piece of work.

The disadvantages of focus groups include the “psychosocial factors that potentially limit the quality of the data” (Carey, 1994, p.235). The researcher may have less control than in one-to-one interviews and a few individuals may dominate the discussions leaving others to remain quiet throughout the session. In order to ameliorate these influences it is the role of the moderator to facilitate fair and even dialogue whilst bearing in mind the context, i.e., in real-life situations some people will dominate conversations.

Many of the complications with focus groups arise in the transcription and analysis phases of the research. Transcription problems may arise due to not being able to identify participants from voice-only recordings. This can be alleviated via video-recordings, whilst stressing to the participants the need for video being for transcription purposes only, thus limiting their inhibitions.

“The analysis and interpretation of focus group data can be very complex” (Carey, 1994, p.233). In many ways it is similar to other forms of qualitative methodology, but with the added dimension of interactional data. Researchers (e.g., Carey, 1994; Krueger, 1995) have stressed that meaning can be obtained from focus group data if systematic and rigorous methods are used which also incorporate the context of the data.

Included with the focus group research in this study, reflections of the researcher and the participants are also used. These are presented in the appendix D (see method for details on methodology and legitimisation criteria for each part of the study and inclusion of these reflections).

4.2 METHOD

4.2.1 PARTICIPANTS

It was anticipated that there could be an introduction to the participants of each group thus allowing the reader to become more familiar with each member. Due to the fact that the readers of this study will be within the peer group of the participants, however, it was felt that any detailed description (including age, gender; etc.) may allow identification. As confidentiality was assured, a general description of each focus group follows. To maintain confidentiality the names of participants have been changed.

Focus Group 1 (N=5)

This group was slightly different from the rest in that it was composed of four trainee sport psychologists (Peter, Ben, Helen and Laura) and one accredited sport psychologist (Andrew). Out of the four trainees, Laura and Helen were in their first year of supervised experience, Ben was in his second year and Peter was in his final year. All the participants were from the same academic institution. Although this group served as the pilot study for the project, thus several of the questions to this group were worded differently, the data produced from this group was included. It was deemed worthy of inclusion as the participants' understanding of each of the terms and their perceptions on the importance of counselling skills and implications for training were obtained from the questions that the participants discussed.

Age

The age range in this group was 22-53 years, with an average age of 31 years.

Involvement in applied sport psychology

Andrew had been accredited for 10 years and had worked in many different international sports. The trainees were involved in working with athletes of County, club and international U-20s standard.

Counselling or Counselling Skills Training

Andrew had completed several months of formal counselling training. He named teacher training as one place that he received counselling skills training and had also received (and was still receiving) training specific to his method of working. All of the

trainees had attended the same counselling skills course offered to the Masters students at their institution. In addition, Peter and Ben had attended BASES workshops on this topic and Ben had completed a course for the certificate in counselling skills.

Focus Group 2 (N=4)

This group consisted of three accredited sport psychologists (Henry, Kevin and Bill) and one trainee who was in his final year of supervised experience (Adam). They were all from separate academic institutions apart from Adam who worked in private counselling psychology practice.

Age

The age range in this group was 28-42 years, with an average age of 34.5 years.

Accredited Status

Kevin had been accredited for four years, Henry for three years and Bill for two.

Involvement in applied sport psychology

This group (including the trainee) were currently working in a variety of different sports some of which were with County and national standard athletes, but most worked with international standard athletes.

Counselling or Counselling Skills Training

Adam had completed a diploma in counselling psychology, Kevin had completed modules at postgraduate level and obtained experience in a counselling centre, Bill had attended a 30 hours course in basic counselling skills and a BASES workshop and Henry had attended a staff development course, also he described his training in this area as “minimal”.

Focus Group 3 (N=6)

This group consisted of six accredited individuals who were all from academic institutions apart from Debbie. Tony, Rachel and Eddie worked at the same institution as each other and Mary and Ruth were from two other academic institutions.

Age

The age range in this group was 28-44 years, with an average age of 33.8 years.

Accredited Status

Debbie, Eddie and Rachel had been accredited for two years, Mary, Tony and Ruth had been accredited for three years.

Involvement in applied sport psychology

This group were all currently working with athletes in various sports apart from Eddie. Eddie had previously worked with athletes at professional, County and junior international level whereas the range of athletes that the other participants worked with was mostly all of international standard.

Counselling or Counselling Skills Training

Mary had completed a certificate (levels I and II) in basic counselling skills and was in her first year of a part-time course for the certificate in counselling; she had also attended various BASES workshops. Eddie and Rachel had both attended two workshops run by BASES and the BOA, Debbie had attended a BOA workshop, Tony had attended a BOA counselling skills conference and Ruth had attended the BOA workshop and been a teaching assistant for a counselling course.

Focus Group 4 (N=4)

This group consisted of four accredited individuals who were all from the same academic institution.

Age

The age range in this group was 32-53 years, with an average age of 42 years.

Accredited Status

Michael had been accredited for approximately 10 years, Jane for seven years, Niall for three years and David for two years.

Involvement in applied sport psychology

This group were all currently working with athletes in various sports who were all of international standard apart from Niall. Niall had previously worked with athletes at professional, amateur and junior international level.

Counselling or Counselling Skills Training

Jane had attended BOA and BASES workshops, and had received training for a student counselling service and health authority. Niall had attended a counselling course at undergraduate level, a BASES workshop and 2 AAASP (Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology, based in U.S.A.) workshops, David had attended the same undergraduate course and stated that “Counselling skills are an integral part of my life; sport psychology is an extension of that”. Michael reported that he had had “Very little” training, two days approximately.

Focus Group 5 (N=5)

This group consisted of five individuals who were all from the same academic institution.

Age

The age range in this group was 27-44 years, with an average age of 34.6 years.

Accredited Status

George, Ian and Calum were not accredited, however each had been working with athletes (of international, national and professional standard) for 5, 10 and 12 years respectively. Ian and Calum did not want to be known as sport psychologists and Calum described himself as an ‘individual involved with sport psychology’. Rose had been accredited for 1 year (working with athletes for five years) and Robert was accredited but did not give details of the number of years of this accreditation, however, he had been ‘working with’ athletes for 20 years.

Involvement in applied sport psychology

This group were all currently working with athletes from various sports most of which competed at international, national and professional standard.

Counselling or Counselling Skills Training

Rose had completed an introductory counselling skills course, Ian had received what he described as ‘in-house’ training, Calum reported attendance at a BASES workshop, Robert had completed training as part of a hypnosis qualification and held university interviewing qualifications in health psychology, and George reported that he had not had any training in this area.

4.2.2 EQUIPMENT

A Sony recordable Walkman was used to record discussions onto audiotape. A special microphone was needed to ensure it picked up all conversation from people sitting in a circle. An omnidirectional boundary microphone was used for this purpose. It lies flat on a table and can pick up sounds from 360° around where it sits. A separate tape recorder was also used as a back up. A mounted video camera was also used to aid transcription, for example, when several people spoke over each other or when the person who was speaking at the time was not clear from the audiotapes. A freestanding flipchart was used on which to write key words to help keep the group focused on the topic at any one time (see underlined words in transcripts in appendix C).

4.2.3 DEVELOPMENT OF FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

During the development of these questions, various sources on this subject were referred to, for example, Wilkinson (1998) and Kitzinger (1995) were consulted for their critique on studies that have not taken into account the interactional nature of focus groups. The information in the Focus Group Kit (volumes 1-4) (Krueger and Morgan, 1998) was applied extensively throughout the whole process of development and moderation of the groups.

The focus group questions were developed primarily from information obtained from the previous questionnaire study. The questions covered the participants' perceptions of several terms, how important they thought counselling skills were, the implications for training and finally allowing the participants to reflect on their experiences of using counselling skills. Once their understanding of the terms was established, the emphasis was very much on counselling skills and the subsequent implications that such knowledge of this topic would have on the profession of sport psychology.

The first question was previewed with a preamble about the results from the previous study to orient them into the reasons for this study. The first question was intended to be fairly simple to let the participants feel comfortable. During the pilot study, however, it was discovered that the question needed modification as it asked for them to differentiate between two different terms before allowing them to define them. After the pilot study, the first question was changed from "I was wondering if you think there are any differences between listening and interpersonal skills?" to "What do you understand by the term 'listening skills'?"

The next question follows on from this and asks, “What do you understand by the term ‘interpersonal skills’? This was the same format for the terms ‘counselling skills’ and ‘counselling’.

Some of the questions used for this first focus group (the pilot study) were originally in the form of statements. These were felt to be too long to put onto the flipchart and difficult for the participants to discuss clearly, thus they were not used after the pilot study.

During the pilot study the participants were asked to briefly talk about how fundamental each term (that they had just discussed, i.e., listening skills, interpersonal skills, counselling skills and counselling) were to sport psychology practice. Due to time constraints in the next focus groups and the need to shorten the length and number of questions, question structure was modified after the pilot study to focus solely on counselling skills. The question “How important are counselling skills to applied sport psychology practice?” was asked. Focus on this particular term was deemed necessary because it was more pertinent than the other terms in the sense of implications for training and education for applied sport psychologists.

The next question asked them to consider the issue of training “What kind of training do you think a sport psychologist would need to be able to use counselling skills effectively with athletes?”

Finally, the participants were asked to reflect on their experiences of working with athletes and “Talk about a time when you used counselling skills successfully with athletes”. They were also asked “Was there ever a time when you felt you didn’t have the counselling skills to meet the situation?” (see appendix D).

4.2.4 PROCEDURE

Recruitment of Participants

The size of the focus groups was small due to availability of participants and size of the overall population group (approximately 70 accredited sport psychologists currently in UK). Krueger (1995) suggests that it is a myth for groups to need to have large numbers of participants (10-12). He argues that some of the most effective focus groups are composed of 6-8 participants especially when the topics are complex or contain participants who have expertise on the topic.

The participants were selected on a geographical basis in order for several accredited sport psychologists and trainees to meet to discuss the topics in the focus groups without undue disruption to their daily lives. If travel was necessary by participants it was

kept to a minimum and the moderator and an assistant moderator completed most of the travelling miles. As the researcher was familiar with most of the participants (due to being an accredited sport psychologist herself) this facilitated organisation of the groups. There was a person within each group with whom arrangements were made regarding venue, refreshments, facilities, etc.

Initial availability dates were obtained via each participant over the telephone and times and dates convenient to all within each group were arranged. Participants were reminded of the time and date of the focus group one week prior to their arranged meeting. The participants were also sent a letter briefly describing a focus group and what the topic of the group was going to be.

Preparation for the focus groups

Before each group started the moderator and an assistant moderator prepared the room by organising chairs in a circle for the participants and the moderator, wrote key words on the flipchart, checked recording equipment, set up video recorder, and got the refreshments ready. The refreshments (drinks and biscuits) have been suggested to be central to the generation of an informal atmosphere (Morgan, 1998).

The original seating plan (used in the pilot study) had the seats arranged in a circle with the flipchart included in this circle. The moderator originally sat next to the flipchart, however, this arrangement caused the moderator to become the focus of the participants' attention. Feedback from this group and reflections of the moderator caused the seating arrangement to be changed so that the moderator sat amongst the participants and the flipchart was at the other side of the circle to her. This had the desired effect in future groups of the participants not addressing their discussions towards the moderator. The assistant moderator sat outside of the group next to the recording equipment in order to change tapes, etc.

A low table was placed in the middle of each group. The purpose of this was twofold: 1). to allow people to have somewhere to place their drinks, again trying to create an informal atmosphere, and 2). the omnidirectional microphone needed to be placed on a flat and even surface in the middle of the group.

Role of the Assistant Moderators

Krueger (1998) encourages the use of having assistant moderators to help with the preparation, running and summarising of the groups. Two assistant moderators (only one present during each focus group) helped throughout the project. Each were briefed by the

moderator on their roles for the project. This briefing included giving them some information from Krueger's (1998) book. In addition to dealing with the practicalities of setting up the group (as stated above) their role was also to take notes and summarise the content of what the group had discussed in order to allow the participants to clarify or expand on any issues raised at this point. If time ran out before the summary could be verbally given, the participants were sent a written form of the summary for them to comment on should they wish (see section below on 'after transcription').

For the pilot study a research team of three people sat in the room and observed various aspects of the focus groups. They were asked to focus on the moderator's behaviour whilst running the focus groups and the interactions of the group, for example, were the participants able to answer the questions? How did the group react to certain questions? The researchers were helped in this task by consulting a rating system (Krueger, 1998). Their feedback was an important part of development for the next groups.

Running the focus groups

Krueger's (1998) book on 'Moderating focus groups' was consulted for this purpose. Moderating the groups was about a balance of allowing the participants to talk freely and exchange views about their thoughts and feelings on the issues whilst keeping the groups focused on the topic to be discussed at any one time.

Before the group began the moderator introduced herself, described what focus groups were and what they could expect from the discussion. The focus group was introduced as a group discussion on a particular topic, the focus for each group being 'Counselling skills in sport psychology'. This introduction emphasised that the role of the moderator was only to facilitate their discussions and keep them focused on the topic to be discussed. They were told to feel free to ask each other questions and exchange anecdotes and that gaining a consensus was not the aim of the discussion. Confidentiality was assured.

After this introduction the participants completed a consent form and then the groups were asked to introduce themselves, tell the rest of the group what they liked to do when they were not involved with sport psychology and the reason why they came to the discussion. The purpose of this "ice breaker" was to encourage them all to talk in a more relaxed manner before the first question and to identify any strong feelings they might have had about counselling skills from the start.

After the groups

At the end of the focus group discussions the participants listened to a verbal summary from the assistant moderator (as indicated above). Where time was not available for a verbal summary, the participants were sent a written copy of the summary. They also completed a form which asked for demographic information, i.e., age, number of years BASES accredited/ what year of supervision they were in, the sports they worked in and details of any counselling or counselling skills training that they had completed.

After each group had departed from the room the moderator reflected upon her experiences. These included impressions of the group dynamics, how it was felt they reacted to the questions and how the moderator felt running the group. This process was facilitated after all but one group (the final group) by one of the assistant moderators who had expertise in reflective practice.

After transcription

Once the group discussions had been transcribed all the participants were sent a copy of the transcript from their group and a copy of the assistant moderator's summary (which they may or may not have already heard, see above). Each participant was given the opportunity to comment on the content and reflect on their experiences of the process and being in the focus group if they wished to do so. They were also asked to reflect on the summary notes and/or any issues that arose in the discussions, for example, if they wished to clarify anything. They were given the opportunity to change/delete any names of individuals or institutions that they were not comfortable with having in the transcript (their reflections are included in appendix D).

4.2.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis followed a procedure commonly used in qualitative analysis in recent sport psychology literature, content analysis. The seminal work of Scanlan et al. (1989) has provided a 'template' (Biddle et al., in press) for qualitative analysis in sport psychology literature which has been largely adhered to by qualitative researchers in this field since (e.g., Gould, et al., 1992). Since such work has been published they have been criticised by several authors on the basis of their claims for using "inductiveness" in the analysis (e.g., Biddle, et al., in press; Krane et al., 1997). Krane et al. (1997) argue that this notion of starting research without any prior knowledge of the phenomenon under consideration is impossible.

Due to such criticisms and the author's acknowledgement of potential bias in the process, the present data analysis also borrowed from analytical aspects developed by Jonathan Smith called interpretative phenomenological analysis or IPA (Smith, 1995, 1996; Smith et al., 1999). IPA was developed in health psychology, but Smith et al. (1999) indicated that IPA could also be employed in other areas of psychology. Smith et al. (1999) argue that access to a participant's personal world "depends on, and is complicated by, the researcher's own conceptions and indeed these are required in order to make sense of that other personal world through a process of interpretative activity" (p. 218). Although Smith et al. (1999) do not use the terms 'inductive' and 'deductive' their method similarly acknowledges that a researcher's preconceptions can influence data analysis and thus, it can be suggested, IPA is formulated to be both inductive and deductive.

Smith (1995, 1996) also gives clear guidance on each stage of analysis for a researcher to follow. Although some focus group literature refers to the importance of the interactional nature of the data, detail is not forthcoming from such works to indicate the procedure. There is no evidence in the literature to suggest that IPA had been utilised in analysing data from focus groups, however, it is an appropriate form of analysis as long as the data is sourced, i.e., whether the themes have come from individual comments or interactions amongst the groups (Smith, personal communication).

Stage one

The author transcribed all five focus group discussions. This enabled a familiarity with each transcript and, arguably, helped the author be more competent in analysing the content of the discussions. In addition focus group 1's (pilot study) discussions were transcribed before the next group, this enabled the author to listen to her style of moderating and pick out points where it could improve, for example, when to keep asking questions and when to keep quiet. The length of transcripts ranged from 16,3348 words from group 5 (not including summary) to 24,017 words from group 2 (not including summary).

Stage two

In line with the IPA procedure outlined by Smith et al. (1999), following transcription of each focus group the audiotapes and transcripts were listened to and read several times. During each reading of a transcript the left side of the margin was used to note down anything that was interesting about the interactions between the participants, for example, disagreements. The right margin was used to note emerging theme titles which

captured the essence of what was being said. Different colours were used to identify whether the participants were discussing an issue in reply to a question on listening skills, interpersonal skills, counselling skills, counselling, the importance of counselling skills or training.

As this analysis process continued the source of the themes was taken into account, i.e., whether the themes were from interactions or individual comments. After consulting the focus group literature, including articles that made reference to the importance of interactions in the analysis (e.g., Kitzinger, 1994; Wilkinson, 1998), no definition of an 'interaction, for the purpose of analysis, exists. The formulation of such a definition was imperative in order to keep the data in context. The definition developed for an interaction is as follows:

A piece of data is defined as being obtained from an interaction if there is direct reference made in response to something that another member of the group has said. There is no stipulation on the length of response, merely that it is present in the dialogue. A reference to what another person has said does not need to occur immediately after it has been stated, the important aspect is the reference to it. An interaction may include the moderator.

This definition was validated by consulting the research team, plus two experts in focus group methodology and qualitative analysis. The above definition was used to categorise the data into: interactions and individual comments. For the purposes of this study it is acknowledged that there may be a small attrition rate for interactions, this is because sometimes it was impossible to know that what one participant had said was in response to what another participant had previously said. The difficulty lay in not knowing who or what has triggered a verbal response, if indeed it was triggered by something that somebody else had said. Distal factors become apparent here, i.e., the longer another comment is from a source the less certain one can be about the interaction.

Stage three

After emerging theme titles were placed in the right hand margin for group 1 this was repeated for each set of focus group data. Being aware of the potential for researcher bias and elements of 'deductiveness' in analysing subsequent focus group transcripts, each transcript was analysed with the intent of being independent of analyses of other groups,

i.e., the themes from group 1 were not used to look for more instances of the same themes in focus group 2, etc. This method is in line with Smith et al. (1999) who described using IPA for looking at participants' shared experiences. They do, however, point out that due to the sequential nature of the analysis it is possible that the researcher is "oriented or primed" to certain aspects of the data rather than others. This notion is reflected in Smith et al.'s (1999) view of interpretative work in which the researcher complicates the process by having conceptions which may affect interpretation of the data, but are, on the other hand, required in order to make sense of the participants' worlds.

In order to alleviate the dilemma for potential bias, further independent co-analysts participated in the process. Each co-analyst had one focus group to examine. Master-theme lists were produced for each focus group and it was these master-theme lists that were used to corroborate the analyses with the co-analysts. This introduced the idea of triangulation into the analysis. This invention for the analysis attempted to increase the inductiveness of and decrease the 'momentum of deductiveness'. The researcher also reflected on the whole process of the focus group study, in order to account for the presence of self (see 'reflections' in appendix D).

Stage four

A meeting with each co-analyst (five in total) was convened and each theme was considered one by one. This process involved clarification of themes, splitting one theme into two separate themes and an opportunity for them to add any themes that they felt the author missed. Each co-analyst was experienced at completing qualitative analysis. They were asked to read each transcript several times and pick out themes from interactions and individual comments that they felt were important and meaningful to the study.

As this process continued in an ongoing cyclical and (what Smith (1995) described as) an 'iterative' fashion, feedback on the summaries and reflections arrived back from focus group participants who had replied. Although the summaries were helpful in generating or reframing some themes, it was clear from the participants' feedback that sometimes the summaries were too specific, i.e., picking up on one individual's comments without noting other comments from the group. Several comments from one participant in particular about the inaccuracy of the summary for their group caused a rethink of the analysis process. Categorising the data into one theme when the group clearly didn't agree with each other could easily overlook disagreements within a focus group.

It was therefore decided to complete another level of analysis of line-by-line coding to obtain 'raw data points' (RDPs), rather than themes initially. Although these were often

individual points the context in which they were said was taken into account (i.e., individual or interaction) and all individual points relevant to the aims of the study were reflected in the data analysis (as opposed to the summaries which had picked out some individual's comments and not others'). The RDPs were often in the same words as those spoken by the participants, this was in order to reflect their world rather than the analysts'.

Line-by-line coding was recommended by Charmaz (1995) in her description of grounded theory. It helps take an analytic approach to data, keeps closeness to the data and helps avoid placing the analyst's motives on the data (Charmaz, 1995). The data was still categorised within the context of interactions or individual comments. This procedure was lengthy, but it was systematic and rigorous. It enabled closeness with the data that went beyond the previous analytic stage. This process was again triangulated with each co-analyst.

This system of content analysis is unique in the sport psychology literature. In their description of analysis of their focus group work, Gould et al. (1999) stated that they identified raw data themes from the transcripts. It may be possible that Gould et al. missed the context of the interaction by not completing line-by-line coding of individual's points as they appear to have picked out themes at an early stage ("direct or paraphrased quotes reflecting a particular thought from the groups relative to the major questions posed by the focus group leader", p.130). Clustering or categorising themes is a necessary step, but only once each point within the context of a discussion is taken into account.

Stage five

Once RDPs were established for each group and typed onto sheets of paper all of the RDPs were literally cut out and placed in envelopes marked either 'listening skills', 'interpersonal skills', 'counselling skills', 'counselling', 'the importance of counselling skills' and 'training' depending on the context of the question in which the RDP was said. Each RDP was then clustered into RDTs, HOTs and broad dimensions and placed in envelopes according to their theme category. This placing of these RDPs into themes was verified via the co-analysts.

The paper or 'hand' method of analysis (Morgan, 1998) was chosen over a computer analysis method in order to be able to 'eye ball' and see 'the big picture' of all the RDPs at once in order to categorise them further. Burnard (1991) and Bertrand (1992) also describes such a method of cutting and pasting. A computer programme enables quick searching and categorising of codes, however, it does not complete the analysis for the

researcher (Smith, 1995; Morgan, 1998). The systematic method chosen here is thought acceptable for approximately six focus groups or less (Morgan, 1998).

4.2.6 REFLECTIONS-ON-ACTION/ BEING REFLEXIVE

During each phase of this study (from moderating the focus groups through all the analysis and write-up) the author's own reflections were noted. The procedure for reflections that took place after each focus group was described above in the section on 'Procedure: After the groups'. Smith (1995) argues that self-reflection can be an important part of the interpretative research process as it can account for the construction of the project, the results obtained and subsequent interpretations. The reflections of the researcher and the focus group participants are shown in appendix D.

4.2.7 LEGITIMISATION CRITERIA

Trustworthiness criteria

Using the 'trustworthiness' criteria developed for qualitative research by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and modified by Hardy et al. (1996) in sport psychology, a list of various criteria to legitimise the work is presented below:

Credibility criteria

Referential adequacy (or "ways of recording data so others could check its accuracy", Hardy et al., 1996, p.264) was achieved by audio and video taping all the focus groups and subsequently transcribing them.

Investigator triangulation was achieved by using a different co-analyst for each focus group analysis.

Member checking was used, i.e., allowing the participants to check the full transcripts and written summaries of the sessions for accuracy. They were also asked to comment on anything they wanted to clarify and reflect on their experiences of being in a focus group. As stated above in 'stage four' one participant highlighted that the summaries were too specific and only picked out individual comments at the expense of other individual comments and this encouraged a modification in the analysis

Credibility was also achieved by obtaining some positive reflections of the focus groups from the participants. These are included in the 'reflections' section of appendix D.

Transferability criteria

Palmer et al. (1999) state that transferability concerns “the provision of a database that enables transferable judgements on the part of potential appliers” (p.318). ‘Thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) is given here in order to meet this criterion. Thick description involves detailed descriptions of the location and the people within it, giving verbatim narratives of the participants’ perceptions and ideas in context. The thick description of the participants is given above in the ‘participants’ section of the method and detailed quotes are included throughout the results and discussion section of study 3.

Dependability

Much qualitative research in the sport psychology literature (e.g., Gould et al., 1992; Gould et al., 1996; James and Collins, 1997; Hanton and Jones, 1999) has included references to the experience and training of the researchers in respect of performing qualitative research. The researcher and each of the co-analysts in the present study had been trained in the use of qualitative research methods. The assistant moderators were also trained in conducting qualitative research. The assistant moderator (who was present at the first four focus groups) had expertise in conducting reflective research. She facilitated this process with the researcher at the end of each group discussion.

Conceivability (Hardy et al. 1996) or Confirmability criteria (Lincoln and Guba (1985))

An audit trail of detailed records of the data and data analysis are presented in the method section above (see also the transcripts of each focus group in appendix C).

Criteria from interpretive research

As stated in the review of literature (chapter 1) there is currently debate on the issue of criteria for qualitative research in the sport psychology field and other related domains. Although the trustworthiness criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985) has been invoked by most qualitative research in sport psychology and used in this study above, this criteria has also been criticised by Sparkes (1998) and Lincoln and Guba (1998) for paralleling positivist criteria. Although trustworthiness criteria is appropriate for a post-positivist perspective, Biddle et al. (in press) argue that other forms of criteria may also be used to legitimise qualitative research rather than relying “solely” on trustworthiness criteria.

It is recognised that only using trustworthiness criteria for qualitative research does not reflect the views of contemporary researchers (e.g., Sparkes, 1998; Biddle et al., in press) and would only present a post-positivist perspective (Sparkes, 1998). Other criteria

are therefore taken into account in order to further legitimise the work in this study using criteria from interpretive work.

The reflexive narrative (see 'reflections' in appendix D) is a form of legitimisation criteria in itself, as Sword (1999) has stated "disclosure of how one is inherently enmeshed in the research enhances the legitimacy of findings and new insights".

Internal coherence and presentation of the evidence are two interpretive criteria suggested by Smith (1996). Internal coherence (or simply coherence, Hill et al., 1997) refers to the need to concentrate on whether the argument presented in the study is logical and justified by the data. This criteria is followed in the present study by allowing the reader to observe the systematic procedures involved at every level of the study and make a judgement on the quality of the analysis. Presentation of evidence is achieved by presenting sufficient verbatim evidence from the participants to allow the reader to interrogate the interpretation.

The criteria of illumination (Heron, 1988) may be open to different interpretations (Gilbourne, 1998). However, it is argued that the reader can give an opinion on the illuminating quality of the research. The researcher would also put forward that the work is illuminating in the exploration of an area of the role of the sport psychologist that has received little attention in the literature, i.e., relating skills. The work in this study is illuminating in presenting the perceptions of the same group of people who may use the information gained for their own practical purposes. This criteria is similar to the criteria of the applicability of the results (Hill et al. 1997), i.e., the usefulness of the findings for practice and further research.

4.3 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

4.3.1 INTRODUCTION

The first part of the results and discussion (section 4.3.2) are divided into four sections of analyses for each term discussed in the focus groups, i.e.:

4.3.2.1 Summary of 'Listening skills',

4.3.2.2 Summary of 'Interpersonal skills',

4.3.2.3 Summary of 'Counselling skills',

and 4.3.2.4 Summary of 'Counselling'.

These correspond to the main terms for debate in each focus group that were shown as keywords on flip charts to help focus the discussions. Presented within each of these four sections are explanatory and diagrammatic summaries of each qualitative analysis. These summaries are shown to help the reader orient him/herself into the structure of the content from the focus groups.

In each diagrammatic summary table that includes raw data points, figures appear after each piece of raw data. These refer to the group from which the point emerged and the page number where it can be found in the transcript (appendix C), for example, G2:14 refers to group 2, page 14. Where a name is given, for example, G2:4:Adam, this refers to a point that has been categorised as an individual comment made by Adam in group 2, page 4.

As the summaries act to take the themes away from the context, narrative expansions of interactive dialogue are presented in order to assist in recontextualising elements of the themes. The next main section (section 4.3.3) therefore focuses on a more in-depth discussion of the results. Each broad dimension is considered in turn for the focus group discussions on 'listening skills', 'interpersonal skills', 'counselling skills' and 'counselling'. The broad dimensions used for the structure for the next section are as follows:

4.3.3.1 Broad dimension: Skills of a sport psychologist

4.3.3.2 Broad dimension: Conceptual understanding of the terms

4.3.3.3 Broad dimension: Role boundaries

and 4.3.3.4 Broad dimension: Importance of the various skills/terms

This structure for presentation and discussion of analysis was used because there are four matching broad dimension themes across all of these analyses. The organisation enables discussion of themes in each section that are the same and it avoids a repetitive format if it was presented section-by-section, or term-by-term. The reader is directed to elements of the appendices (appendix C) throughout the results and discussion (after each verbatim example from the focus groups) for further reference to the context from which a dialogue has been taken.

In presenting the verbatim examples of interactive dialogue, minor hesitations (e.g., “erm”, “uh”) have been deleted for readability. Ellipses (...) are used to indicate omitted material and square brackets [] are used to indicate words omitted to protect confidentiality or when the actual word(s) spoken by the participant have not been understood at transcription stage.

The final analysis section on ‘training’ is presented on its own at the end of the results and discussion (in section 4.3.4) as some of the broad dimensions for these results are different from the other analyses. An integrated discussion is presented at the end of this chapter, this attempts to incorporate the main findings from the study and reach a sense of a ‘culmination of points’.

4.3.2 SUMMARIES OF QUALITATIVE ANALYSES

4.3.2.1 SUMMARY OF ‘LISTENING SKILLS’

All the groups were able to describe listening skills, some used professional terms that may be common to counselling skills courses. Other participants used terms which suggested they had derived their knowledge and/or skills from their practical experiences of working with athletes, also known as ‘practical’ knowledge (Schön, 1983) or ‘craft’ knowledge (McFee, 1993).

Listening was viewed by some participants as ‘actively looking for underlying messages’. This highlighted the need to be able to focus not only on athletes’ verbal messages but also their non-verbal communication. One participant emphasised that whilst this was true, inappropriate listening includes a form of ‘interrogation’.

It was perceived that listening skills can be developed through both professional and craft knowledge, but one group (3) queried if sport psychologists were actually professionally trained to listen.

Listening was described as an important part of communication, which in turn was an important part of interpersonal skills. All groups stressed the importance of listening skills. It was perceived also as an important component of counselling skills. It was suggested that it is not only important in counselling and sport psychology, but also for other helpers.

A summary of the qualitative analysis for listening skills is presented in figure 4.1 on the next page. A more detailed examination of the analysis is presented in figure 4.2.

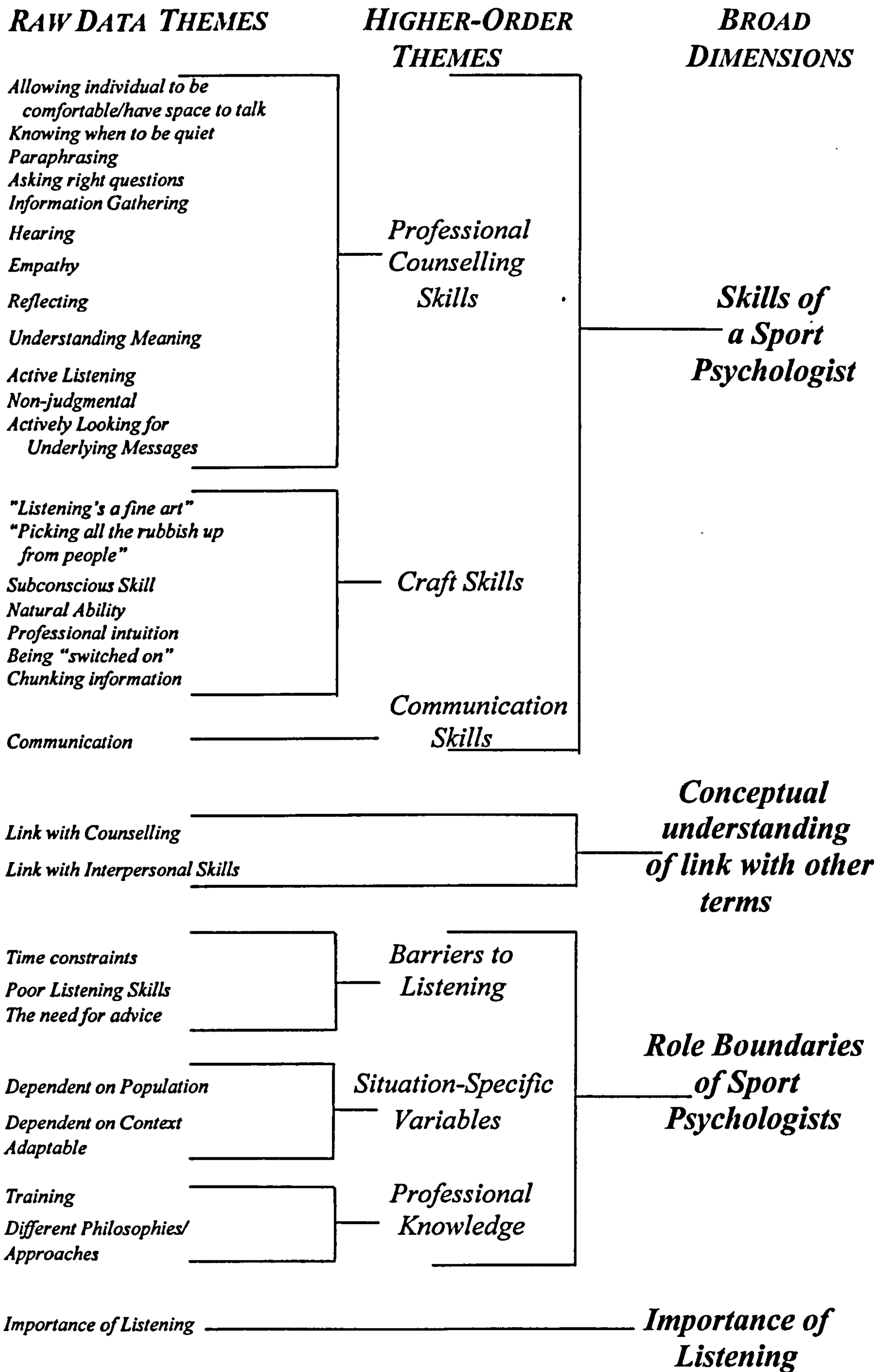


FIGURE 4.1 Raw Data Themes, Higher-Order Themes & Broad Dimensions for LISTENING SKILLS

Raw Data Points

Raw Data Themes

Higher-order Themes

Broad Dimensions

- ◆ Allowing the person to decide whether to say more or not (G2:3:Adam)
- ◆ You've got to let them go at their own pace (G4:3)
- ◆ Knowing when to keep quiet is one of the least obvious but most important skills of listening (G2:3:Adam)
- ◆ Listening can also mean silence (G3)
- ◆ Prompting willingness to talk comes from paraphrasing (G2:3)
- ◆ Be able to chunk information that they've just given you and utilise that within your next question (G5:1)
- ◆ Asking the questions that will facilitate the answers you're looking for (G2:2)
- ◆ A lot of people can listen, but it's the ones who can spot when to ask the right questions (G2:2)
- ◆ Collecting information to evaluate or assess the situation (G3:1)
- ◆ Collecting information (verbal and non-verbal) embraces both listening and observation (G3:1)
- ◆ Hearing (G2:1)
- ◆ Hearing and listening are not the same thing (G3:4)

Allowing individual to be comfortable/ have space to talk

Knowing when to be quiet

Paraphrasing

Asking right questions

Information Gathering

Hearing

Skills of a Sport Psychologist

FIGURE 4.2 Examples of Raw Data Points for the Raw Data Themes, Higher-Order Themes & Broad Dimensions of LISTENING SKILLS

Raw Data Points **Raw Data Themes** **Higher-order Themes** **Broad Dimensions**

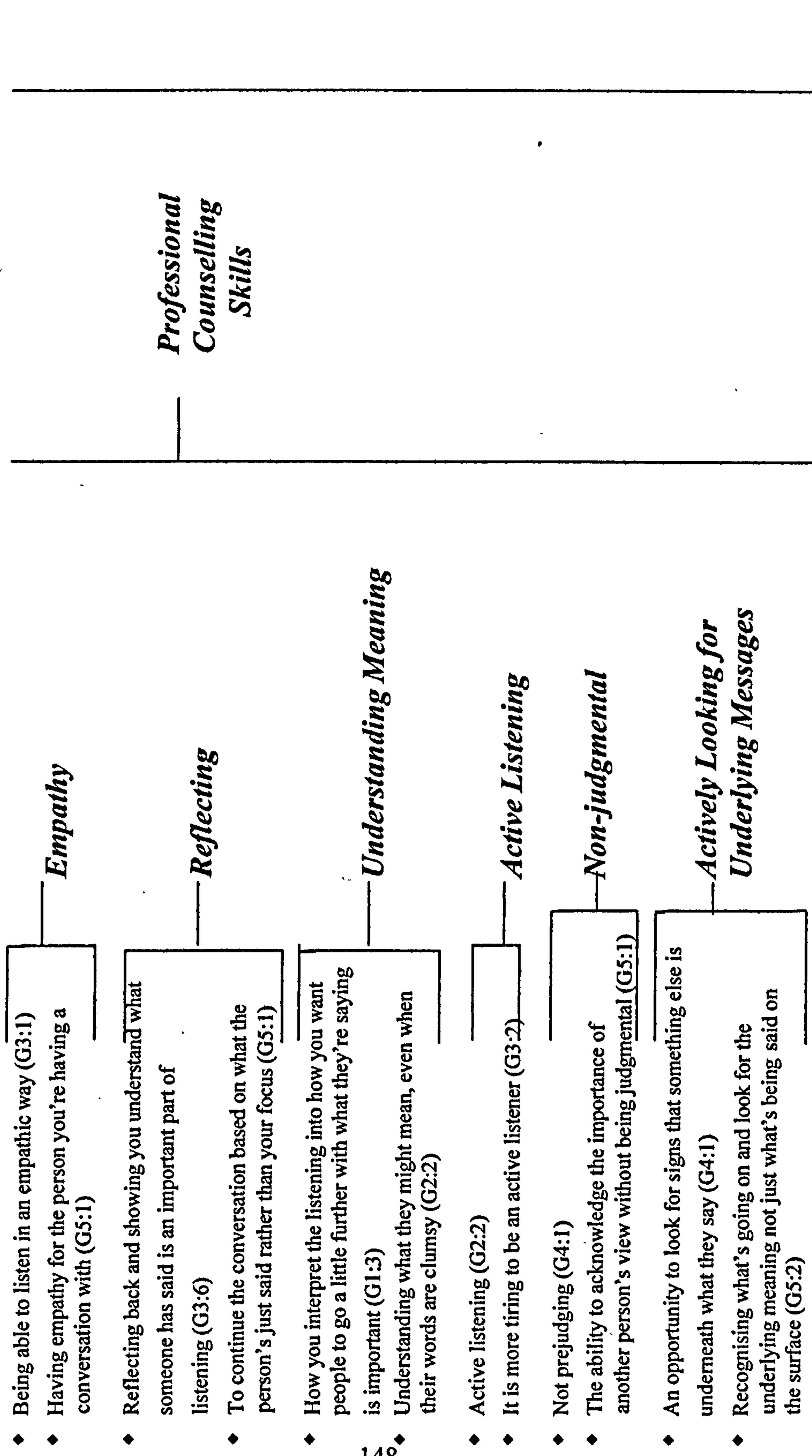


FIGURE 4.2 Examples of Raw Data Points for the Raw Data Themes, Higher-order Themes & Broad Dimensions of LISTENING SKILLS (CONT'D)

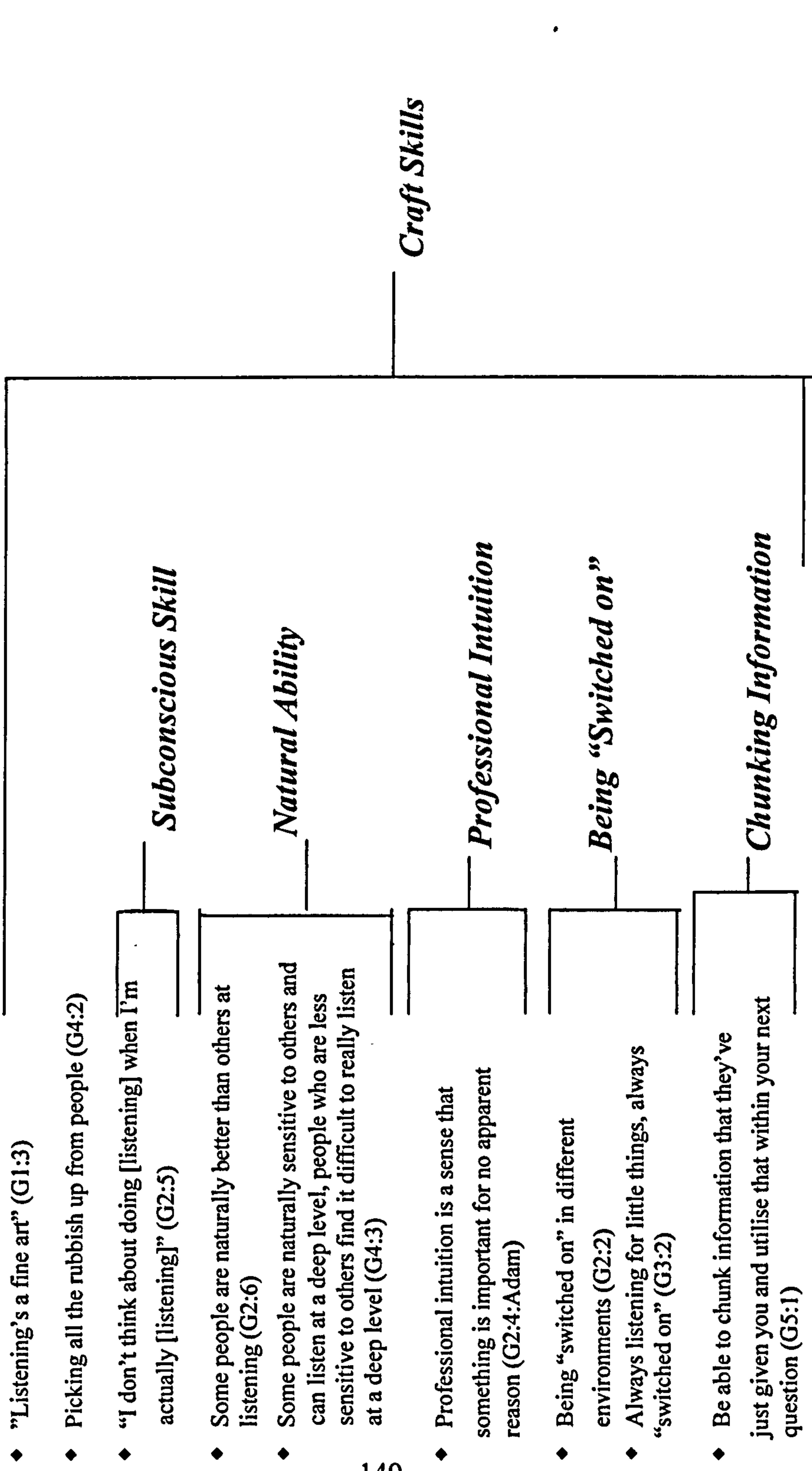


FIGURE 4.2 Examples of Raw Data Points for the Raw Data Themes, Higher-Order Themes & Broad Dimensions of LISTENING SKILLS (CONT'D)

Raw Data Points

Raw Data Themes

Higher-order Themes

Broad Dimensions

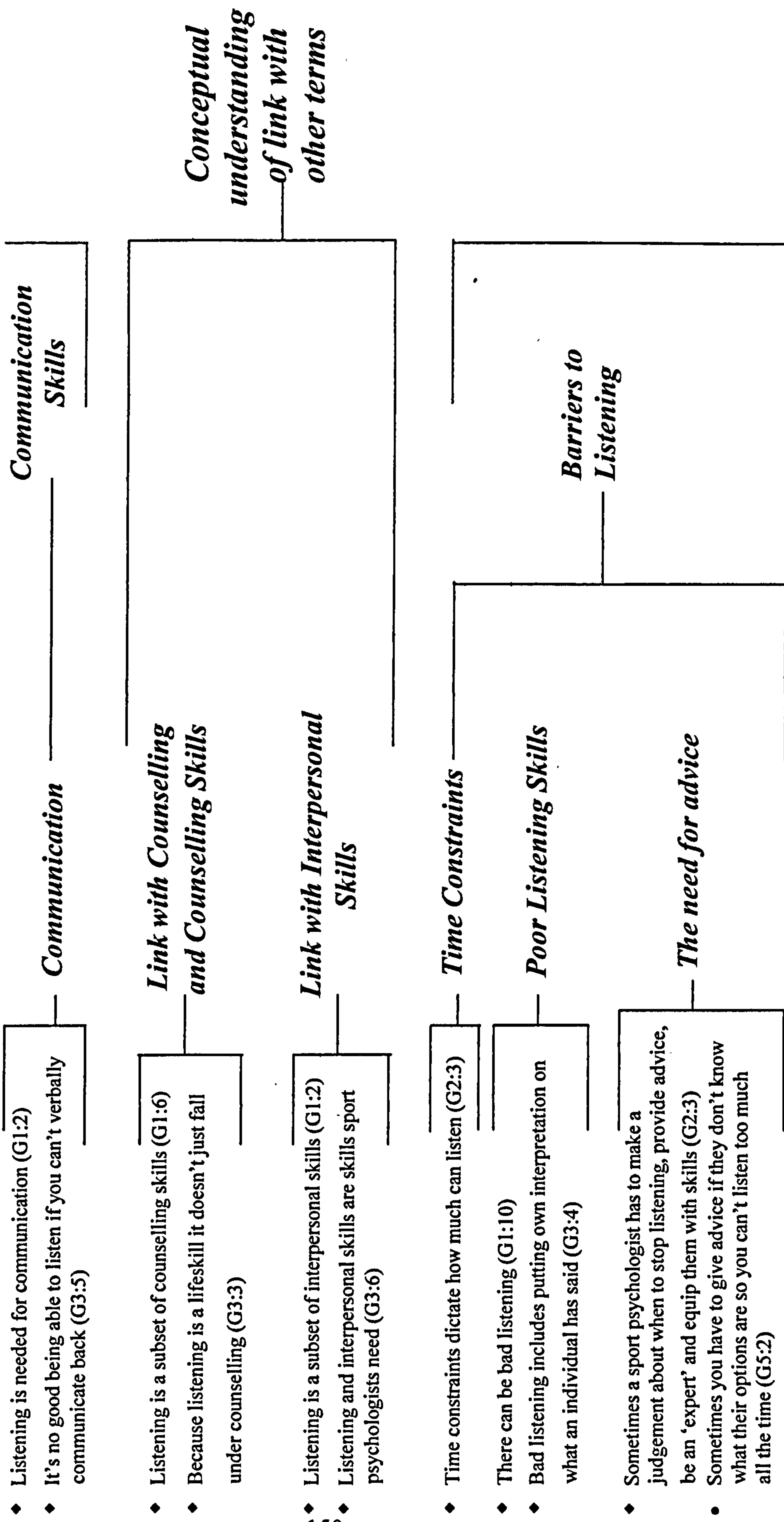


FIGURE 4.2 Examples of Raw Data Points for the Raw Data Themes, Higher-Order Themes & Broad Dimensions of LISTENING SKILLS (CONT'D)

Raw Data Points

Raw Data Themes

Higher-order Themes

Broad Dimensions

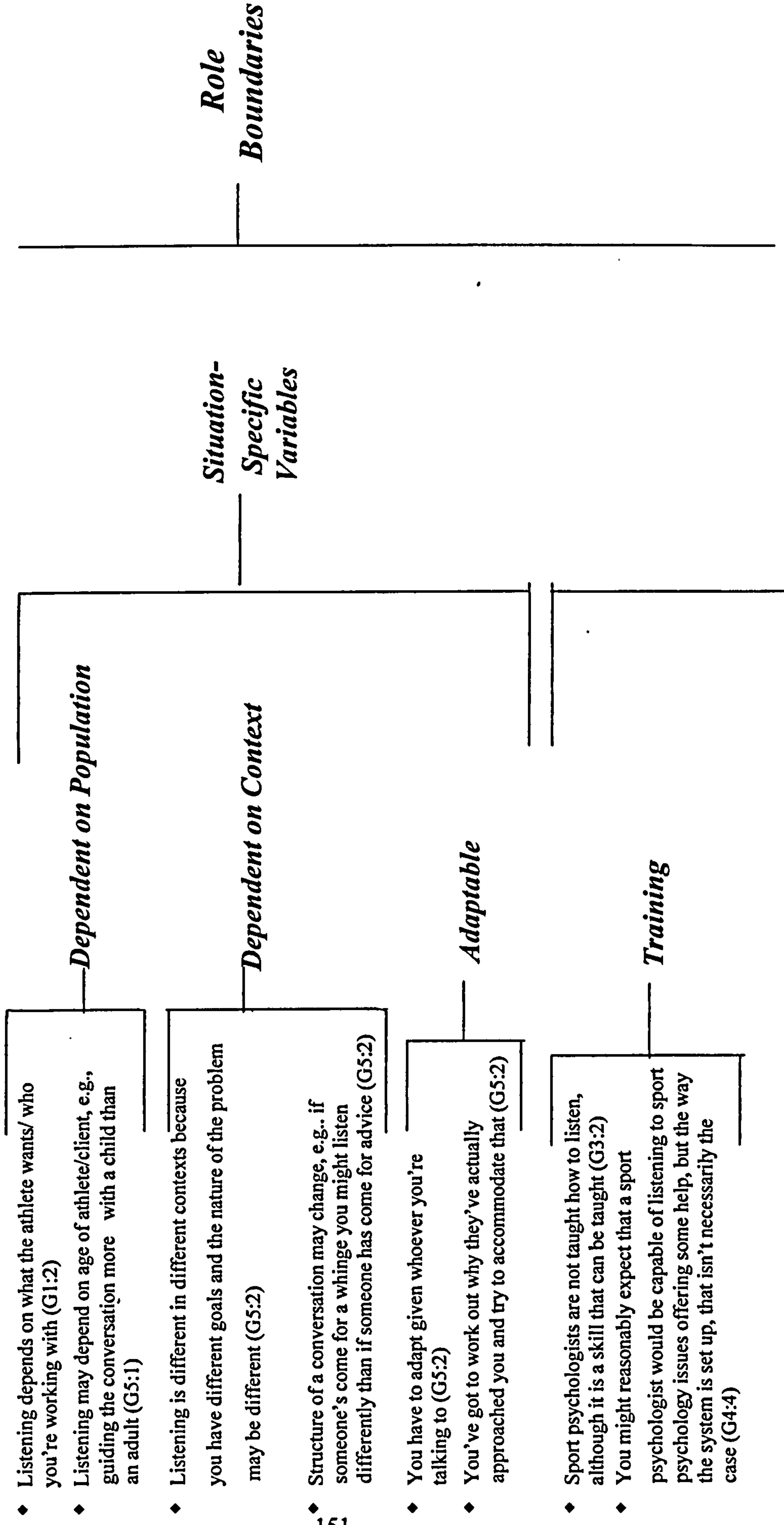


FIGURE 4.2 Examples of Raw Data Points for the Raw Data Themes, Higher-Order Themes & Broad Dimensions of LISTENING SKILLS (CONT'D)

- ◆ Listening depends on your style and philosophy of your practice (G1:2)
- ◆ There are different approaches to listening in models of counselling, e.g., letting that person say what they want to say or a more directed approach (G5:1)

*Different Philosophies/
Approaches*

*Professional
Knowledge*

- ◆ Listening is the foundation upon which everything else is based (G1:2)
- ◆ As a sport psychologist often spend time just listening to people (G4:2)

*Importance
of Listening*

FIGURE 4.2 Examples of Raw Data Points for the Raw Data Themes, Higher-Order Themes & Broad Dimensions of LISTENING SKILLS (CONT'D)

4.3.2.2 SUMMARY OF 'INTERPERSONAL SKILLS'

'Interpersonal skills' is a term described as broad which encompasses other relating skills such as communicating and listening. Good interpersonal skills were paralleled with good communication skills, whereas this was not necessarily the case with listening skills.

Some skills were categorised as craft skills or characteristics, for example, dress and humour were viewed as important components of interpersonal skills, thus such skills include more than just what is said, it includes presentation and how something is said. How much the personality of the individual was part of using interpersonal skills and how much one has to adapt to different people and situations were themes that arose in most groups.

Role boundaries of the sport psychologist were discussed in the context of being adaptable, multifaceted, not "switching off" from the role of sport psychologist and training.

Most groups acknowledged the importance of interpersonal skills. One group considered if they were essential in the sense that one could work as a sport psychologist without them depending if the situation or the approach or style of the practitioner allowed and concluded that it would be possible to work without them, but it would restrict the applicability of the work to different situations and sporting populations.

The term 'interpersonal skills' was considered broad, complex and difficult to define unless you "...actually consider the whole range of...skills/ability/characteristics that made up the profile". Interpersonal skills were perceived by most of one particular group (group 3) to be synonymous with counselling skills.

A summary of the qualitative analysis for interpersonal skills is presented in figure 4.3 on the next page. A more detailed examination of the analysis is presented in figure 4.4.

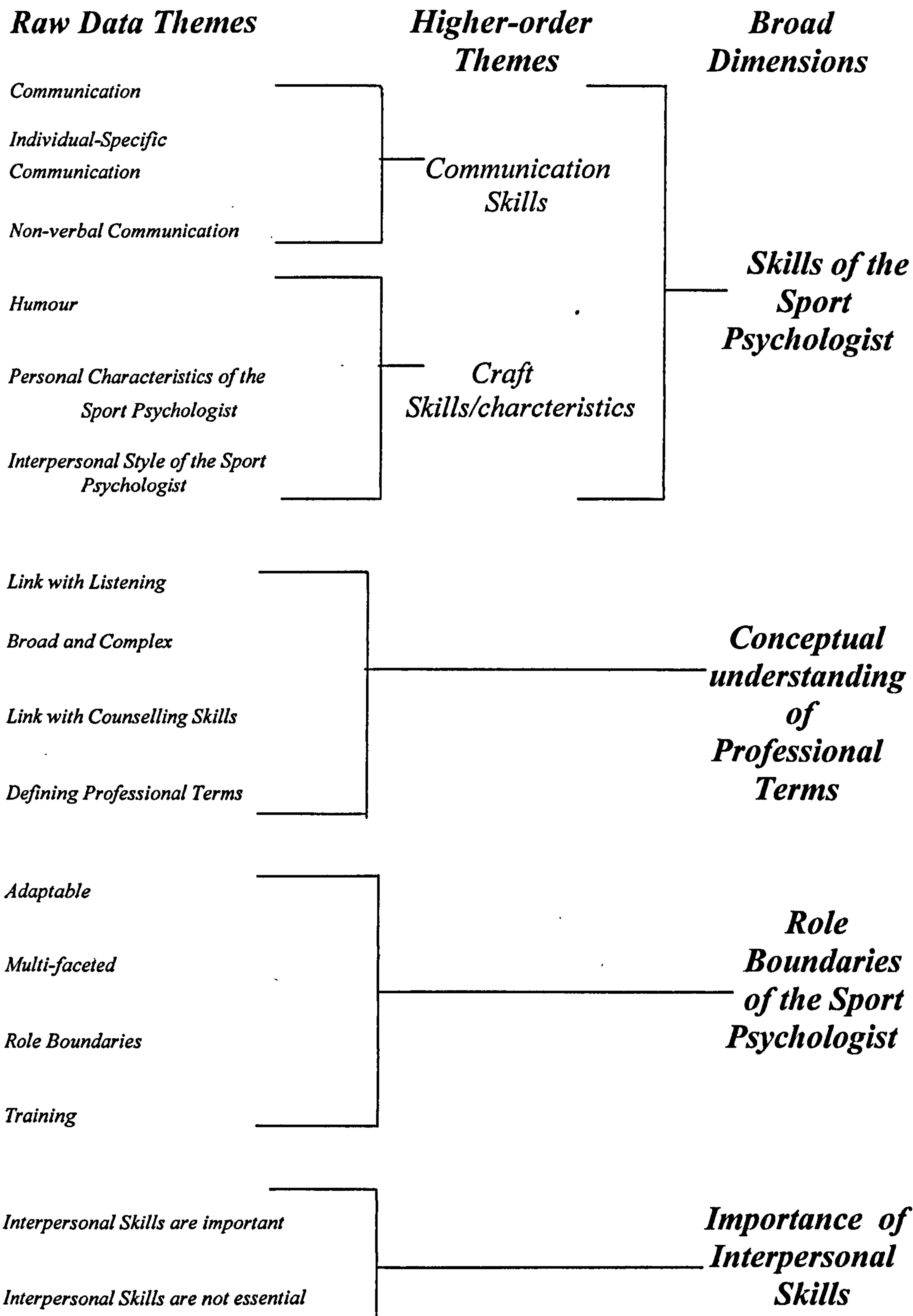


FIGURE 4.3 *Raw Data Themes, Higher-Order Themes & Broad Dimensions for INTERPERSONAL SKILLS*

Raw Data Points

Raw Data Themes

Higher-order Themes Broad Dimension

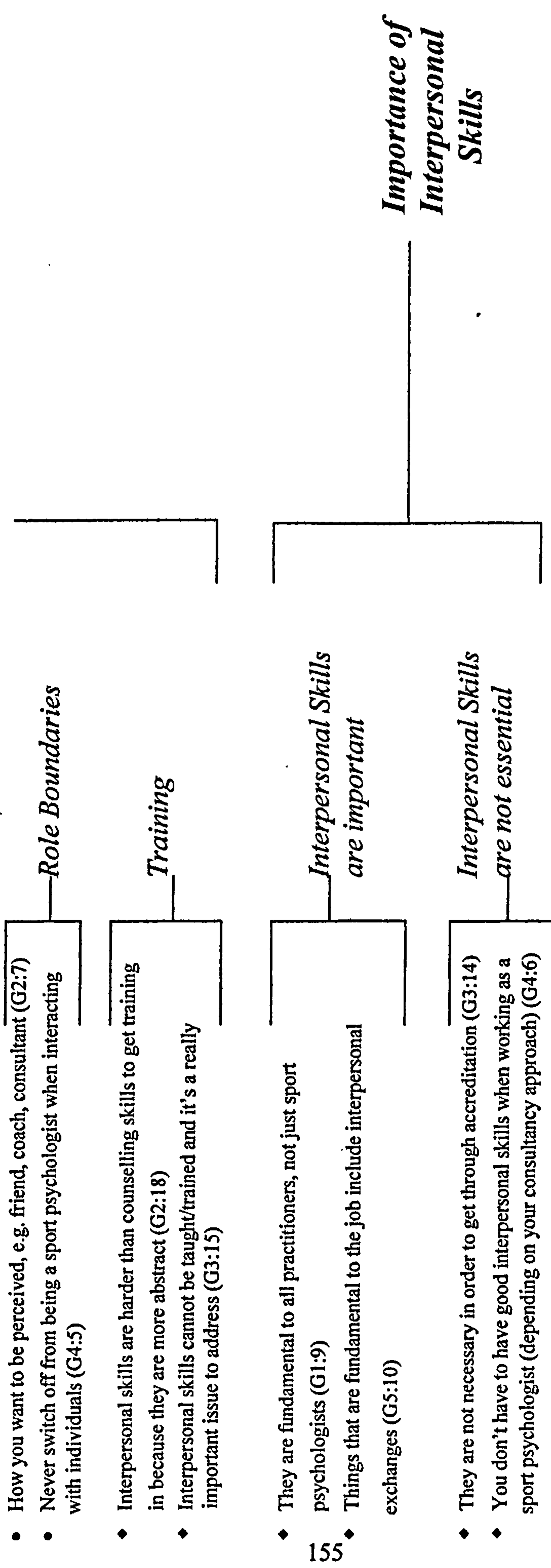


FIGURE 4.4 Examples of Raw Data Points for the Raw Data Themes, Higher-Order Themes & Broad Dimensions of INTERPERSONAL SKILLS (CONT'D)

Raw Data Points

Raw Data Themes

Higher-order Themes *Broad Dimension*

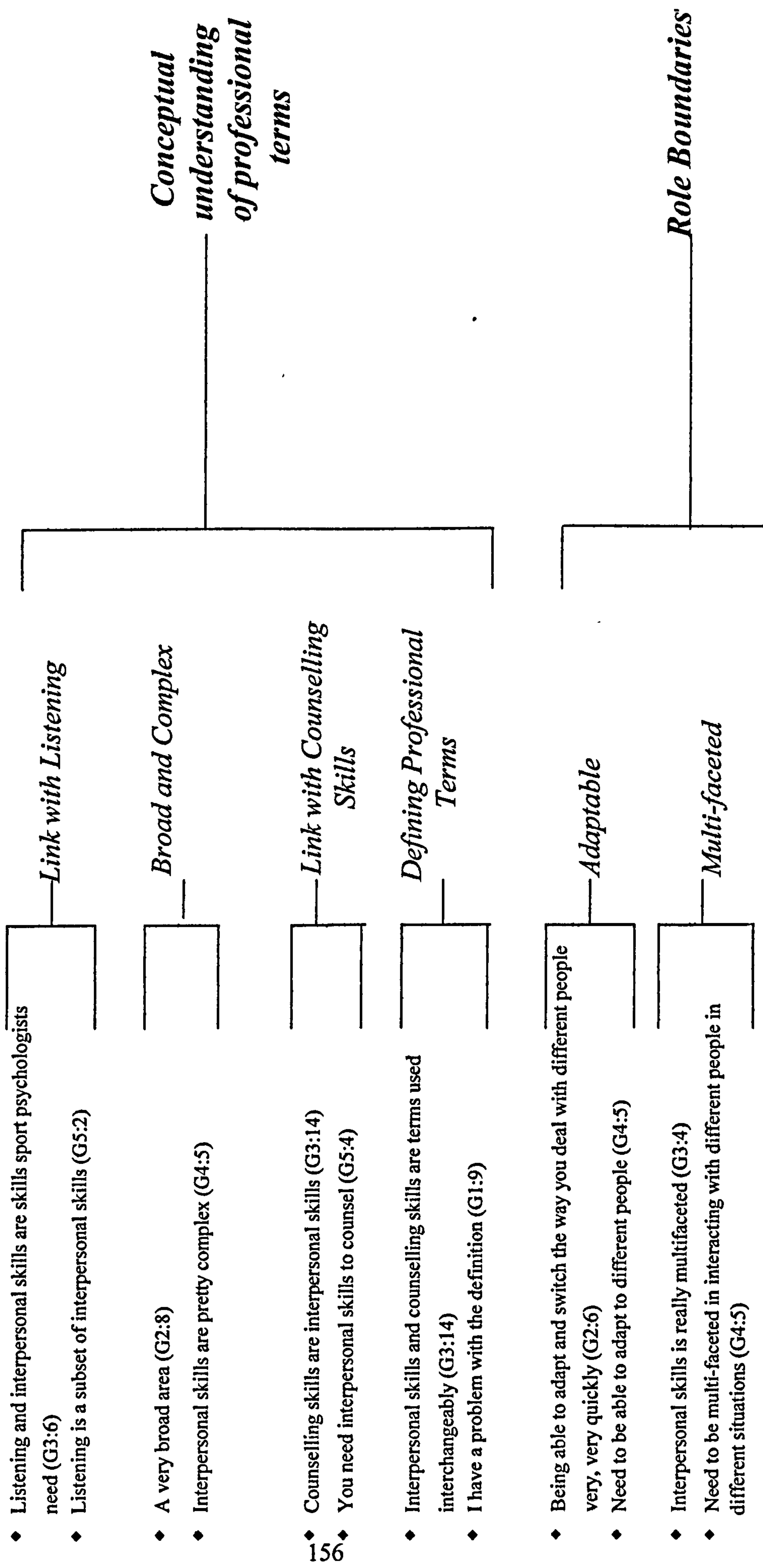


FIGURE 4.4 Examples of Raw Data Points for the Raw Data Themes, Higher-Order Themes & Broad Dimensions of INTERPERSONAL SKILLS (CONT'D)

Raw Data Points

Raw Data Themes

Higher-order Themes Broad Dimensions

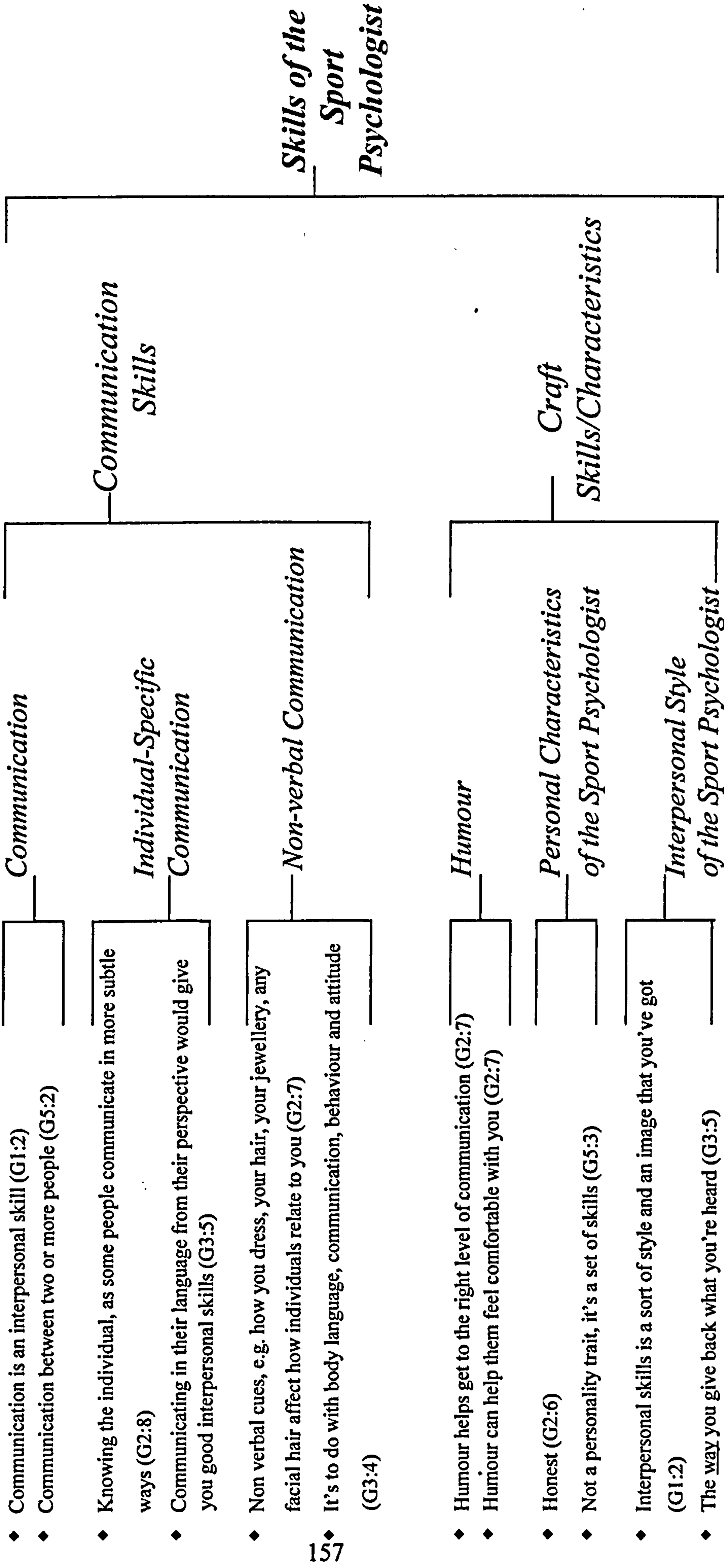


FIGURE 4.4 Examples of Raw Data Points for the Raw Data Themes, Higher-Order Themes & Broad Dimensions of INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

4.3.2.3 SUMMARY OF 'COUNSELLING SKILLS'

'Counselling skills' was interpreted as a more contentious issue to discuss than listening or interpersonal skills. Counselling skills were discussed in the way that they are linked to listening and interpersonal skills. It was concluded that counselling skills consist of these components, but it is the way that the participants described counselling skills in different situations that was the most revealing. Teasing out whether the participants viewed counselling skills and counselling as different entities or not proved difficult because of their training backgrounds and understanding of the terms.

For most of group 3 the two concepts (counselling and using counselling skills) were inextricably linked and although they felt that some of the skills they used as sport psychologists were counselling skills, they felt uncomfortable using the term because of the connotation of dealing with problems. Most of this group referred to counselling skills on the one hand as something that dealt with deviant problems or issues other than performance enhancement and on the other hand they were the same as interpersonal skills and fundamental to what sport psychologists do.

All the groups discussed two different types of counselling skills. In a sport psychology situation the general impression from the groups is one of using counselling skills akin to listening and interpersonal skills only, whereas in a counselling situation the general impression is that the counselling skills are somehow deployed differently and "...something that we shouldn't necessarily be dealing with" (group 3). For group 4, the distinction lay in what the skills were used for and by whom; they referred to counselling with a big 'C' and counselling with a small 'c'. Some participants (Kevin, group 2 and Michael, group 4) argued that the skills themselves were not any different regardless of the situation.

Some participants (David and Niall in group 4) found counselling skills difficult to define because they were fundamental to what they were doing. This is a typical problem in attempting to elicit craft knowledge from practitioners because it is intuitive and often not a conscious act (Schon, 1983).

For all the groups, counselling skills were described as important and fundamental to the role of a sport psychologist, however, it is important to bear in mind the type of counselling skills or counselling to which they were referring. Some suggested that the importance of counselling skills was dependent on the approach taken and that they were no more important than other skills (group 4). One participant, however, (Peter in group 1)

suggested that no matter what approach is used counselling skills are fundamental and are needed at some point by all sport psychologists. Peter's argument seems to exemplify what all the participants had said about listening and interpersonal skills, that they were important and fundamental to what sport psychologists do. The link between the fundamental skills of listening and interpersonal skills and counselling skills is documented above, so it may be suggested that counselling skills are also fundamental to the work of a sport psychologist if there is an implicit link to other fundamental skills.

Some participants describe counselling skills using terminology that was derived from professional counselling courses or texts. Other participants used terminology derived from their craft skills development, for example, the use of the word 'parroting'. The need to be adaptable was perceived as important by Peter (group 1) in using the skills appropriately. 'Adaptability' was a theme categorised within 'role boundaries'. It was viewed as important to adapt to different contexts.

Two groups discussed the role of a sport psychologist in terms of it not just being to teach PST to athletes, it can also include life skills. It was suggested in these groups that irrespective of the approach used by a sport psychologist, counselling skills are needed. It was also suggested and that sport psychologists need to reflect more on their role.

Counselling skills training was viewed as something that increases awareness of the use of the skills and aids in using such skills appropriately.

A summary of the qualitative analysis for counselling skills is presented in figure 4.5 on the next page. A more detailed examination of the analysis is presented in figure 4.6.

RAW DATA THEMES

HIGHER-ORDER THEMES

BROAD DIMENSIONS

Professional Skills
Intuitive/Craft Skills



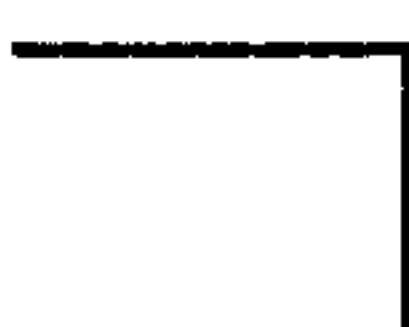
Skills of the Sport Psychologist

Defining the term 'counselling skills'
Link with Interpersonal and Listening Skills
Link with Listening Skills
Link with Interpersonal Skills
Link with Communication Skills
Distinction between Counselling Skills and Counselling



Conceptual understanding of terms

Context-Dependent
Range of skills, not situation-specific



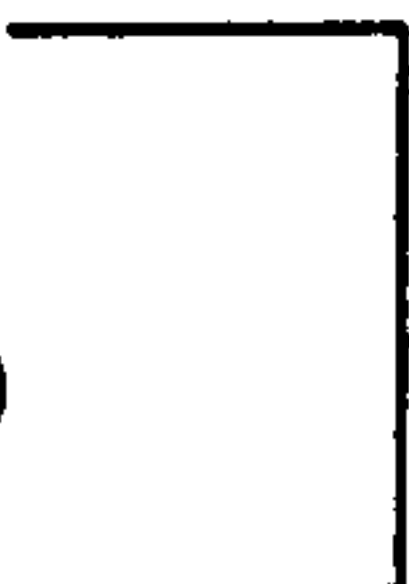
Adaptable

Theory
Referral
Appropriate Use



Training

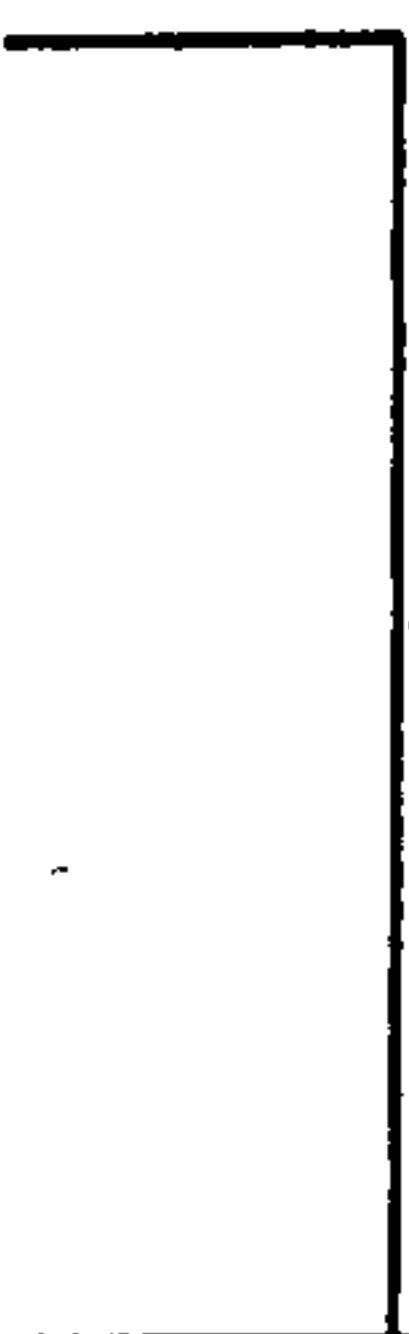
More to Sport Psychology than teaching PST (Psychological Skills Training)
Used for 'other' issues



Life Skills

Role Boundaries

Important
Not essential
Not essential, but limited without them
Depends on approach
One of a number of important skills
Counselling skills alone are not enough
Self-Awareness



Importance of counselling skills to applied sport psychology practice

FIGURE 4.5 Raw Data Themes, Higher-Order Themes & Broad Dimensions for COUNSELLING SKILLS

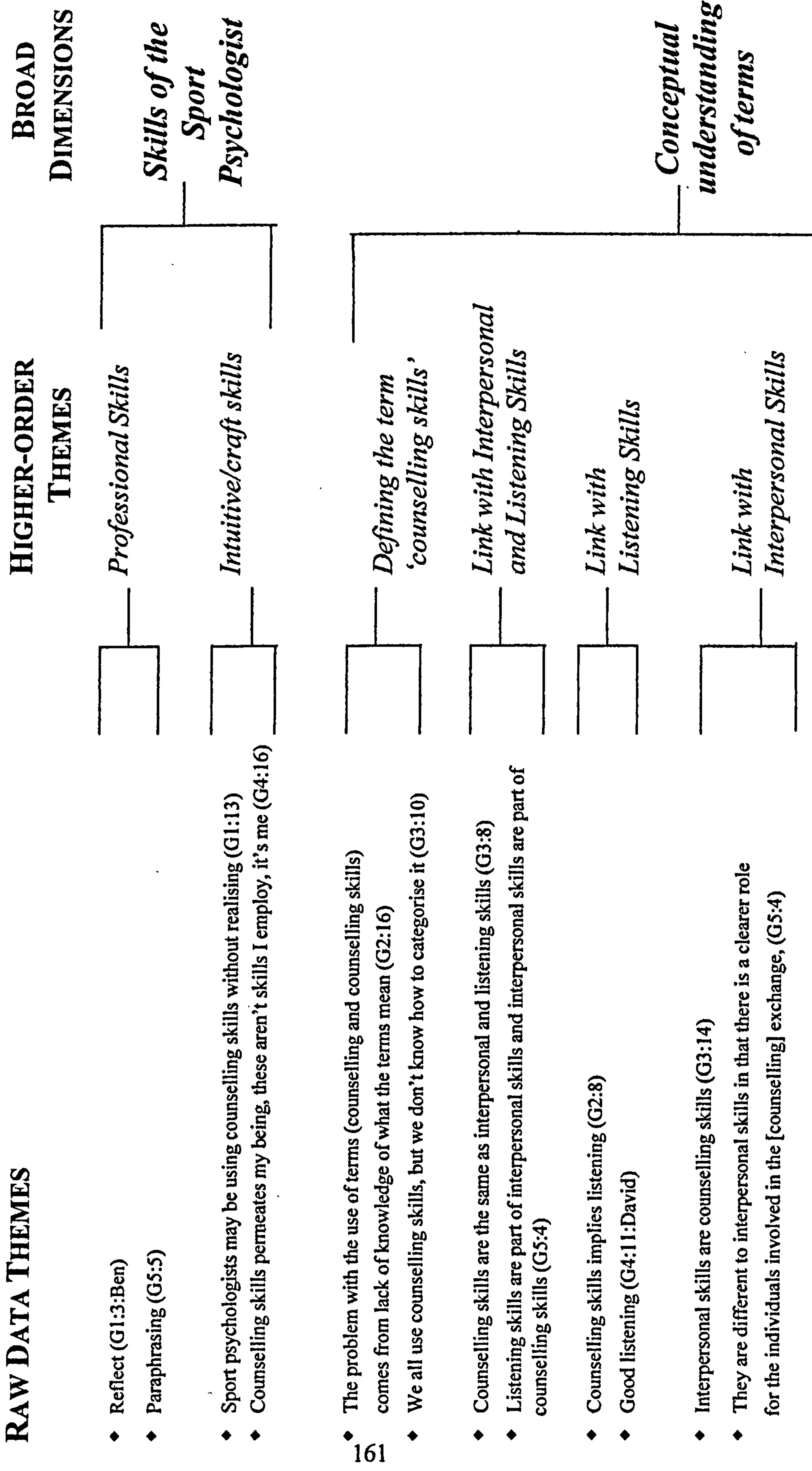


FIGURE 4.6 Examples of Raw Data Points for the Raw Data Themes, Higher-Order Themes & Broad Dimensions of COUNSELLING SKILLS

RAW DATA POINTS

RAW DATA THEMES

HIGHER-ORDER THEMES

BROAD DIMENSIONS

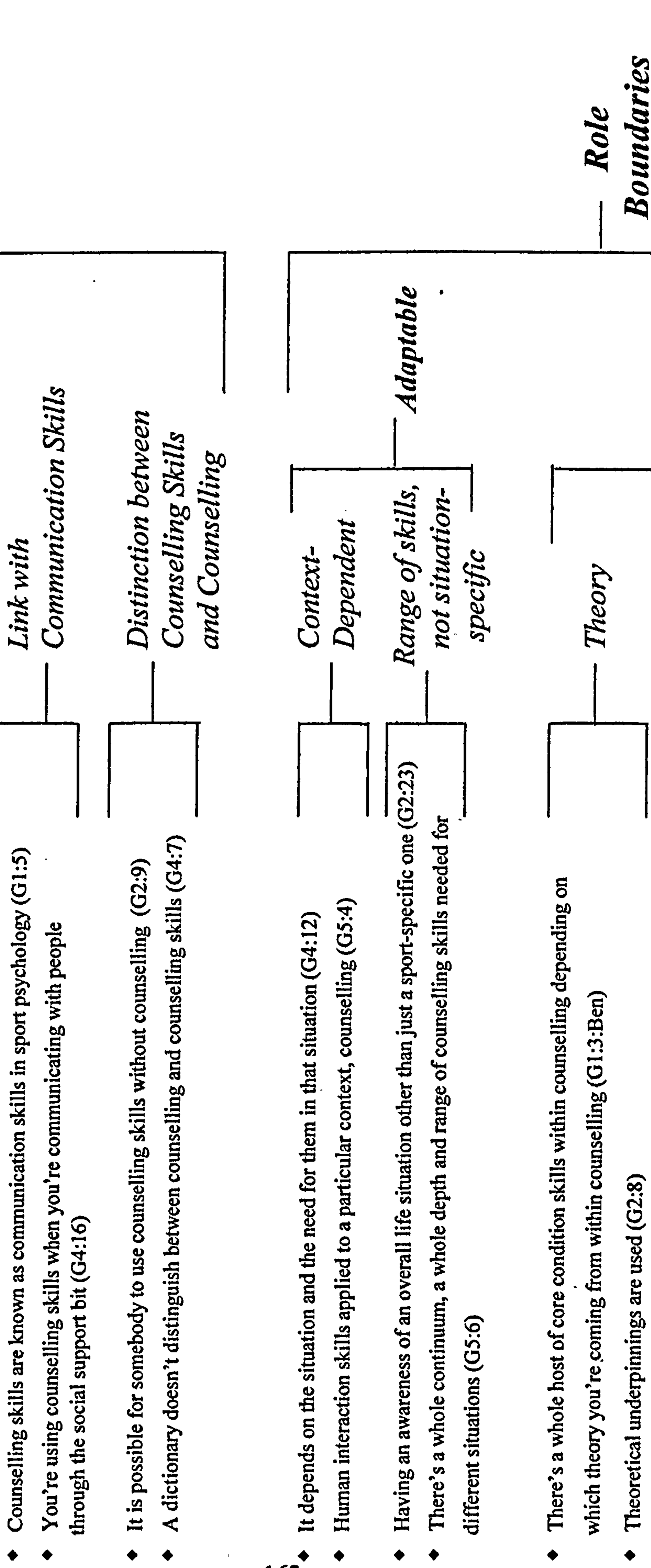


FIGURE 4.6 Examples of Raw Data Points for the Raw Data Themes, Higher-Order Themes, and Broad Dimensions of COUNSELLING SKILLS (CONT'D)

RAW DATA POINTS

HIGHER-ORDER THEMES

BROAD DIMENSIONS

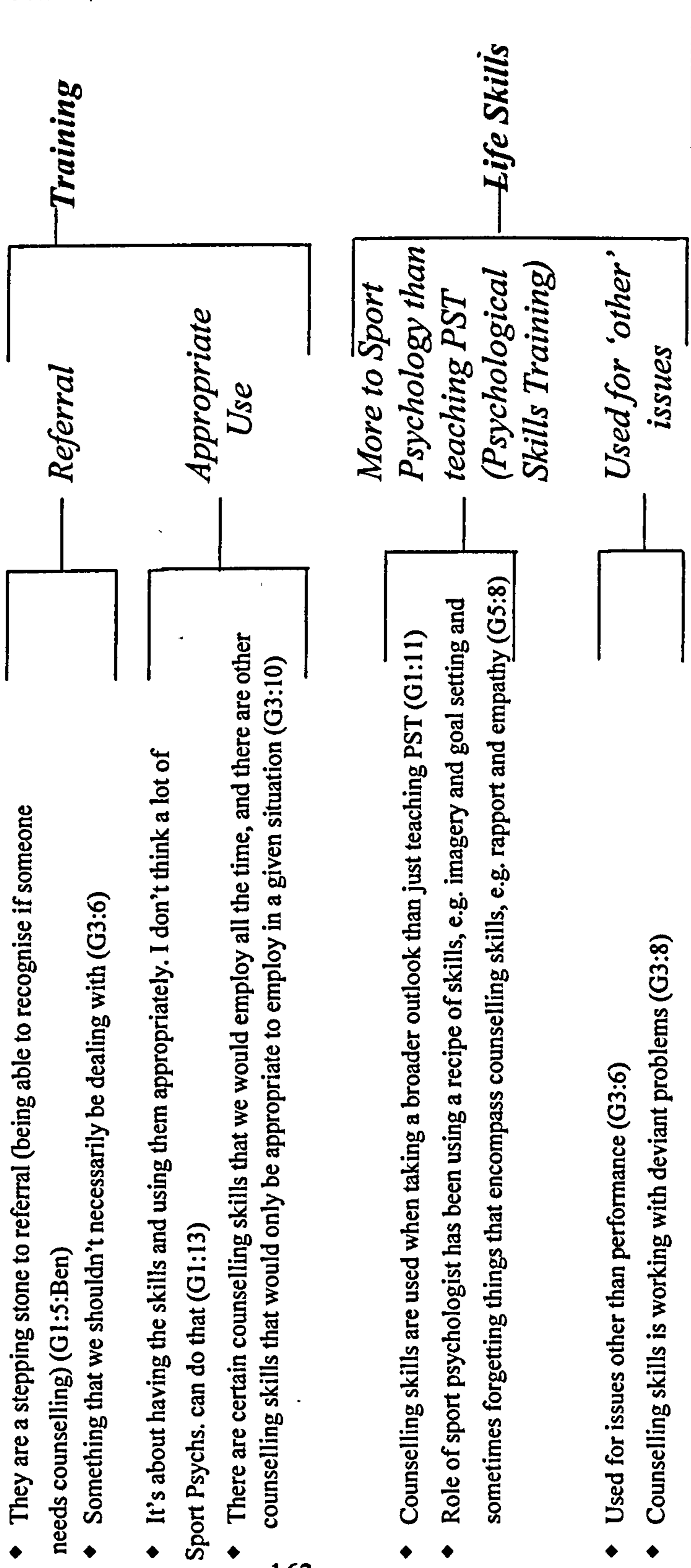


FIGURE 4.6 Examples of Raw Data Points for the Raw Data Themes, Higher-Order Themes & Broad Dimensions of COUNSELLING SKILLS (CONT'D)

RAW DATA POINTS

RAW DATA THEMES HIGHER-ORDER THEMES BROAD DIMENSIONS

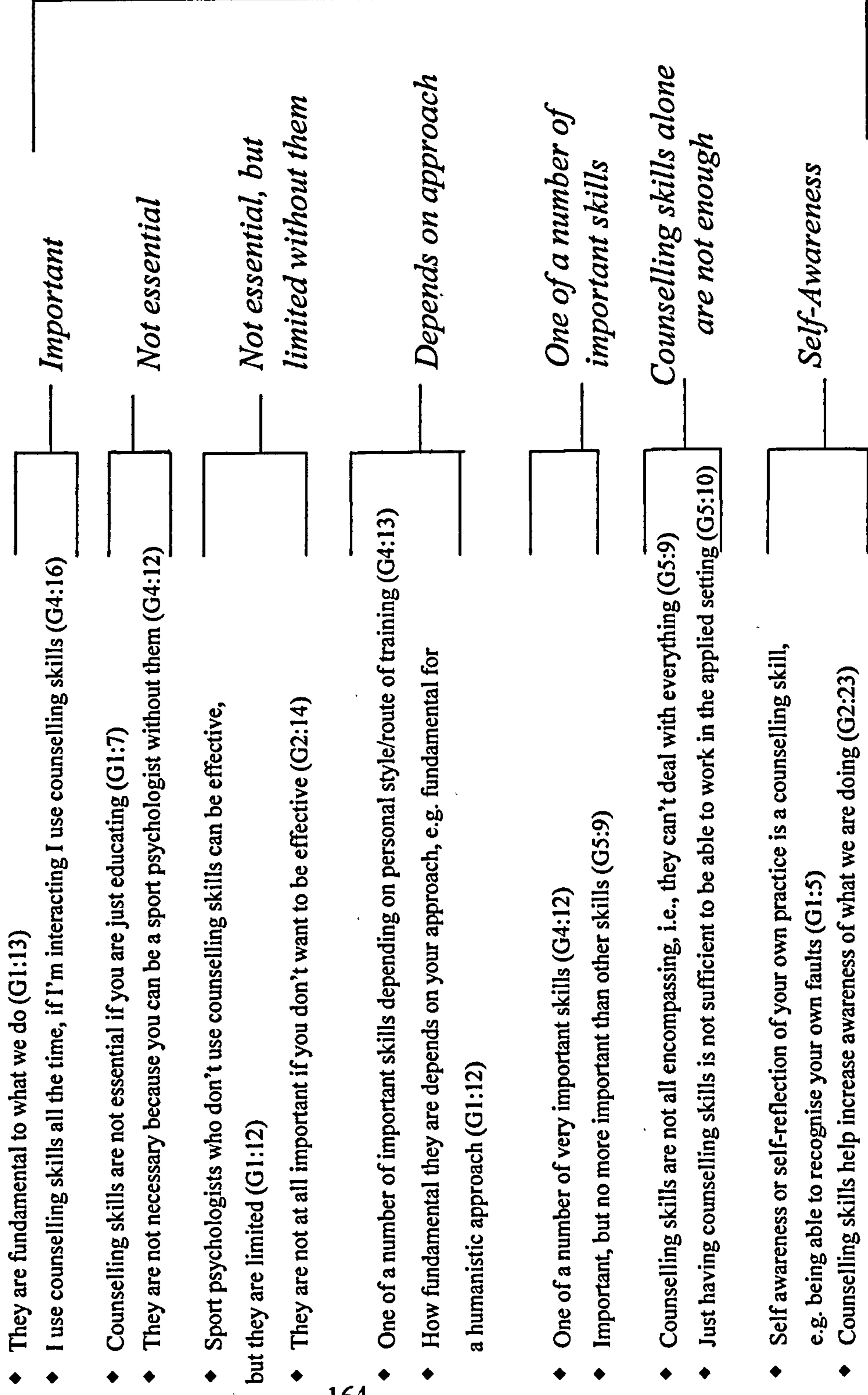


FIGURE 4.6 Examples of Raw Data Points for the Raw Data Themes, Higher-Order Themes & Broad Dimensions of COUNSELLING SKILLS (CONT'D)

4.3.2.4 SUMMARY OF ‘COUNSELLING’

‘Counselling’ was (like ‘counselling skills’) interpreted as a more contentious topic to discuss than listening or interpersonal skills. There was a lot of debate on the definition of counselling. All the groups talked about counselling from two different perspectives:

- 1). One was cited as “big ‘C’ counselling”, “pure”, “purist” or “proper” counselling, something that occurs when explicitly changing emotion, when not giving advice, something that is used when issues are not about performance enhancement, when a narrow or tight definition of counselling is used and what counsellors do.
- 2). The other type was referred to as “small ‘c’ counselling”, “what everyone does and everyone uses”, the dictionary definition of counselling, advice, guidance and support, what may be used when attempting to change behaviour only (rather than emotion), when a more broad definition of counselling is used and what sport psychologists do.

Two groups suggested that there was no need for a label of ‘counselling’ simply because that is what they do as applied sport psychologists. One participant from group 3 wanted help from a dictionary with a definition of what counselling was. Adam (group 2) stated that a definition of counselling can vary along a continuum.

Different approaches to counselling include using different theoretical perspectives. Peter (group 1) discussed adapting theoretical approaches to different situations.

Some participants distinguished between counselling and using counselling skills. Some decided that counselling skills could be used without having to counsel. For Michael (group 4) counselling was called ‘big ‘c’ counselling’ and using counselling skills as called ‘small ‘c’ counselling’. For Adam (group 2) counselling included explicitly changing emotion, counselling skills can be used when implicitly changing emotion or changing behaviour. For most participants in group 3 the two terms were inextricably linked.

Groups 2, 3 and 4 linked the term ‘counselling’ to the addressing of ‘problems’. For group 3 they were uncomfortable with the term counselling and they “shied away” from using it. Members of group 5 suggested that counselling might not solve problems if the issue is organisational. They presented counselling as “fire fighting” the symptoms rather than dealing with causes.

Group 3 attempted to locate where their perception of counselling as something that deals with ‘deviant’ and non-performance enhancement issues came from. Rachel decided that it came from completing the BASES form for accreditation and supervised

experience. Mary argued that it went beyond this and their perceptions were due to the fact that they do not use counselling skills themselves or in their teaching of students.

Group 2 and 3 talked about a cultural difference in the meaning of the term 'counselling'. In the UK it is used when there is a problem, in the US it is used to mean guidance and is more freely used. Counselling is linked in the UK to clinical need and this may help to explain the participants' reaction to the term.

In terms of role boundaries, the role of the counsellor was discussed both in a positive and a negative light. Adam (group 2) argued that counsellors could work with sport-specific problems and more, whereas a more negative view was given by Ian (group 5) in that being viewed as a counsellor may be a barrier in sport. The role of the sport psychologist was described in a holistic way (Ben, group 1) and in a way that had a clear boundary between the role of a sport psychologist and counselling, where counselling was about issues not related to performance enhancement (group 3).

To avoid inappropriate interventions, it was recommended that sometimes saying nothing to an athlete might be more advisable rather than saying something inappropriate. The importance of being adaptable was raised again. Group 5 decided that whether to counsel or not is dependent on context.

Counselling was perceived as a fundamental element to sport psychology by all the participants if the definition of what they perceived as counselling was taken into account. Adam argued that sport psychologists probably don't and shouldn't counsel (p.11), although he does concede that sport psychologists all use counselling skills effectively (using his 'broader' definition). Rachel (group 3) stated, "what we do arguably is counsel people" (p.8) and Robert (group 5) said that "...everybody counsels depending on how you define the term" (p.5).

A summary of the qualitative analysis for counselling is presented in figure 4.7 on the next page. A more detailed examination of the analysis is presented in figure 4.8.

RAW DATA THEMES

BROAD DIMENSIONS

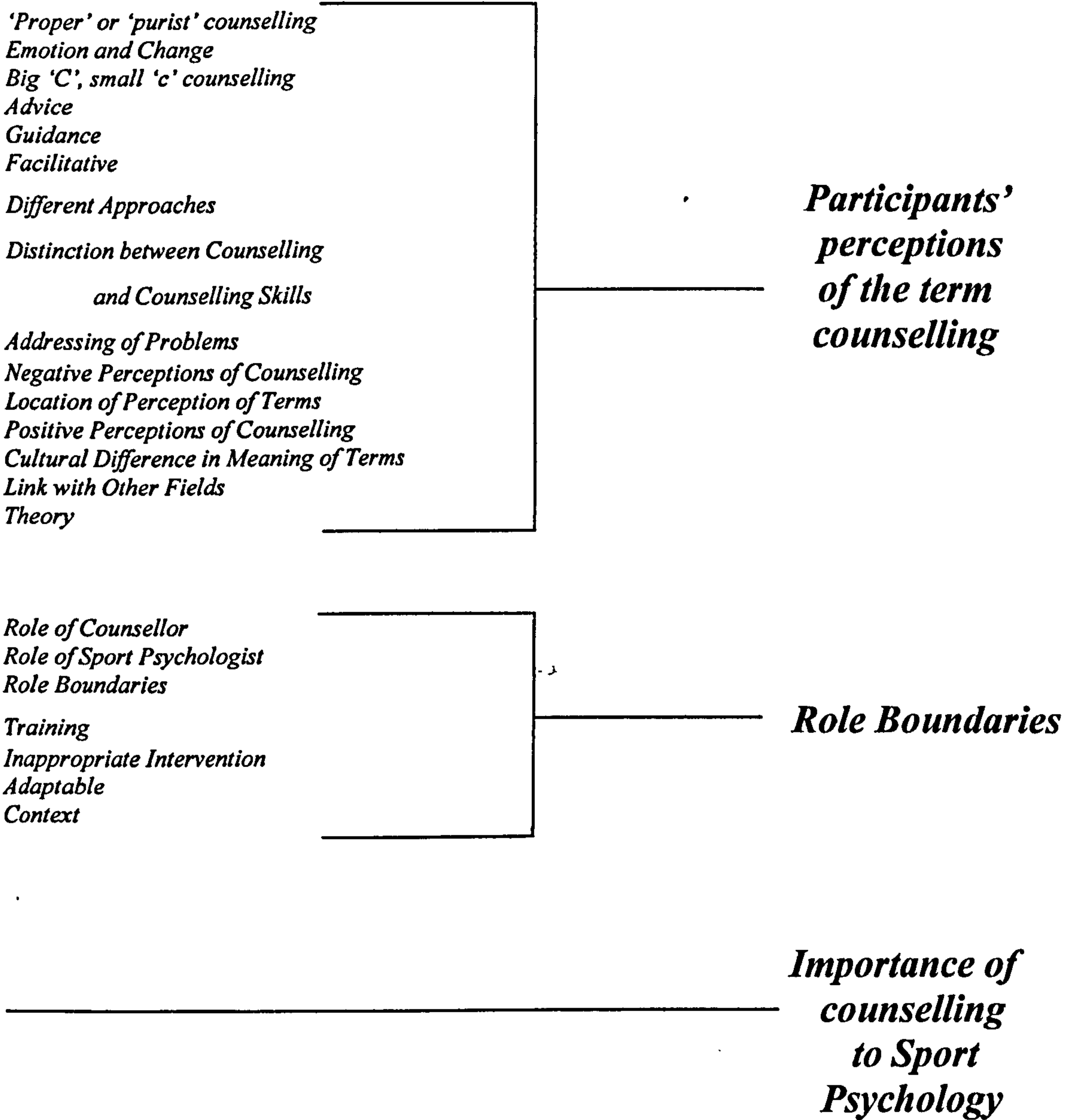


FIGURE 4.7 Raw Data Themes, Higher-Order Themes & Broad Dimensions for COUNSELLING

RAW DATA POINTS

RAW DATA THEMES

BROAD DIMENSIONS

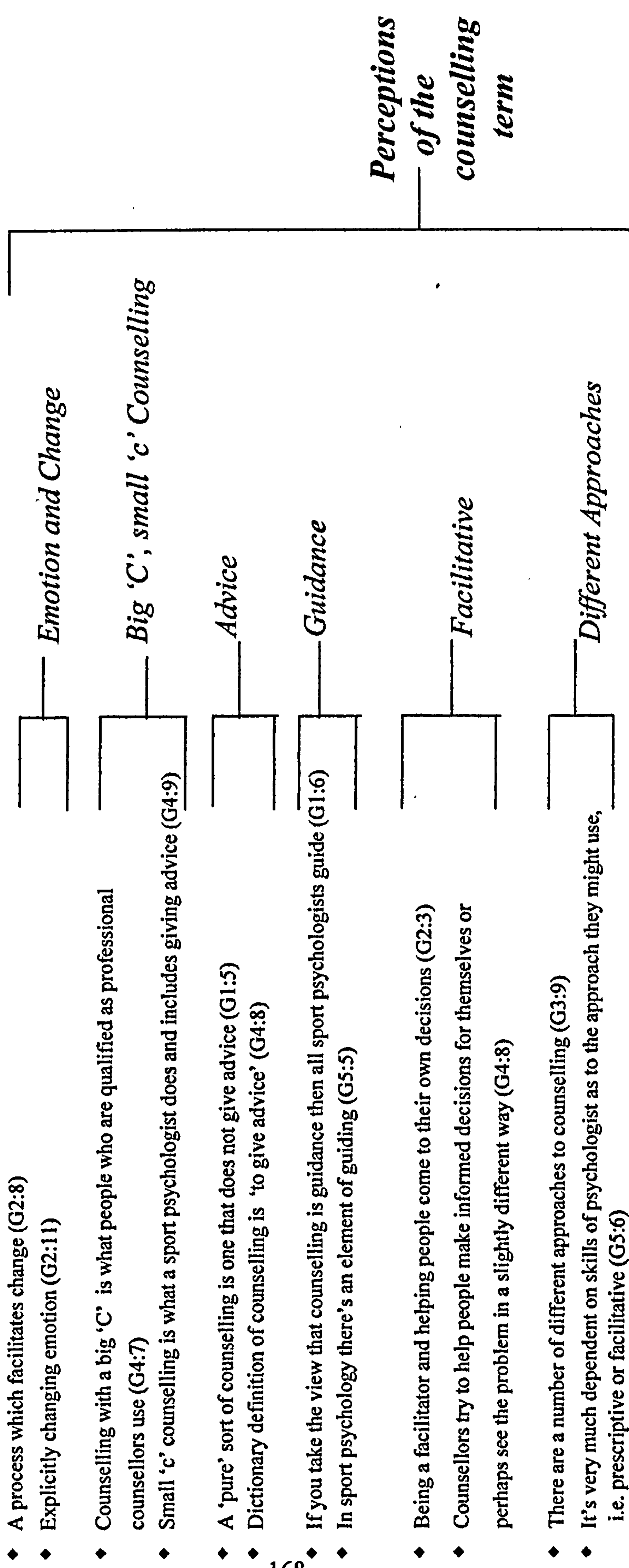


FIGURE 4.8 Raw Data Themes, Higher-Order Themes & Broad Dimensions for COUNSELLING

RAW DATA POINTS

RAW DATA THEMES

BROAD DIMENSIONS

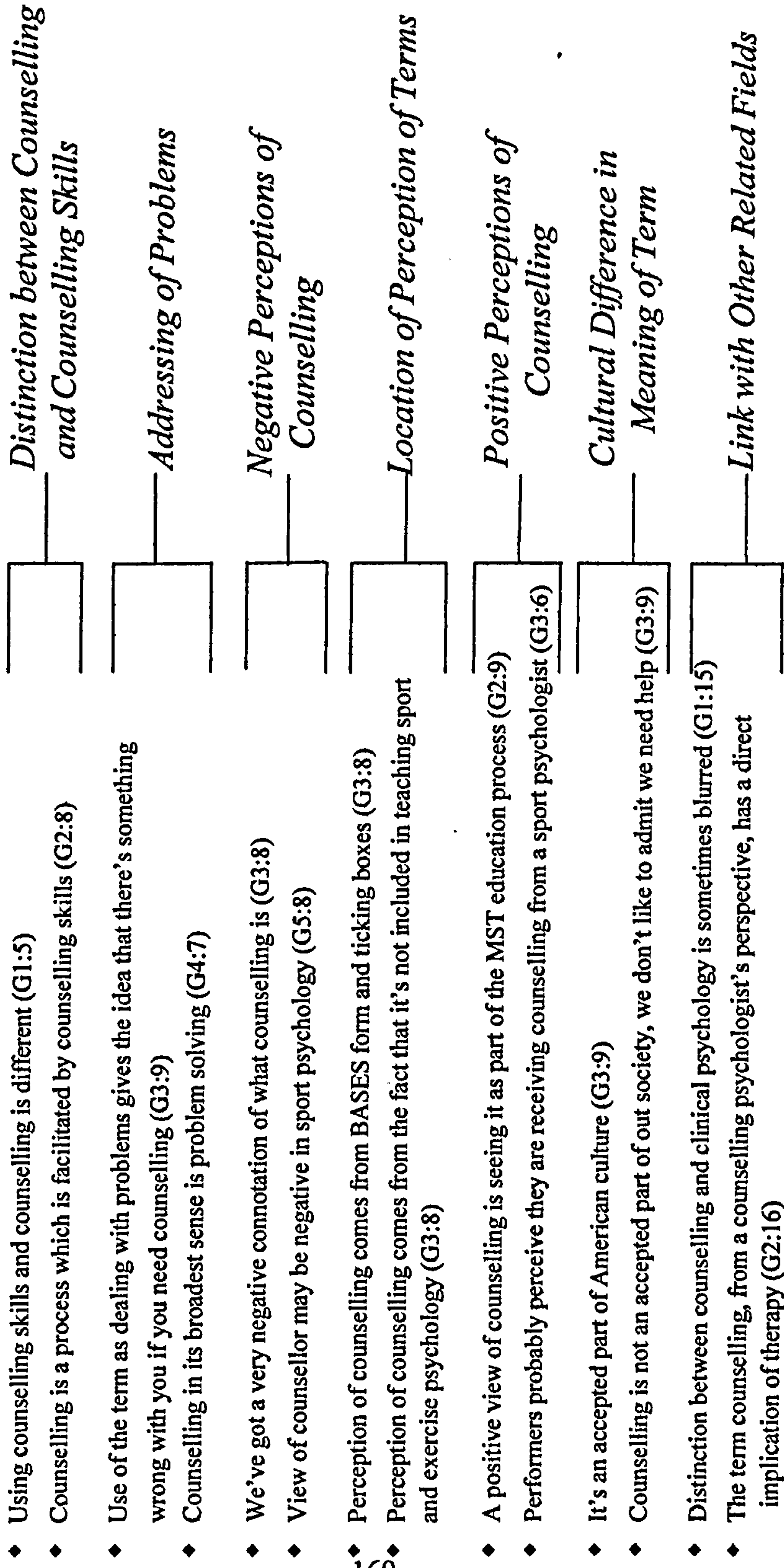


FIGURE 4.8 Raw Data Points, Raw Data Themes & Broad Dimensions for COUNSELLING (CONT'D)

RAW DATA POINTS

RAW DATA THEMES

BROAD DIMENSIONS

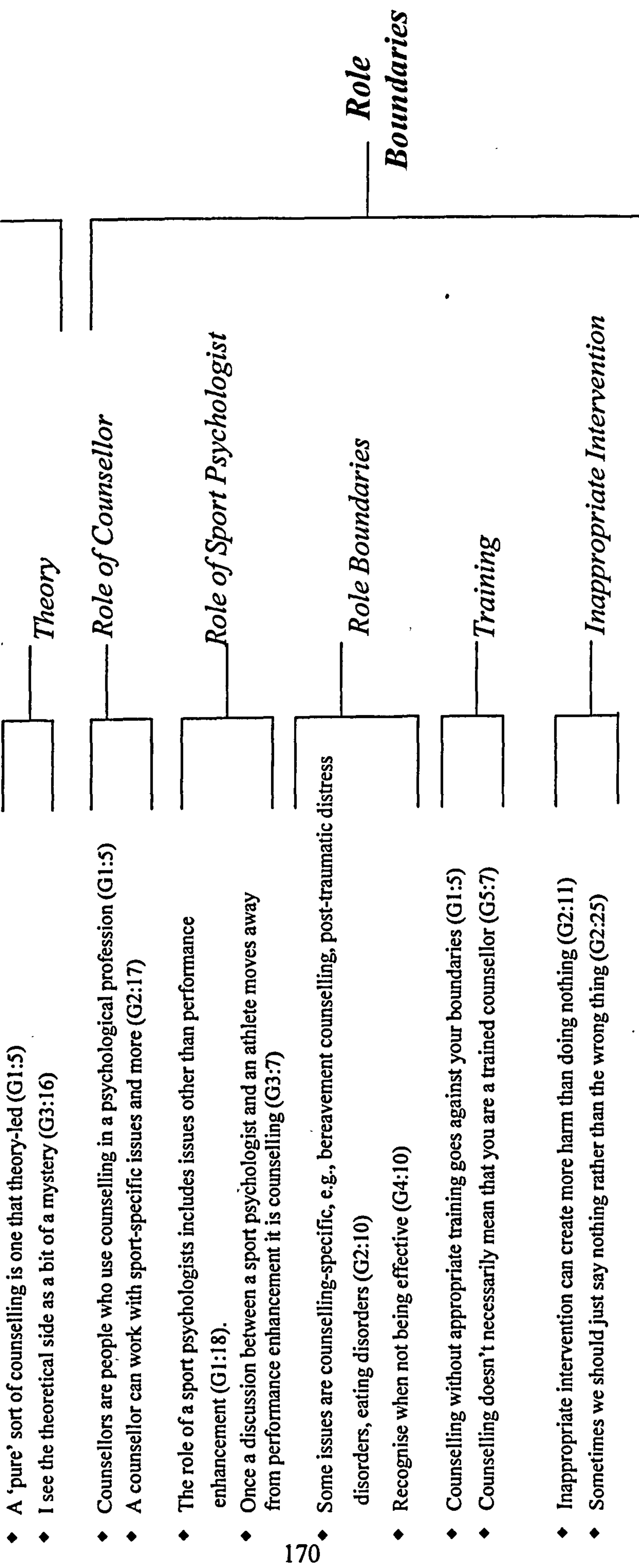


FIGURE 4.8 Raw Data Points, Raw Data Themes & Broad Dimensions for COUNSELLING (CONT'D)

RAW DATA POINTS

RAW DATA THEMES

BROAD DIMENSIONS

- ◆ Being able to adapt to athlete's needs by changing the focus of the interaction is important (G1:6)
 - ◆ Counselling is a progressive thing which must adapt to situations and people (G4:15)
 - ◆ Important to relate to the sporting population (G3:19)
 - ◆ Counselling depends on the context in which it's operating (G5:5)
-
- ◆ Listening and counselling are important to the work of a sport psychologist (G1:7)
 - ◆ Sport psychologists don't and shouldn't counsel (G2:11)
 - ◆ Everybody counsels (depending on how you define counselling) (G5:5)

Adaptable

Context

Importance of counselling to Sport Psychology

FIGURE 4.8 Raw Data Points, Raw Data Themes & Broad Dimensions for COUNSELLING (CONT'D)

A more detailed examination of each of the matching broad dimensions from the analyses is presented below. Within the context of each broad dimension, the four main terms are examined. In order to help the reader, there is a summary of each broad dimension prior to the presentation and detailed discussion of the various themes. This should aid in “signposting” the way towards the main factors that have emerged from the study. An “integrated” discussion is presented at the end of the results and discussion section that helps to bring together the main findings.

4.3.3.1 BROAD DIMENSION: SKILLS OF A SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST

Summary

Throughout the focus groups, the skills of a sport psychologist were discussed when talking about listening, interpersonal and counselling skills. These were categorised in two ways: one that reflected practical or ‘craft’ knowledge (McFee, 1993) and the other that reflected professional counselling skills knowledge. This distinction highlighted their different training backgrounds and subsequent approaches when working with athletes. It illustrated their use and understanding of the various terms that are covered in more depth in the presentation of the next broad dimension ‘Conceptual understanding of terms’.

Communication skills were addressed by many of the participants. Listening was described as an important part of communication, which in turn was an important part of interpersonal skills. Good interpersonal skills were paralleled with good communication skills, whereas this was not necessarily the case with listening skills. Non-verbal forms of communication were also discussed and the notion of adaptability was highlighted.

Professional Counselling Skills and ‘Craft’ Skills

Listening

Some participants talked about listening skills using terminology that is employed in counselling or on counselling skills courses, for example, reflecting, having empathy, paraphrasing, asking the right questions, being non-judgmental, active listening, understanding meaning and hearing. These were placed within the Higher Order Theme (HOT) of ‘Professional counselling skills’.

Some participants used different terminology to talk about listening skills. Their responses were placed in a separate category of ‘Craft skills’. This was in order to echo the language that the participants used and reflect what McFee (1993) describes as ‘craft

knowledge' and Schön (1983) refers to as 'practical knowledge' or 'artistry', i.e., terms that suggest that the knowledge gained has not derived from professional training but from applied practice and experiences. Examples of this 'craft' knowledge are given below:

Jane: I seem to spend most of my time when I'm away the team is just listening to people giving them space so they can come and talk, and then going away and thinking about it myself as well and then, if necessary, can make a space or offer an opportunity if that person wants to follow on, but I seem to spend a lot of my time thinking "Why am I here?" but in fact you're actually listening to a lot of things that are going on and are really responding I suppose, pick up all the rubbish from people.

Michael: Well just an insurance policy as well aren't you?

Jane: Yeah, let them let off steam.

Alison: By sponge, you use the word sponge as in 'takes things in'?

Jane: Yeah, or you're just listening to everything that's going on, you don't necessarily have to react immediately to that. In fact you probably might make quite a few mistakes.

(Focus Group 4, page 2)

Jane's use of the phrase "pick up all the rubbish from people' may reflect a term she has generated through her own development. However, some may perceive it to be a derogatory phrase to use in reference to what others think and feel and does not reflect a term used in professional helping circles to refer to what clients or athletes are talking about.

Schön (1987) argues that 'professional intuition' is something that cannot be taught or gained from professional training. This is something that is attained via experience of working in the field with clients or athletes, also known as 'craft knowledge' (McFee, 1993), or 'knowing-in action' (Schon, 1987) and is revealed by a lack of being able to describe how one knows that something is, for example, important or worthy of attention. Adam (group 2) describes what professional intuition means to him:

Adam: ... something I would call professional intuition, just giving a sense for no apparent reason, but a sense of - that's important. If I give you an example, yesterday I was refereeing in a tournament, and there were two people I was refereeing, at the end of the [event] one lost, both were [competing] on the same squad one is younger and got ahead earlier and got beaten, and in the end they were walking away swearing to themselves and in tears, and I went and looked at them, I started walking with them and I looked at this guy and I asked him "Are you listening to me?" and he said "No not really" and I said "Well can you hear me then?". And that got his attention. There was nothing he said that led me to conclude that, other than a sense that I could talk to this guy but all I would do is bounce off a brick wall and I didn't know the guy very well. Now that is listening by observation...

(Focus Group 2, page 4)

Taking two examples of raw data themes (RDTs) in the 'listening skills' analysis, one from the higher order theme (HOT) of 'professional counselling skills' and one from the HOT of 'craft skills' the distinction between the two concepts (of 'craft' and professional knowledge) is illustrated further:

Listening Skills: 'Active Listening' and 'Being switched on' (RDTs)

'Active listening' reflects a term used in counselling and was employed by Adam in group 2 and Mary in group 3 (both of whom had undergone or were undergoing counselling training). Adam and Mary both introduce the term 'active listening' after someone else in their groups have talked about 'being switched on' first. It is almost as if they are adding the 'professional' word for what the others have just described.

Henry: ...I think maybe it's an indirect skill associated with listening, but actually making sure you are switched on at the times when you know your athlete or performer is saying...almost expressing words most meaningful to them...So for example, if you've got a player after a match or a competition that they've performed in..., knowing when they are most likely to want to talk about it, or most likely to express and reflect in a way which is going to make them improve. Being able to be there and, at that time, being able to listen to what they have to say, I think that's a skill in itself. So there's being able to listen at the right time and knowing when your athlete's going to talk which adds to the skill itself...

Kevin: And I find that the most draining emotionally, in terms of my own energy, that I have to be switched on all the time...

Adam: This is...the part of listening or listening skills which is so misunderstood, because the person who is listening well appears not to be doing anything it's therefore seen as something which is passive. There's a phrase that is used called 'active listening', which is what I understand, from what we're talking about, it is trying to understand what somebody is trying to say, even though the words they're using may be clumsy...
(Focus Group 2, page 2)

Eddie: ... Of course you're always listening for little things they've given you, if you're involved with the team or you're watching a training session you're always still switched on, you're always still listening then, it's not always in a face-to-face situation is it I think.

Mary: I think it's a matter of active listening too in terms of the listening skills, because you've got passive listening where you're almost allowing stuff to flow over you, and then you've got the active listening where you're really concentrating on what it is, the information that's been given to you. I think there's a real difference there.
(Focus Group 3, page 2)

The two raw data themes of 'active listening' and 'being switched on' are similar because they refer to a notion of readiness or 'activeness' to listen whenever someone is talking. The distinction in the terminology is interesting in that one (active listening) is a term commonly found in basic counselling skills texts, i.e., (e.g. Egan, 1998), the other

(‘being switched on’) is not but still reflects how the participants feel when they are listening to athletes talk (i.e., their craft skills).

It is this ‘activeness’ or readiness to listen that is reflected in a similar theme: ‘Actively looking for underlying messages’ in what individuals say.

Listening Skills: Actively looking for underlying messages (RDT)

This theme reflected the idea that there was more to listening skills than just information gathering, paraphrasing, reflecting and being empathic. Groups 2-5 discussed the ideas that listening included using both verbal and non-verbal information, teasing out meaning that may be hidden or underlying what they are actually verbalising, for example, having ‘hidden agendas’. An excerpt from group 4 with Jane and Niall exemplifies the kind of conversation within which these ideas arise:

Jane: ...I also think it’s [listening] a time when you find out what the person’s really saying. You know, are they saying the words that have come out, or are they trying to say something else?...Some people come and talk to you and what they’re saying is really not what they really want to say. So it gives you an opportunity to look for signs that something else is underneath all that. So you really have to listen, it’s not just listening to the words they’re making, you know, the sounds that are coming out, but where there’s a hidden agenda. I mean often there isn’t, but sometimes there is and it’s knowing whether it’s that or whether it’s a sort of superficial level or there’s something hidden underneath that needs to come out.

Alison: And would you say that’s something that you try to get at, the underneath?

Jane: ...well you have to give them space, because eventually it will come out, so if we keep asking, prompting them the bits will come out, so then you can listen to the right things.

...

Niall: Yeah, I mean I think I know what you’re saying. It’s a listening skill, but part of the listening skill is being able to tease out what it is that they really want to say, so, you know, it may involve some sort of interaction which isn’t exclusive to listening.

(Focus Group 4, pages 1-2)

This example shows that listening is not just about what individuals actually say, it includes picking up on cues which what they don’t verbalise. Jane briefly comments about ‘different levels’ of what athletes might be saying, a ‘superficial level’ or ‘something hidden underneath’. The two approaches may require different skills or an understanding of how to tackle more psychological depth (Ringer and Gillis Jr., 1995) and how to respond to a less ‘superficial’ issue. Corlett (1996) argues for more approaches which incorporate a Socratic philosophy which tackles underlying issues rather than merely symptoms.

Michael agreed with this point but did stress that it was important not to 'probe' too much:

Michael: ...yeah I agree, that's very true, but I know of circumstances where people have been prompted and probed to such an extent that they've divulged things that they didn't want to divulge...

Jane: Oh yeah, yeah.

Michael: ...and that isn't listening. That's interrogating.

Jane: Yeah, yeah.

Michael: And I suspect that sometimes people cross that line calling it listening and it isn't actually listening.

(Focus Group 4, pages 1-2)

This example highlights Michael's thoughts on inappropriate use of listening skills. To "prompt and probe" too much may have inappropriate consequences if the sport psychologist is not trained to deal with the consequences or uses these skills at the wrong time. This links back to the findings of the previous study (2) which suggested that a sport psychologist should be able to make appropriate responses, irrespective of the topic of conversation. Training in counselling skills facilitates appropriate responding by increasing awareness of the response repertoire of the sport psychologist and informs about the effects of responses on the athlete.

Michael's reaction is interesting because he describes his own training in counselling skills (of which listening is one aspect, Sanders, 1996) as "very little". It is proposed that Michael might be suggesting that his predominantly 'craft' developed skills in listening skills are sufficient in order to listen effectively.

Michael refers to people crossing a line between listening and interrogation. He may be referring to a boundary between listening skills and having a therapeutic exchange. It could be argued that this boundary may be clearer for sport psychologists to establish if they are able to respond appropriately to whatever athletes discuss. This may involve pushing the boundaries of competence for a sport psychologist further as the typical competencies of sport psychologists in the UK involve "...little or no formal training in this area [listening and counselling]" (BOA, 1999).

The issue of managing psychological depth (Ringer & Gillis, Jr., 1995) in interactions is pertinent here. Managing psychological depth is imperative in order to avoid straying over boundaries of competence and being able to respond appropriately to any issues that arise in discussions. Boundaries are discussed further in the broad dimension section 'Role boundaries'.

Interpersonal skills

Some elements of the conversations on interpersonal skills were categorised as 'craft' skills or characteristics because they are factors which are not gained through professional knowledge bases and involve either being naturally good at using interpersonal skills or learning how to use and develop them through 'on the job' experience. Humour was perceived by Adam as a 'natural skill' and was seen to facilitate communication by participants in group 2.

How much the personality of the individual was part of using interpersonal skills and, again, how much one has to adapt to different people and situations were themes that arose in most groups and categorised as 'craft' skills. Interpersonal style/personality and adaptability were discussed in conjunction with each other in two separate groups (3 and 5). One example is from group 3:

Tony: I think it's the way you give it back.

Mary: Right.

...

Tony: ...I would use the word 'style' or 'personality'. Take two different scenarios: say you're working with somebody who is particularly bright, and say you're working with somebody who is particularly unbright and you're doing essentially the same sort of session. I think if you've got good interpersonal skills you can read the situation, you can hear what they're telling you, you can adapt your style and your manner and your mode of delivery to that individual. Alright you're still making an assumption that you're not absolutely sure about, i.e., one person's very bright, one person's not so bright, but if you've still got to try and get over a general message and you've got a certain time to do it, you can adapt your interpersonal skills to the situation I think.

Rachel: I'm not sure what you're saying Tony.

Tony: Anybody else?

Ruth: I'd say you're talking about, when you say 'style', I think what Tony's trying to say is if you're communicating to different people at different levels and it's having that ability to switch.

Tony: That's...yeah.

Ruth: And perhaps that is part of interpersonal skills. That you don't have to actually have, you might have your own personal style that you have when you're communicating with your friends, but when you're communicating with other people you can switch into another mode say...

Tony: Yep.

Ruth: ...or assess the situation. I think that's what...

Tony: So you're quite adaptive.

Ruth: Yeah.

(Focus Group 3, page 5)

As can be seen from this excerpt, the notion of 'switching' styles or adapting to work with different people is perceived to be an important feature of interpersonal skills by

groups 3, 4 and 5. Adaptability is discussed further in the broad dimension 'Role boundaries'.

Counselling skills

During the discussions of counselling skills, the participants referred to types of skills, for example, paraphrasing, reflecting, being non-judgmental, etc., that were linked with professional counselling skills. Again, some used terminology found on counselling skills courses:

Adam: Counselling skills is, for me they start, they're what I refer to as generic counselling skills which are founded on listening. The classic ones are warmth, empathy and genuineness, the classic ones, demonstrated through active listening. They are generic foundation core skills.

(Focus Group 2, page 8)

Some participants used terms that would not be used on counselling courses:

Ian: Some are techniques rather than skills.

Alison: Counselling techniques?

Ian: Mm.

Calum: Listening, chunking, parroting those kind of things.

(Focus Group 5, page 4)

What Ian calls techniques are what counsellors may describe as skills. What is interesting is the language that Calum uses to give examples of these techniques or skills, i.e., what Calum refers to as chunking may be termed 'paraphrasing' by counsellors. Calum had earlier described 'chunking' as continuing the conversation on the basis of what the person has said and using what they have said within the next question.

His use of the word 'parroting' reflects a term that would not generally be used on a counselling skills course and, indeed, may be interpreted as a derogatory term that does not reflect warmth, empathy and genuineness. Parroting is not the same as paraphrasing and to continually repeat what an athlete has said may annoy him/her rather than create a good relationship (Geldard, 1993). Geldard argues that rather than parroting, skilful reflection or paraphrasing of what the client (athlete) has said makes that person feel valued, listened to and heard. Parroting may occasionally be used to help someone complete a half-finished statement (Geldard, 1993).

Members of group 1 discussed the idea that sport psychologists can (and do) use their counselling skills without realising and without any formal training, i.e., intuitively:

Peter: ...most sport psychs out there would feel that they can listen and counsel to some extent, but one they don't necessarily know when they're doing that and don't know how to do that. They don't have a formal framework or haven't been told or had any experience of how to do that and when to do that and when you should actually do that. ...so I wouldn't say that the sport psychs who are out there currently working who are accredited don't have any of these skills, you know we don't know, but they haven't gone through any training or maybe they've developed some of the skills and they just don't know...

Ben: That's it.

Peter: ...they can't, they couldn't tell you when they were using the skills or when they weren't. That's the key thing I think. When you practice, you obviously have to practice in a particular way, and your practice should be conditioned by what you do, who you're working with in what situation. And that's the key thing. It's having the skills and then using them appropriate to what you're doing. And I don't think a lot of sport psychs can do that.

(Focus Group 1, page 13)

Peter suggests that despite most sport psychologists having some skills of listening and counselling, they cannot necessarily be adaptable in using the skills appropriately. Using counselling skills naturally without awareness is also discussed by group 4:

Niall: I think, because I can't define them easily, I assume that I use them all the time, you know, if I'm interacting I use some counselling skills.

Michael: All the time.

Jane: Yeah I would have said that too. Even in, sort of, almost social things...

Michael: Yeah absolutely.

Jane: It's there isn't it? I wouldn't say "I'm counselling this person", but, you know, you're thinking about what you're saying and doing.

Niall: Well your skills are a product of your experiences aren't they? So, you know, you use your experiences whenever you interact with anybody.

David: There's almost a, erm, conscious connotation to the word skill isn't there? In that you to someone, you're applying that as a skill and you use. But I would say that, erm, counselling skills permeates my being.

Michael: Mm.

Jane: Part of your ethos?

David: Yeah, and these aren't skills I employ, it's me.

(Focus Group 4, page 16)

David perceives counselling skills as something that comes naturally to him, he suggests that he has developed his ability during his experiences in life rather than by employing such skills. David's experience of relating skills can therefore be described as 'craft' in development as his counselling skills training is limited (he had attended one undergraduate course) but he had stated (on the form obtaining participants' background

information) that “counselling skills are an integral part of my life; sport psychology is an extension of that”.

Communication Skills

Listening skills

A link was made between communication and listening skills by participants in several groups. Listening was perceived to be a very important part of communication. It was argued (in group 1) that sometimes a person may not have good listening skills and good communication skills together, but the importance of listening to communication was pushed further by the suggestion that communication is pointless without first listening.

Interpersonal skills

The term ‘interpersonal skills’ covered different types of skills and was perceived as a term that incorporated such general terms as communication skills. The ability to communicate was perceived as an interpersonal skill. In the example below good interpersonal skills were used interchangeably with good communication skills:

Rachel: ...just because you were good at listening wouldn't necessarily mean you had good interpersonal skills. If you couldn't communicate verbally back, it's no good being able to listen...

Alison: ...does it work the same the other way, if you're good at listening are you necessarily good at, do you necessarily have good interpersonal skills?

Rachel: No because it doesn't necessarily make you a good communicator per se just to be a good listener. I mean it's working in the right direction, but we could all be very good at sitting and listening but we couldn't be able to express ourselves in the right manner in a way that we're understood, like using the appropriate jargon. So even though I might be very effective at listening I might not be effective at communication per se.

Alison: Is that part of listening, to give it back, not just to take it in and to understand, but to almost reflect back, if you like, to demonstrate understanding not just to understand?

Mary: I think so, because how else does the person who's talking to you know that you're really listening if you're not actually giving something back?

(Focus Group 3, page 5)

Non-verbal forms of communication were also addressed during discussions of interpersonal skills:

Kevin: It can be much broader, or more narrow, whatever it is, to things like how you react, to how you dress. Do you want to try to be their friend? Do you want to just be distanced? Do you want to just be a coach? Are you a consultant first, coach

second? Consultant second? Interacting with parents may be different from interacting with children, than with the coach, than with the director. Again it's that awareness of who you are talking to and how close you want to get to that individual and how much do you want to show all of yourself to that individual. Things like dress, how you dress, are very important. Working with the client, if you come being overly dressed up that will turn off some clients and they will think, "that person is not approachable". If you come in a, like Henry is, in a tracksuit, for most clients they see that as a better approach, because they can relate to you, "you are just like us"...That's all part of the interpersonal skills. I've often thought about those things before I go to meet a client, you know, do I want to have long hair? Do I want to have a beard?...your jewellery, are you going to wear a watch? Those things can all be very important non-verbal cues.

Bill: I noticed once when I went to work with golf think I had a light sweatshirt on from some work I had done before, and then I went in and the session was held up in the clubhouse and I was immediately not in with the dress code. The lads changed from their golfing gear, they walked into the clubhouse and they're immediately changed and its very, very smart dress. Now I immediately felt "Well I've made a big mistake here".

Kevin: How do you know that in advance though?

Bill: Because nothing was said, that was a big oversight.

(Focus Group 2, page 7)

The idea of being adaptable emerges even when talking about what to wear when working with athletes ('adaptability' is a theme that appears several times during the analysis). Having one style of working (including what is worn) may not be appropriate and being flexible or adaptable appears important to this group in being a successful sport psychologist.

4.3.3.2 BROAD DIMENSION: CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF TERMS

Summary

When the groups considered the different meanings of the terms, 'listening skills' appeared easier to describe than the others. 'Interpersonal skills' was "broad" and "complex", although one group preferred to use this term rather than 'counselling' to describe their relating skills. In this respect, 'Counselling skills' and 'counselling' were described by the co-analysts as "contentious" terms for some of the participants to talk about. There is a specific focus on 'counselling' in this next broad dimension in order to explore this further. It attempts to tease out what the participants understand by 'counselling' and how they arrived at their interpretations.

All the groups distinguished between different types of counselling skills and/or counselling in various ways. They also discussed the link between the four terms. Their discussions reflected their understanding and awareness of the terms and their different training backgrounds. The different types of counselling that the participants referred to are summarised in table 4.1 in the 'Integrated discussion' at the end of this chapter.

Listening skills

Several examples of what the participants understood by the term 'listening skills' were given in the previous section on the broad dimension of 'Skills of a sport psychologist'.

Interpersonal skills

'Interpersonal skills' was perceived as a term that encompasses many different aspects of relating to and working with other people. On the whole, most participants did not have trouble discussing the term 'interpersonal skills' even though it was considered "a very broad area", "...the label for all things" (Jane, group 4, p.4), "...pretty complex" (Michael, group, p.4) and difficult to define unless you "...actually consider the whole range of...skills/ability/characteristics that made up the profile" (Ian, group, p.3).

Counselling skills

When the term 'counselling skills' was introduced to the groups, this was interpreted as a more contentious issue than listening or interpersonal skills for some of the participants. There were complications in attempting to describe what the participants understood by the term 'counselling skills':

- some participants appeared comfortable with their understanding of the term and some were not (participants in group 3 were so uncomfortable with using the phrase that they chose to use the term 'interpersonal skills' interchangeably with 'counselling skills');
- most participants viewed counselling skills as being made up of listening and interpersonal skills;
- some were able to distinguish between using counselling skills and counselling and for others the two terms were inextricably linked;
- for some groups there were two different types of counselling skills - one for listening, communicating, giving advice, guidance and support and one for using

in a counselling situation where, for example, advice was not given, this was termed 'pure' or 'official' counselling;

- for another group the skills were the same, but it was the notion of counselling in sport psychology that was different to counselling as a counsellor;
- one group argued that the distinction lay in the situation not the skills, i.e. whether the sport psychologist is involved in the process of counselling or communicating.

Throughout the discussion the term counselling skills was deliberated with varying levels of understanding with some participants admitting that their understanding was not clear (e.g., Henry, group 2). Those who appeared to understand the distinction that a professional body such as BAC (British Association for Counselling) would make between the different terms were, generally, those who had received the most counselling skills training, for example, Ben and Andrew (group 1), Adam (group 2) and Mary (group 3). Some of the others within the groups declared that they were "...quite confused by that term" (Helen, group 1, p.3), David and Niall (group 4) stated that they had difficulty defining the term, Ian (group 5) stated that

"I still have a problem with this idea of packaging things together, counselling skills, because it's a nebulous term. There are some specific counselling skills which you don't necessarily have to have to be a sport psychologist" (p.15)

The understanding of the terms that the participants showed was further illustrated when they discussed the link between the various terms, i.e., counselling skills, listening skills, interpersonal skills and counselling (see later section 'link between the terms').

In one group, George (group 5) suggested that one of his fellow participants was referring to different types of counselling skills in the following example:

Robert: ...I think a lot of people would argue that they're [counselling skills] equally important to sport physiologists, sport biomechanists, so as much a part of interpersonal exchanges, people working with people, but...

Ian: So the communication skills that a physiologist needs would be core skills, but they don't necessarily have any formal training. But because we happen to work in psychology, and that happens to be to do with...solving psychological problems then there's an almost an implicit link to counselling as another area. It doesn't necessarily follow.

George: I think you're distinguishing between two forms of counselling skills there aren't you? You're talking about those skills that are important, are integral in terms of communication and listening, and you've got those skills that are

processes of a specific fundamental model of counselling. So, if you were going to follow a cognitive-behavioural model of counselling to deal with a specific, you know, problem as a counsellor then you would follow that process, there isn't necessarily a requisite for biomechanists.

(Focus Group 5, page 12)

Counselling

As with the term 'counselling skills', it emerged that some participants were comfortable with using the term 'counselling' and others were not. As group 3 worked through the terms counselling skills and counselling, Rachel seemed to need some help with the definition of counselling:

Rachel: What's the word, what's the definition of counselling?

...

Rachel: What's the definition of counselling?

...

Rachel: Do you have a dictionary with you? I feel a huge need for a dictionary!

(Focus Group 3, page 8)

A little later she finds out that Mary is attending a counselling course and she asks her for a definition of counselling:

Debbie: Has anybody done a counselling course?

Mary: I'm doing it at the moment.

Rachel: Definition of counselling?!

(Focus Group 3, page 9)

Some participants were not clear on their definition of counselling, had difficulty defining it and they admitted that they were "shying away" from it (group 3). This is discussed further in the section on 'addressing of problems' in 'Different types of counselling' below.

Participants perceptions of counselling

The following sub-sections illustrate what the participants perceived counselling to involve and how this related to the work of an applied sport psychologist. The sections that follow highlight the different types of counselling that the participants perceived exist and include references to participants feeling uncomfortable with the term 'counselling'.

“Proper” or “Purist” counselling

Participants perceived counselling differently to how they thought counsellors would perceive counselling. Indeed, Adam (the counselling psychologist in group 2) talked about different definitions of counselling. He described a “purist” view or a narrow definition of counselling after Henry introduced the notion of a “proper version” of counselling:

Henry: Let us take for example, losing a tennis final in three sets having been 4-0 up in the final set, let's say Novotna's demise...

Adam: Yes.

Henry: ...at Wimbledon '93, you know. Then you might well argue that then you might be saying that that is a probably the proper version of counselling if you actually had a sport psychologist sat down with her and debriefed with her in at that particular match situation.

Adam: What I am suggesting is what are you debriefing, are you debriefing the tactical choices, or are you debriefing the approach to the match, why she'd changed why she didn't change at certain times approach? Or are you discussing the emotional effect of her as a person as a consequence of that event? ...I would say the second one is closer to a purist view of counselling, although there are shades of grey in this quite clearly from my point of view.

(Focus Group 2, page 10)

It is interesting that they both make some sort of distinction between ‘proper’ or ‘purist’ counselling and some other kind of counselling. Whilst these terms have no legitimacy within counselling circles, the notion that a distinction exists between what counsellors do and what sport psychologists do is pertinent. Adam does point out, however, that the distinction is not always easy to make. The blurriness in the distinction may be helped by referring again to Egan's (1998) examples of ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ helpers, or counsellors who counsel and people who use counselling skills (Sanders, 1996).

Some participants distinguished between counselling and using counselling skills.

Ben (group 1) distinguished between the two:

Ben: ...The term counselling to me is, I get the impression that there's sort of a ‘pure’ sort of counselling in the fact that if you're using a client-centered approach you have to try and establish the three core conditions, by using the skills to get to them three core conditions, and you're running along a theory and erm, applying what the thought of the theory is, and that theory within that is to self-awareness. Basically you're not giving advice to the person, you're getting them to think about things themselves, so that's what counselling is to me. I do see a big difference between counselling and counselling skills.

Andrew: Right, tell us about that. What's the difference between counselling and counselling skills? That's quite interesting.

Ben: Well, because, if you try and get, in sport psychology, now I'm looking at ways that you can apply counselling skills in sport psychology. I think, if you used a client-centered approach to counsel somebody in sport psychology, you're going against your boundaries unless you're a trained counsellor. Do you understand what I'm saying there?

Andrew: I understand what you're saying yeah.

Ben: So, to be able to DO counselling, to counsel an athlete, you'd have to have a postgraduate diploma in counselling. But, to be able to use the skills within sport psychology, you can use counselling skills within sport psychology.

(Focus Group 1, page 5)

Group 1 continued to discuss counselling in light of Ben's definition of "pure" counselling. Helen queried the ethical implications of using counselling skills without being a counsellor, but Ben made a case for sport psychologists being able to use the skills without necessarily counselling.

Group 2 discuss the same distinction:

Adam: Can I ask you a question [Kevin] what you were saying a moment ago, is it possible for somebody to use counselling skills without counselling?

Kevin: Very much so...if we are including things like the interpersonal skills and the listening skills then yes.

(Focus Group 2, page 9)

Big 'C', small 'c' counselling

Michael (group 4) talks about a distinction between what he calls big 'C' and small 'c' counselling. Separating the two types seemed important for both Michael and Jane:

Michael: ...important to differentiate between counselling skills with a capital 'C' and counselling skills with a small 'c'.

Alison: Can you expand on that?

Michael: Yeah, counselling skills with a capital 'C' are a collection of professional skills which counselling psychologists need to have in order to provide a clinical service. We are not involved in that at all. Counselling skills with a small 'c'.

Jane: A small 'c' is being...

Michael: Counselling with a small 'c' are things that everybody has and everybody uses in everyday life.

Alison: I've never come across that distinction before!

Michael: Because if you don't make *that* distinction then...

Jane: Then you're on really dodgy ground.

Michael: ...in my opinion you're on really, really dangerous ground. Because we're not trained as counsellors, we are not professionally qualified as counsellors...and if we're going to engage in counselling with a capital 'C', then we probably should resign from BASES before they kick us out because we just breached our code of conduct, and the same if we're BPS chartered, we ought to get out of the BPS as well for the same reason.

...

Michael: I don't mind what the words are that you use and you can differentiate between these two things how you like, but there's one thing that's about delivering a professional service aimed at helping people to solve problems, and...that's the thing that's we're not qualified to do, and there's another thing...

Jane: That we do all the time.

Michael: ...that when you engage in any...dialogue with somebody whether this is professionally or non-professionally and an issue arises that that person is talking to you about because they would like some help with it, then you are engaging in that other thing, and you can distinguish between them how you like and say one is you're using counselling skills and the other is you're doing counselling, or you can say this about counselling with a capital 'C' and this is about counselling with a small 'c', or you can say we won't use either of those words we'll come up with something completely different. But those two different sets of activities you have to differentiate between them.

(Focus Group 4, page 7)

He goes onto argue about the lack of distinction that a dictionary would make between counselling and counselling skills:

Michael: Have you looked these two phrases up in a dictionary?

Alison: Yeah.

Michael: I don't believe it'll distinguish between them.

Jane: Isn't counselling the delivery of those skills supposedly?

Michael: Yeah, or the use of them.

Jane: Or the use of them.

Michael: You see that's why I don't think that's a very good way of differentiating between those two things that we're talking about. Er, because if you had a dictionary definition of the word counselling.

Jane: With a capital 'C' or a small 'c'?

Michael: It's the same problem, you know. At least if you do it with a big 'C' or a little 'c' or inverted commas or out of inverted commas, you're making it clear that you are talking about something...

Michael & Jane: Different.

(Focus Group 4, page 7)

The way that Michael refers to counselling skills is 'counselling with a small 'c'' and he refers to doing counselling as 'counselling with a big 'C''. The British Association of Counsellors (BAC, 1998) distinguishes between counselling and using counselling skills. This distinction can also be found in many texts on basic counselling skills, for example, Sanders (1996). What is shown from the dialogue is that Michael does not appear to be familiar with the professional counselling or counselling skills literature which does clearly distinguish between counselling and using counselling skills (e.g., BAC, 1999; Sanders, 1996). However, he does distinguish between them using his own terminology (big 'C', small 'c'). Using this language reflects his 'craft' developed knowledge on this

topic (McFee, 1993). The distinction that Michael and Jane make between what they perceive as different types of counselling represents what Sanders (1996) refers to as the different ways that people can be 'helpers' rather than counsellors.

Group 4 discuss the merits of calling some of the work they do 'counselling':

Alison: Are you happy with using the term counselling or do you have to always qualify it by saying big 'C', little 'c'?

Jane: Well I never think of it as counselling.

Niall: No.

David: They [athletes] wouldn't understand what you're saying

Jane: I'm just, I don't, I've never given it a label.

Niall: No, no. It's just working with an athlete!

Jane: Yes, that's part of my job, yeah I'm like you, I feel quite comfortable, I work like that.

Niall: Yeah, I don't concern myself that I need to define, you know...

Jane: Well, I've never thought about it.

Niall: ..what counselling is. You know, it's not an issue.

...

Niall: I think, because I can't define them easily, I assume that I use them all the time, you know, if I'm interacting I use some counselling skills.

Michael: All the time.

(Focus Group 4, page 15)

It appears that they did not feel any need to call what they do counselling for their own purposes or when talking to athletes. This again reflects (as in group 3) that practitioners perceive athletes may not be comfortable with the use of the term counselling.

Group 4 appear to integrate counselling and counselling skills (both with a small 'c') naturally into their applied practice and yet some do not feel comfortable with a label or definition of what it actually is. This may be due to their skills having been developed primarily through 'craft' knowledge (McFee, 1993), thus they are not aware of using their skills. It may also be due to their use of the definition of small 'c' counselling, i.e., that it is what everyone does and everyone uses. Again, this points to references of a different type of counselling for sport psychologists.

Emotion and Change

Adam and Kevin (group 2) were specific on their understanding of counselling, to them it is about change:

Adam: ...The implication of counselling is there is some agreement that somebody would like something to be different. There's almost this, it could be formal, but it

is an informal contract between the client and myself, say I've got this "I'm going to talk to you about a problem which I would like to be different"... [There's] some way of negotiating a change, and the way in which that change is negotiated depends on another label which is the model of how you counsel. What approach do you use to promote change?...

Kevin: I think that's excellent because how I separate mental skills training, educational training from counselling is that third part. It's that negotiation of change. You can provide an education, you can provide advice, you can say "Here is what, here is how goal setting works, here's what imagery's all about". But until you actually sit down and say "This is where you are at point A, this is where you want to be at point B, how are we going to get there? Is there something I can do to facilitate that?" That's when that becomes counselling in my opinion.

(Focus Group 2, page 8)

Later, they come back to this topic of change and Adam expands on his earlier point, he tells the group that it is more than just change:

Kevin: ...if we define counselling as the process of change, facilitating the process of change, you could just hear someone say that "I want to learn about goal setting". "Oh okay, here is a book about goal setting. Try it and let me know if it works. If it doesn't work I'll try to tinker with it a little bit and get you back on track". Is that counselling? Maybe not. Does it involve listening skills? Yes. Does it involve some sort of facilitating change? Yes...but that's not very much interaction, you know counselling may be a step beyond that.

Adam: ..one of the key things that I find there's a big difference and that is change at what level? ...one can facilitate intellectual change, "Read this, here's information", that to me is not counselling because that is not facilitating change. To me for counselling there would perhaps specifically be facilitated an emotional change...which to me is a subtle, at one level, but fundamental difference between how I would see a sport psychologist who does counsel, with one who doesn't counsel. For example, it is possible to do mental skills training with people week in week out, for months or years and not be involved in emotional change. It's possible to do relaxation techniques and focusing techniques to moderate the levels of arousal, I don't see that as producing a change, I see that as managing and moderating an existing emotion.

(Focus Group 2, page 9)

Adam views counselling as 'explicitly changing emotion'. This is the most specific definition of counselling that came from any of the participants. This response probably reflects his advanced training in counselling psychology. Adam later compares what he called his "purist view of counselling" with a broader definition that sport psychologists may use. This can result in behavioural (rather than emotional) change:

Henry: ...say you've got this athlete, this negative attributer who he might have said to me, for example, after a session "It really puts things into a different perspective and I feel really happy about my situation now" like a throwaway remark. But then his behaviour changes and he actually...changes some of the structure of the

sessions to try and build up for a particular event with the things that he's learnt in mind. Now I can't necessarily quantify emotional change there with him, but as his coach I can quantify behaviour change into it.

Adam: Yes.

Henry: So...is the role I've had with that person in terms of changing his attributional profile and then allowing his behaviour to change, is that not counselling because I might not have shifted emotion because I never assessed his emotional profile but I know his behaviour has changed as a result?

Adam: If you are looking at the very specific tight definition I used, probably not. If you are looking...at a broader definition, then you have. And to me I think it is a theoretical point as to where you draw the line. I view this very much as a continuum rather than this or that, and for me I have a point on the continuum where for me I say this is kind of where it ends. Another person may say "No it's over there", it varies accordingly so it is a continuum rather than a black and white issue.

(Group 2, page 12)

Henry feels that he is counselling at some level. Adam agrees that Henry may be if his broader definition of counselling is used. Adam later argues that implicitly changing emotions is using counselling skills rather than counselling. Adam is clear that, to him, counselling is about explicit emotional change, but he acknowledges that this is only one definition of counselling and that other, more broad definitions or types, may exist. Although Adam refers to a continuum in terms of where the line is drawn between the different types of counselling, it is clear that different types of counselling are perceived by these participants.

Advice and Guidance

A contrast was made by all the focus groups between different types of counselling on the basis of advice that is or is not given to athletes. Some groups distinguished on the premise that professional counsellors never give advice:

Ben: ...The term counselling to me is, I get the impression that there's sort of a 'pure' sort of counselling...Basically you're not giving advice to the person, you're getting them to think about things themselves, so that's what counselling is to me...

(Focus Group 1, page 5)

Russell et al. (1992) argue that advice and guidance (and befriending) are forms of non-counselling helping. Counselling (as counsellors define counselling) is not about giving advice or guiding (Sanders, 1996; BAC, 1998).

Michael (group 4) further illustrated that he perceives two types of counselling. He talks about the link with advice by referring to the dictionary definition of counselling in a separate way to the counselling that professional counsellors do:

Michael: I think if you look in a dictionary you'll find that it uses, it does use the word 'advice'.

David: But counsel means advice.

Michael: Yeah, to give advice. But if you talk to...professional counsellors they would say that they would never give advice. They would only ask questions that enable the...person who is also engaged in that counselling session, that enabled them to perhaps, erm...

Jane: Make informed decisions?

Michael: ...yeah, perhaps make informed decisions for themselves or perhaps see the problem in a slightly different way, or whatever, but they would only ask questions, *not* give advice. They see that as quite important.

Jane: Would they only ask questions?

Michael: I think so, you see it's quite important that they don't give advice.

(Focus Group 4, page 8)

Most of group 3 talk about advice being part of counselling as they perceive it:

Alison: ...What do you think counselling is...?

Rachel: To offer help and advice.

(Focus Group 3, page 8)

Mary, however, argued that it is not just about offering advice:

Mary: But...it's having the athlete...problem solve for him or herself isn't it as well? So we're not offering solutions.

...

Rachel: You're offering help though aren't you? If you say you're offering help then what you're talking about is the manner in which you provide that help, rather than the fact that you're offering it.

Mary: Yes.

(Focus Group 3, page 8)

Mary and Rachel agree that counselling is about offering help. This idea of counselling being help and (for some) advice ties in with those participants who viewed counselling as guidance and support:

Peter: We're trying to define counselling by saying "well it's these skills". Now, you could just say, because people do say, that counselling is guidance, full stop. That's what you understand by the term counselling. Now if you take that simplified view, then we would probably all maintain that we guide in some way.

Ben: Yeah.

Peter: But it's how we do that that I think is the key to this. I mean, I would maintain that I use guidance in my role as a trainee sport psychologist, but is that counselling? Is there a difference between guidance and counselling? Is counselling a special form of guidance?

...

Andrew: ...[what] I understand by counselling, in the context that we're discussing here is, I've just called effective support and guidance.

(Focus Group 1, page 6)

Peter here describes a "simplified view" of counselling where it can be viewed as guiding. Peter raises the question himself about the difference between guidance and counselling. It appears that Peter perceives a difference between what sport psychologists view as counselling and what counsellors would describe as counselling.

It is suggested by participants in group 5 that an element of counselling exists in communication and that they also define counselling in the sense of guiding and offering advice:

Calum: To... go back to your specific question [Alison], do you have to be a counsellor to counsel? No. If somebody's had a bereavement in the family, or somebody's upset about the fact they've just had a low mark, or, then there's an element of counselling that goes on there whilst you're communicating with those individuals.

Alison: Does everyone agree with that?

Robert: Yes, I would agree with that, and I would also agree that everybody counsels depending on how you define the term, I believe that in their normal exchange with other people there's an element of counselling. I do think, as we would probably define the term, there is an element of guiding and offering of advice or a suggestion of how...things may be resolved, because that's often the context in which you encounter them, there is a need.

Alison: In sport psychology?

Robert: Yeah. I should suspect that also in counselling someone comes to you with a need for counselling.

(Focus Group 5, page 5)

Group 5 often highlight the importance of context in their discussions (as above and in other sections of this discussion). In line with the thinking of the other groups, Robert (group 5) appears to be referring to a different type of counselling than the 'pure' type. He suggests, "everybody counsels depending on how you define the term" (p.5). These sentiments seem to echo the perceptions of members of other groups who have argued that counselling to sport psychologists is different to counselling as perceived by counsellors. Some authors who have written about counselling might call the 'counselling' that sport psychologists refer to in their work as 'helping' (e.g., Egan, 1998; Sanders, 1996). The distinction between counselling and other ways of helping is determined by boundaries (see broad dimension below on 'Role boundaries').

Facilitative

The notion of being facilitative arose in most groups. Facilitating change and not necessarily advising athletes was the emphasis in these conversations. Henry (group 2) realised (through listening to others in his group) that he works as a sport psychologist to facilitate rather than just educate athletes with PST:

Henry: ...I've always had a view that sport psychologists have seen counselling, the term counselling as when an athlete has a problem and it's about perhaps using mental skills training techniques to work on that problem, but it's the athlete that brings the problem to you first and you talk through it and then sort of try and remedy it with change, rather than the positive view that you took Kevin about that counselling is just part of the mental skills training education process that we are facilitating at the same time rather than just giving information and letting them walk away with it. So I think that certainly...you know if you look at the term counsel to be an expert adviser to facilitate that process, then everything that I do is counselling with a sport performer. But the connotation comes through that when you are counselling you are almost like...dealing with a person in a crisis, for example and working through that, possibly by giving advice on mental training techniques. Certainly that's the feeling I would have found even though it's nice to hear that that's not necessarily the case.

(Focus Group 2, page 9)

Here Henry illustrates how listening to others in the group have altered his ideas on counselling and counselling skills. He acknowledges that what he does includes using facilitation and counselling (although it appears that he would not have used this term before). To Henry, 'counselling' was about dealing with a person in a crisis and the way in which Henry would tackle this is by giving advice on mental training techniques. Corlett (1996) refers to this as working in a sophist way that works on alleviating symptoms but not dealing with underlying causes.

Different Approaches

Peter (group 1) talks specifically about the different approaches:

Peter: ...I suppose that if I say well I'm using guidance then I might take that as my baseline if you like, my, that's what I do. Now, if I guide in a problem-solving way, like in a cognitive-behavioural way, which a lot of sport psychs do, then that'll be fine for one type of situation, but another situation may require a more client-centered approach. We've talked about this before, you know the sliding scale, and I would hope I could adapt to the athlete need, so I think I would argue that I would be guiding and I would be counselling in any situation, but it's then that I use the skills to do that. So, I'm working in a problem-solving way. I'd still be guiding, I might be taking more of a lead on that, whereas if I was working in

a client-centered way, then the athlete would be leading. That's my view on it anyway.

(Focus Group 1, page 6)

Again, Peter refers to counselling in a sense of guiding and being adaptable. Being adaptable to Peter means changing approaches to use in different situations, the approach being a different theoretical position. He acknowledged that most sport psychologists use a cognitive-behavioural approach and concluded that sometimes it may be better to adapt the approach rather than always using the same one.

Other examples are given below:

George: ...I think it's very much dependent upon your skill set...and it depends on, you know, how formal your training's been, for example, if you are trained in a humanistic approach to counselling then they would, you know, like [a specific person who uses a humanistic approach in their work], I don't know if someone like [referring to same person] would totally disagree with that and say "Look", you know, "You have got the answers and I'll facilitate you to come with your own problem-solving and come up with the answer yourself". So I think it's very much dependent on the training that you've had and those abilities that you've been brought up with.

(Focus Group 5, page 6)

Robert: You would tend to use that which you are familiar with and feel confident in...and if acquiring and developing and refining counselling skills are important parts, if the answer to that one is "Yes", then having developed that you may then view your kind of approach different. It's almost inevitable I think as you acquire and develop skills you reflect on the way that you do things, and they become then the filter for your judgements. If you're, you know, big into counselling, you're probably going to be inclined to address most of the issues you see from the perspective of a counsellor. Like Ian's example [of a counsellor not addressing problems], a counsellor may well just keep fire fighting in that context rather than addressing, because he or she may believe that's what their role is and that's perfectly legitimate.

...

Robert: ...if you believe you have those skills then you tend to view the world through different perspectives.

Rose: Yeah, tacit knowledge.

(Focus Group 5, page 6)

Ruth: My understanding of counselling skills, I think is that somewhere there are, not necessarily a fixed set, but there are a number of approaches to counselling. And because I've not actually received any formal training I believe I do do counselling but I wouldn't have the knowledge necessarily what my style, what approach I'm adopting. It's almost, and again it's to do with this formalised training and this identification of it as being associated with a branch of mainstream psychology that we probably haven't had that background to sort of label it.

(Focus Group 3, page 9)

Rose acknowledges that counselling can include different approaches, but also concedes that despite her feeling that she does counsel she is unable to 'label' or define what it is. Her sense that she counsels may reflect her feeling that she has developed these skills through some intuitive or craft knowledge by working with athletes in applied settings.

Addressing of Problems & Negative Perceptions of Counselling

Group 5 suggested that problem-solving can be one aspect of being a sport psychologist:

George: I think first off, counselling doesn't necessarily mean that you are a counsellor, you know, you're not a trained counsellor. I think you can counsel without necessarily having any major formal training. I don't know if we're backtracking to counselling skills there, but in counselling it depends what the aims of counselling are because we come up with a few like problem-solving is a common one in sport. Erm, there's a whole host of things, and just self-awareness, things like that that don't necessarily require fancy formal training skills of a counsellor, you know.

Alison: So you're using the skills, but you're not necessarily trained...

George: To use them.

Alison: ...to use them when you're a sport psychologist?

George: So on a continuum, you know, you counsel based at your competency and based on the context that you're working in. So counselling doesn't necessarily mean that you have to be a counsellor, it's just saying that you are, you know, a member of support staff dealing with a specific context. You don't know what the aim is, the aim may be problem-solving, it may be self-awareness, it may be cognitive change, it might be behavioural change, you know.

(Focus Group 5, page 7)

A little later in their discussion, Ian introduces a notion of not dealing with problems when counselling:

Ian: If I was spending all my time counselling as a sport psychologist then I'm not doing my job effectively because there's a big problem somewhere and I'm dealing with lots of symptoms, and really I ought to be going to the source of the problem and addressing that. It's likely to be the coach or the management or something like that that's going on, and consequently you're spending lots of time counselling. Now I've been in a situation like that and it was that there was a manager who was mad and causing all sorts of problems.

Alison: So, what you're saying is the counselling didn't address the underlying issues...

Ian: Not at all.

Alison: ...it dealt with the symptoms?

Ian: Crisis management.

Alison: Right.

Ian: And if you end up spending a lot of time doing that then I don't think you're being a particularly effective sport psychologist because you ought to be able to identify those issues and do something about it.

Alison: George you disagreed?

George: I think...you know, chronologically in time, I think yeah, people have this tool base approach to looking at sport psychology, but I think all those tools have to be laid on a real good solid bed of things like counselling skills.

Ian: I like the bed part!

George: Thank you, you like the bed thing, but the idea is that you'd never be able to identify that there was a problem without having the ability to listen to people's whinging.

Rose: But they are quite separate issues really you're talking about.

George: What?

Rose: That you're not saying [Ian] "You don't need the skills"...

Ian: Yeah.

Rose: ...you're just saying "Can't be all encompassing".

George: ...I think you need those skills to identify the problems. How you deal with that problem could be done through counselling, it could be done through organisational management, conflict management-type issues. But I think if you haven't got those abilities, those skills to be able to, if you haven't got the skills where somebody can approach you and offload, disclose then, you know, you'd never know that there was a problem in that organisation.

(Focus Group 5, page 9)

George argues that counselling skills are fundamental to identifying problems, however, Ian again talks about a psychologist who has counselling skills and not allowing a problem to be solved:

Ian: Yeah, but having a psychologist who has counselling skills actually allows the problem to persist for a longer period because the crisis point isn't reached within that group, because it doesn't come to head because the psychologist often is able to diffuse. So you may have a situation that bubbles away for a couple of years presuming the psychologist will stop it coming to a head.

(Focus Group 5, page 9)

Robert agrees:

Robert: I think Ian's example is quite a good one where you can apply counselling skills to fire fight and keep, if you like, the mental health of the individual in better shape within a context that you know needs to be addressed, but as a counsellor you may choose not to go to the organisational level, you're working with the interests of the athlete paramount. ...a counsellor can keep fire fighting over and over again without necessarily moving, and still be an effective counsellor, but without necessarily addressing the problem as he or she sees it.

(Focus Group 5, page 9)

Robert seems to be comparing the role of the counsellor with what a sport psychologist may do in the same situation, i.e., work at the organisational level. Robert's depiction of a counsellor as one of 'fire fighting' and not necessarily solving a problem could be interpreted (within a professional counselling context) as somewhat incorrect, unless Robert was referring to 'holding' or 'containing' the athlete (which are advanced skills of a counsellor). However, his interpretations also seem to reflect a notion of a sport psychologist being adaptable in different contexts.

The term counselling was also defined in terms of its association with 'problems'. Henry (group 2) admitted that he and, he suggests, other sport psychologists have associated the word counselling alongside dealing with problems. After hearing the others in his group talk, however, he realises that this is not necessarily the case (see sub-section on 'facilitative' above which illustrates Henry's comments).

Jane (group 4) did not like to use the term counselling because of its perceived association with problems:

Jane: I mean I have a problem with the term counselling because, it may just be me, but I have always associated counselling per se as somebody who has a problem, and half the time some of these people haven't got a problem, but you're still using counselling skills when you're communicating with them through the sort of social support bit. So, yeah I have a problem with the term in the way that I work.

(Focus Group 4, page 17)

Group 3 also link counselling with addressing problems. They start off the dialogue by suggesting that it is other people's perceptions of what counselling is:

Mary: People see it as problems.

(Focus Group 3, page 10)

But Rachel acknowledges that the participants in the focus group themselves may also be viewing counselling as linked to problems and this is uncomfortable for them:

Rachel: We're shying away from the words aren't we?

Debbie: Yeah.

Ruth: But I think in counselling practice people would not usually go to see a counsellor unless there was some problem that they had that they wanted some advice and help with.

Mary: Yes.

Ruth: So I think, in a sense, that's where it comes from, is that that's how the role is defined in this country. You don't go when there's nothing wrong.

...

Rachel: I suspect many of us in our day-to-day dealings with, in our consultancy or work with specific clients, spend most of our time trying to get away from this issue about sport psychology is about solving problems.

Mary: Yes.

Rachel: So we want to try and move away as much as possible from this concept of problems and you're there to solve problems, and I suspect a lot of us see counselling as dealing with problems, and so therefore as part of the matrix we also shy away from the word counselling or any words that identify this person as having a problem.

Alison: Counselling skills as well?

Rachel: No counselling, the word counselling, I don't think I'm shying away from them all. I think I recognise that a lot of the skills I might use would be classed as counselling skills, but I think that's maybe one of the reasons why commonly, I certainly shy away from the word counselling because it probably represents and what it embraces, it embraces problems I wouldn't want, you know, [I] spend my time telling them about sport psychology's not necessarily about problems.

(Focus Group 3, page 10)

Rachel suggested that they shy away from using the word counselling because of its association with problems and this is not what sport psychologists want to focus on. Jane (group 4) stated that they might not even be working with people who have "problems". It is plausible to suggest that the group are inferring that they do not work with people who have "problems". The issue may be one of semantics, as Kevin (group 2) argues:

Kevin: I also think there's a semantic issue about defining the client's needs as problems, you might call it goals, you might call it areas of improvement. There's a lot of ways of referring to what the client needs other than calling it problems.

(Focus Group 2, page 17)

Here Kevin suggests calling the 'problem' something else (even though he used the term 'problem' earlier in his discussion). It may be suggested that this semantic issue causes participants to either deny that problems exist for athletes or that they re-name them, for example, goals or areas for improvements. There is a large amount of sport psychology literature which has documented that athletes have problems or issues which may not be directly related to performance enhancement but which need to be discussed and resolved (e.g., Gould et al., 1989; Sullivan and Nashman, 1998). Corlett (1996) argued that not

looking to solve problems and only deal with symptoms is working in a sophist or 'quick fix' way.

By group 3 talking about "shying away" from the term, this reflects a feeling of being uncomfortable with the term counselling. There are several references within group 3's discussion to such a feeling:

Rachel: In day-to-day communications with students you're advising them, so why can I academically have that as a normal part, and yet within sport psychology it's something that I see as bit more deviant, I'm trying to think of a word.

Tony: Mm, it's the word though isn't it?

(Focus Group 3, page 8)

Tony: We've got a very negative connotation though haven't we?

(Focus Group 3, page 8)

In trying to work out his thoughts on sport psychology and counselling, Tony's unease comes through:

Tony: I think this is a very messy area.

(Focus Group 3, page 11)

When discussing the use of the term in America, Tony talks about feeling uncomfortable with the word therapy as well as counselling:

Tony: ...we don't like the word [therapy]. We're not comfortable with that word [counselling] either.

(Focus Group 3, page 11)

When asked to talk about specific practical examples of using counselling skills, Tony shows that he is uncomfortable with the term again:

Tony: ... I've still got this idea of counselling as something negative.

(Focus Group 3, page 20)

The group realise that their uneasiness with using the term counselling has caused them to use the term interpersonal skills instead of counselling skills:

Rachel: It's quite interesting we're all talking about interpersonal skills here now, not counselling skills.

Tony: Hey you like that don't you [Alison]?

Rachel: We don't like that word.

Alison: I'm hearing that you're using the terms interpersonal skills and counselling skills interchangeably.

Tony: Mm.

Alison: And I distinguished between them on the original, the very first sheet. Am I hearing it right that you don't distinguish between them then?

Tony: I don't think we're very happy distinguishing between them.

Rachel: We're not.

Tony: I'm not comfortable holding this counselling skills or counselling label when it's not what's really going into my mind, the interpersonal skills.

(Focus Group 3, page 15)

This dialogue not only highlights the strong link that they perceive between interpersonal skills and counselling. The notion of a label for counselling is an issue that arose in both groups 3 and 4. An example from group 3 is:

Eddie: I don't think it matters what they call it.

Tony: No it's just a label.

Eddie: Someone might call it counselling, they might not have a clue what they mean by counselling, it's just a word they use to describe what's going on.

Alison: What about you as a sport psychologist, does it matter what you call it?

Eddie: Does it matter what I call it?

Alison: Yeah.

Eddie: Erm, I think it does. I just call it help. If you need some help or anything. That's all I call it.

Tony: Or a chat about it, have a chat about something.

Eddie: Try not to give things labels.

Debbie: Mm.

(Focus Group 3, page 7)

It appears that Eddie is referring to what counselling means to athletes, rather than what it means to sport psychologists. It may help shed light on another reason why several members of this group feel uncomfortable with the term counselling, i.e. they don't wish athletes to feel like they are being counselled because of the negative connotation of having a 'problem' that the word brings.

Most of group 3 seemed uncomfortable at times with using the term counselling because of: 1) the association they perceived between the term and 'problems' and their desire to keep away from talking to athletes about problems, 2) their self acknowledged lack of understanding on the topic and 3) their perceptions that counselling is something

that is used when the issue being discussed between an athlete and sport psychologist is not about performance enhancement:

Tony: ...as soon as it goes into the realm where you're moving away from the performance then I tend to think of it as counselling. So things like home sickness...relationship problems without doubt view as being counselling, or I'll try to counsel somebody.

Alison: You would try to counsel somebody?

Tony: I would try to, I would see it as moving away from performance enhancing...., for, example, if I had to classify how an hour had gone, we'd spent 45 minutes on goal setting and 15 minutes on home sickness. I'd classify that as being part of counselling.

Alison: Why is that?

Tony: ...the way I've been brought up I think, what I've read.

(Focus Group 3, page 7)

Tony suggests that this perception is derived from the way he was brought up or what he has read. Rachel decided to tackle the issue of the location of these perceptions of counselling. This is covered in the next sub-section.

The location of the perceptions of counselling

Rachel suggests that her perception of counselling as 'something that deals with non-performance enhancement issues' comes from completing the BASES form for supervised experience/accreditation:

Rachel: I'm trying to locate why this counselling thing is...you know, how's it got to the position, because everyone seems to be agreeing that it's not part, you see it as this attachment, that it's not part of the performance enhancement stuff, it's this other stuff that's preparing to deal with these other issues that on a day-to-day basis you mightn't. And I'm trying to work out as an individual how I've come to this sort of...position whereby I think counselling, half of me says "Well counselling's not about that", you know, I was with someone for two hours last night, I was offering him counselling, but I would never, ever in a million years use that phrase to describe it because, for some reason, I've attached this 'other meaning' to this phrase counselling...and I swear that I've tried, the best location I can find for this is the BASES form. I mean I'm locating myself to filling in those little boxes and ticking those little things.

Tony: On your profile.

Rachel: And I don't know, I mean it's a long time since I did that form, but I sort of recall counselling skills belonging to the sort of mainstream psychology bunch of skills working with other disorders or other, you know, population groups or other problems. So I've sort of located, I might be completely wrong, but I'm trying to locate, in time how I've now decided counselling skills is working with deviant problems or, you know, issues other than those which, because what we do arguably is counsel people.

Eddie: That's what I said at the start...because you can still use those [listening and interpersonal skills] to handle issues like that that crop up.

(Focus Group 3, page 7)

By suggesting that her perception of counselling has derived from an application form for training/accreditation reflects craft rather than professional knowledge. Mary counters this view by suggesting that the perception of counselling goes beyond the BASES form:

Mary: But I think the placement of counselling goes beyond that BASES form, I think it's the fact that we don't use it, I certainly don't use it in any of my teaching, in terms of sport and exercise psych. Whether I'm doing an applied module, whether I'm doing, not doing an applied module. Counselling comes within those parameters and maybe we need to expand our viewpoint on this and say "Alright, so let's encompass some basic skills within some of these applied stuff", so we take away this label that it is out here and only...deviant people need counselling skills. And counselling takes on this broader feature that we counsel athletes and we counsel athletes as much about performance enhancement as we do on anything else.

(Focus Group 3, page 7)

Mary's point of view reflects her experience and professional knowledge of basic counselling skills gained from taking her course. In contrast, other members of the group felt that listening and interpersonal skills developed through craft knowledge are sufficient in order to be able to 'counsel' athletes without any specific training in counselling skills. In this context, it appears that Mary and the rest of the group are talking about different types of 'counselling'.

Positive perceptions of counselling

After Henry had listening to his fellow participants speak about counselling, he realised that counselling is not just about dealing with problems. He also took a more positive view that "counselling is just part of the mental skills training education process that we are facilitating..." (p. 9).

Group 3 discussed the suggestion that athletes perceive that they are receiving counselling and do not necessarily perceive it as negative:

Eddie: I mean athletes might call it counselling, "I'm off seeing the psycho", "I'm off seeing the shrink".

Debbie: Mm.

Tony: Mm.

Alison: Are you happy with them saying that?

Eddie: Erm...

Rachel: Yeah.

Eddie: Yeah, because it's part of, especially if it's a team sport, or in a squad situation, it's just part of the banter, it's just part of the relationship.

Debbie: It's very tongue-in-cheek when we say it.

Eddie: Yeah, of course.

Rachel: It's often quite a good thing.

Debbie: Yeah.

Rachel: Yeah, it's not negative in the context that they frequently use it.

Debbie: Because they've started to realise that that's not what it is, a sport psychologist.

Rachel: But it shows that where the relationship has got between you that they can have that sort of banter.

Ruth: Yes, yeah.

(Focus Group 3, page 6)

Although they acknowledged that athletes might perceive that they receive counselling, in this example, describe their role as one that does not include counselling.

Cultural difference in meaning of 'counselling'

Group 3's discussion moved on to the idea that there is a difference in terminology used between America and Britain:

Tony: ...it's a label that we're not comfortable with, we don't really understand. Other people are not comfortable with, for example, Americans use the term counselling all the time and it's an accepted part of their culture. It's not an accepted part of our society. "My little lad's going for tuition for his maths lessons", "Oh he's going for maths counselling" ooh I don't like that bit on the end....

Alison: Do you think Americans see counselling differently?

Rachel: Mm.

Mary: Mm.

Alison: Does it mean something different in America?

Tony: They use like the word 'therapy'...we don't like the word. We're not comfortable with that word [counselling] either.

Alison: Why do you think that is? When you say we, do you mean sport psychologists?

Tony: In my opinion, no, it goes outside generally.

Debbie: Yes.

Mary: Society in general.

...

Tony: Yeah...it's the attitude that we don't like to admit that we need help.

Mary: That's right. It's this stiff upper lip approach that we can deal with it all ourselves.

Rachel: You know in America you're not one of the trend setters if you're not in therapy.

Tony: No, if you haven't got a therapist there's something wrong with you!

[Laughter from rest of group]

Mary: That's right yeah. I mean they have athletic counsellors, and athletic counsellors are your sport psychologists, if you like, they call them athletic counsellors.

(Focus Group 3, page 9)

Focus group 2 also hit on this notion of a different meaning of counselling in America:

Adam: ...When I was studying in America I noticed a difference in the use of what counselling means or implies. Counselling in this country implies more the view that there is something wrong with the person. My impression of counselling in America, in the States, is that it's not. I think in this country that kind of counselling you are referring to would come under here as 'guidance'.

Kevin: Right.

Adam: The terminology would be different to mean this same thing.

Kevin: Yes.

Adam: So I think there's a cultural difference in the meaning of the term.

Kevin: Interesting point.

Adam: Certainly applied sport psychologists guide people, there is no doubt about that, if you want to what to achieve, that's what you need to do. That would be guidance, and I would agree with you.

Kevin: I think Americans are often make the distinction between counselling and psychotherapy or counselling and clinical psychology.

Adam: Yes.

Kevin: There are programmes degree programme in both counselling and clinical and the approaches that the clinician deals with more abnormal psychology than a counsellor, a counsellor facilitates life skills.

Adam: Yes.

Kevin: And, would say that what we tend to do is counsel, what we tend not to do is deal with the psychopathology unless you're trained as a clinical psychologist, and then I'm not sure there is a real need for a clinical sport psychologist, a clinical psychologist maybe appropriate.

Adam: But I think what I'm hearing now, our views are agreed, the words are different.

Kevin: ...the terminology, yes.

(Focus Group 2, page 15)

Most of the literature in sport psychology which focuses on counselling has emanated from the US rather than the UK (e.g., Petitpas et al., 1995; Petitpas et al., 1999).

Link with other related fields

Groups 2's and 3's conversations above help shed light on the question of why counselling is viewed in this country as associated with 'problems', 'psychopathology' or 'deviance'. Indeed Henry (group 2) highlighted this issue:

Henry: I think one issue you might want to get into is the closeness of counselling to the old clinical, sort of, chestnut. In the sense that how much are you actually allowed to be a counsellor if the area you are talking about as a sport psychologist is something which is not necessarily performance-related or is indirectly performance-related. Because I always thought, I always had an opinion as a young psychologist that there are certain counselling topics that are OK, but there are other topics of counselling in which you will almost become like a social worker or a clinical psychologist.

(Focus Group 2, page 15)

It is interesting that Henry talks about the counselling topics that he thought were 'o.k.' to deal with when he was a 'young psychologist', but had previously admitted (see sub-section above on 'addressing of problems') that he did not describe what he did as counselling.

Bill admits to using the term 'counselling' in a way that inferred a psychological problem:

Bill: ...whenever I use the word counselling that inferred some sort of psychopathology, or something like that, and I think that's...I think I use counselling skills a lot but it's almost recognition that I can't deal with this then that's going over to some sort of counselling role.

(Focus Group 2, page 15)

There is a perceived link (not just in this group) between counselling and clinical psychology that may also reflect general society's view (as shown previously).

Theory

Different approaches to counselling include giving advice, guidance and support, whereas for others it has a much narrower definition and is 'explicitly changing emotion'. Differences in terms of theoretical approaches were also discussed in the previous section on 'different approaches'. Ruth (group 3) refers to her understanding of counselling in relation to theory:

Ruth: My understanding of counselling skills I think is that somewhere there are, not necessarily a fixed set, but there are a number of approaches to counselling. And because I've not actually received any formal training I believe I do do counselling but I wouldn't have the knowledge necessarily what my style, what approach I'm adopting. It's almost, and again it's to do with this formalised training and this identification of it as being associated with a branch of

mainstream psychology that we probably haven't had that background to sort of label it.

(Focus Group 3, page 9)

Ruth statement reflects her 'practical' (Schön, 1983) or 'craft' knowledge (McFee, 1993). She later highlights that she is not sure about the theoretical aspect:

Ruth: When I was talking earlier, I had assumed that kind of in your counselling course [Mary] you might have been doing more sort of theoretical stuff, coming from one approach and understanding the approach, but the practical side's kind of one aspect of it, but there's also this big theoretical aspect. Erm, I guess I see that as a bit of a mystery, you know.

Mary: I mean there is obviously a theory base there but the way the course is set up and organised is it's very interactional and very practical.

Rachel: I wonder if that's quite common though, I wonder if there's that huge variety between actual counselling courses that in some there's this huge theoretical underpinning.

Tony: Mm.

Debbie: Mm.

Rachel: Because I would see it as different approaches to the use of interpersonal skills.

Ruth: Yes, that's how I see it.

Tony: One approach is beneficial in certain situations.

Rachel: Yeah, in bereavement counselling you might use...

Tony: Yeah, exactly.

Rachel: ...and in aggravated bereavement you might use, there's this type of grief and that type of grief, and in those certain different situations you might use different approaches which underpin your interpersonal skills, but you haven't described it as that so now I'm quite happy with the two coming together.

(Focus Group 3, page 16)

Again, the interchangeable use of the terms 'interpersonal skills' and 'counselling skills' is apparent. The passage above illustrates that (for most of group 3) their knowledge on what constitutes counselling skills training has been gained from their craft developed experiences. They do reiterate that they are comfortable in naming what they do as interpersonal skills.

Link between the different terms

There were several points of debate in the focus groups about the link between the terms; these further illustrate the participants' different understandings and interpretations. Examples from the discussions to show the links are given below.

Alison: ...would you distinguish between listening skills and counselling skills?
[6 seconds of silence]

Laura: Listening's only half of it isn't it? Once you've got like, again it's like a two-way thing, so if you can use the skills for listening and communicate that to someone else, but you've also got to be able to use different skills to reflect that back to them and to help them move on through their problem.

Ben: I wouldn't see that there's a difference between them, or distinguish between them. Like Laura says, there is, it's a two-way process. One is, well listening skills to me are counselling skills, but you've also got other counselling skills, on the ability to reflect back, paraphrasing, summarising.

Peter: I'll give a similar answer as I did to the first question - listening is a key part of what we understand as counselling skills.

Helen: But I think it's more, I think listening skills would be more important as a key part to your counselling skills...

Peter: Yes.

Helen: But to be an effective counsellor you'd *have* to be an effective listener. Whereas to have effective interpersonal skills you wouldn't necessarily have to be an effective listener.

Ben: That's true.

Helen: So that's an integral part, well it would be quite an important part of counselling skills.

Alison: What is, listening?

Helen: Yeah.

Alison: Right. Listening is an integral part of ...

Peter: counselling skills.

Andrew: Well I support that, and say that I can't see how you would have counselling skills without listening. But, you could have listening skills without counselling skills. That's how I would see it.

Peter: Well, when you do a counselling course, normally the top thing [listening skills] is what you do first isn't it? You know in a course. You'll do perhaps two weeks of listening skills before you move onto anything else. Which suggests that it's very crucial.

(Focus Group 1, page 6)

This group agree that listening is an important component of counselling skills. This is a view substantiated by the texts in basic counselling skills (e.g. Sanders, 1996; Egan, 1998). Participants in group 3 suggest that listening is not only important in counselling and sport psychology, but also for other helpers:

Tony: It's a life skill. It's not just a sport psychology skill or a psychology skill, it's a teacher's skill, a manager's skill.

Ruth: Yeah, for that reason I wouldn't see it necessarily as just falling under counselling.

(Focus Group 3, page 3)

This is similar to Egan's notion of 'informal' helpers for teachers and managers who may not necessarily be helpers in any formal sense, but often may deal with people in times of crisis and distress (Egan, 1998). What these participants do not see is a link between these skills of counselling and counselling per se.

All the groups viewed listening as part of interpersonal skills. The example below illustrates how people expressed their opinions on whether the two were linked or separate:

Niall: I think I'd have difficulty separating those [listening skills and interpersonal skills]. You know, if you have good listening skills then you have good interpersonal skills.

David: I can see why you say that but I don't think an athlete would see it that way. I think you could be a bit of a lad and a bit of, you know, very "Isn't everyone jolly?" and everything, but not a very good listener and you might be viewed as a great team member. I would personally view, I'd say I have very good listening skills, I don't think I'm very good at interpersonal skills.

Jane: You mean you're not being very good at being laddish or...?!

David: I'm not very good in a group situation, I'm not as effective in a group situation, I'm more reserved. So in a group situation I'm quite easily overwhelmed and I find it difficult to make my own space, so that's not very good interpersonal skills. Although it's my own style, so I'd say that that's fine, but listening skills, I'm much better. But...I think definitely they're separate.

...

Niall: The way we discussed listening skills, we said it wasn't just about listening, it was about interacting in an effective manner with this individual.

David: Mm.

Niall: And for me that's what interpersonal skills are, they're about interactions. So I think that's why I have difficulty separating them. But I agree, listening doesn't necessarily account for laddish behaviour in a group environment.

Jane: I don't think laddish behaviour is interpersonal skills.

Niall: It could be.

Jane: It could be, yeah I suppose because it helps you fit.

Alison: Were you just using that as an example?

David: Yeah.

Alison: So you were agreeing with what some of Niall and Jane were saying, have you changed your mind, or do you still see them as very distinct?

David: Oh I agree totally. Listening skills is part of interpersonal skills.

(Focus Group 4, page 4)

This example helps illustrate how the group helped David clarify his ideas on the link between the two types of skills. It showed that he felt comfortable with discussing ideas within this group. As an example, he disclosed personal information about how competent he felt in group situations. This is a reflection that the participants in this group knew each other quite well as they were colleagues, it could also indicate that the atmosphere of the focus group was informal enough for David to talk about these issues.

For some participants counselling skills appear, on the surface, to be the same as listening and interpersonal skills:

Adam: For me, superficially, they could be synonymous [counselling skills, listening and interpersonal skills].

(Focus Group 2, page 8)

But Adam (trained in counselling) went on to say that beyond the superficial level they were different to listening and interpersonal skills because of what the implication of counselling meant to him - an agreement that somebody would like something to be different. Kevin (also group 2) agreed with this point.

Tony in group 3 started the discussion on this topic by suggesting that counselling skills were about having good listening and interpersonal skills. This was countered by some people arguing that it is about more than just possessing listening and interpersonal skills, it is about dealing with issues which were not related to performance:

Eddie: I think when people start using that term [counselling skills], in the framework of sport psychology, I don't think they're talking about interpersonal skills and listening skills, because they are skills we need anyway as a sport psychologist. For me, when people start talking about counselling skills in this context it's about dealing with issues other than... performance issues. Getting further training to deal with those sorts of things that crop up.

Alison: So, it's issues that are not performance enhancement?

Eddie: Yeah, when I see that mentioned, and when I hear that mentioned that's what I always think about, I don't think about counselling skills as being specific skills that you've developed to enhance a relationship that you've got as a sport psychologist, because I think you should be doing this, you should have those anyway to a certain extent, interpersonal skills, the listening and the communicating. That's what I understand by it, I don't know about anybody else.

Tony: Mm.

...

Debbie: Erm, I agree really with what Eddie's saying, when I see the term counselling skills I don't really see that as sport psychology training as being counselling particularly, I see that as more ... something that we shouldn't necessarily be dealing with. ... I see it more as the interpersonal and listening skills that's all part of it, they're important parts of it.

(Focus Group 3, page 6)

Debbie appears confused in trying to describe the link between sport psychology and counselling, although she does seem to agree with Eddie in that counselling skills (and the link with counselling) are something that a sport psychologist "...shouldn't necessarily be dealing with". She views counselling skills as being made up of listening and interpersonal skills. It is interesting that Eddie referred to needing get 'further training' to deal with issues other than performance enhancement (training is discussed further in a later section).

Most participants appeared to agree that listening and interpersonal skills are part of counselling skills and are skills that a sport psychologist should possess. This does not appear to be the same for most of group 3 because of how they perceived the role of

counselling in sport psychology, i.e. dealing with issues that are not related to performance. However, Eddie later alters his thoughts to:

Eddie: ...I mean I started off by saying what I thought counselling was dealing with stuff over and above performance. But the skills that you would use are those skills [listening and interpersonal skills]. Or they should be.

(Focus Group 3, page 8)

Here, Eddie appears to acknowledge that skills integral to counselling skills are skills that can be used for performance enhancement and 'other' issues. But, others in the group later suggest that counselling is about working with 'deviant problems' and not performance enhancement.

4.3.3.3 BROAD DIMENSION: ROLE BOUNDARIES

Summary

Role boundaries were discussed in various contexts throughout the discussions. One theme that emerged most frequently in each group was 'adaptability'. It was viewed as important to adapt the role of the sport psychologist in different contexts.

The role of the sport psychologist was also described in both a holistic way (Ben, group 1) and in a manner that had a clear boundary between the role of a sport psychologist and counselling, where counselling was about issues not related to performance enhancement (group 3).

Role Boundaries

Andrew talks about boundaries in a way that seems defensive of his position as a sport psychologist:

Andrew: ...I would have a problem with these boundaries business because presumably a counsellor isn't allowed to mention the word 'sport'.

Peter: Mm.

Andrew: Otherwise they're going over their boundaries aren't they?

Ben: Mm.

Andrew: So, you know, that's trite of me to say it like that, but what I'm saying is I see it as problematic if we talk about boundaries in that sense, although I appreciate when you're talking from a legal point of view or what you mean by clinical, all sort of stuff...

(Focus Group 1, page 6)

Kevin (group 2) suggests that looking at 'protecting turf' and 'compartmentalising' what sport psychologists and counsellors do is not helpful:

Kevin: I think the big problem is that in protecting our turf, the psychologist from the kinesiologist from the counsellors from the Chartered or licensed individuals all want to say that "Because I have a licence or because I'm chartered or because I have a degree in counselling then I'm the only one that's trained to do that and I'm the only one who should be allowed to call myself a psychologist or call myself a counsellor", rather than embracing the differences that we have and agree that what we do is similar than trying to separate and compartmentalise ourselves and protect our turf and say that nobody else can do this. If you're not a chartered psychologist then you can't call yourself a psychologist. You know, if you don't have a degree in counselling, you can't call yourself a counsellor...I don't agree with that.

(Focus Group 2, page 9)

Robert (group 5) also talks about boundaries in terms a self-protecting nature of terms and of competence:

Robert: It may be tied up with the sort of self-protective nature of the terms like 'counsellor' that we're all sort of steering, just like sport psychology.

Alison: Are you steering away from it? Are you happy with the term 'counselling'? Are you happy to say that you counsel, are you comfortable saying that you counsel athletes if you weren't trained in counselling?

George: Yeah. We're on that continuum of life from psychotherapy to, you know, just conversation. It varies dependent upon your skill set and...

Robert: I think it's like knowing your boundaries of competence and that often is, in this sense, defined by your ability to know that you're [].

(Focus Group 5, page 7)

Situation-Specific Variables

Some participants discussed situation-specific variables in relation to how role boundaries are set. Group 5 discussed the idea of context being important to the various issues all the way through their focus group.

Professional Knowledge

Gaining professional knowledge may influence the role boundaries of a sport psychologist. For example, some participants (for example, Adam group 2, page 5) suggested that training and education in listening skills is needed, others agreed but were not sure about whether it should be formal or not. This is discussed further in the section on 'Training'.

Adaptable

Adaptability was a theme that emerged during all the focus group discussions. It was interpreted as a key factor in the notion of setting of boundaries. Group 4 discussed the complex nature of needing to adapt and be flexible with different people in different situations whilst still being consistent with individuals. A multi-faceted approach was also introduced which incorporates the idea of being professional whilst being able to socialise with athletes (socialising was also described as an interpersonal skill):

Niall: I mean I don't think if you're still in the environment with the performers I don't think you really switch off in terms of being a sport psychologist. You know, you do have a consistent approach because you are what you are and that is part of, you know, your role isn't just when you're actually in the training environment, your role is, you know, whenever you're interacting with those individuals. So, I think consistency is fine, but I don't think that happens by accident.

Michael: No no no, no no, I didn't mean it, it happened by accident. It's just I think some people...by personality some people are very consistent, and if you want a different word for that say inflexible, and other people are very adaptable and if you want another word for that, let's say chameleon-like. So I'm trying to say it so I don't think that being consistent is a good thing, or that being adaptable is a "good" thing, it's somewhere, if you're going to relate to different people you need to be able to change, but equally if you just change all the time then I think you only get a very superficial sort of relationship. So then I wouldn't say that's being very skilled.

...

Niall: But if you're, say for example, you know, you're away with a group or a team whatever, for a contracted period of time and, you know, you have a social time out, you can go and enjoy yourself without compromising your position or, you know, the relationship that you have with those athletes at all. You know, so I mean it's, clearly you're not rigid, but you hope that you, you know, are effective enough at what you're doing to make sure that the athletes see you as, you know, a multifaceted individual, they don't see you just as, you know, the person you sort of may interact with and talk quietly to them.

Jane: They see them as a person don't they?

Niall: You know, it's gaining their belief in you as an all-round person as well. I think you can have a couple of beers and chat with them and still maintain, you know, your integrity...

Jane: Professional.

Niall: ...in terms of if they say something to you that's important that you can still, you know, treat that in a confidential and professional manner and then, if necessary, you deal with it, you know, when you've had time to think about it when you're in a more appropriate situation, or state.

(Focus Group 4, pages 5-6)

It seems that both accept that the role boundaries of the sport psychologist can change depending on who an interaction is with as "...flexibility is part of interpersonal skills" (Michael, p. 5).

It is interesting that the notion of "switching" on or off arises again (as in the discussions of groups 2 and 3 on 'active listening'). Niall suggests that the role of a sport psychologist is not just confined to the training environment. There is no concept of 'clocking on' or 'clocking off' when working as a sport psychologist when in an environment that requires interacting with athletes and anyone associated with those athletes (i.e., coaches, administrators, friends, parents, etc.), for example, on a squad weekend.

Adaptability was also a theme that emerged during the discussions on counselling skills. Context and adapting to the context were key for some participants and a dominant theme running all the way through group 5's discussion on each aspect of the focus group. As shown in the section above on the link between interpersonal and counselling skills, members of group 5 disagreed on whether counselling skills are different to interpersonal skills. Ian suggested that the skills are the same; the distinction lay in whether the sport psychologist was involved in the process of counselling or communication:

Ian: I don't think you're, well for me, you're not talking about anything that's different to the first two [listening and interpersonal skills], it depends if you're involved in the process of counselling, or if you're using skills that would be appropriate in a communication situation. The skills themselves are listening skills, interpersonal skills...if you're talking about counselling skills, what you're saying is "These are broadly human interaction skills, so let's apply them to a particular context, the context is counselling". So, which of these set of skills would be appropriate in a counselling situation?

George: But some people might term counselling skill as not necessarily...going through a formal process of counselling, it's more of a conversation skill, like an interpersonal skill. It's just being able to communicate effectively with a person and deal with and problem-solve, that's what coaches do all the time. People could perceive that to be a counselling skill.

Robert: I mean I'd slightly disagree there in as much as I think when you put counselling skills in, you begin to identify a clearer role for the individual or individuals involved in the exchange. You know, by definition 'to counsel', there is not an analogy with interpersonal skills, there is either a suggestion, implicit or explicit, that in the counselling context that someone is being counselled or some people, a number of people are being counselled and someone is providing the counsel. So, that's different, for me, from interpersonal skills.

...

Calum: The difference for me would be that ... counselling implies that someone is leading and ... there's an element of somebody, you know, leading or being in charge of the situation, as opposed to interpersonal which is a random form of communications between two individuals or a number of individuals, where it

doesn't necessarily mean that one individual is taking the lead in that interaction, whereas the counselling involves somebody having a specific role to play.

(Focus Group 5, page 4)

The difference for this group lies in whether counselling skills are something that are explicitly or implicitly used. To Robert and Calum the skills are being used explicitly in the sense of the role that the person using the skills is in, whereas for George the skills are simply the same as communicating and helping to problem-solve. Counselling skills do have a strong element of interpersonal skills (Sanders, 1996, Egan, 1998), but if they are used in a counselling situation then the role of the counsellor is more clear than merely being able to communicate with individuals.

In the discussion of 'counselling', Peter (group 1) talked about adapting to the needs of athletes by using different approaches. In group 4, Jane and David talked about counselling training needing to be progressive which reflects the process of counselling in terms of needing to change and adapt over time:

Jane: But wherever you go, it is frustrating to do a workshop and think "Yeah, I'm working like that, that's O.k.", which is reassuring at that level. But I think you need to go beyond the "Yeah I'm doing those sorts of things"...and "it's nice to know that Joe Bloggs is actually made a mess of it", you know, in certain ways that's fine. But you need to move up perhaps and do a little bit more, or at least have the opportunity.

David: Well particularly for counselling.

Jane: Yeah, because it's a progressive thing.

David: That's part of, it replicates the process doesn't it? And when you're working with groups, and I think most sport psychologists work with groups over a period of time, so there is a development, there is change.

Jane: Yeah, and the dynamics of the way that you'd work that group of individuals change. I mean I have, I work with people of about, you know they're between 18 and 20, and some are like mid-30's, 40's, so they're quite different and...it does take them a while to, you know, the dynamics of what you do does change, yeah quite dramatically. You know, like a year later, when the individual reacts with you very, very differently, you know, the year before, so there's a level that you can counsel.

(Focus Group 4, page 15)

David agrees with Jane when they talked about needing to have the opportunity to move skills up, 'especially for counselling'. David appears to be referring to 'moving up' in terms of developing craft knowledge as there is no mention of developing professional knowledge and David has not received formal training beyond an undergraduate course. He reported that counselling, however, is an 'integral' part of himself

Referral

Ben talked about using counselling skills in knowing when to refer:

Ben: ... you could be somebody who works in industry and just has, as part of a management team, and have counselling skills and has a certificate in counselling skills. It promotes discussion between your employees. I see it as a sort of stepping stone to referral as well. Because you can, you may be able recognise more often, a little better the fact that somebody DOES need counselling, you know with the counselling skills that you've got.

(Focus Group 1, page 5)

Other members of this group discussed referral:

Andrew: ...for me, the way I work is, what I hope I recognise is that this isn't something I can deal with at this moment or I've gone a bit beyond the superficial here, ooh, ooh, I need someone who I need to refer this onto immediately and say "Look I think you need some help further on this and I can't give that to you" and think it's recognising that that's what it would be for me. To move onto someone like a clinical person that may start to move from more superficial to the more therapeutic line.

Helen: Yeah, I think it's more like if a problem comes up, if you're talking about just dealing with performance enhancement, mental skills training and pressures of life, then that kind of superficial approach is alright. It's like if there's is like a problem a named problem that we are not qualified to deal with then you have to obviously, do you know what I mean? But if a problem hasn't arisen, the skills that you're teaching them will transfer to outside of performance enhancement. Like with college work or job work or anything, so it's not confined to performance enhancement. But, maybe the problem of like...if a serious problem arises outside, then maybe it's move up.

(Focus Group 1, page 18)

Andrew talked about going 'beyond the superficial' and needing to refer. The issue of controlling the depth of intervention arises again (as in previous sections on listening and interpersonal skills). What is interesting is the use of the word 'superficial' to refer to sport psychology interventions and suggestions of being more in-depth to refer to therapeutic interventions. It may be argued that the level of psychological depth that a sport psychologist can or chooses to manage dictates role boundaries. Corlett (1996), however, criticises working in a sophist way that only deals with symptoms in only educating athletes in mental training techniques.

This notion of being superficial ties in with using the skills appropriately. Peter (in group 1) argued that counselling skills include knowing when and how to use them to best effect:

Peter: ...they [sport psychologists] can't, they couldn't tell you when they were using the skills or when they weren't. That's the key thing I think. When you practice, you obviously have to practice in a particular way, and your practice should be conditioned by what you do, who you're working with in what situation. And that's the key thing. It's having the skills and then using them appropriate to what you're doing. And I don't think a lot of sport psychs can do that.

(Focus Group 1, page 13)

This links back to the earlier section on intuitive/craft skills and awareness (in 'Broad Dimension: Skills of a sport psychologist'). Peter stated that sport psychologists may have these skills without realising it or without having the awareness of their potential and that they would not necessarily have the skills therefore to use them appropriately. In this situation if they are not able to know when to use them appropriately they may therefore be in situations where they may use these skills inappropriately.

Life Skills

Some participants addressed the issue that there is more to the role of a sport psychologist than teaching psychological skills training (PST) to athletes. Laura (group 1) suggests that whether counselling skills are fundamental to sport psychology depends on what level a sport psychologist works, i.e. on a superficial level or deeper:

Alison: Would it be fundamental to everybody's work?

Andrew: No, I don't think it is. I think there are effective sport psychologists around, I think they're effective, but I think they're limited. I think they're limited. But I think they're effective.

Laura: It depends how far you're going to take what you're going to do. If you're just going to deal with at the surface things, then you're going to go in teaching them PST techniques, then you probably wouldn't need them as much as someone who's going to take a bit of a broader outlook on how you're going to try and work with someone.

(Focus Group 1, page 11)

Group 5 also point out that there is more to being a sport psychologist than using PST:

George: It's something that the BOA's [British Olympic Association] been pushing as well, it's like we've gone with this very much...recipe of skills, like tools like imagery, goal setting and people go in and do sessions like that and forget about things like rapport and ...empathy and, you know, all the things that encompass counselling skills.

Rose: Like looking at the bigger picture isn't it?

George: Yeah, sort of there's very little self-reflection in some sport psychologists. That's not me criticising, that's a general perception.

(Focus Group 5, page 8)

It appears that some participants feel that the role of applied sport psychologists is broader than just using PST with athletes:

Ian: Of course, having counselling skills and being identified as a counsellor, can also be a barrier to being a sport psychologist. If you're identified as a counsellor, you can end up just doing that, and doing nothing that's really sport psych.

George: But I think that's key to what we said before about counselling, you don't necessarily have to be a counsell-or to do counselling. It's not you coming up and saying "Right, here's my list of competencies in counselling skills. I can communicate effectively with you", you know, I think in that circumstance what we're saying is that these skills are worth having but are not necessarily...

Ian: I also think there's a, you know, it's a bit in vogue at the moment, and it seems to be something of a hot topic...it could be a little bit of a smokescreen.

(Focus Group 5, page 8)

Ian's reaction is interesting by downplaying the importance of counselling skills when George was trying to introduce the idea of extending the traditional role of applied sport psychologists.

Role of Counsellor

The role of a counsellor was discussed in most groups. The participants' perceptions included positive and negative notions of how counsellors are perceived in sport psychology. Adam (group 2) argued that counsellors could work with sport-specific problems plus others areas. Henry tried to counter with a sport-specific example:

Adam: ...To me counselling, and my background is in counselling psychology which has a direct implication of therapy,...we're now looking at issues not sport-specific to that person but more global issues in the person's psyche that are manifested in sport. If they were an actor it would manifest in their acting performance, if they were an artist it would manifest in the art expression. Because they are athletes it happens to manifest in their sport performance, so they're beyond, they are not sport-specific would be my definition.

Henry: But surely there are...sport-specific emotions such as stress and anxiety, for example, where, as a sport psychologist, you are trying, for example, let's say

change an appraisal of anxiety and to shift emotion that way. So there must be topics within the counselling remit which are typically performance enhancement based or sport-specific based rather than depression as an emotion.

Adam: ...what is done in applied sport psychology, from what I can tell, as part of what a counsellor would do, it's a subset of it. I think a counsellor can do that and more in that particular area.

(Focus Group 2, page 17)

This is a positive view of the role of the counsellor, which is not surprising considering Adam's background. Ian (group 5) gave a slightly different view:

Ian: Of course, having counselling skills and being identified as a counsellor, can also be a barrier to being a sport psychologist. If you're identified as a counsellor, you can end up just doing that, and doing nothing that's really sport psych.

George: But I think that's key to what we said before about counselling, you don't necessarily have to be a counsellor to do counselling. It's not you coming up and saying "Right, here's my list of competencies in counselling skills. I can communicate effectively with you", you know, I think in that circumstance what we're saying is that these skills are worth having but are not necessarily...

Ian: I also think there's a, you know, it's a bit in vogue at the moment, and it seems to be something of a hot topic...it could be a little bit of a smokescreen.

(Focus Group 5, page 8)

Ian appears to be suggesting that being a counsellor and a sport psychologist are roles that are not necessarily compatible. George merely points out that possessing counselling skills is not necessarily the same as counselling, however, Ian reacts by suggesting that counselling is "...a bit in vogue at the moment" and "...it's a hot topic". In considering the role of counselling further he suggested that counselling does not necessarily solve problems and deals with symptoms by 'fire fighting' rather than addressing the problem that may be at an organisational level (as shown previously in the section on 'addressing of problems').

Ian appeared to be talking about being a counsellor in a counselling situation, because he then refers to counselling skills differently and more positively:

Ian: ...counselling skills include a whole range of other interpersonal skills that might or might not be used in a particular setting. This setting happens to be a counselling setting, so we apply these skills in this particular way, these techniques. So I might use some of those other skills in the pub.

Alison: So if it wasn't a counselling setting, you could still use counselling skills?

Ian: Absolutely. Yeah because counselling skills are not exclusively used for counselling.

(Focus Group 5, page 10)

In this illustration, Ian appears to be talking about the boundaries that counsellors and sport psychologists work within. He points towards working in an adaptable way to cater for different situations and people.

Group 5 discussed whether it was necessary to be a counsellor in order to counsel in terms of the context. There was a suggestion that when working with athletes there is an element of counselling whilst simply communicating and that this can be used in a variety of situations:

Ian: ... the skills you might use in counselling may be developed in a whole variety of situations and may be applied in particular situations when somebody says "Let's talk about this", "Why's that?" "What's' going on?". So you may have a counselling session that lasts for 30 seconds with someone who just happens to be fed up about something.

George: Conversation in a pub.

Ian: Yeah. But it's a low, relatively superficial low level incident. If you're dealing with a major trauma then probably most of us don't have the sophisticated counselling skills that would be required to deal with that situation. In which case they would need someone who had much more in-depth training and experience. So it's not "This is counselling and skills, and this is not", there's a whole continuum, a whole depth and range.

(Focus Group 5, page 5)

Ian demonstrates that he has a different understanding of the meaning of the terms counselling and counselling skills from the sense of the word as defined by the BAC or by Sanders (1996) because he refers to "...a counselling session that lasts for 30 seconds...". This scenario would not happen if using the BAC (1999) definition of the term because a counselling session is never unanticipated and would not be so short in duration. Counselling skills, however, may be used in this situation. It is possible that Ian was referring to a different type of counselling than that as defined by the BAC, one which is more 'broad'. Robert suggests that "...everybody counsels depending on how you define the term" (p.5).

Role of the Sport Psychologist

Ben (group 1) talked about taking a more holistic perspective and not restricting himself to working solely on performance enhancement:

Ben: You see one of the things you use within performance enhancement is goal setting, and time management within goal setting. Now, if you're going to use time management, you've got to incorporate where these other people are coming from. Their relationships that they've got, whether they work, you know? There's some

elite athletes that work part-time, so they also include, you know, the sport within where they work. So, their not purely working from performance enhancement I don't think.

Alison: Is that a role of a sport psychologist?

Helen: Yeah, because you can't look at sport without looking...

Ben: At the whole picture.

Helen: Yeah.

(Focus Group 1, page 17)

In contrast, members of group 3 viewed the role of a sport psychologist as moving into counselling once the issue moves away from performance enhancement (see previous section on 'addressing of problems' for example). The way group 3 referred to the role of a sport psychologist and counselling suggests a clear boundary between the two roles. Ben's statement above, however, appears to be more integrative, holistic and part of the performance enhancement role of a sport psychologist.

Inappropriate Intervention

Inappropriate intervention could be analogous to 'stepping over a boundary' or 'going beyond a certain level of competence'. Adam (group 2) talks about not responding appropriately: "...actually inappropriate interventions can create more harm than doing nothing is a view I have" (p.11). Kevin also talked about not intervening at all rather than intervening inappropriately:

Kevin: I think that's an important issue...in that because we are, we believe we can help, and we're sort of expected to help, whatever help is. If we get into a situation we're not quite sure what to say because we don't know the person, we don't know the situation, we tend to want to say something and I'm not sure that's always the best. A good strategy might be "I don't know, I can't help you, go away!" politely, but you feel like "Oh I've got to say something, I've got to do the right thing here, what's the right thing?" I think that sometimes we should just say nothing.

Bill: It's a difficult one isn't it? It's like forcing it on them type of thing.

Kevin: Yeah.

Bill: Because we had one athlete recently who's had a real slump in form and we've left it on this sort of open basis that you can, you know, 'I'm available for psychological support, mental support' all this sort of thing, and it's almost like a pride thing I think where they won't come forward because it's almost accepting there's a problem, and then I guess, where I feel, through observation, there's clearly something I can help with, especially when the coach is saying 'It's not technical'. But then I can't go forward because I feel if I go upto them then that's, "Well you have got a problem".

Kevin: That's right.

Bill: And so I've just kept to my word and kept back.

Kevin: It's all you can do if that's the rubric you're working with.

(Focus Group 2, page 25)

Egan (1998) suggested that “poorly done, helping can actually harm others” (p. 13), thus it may sometimes be better to say nothing. Saying nothing rather than saying the wrong thing is similar to the notion of being able to respond appropriately (initially referred to in study 1). Irrespective of what issues athletes bring to a conversation, an appropriate response will help to manage psychological depth (Ringer and Gillis Jr., 1995). Sometimes the appropriate response may not to say anything or not to give advice and merely reflect what the athlete has said back to them.

4.3.3.4 BROAD DIMENSION: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE VARIOUS SKILLS/TERMS

Summary

Listening was described as an important part of communication, which in turn was an important part of interpersonal skills and counselling skills. All groups stressed the importance of listening skills.

Most groups acknowledged the importance of interpersonal skills. It was questioned, however, whether they were essential to the role of an applied sport psychologist.

For all the groups, both counselling skills and counselling were described as important and fundamental to the role of a sport psychologist. It is important, however, to be cognisant of the type of counselling skills or counselling to which they were referring. As shown in the previous broad dimensions, this differentiation in terminology became an important aspect of the interactions. Robert (group 5) said that “...everybody counsels depending on how you define the term” (p.5).

Importance of listening skills

Several participants described listening and listening skills as vital, essential, important, powerful and universal. No other participants challenged this positive view. The ability to listen was described by Kevin (group 2) as “...the most important skill that I have...” (page 2). This sentiment was reiterated by Rachel’s comments (group 3) with one addition:

Rachel: I’d say listening is probably THE most important skill of a sport psychologist, but I’d also say it for a coach.

Debbie: Yeah.

Rachel: I'd say it for a huge number of things, but it's just one of those things very underrated and not often brought to the forefront.

Tony: It's a life skill. It's not just a sport psychology skill or a psychology skill, it's a teacher's skill, a manager's skill.

(Focus Group 3, page 3)

It appears that listening was not only perceived as an important skill for a sport psychologist to possess, but it has been suggested that it is, similarly, important for other helpers, e.g., informal helpers (Egan, 1998). The specific reasons why some participants perceived listening as the most important skill were not ascertained, but it may be suggested from their discussions that the participants viewed listening skills as fundamental to the role of a sport psychologist and a tool that they must rely on heavily in order to assess and help athletes. It is also suggested that by agreeing that listening skills are fundamental to sport psychology, the participants were implicitly proposing that counselling skills are also fundamental. Listening skills are an integral part of counselling skills (Sanders, 1996; BAC, 1998; 1999).

Importance of interpersonal Skills

Groups 1-4 explicitly talked about how essential they thought interpersonal skills were to being a sport psychologist. Despite most groups accepting the importance of interpersonal skills (for example, by referring to interpersonal skills as "...fundamental to what we do" (Eddie, group 3, p.14)), group 4 considered if they were actually essential to applied sport psychology.

Michael:...I was thinking of something that I couldn't decide whether it was right or not...what I was thinking was if you haven't got an interest in people and you don't feel reasonably comfortable being with people and working with people...and having some sort of interpersonal connection with them, then there wouldn't be much point being a sport psychologist. But then I thought "Mm, maybe that's not right". ...If we're talking only about sport psychologists in that consultant sense then maybe that's right. But even then I sort of have some reservations, I'm not sure, ...but then it leads you into all sorts of more difficult questions doesn't it? Like 'So why do you do it if you don't feel especially comfortable working and developing relationships with people?' 'Well because you're interested in sport and you want to, you have an interest in finding out how high level performance works'. You don't necessarily have to be interested in people, you don't necessarily have to want to develop relationships with them.

Alison: Do you think you can be effective as an applied sport psychologist working in that way?

Michael: I'm not sure. It might depend on what sort of sport you worked in, for example.

Jane: I would imagine there are some people who are out there working who are probably in that situation who are probably being seen as relatively effective.

Niall: And equally there maybe some athletes who much prefer that detached approach. This is, "Tell me something to do", you know, "We don't have to get on, I just want you to give me something to do". It's like the coaches who work when they have no relationship with that athlete.

Jane: Professionally can you do that?

Michael: That's why I say I wasn't sure.

Jane: I'm not sure, no.

Michael: I'm not sure that I'd actually say you definitely can't work unless you're like that.

Jane: No, that's why I'm asking the question.

Michael: I was trying to think of some specific examples, but something like, you know, I don't know, something like pistol shooting, for example, and you said "O.k., I'll take a really, really strong psychophysiological approach and I'll have all these performers to develop strategies that enabled them to lower their heart rate down to ten, some ridiculous rate, slow their respiration down, fire in between beats"...

Jane: And let them get on with it.

Michael: ...you know, I could think of a thousand technical things that you could do with absolutely crap interpersonal skills, just hiding behind or working off data, feeding back data to them. So, I go "It could be quite good".

Alison: So you could be effective?

Michael: Maybe you would be, maybe you wouldn't. I'm not saying you would, I'm just saying I find it difficult to actually explicitly say you definitely could not work unless you had good interpersonal skills.

Niall: It'd be fairly difficult to work!

Michael: Yeah you'd be a bit restricted.

(Focus Group 4, page 6)

The group discussed how essential interpersonal skills are to being an applied sport psychologist. They concluded that it might be possible to be effective without interpersonal skills depending on who or within what sport the sport psychologist worked, although they did concede that it would be restrictive without interpersonal skills. This seems to confirm what other groups have said that, in the majority of cases, interpersonal skills are fundamental to the role of an applied sport psychologist.

Importance of counselling skills to applied sport psychology practice

This section reflects the answers on the specific question asked of each group, "How important are counselling skills to applied sport psychology practice?". No one in the focus groups argued that counselling skills were not important, however, some felt that they needed to stress that although they were important, they were no more important than other skills of a sport psychologist:

Michael: ...I think counselling skills are very important to me as a sport psychologist...

Jane: Yeah, yeah.

Michael: ...not to sport psychologists per se.

Jane: Yeah, I wouldn't say they're more important than anything else. I would agree with you [Michael], they're part of your library of skills...

(Focus Group 4, page 12)

It is interesting that Michael refers to counselling skills being very important to him as a sport psychologist, but it is presumed that he must have been referring in this excerpt to counselling skills as a 'craft' based skill (with a small 'c') as he cites his counselling skills training as "very little", incorporating two days. This seems a contradiction at first glance, however, it may reflect Michael's stance on counselling skills with a small 'c' being what "everybody has and everybody uses". He may have developed his small 'c' counselling skills via craft knowledge and his lack of formal training in counselling skills also suggests that Michael may perceive his craft training in relating skills to be sufficient for being a sport psychologist. This issue is to be addressed further in the section on training.

Ian in group 5 gave a similar emphasis to Michael:

George: ...I'm still saying that this is an important subset of the foundation skills.

Ian: Yeah, I'm not saying it's not...

Rose: I don't think anyone's saying it isn't are you?

Ian: ...but I don't think it's that much more important than other skills.

(Focus Group 5, page 9)

The qualification that they add to their statement of counselling skills being important is interesting. Why did they feel the need to add this? Do they feel threatened in some way by the term (like Henry in group 2)? These are speculative comments, of course, but raise important points about the way that they refer to the term.

Andrew (the accredited sport psychologist from group 1) argued that whilst counselling skills were fundamental, they might not be needed all the time (which suggests a notion of adaptability):

Andrew... it seems to me that it is a fundamental, it's one of a number of fundamental skills that you may or may not be needing to use, but it needs to be there...it's a fundamental skill, that you *may* need at times.

Alison: Counselling skills?

Andrew: Yes, yes.

Peter: I think the important part of what you said is "maybe at times". So, yes it is fundamental, but the skill in sport psych is to know when to use it and how to the best effect.

Ben: Mm.

Peter: ...you're not using it all the time, but you have to have it as part of your competency don't you?

Andrew: You certainly want it. You might use other things which are just as effective which don't involve that at all.

Peter: Yeah, sure.

(Focus Group 1, page 10)

Andrew also added that whilst it is possible to be effective and not need to use counselling skills, he believed that this is a limitation to the work of sport psychologists. He suggested that they were important in order to be an "all-round completed sport psychologist" (p. 7). This goes back to Michael's (group 4) point that they may be important to individuals, but not necessarily to all sport psychologists. David (group 4) contended that they were important to his 'style'.

Peter (group 1) added to the debate within his group by suggesting that counselling skills were fundamental in the sense of needing them at some point them irrespective of the approach of the sport psychologist:

Peter: ...that's not to say that the person who's coming from that different perspective shouldn't have them as part of their armoury if you like. Because they will need them at some point, I would argue.

(Focus Group 1, page 11)

The notion of counselling skills (in some form) being fundamental to what sport psychologists do is accepted across all groups. However, this can only be an accepted position if their perceptions of what the term means to them is taken into consideration, for example, counselling skills are essential to most participants in group 3 if counselling skills are taken to be the same as interpersonal skills.

The debate about how fundamental counselling skills are maybe clouded by participants referring to different types of counselling skills or counselling. When the participants talk about the skills being fundamental and integral to what they do as sport psychologists, many of the participants are referring to counselling skills solely in the sense of the small 'c' type (to overlay the terminology of group 4), i.e., one of listening, and giving guidance and support. The participants who do not solely refer to counselling skills in this way are (generally) those with the most formal training in these skills, i.e., Ben (group 1), Adam (group 2) and Mary (group 3).

Importance of counselling

Counselling was perceived by the participants in a similar light to counselling skills, i.e., as a fundamental element to being a sport psychologist, but only if the definition to which they were referring and the context was taken into account.

Andrew says that counselling is fundamental for him because of his approach:

Andrew: For me, they are one hundred percent, in terms of counselling, from my approach. But, again I would argue that there are people around who are effective sport psychologists, I think they're negative, but that doesn't mean that they're not ineffective. they're effective for what they do, and they don't have that [counselling] as a fundamental skill. I think they have listening skills. I don't think they necessarily have counselling skills fundamentally. I mean they are still very, very effective and they take a very hard line, scientific gathering, analysis, produce and deliver that kind of analysis to the athlete which is helpful and helps them do better. There's no doubt about that at all. But, I think they're limited to that. Whereas I like to think that if you take another approach, which is the one that I'm used to dealing with, I think it has broader applications and in that case it would then be fundamental.

Alison: Counselling?

Andrew: Yes. Counselling would be fundamental for a broader more encompassing approach. Because you could still use all those other aspects, but you've also got an additional tool in the bag.

Ben: Yeah, I agree with that, yeah.

Andrew: So when it's fundamental, it's fundamental to my approach, but it's not fundamental necessarily to everybody's approach, counselling.

(Focus Group 1, page 12)

Andrew argued that they may not be fundamental for everyone in sport psychology, but added that he believed sport psychologists are limited without them. Kevin (group 2) goes further in his views:

Kevin: I think sport psychologists are fooling themselves if they are not considering themselves counsellors. Because if a counsellor counsels, then that counselling process is being done by a sport psychologist, unless they are just providing an education, saying "Here is the information, here is the techniques, go read it, I'll give you some books some pamphlets, go read it on your own, or I'll explain it to you, but I'm not going to facilitate you're use of it". Once you get into facilitating use of it, and you start listening and you start hearing things that you weren't expecting to hear perhaps, and it starts becoming more counselling than it is just education. I think we all do that. I think the, I don't think there's a fine line, I think we do it.

(Focus Group 2, page 8)

He distinguishes between counselling and just educating. He refers to it again in a discussion with Bill:

Bill: ...I think I use counselling skills a lot but it's almost recognition that I can't deal with this then that's going over to some sort of counselling role.

Kevin: Do you think that comes from this perception that permeates our profession that if I'm not trained, I can't call myself a counsellor, I don't counsel?

Bill: I think on a personal point of view it's unease with going into things that I don't feel comfortable with dealing with and I think you can...

Kevin: And this is where I think I get to the degree, the levels of counselling that we get involved in and I think it's a misnomer for a lot of my colleagues to say "you know I never get involved in counselling, I'm not trained for counselling, I will never counsel. And I say "I think you're fooling yourself because at some level I think there is some counselling that takes place".

(Focus Group 2, page 15)

Here, Kevin talks about sport psychologists using counselling. However, it is not until later in the discussion that it becomes clear there is a difference between what he calls counselling and what has been called 'pure' counselling. Adam and Kevin decide that there is a cultural difference in their understanding of the term (they were both educated in America at some stage in their training). According to Adam's 'tight' definition of counselling, Adam argues that sport psychologists probably don't and shouldn't counsel (p.11), although he does concede that sport psychologists all use counselling skills effectively (using his 'broader' definition).

Whilst Rachel attempted to locate how her perceptions of counselling have developed, she stated that sport psychologists do counsel people:

Rachel: ...I'm trying to locate in time how I've now decided counselling skills is working with deviant problems or, you know, issues other than those which, because what we do arguably is counsel people.

Eddie: That's what I said at the start it's what, because you can still use those [listening, interpersonal and counselling skills] to handle issues like that that crop up.

(Focus Group 3, page 8)

From previous commentary it is clear that most of group 3 (apart from Mary) are referring to a different type of counselling to what counsellors do when they counsel. This is a recurrent theme from all the focus groups. As Robert (group 5) stated "...everybody counsels depending on how you define the term" (p.5).

4.3.4 'TRAINING'

SUMMARY OF 'TRAINING'

Many participants in the groups acknowledged the importance of both professional and craft knowledge despite most not having received a great deal or any formal training. Michael (group 4) questioned the idea that sport psychologists without formal training are incompetent. He argued that formal training is not needed although did agree on notions of 'exposure' to or 'engaging in' some sort of experiences to enhance counselling skills.

It was suggested that some people are naturally good at counselling and that these people do not necessarily need formal training (group 5). The same participants, however, argued in favour of formal training for sport psychologists' relating skills. Geldard (1993) suggested that effectiveness at counselling can be improved with training even for those who are naturally good counsellors.

There appeared to be a difference between what participants understood by counselling skills and what BASES want from the accredited sport psychologists and trainees on this aspect.

Jane (group 4) did not like the word 'training' because of what it meant to her, she drew an analogy of training to being in the army and thinking "we are now being trained in counselling". Both Jane and Michael preferred phrases such as 'exposure to' and 'engaging in' rather than the term 'training'.

Group 1 discussed the idea of extending the role of the sport psychologist to incorporate both a PST approach and counselling skills which did not just focus on symptoms.

It was highlighted that assessment was needed to ensure quality for accreditation (this does not currently exist). Groups 2 and 5 considered the difficulty in policing a minimum standard for accreditation. Bill (group 2) suggested a nationally recognised qualification as a minimum standard for counselling skills. Group 1 reached a consensus and agreed a minimum standard would be beneficial in an ideal world.

Selection was a process that Michael thought was very important in order to produce effective sport psychologists. The supervision process was viewed as critical to the success of training. Some participants viewed flexibility of the accreditation system positively (groups 2 and 5) and some negatively (Michael, group 4). Groups 3 and 4 talked about the need for decision on value judgements to be made in respect of accreditation. The BASES accreditation criteria was viewed as a 'tick list', 'check list', 'tick boxes' and 'a set

of hoops to jump through' and not viewed by participants in group 3 and 4 as a positive experience. The current BASES criteria was perceived as lacking clarity.

Examples of good practice for training were given by participants and included common practices from counselling courses, for example, role plays.

Barriers to training included not knowing what is enough training, the perceptions of older sport psychologists being that they did not need any extra training, the difficulty in gaining experience to work with athletes and the time needed to take a course.

Training of interpersonal skills was discussed by group 3. Some participants in this group suggested that no amount of training would help develop some people's interpersonal skills. This was countered by Mary by suggesting that formalised training in counselling skills would help to identify those individuals who did not understand and could not use interpersonal skills.

Theory was discussed with regard to training in 'counselling'. Referral was also discussed in the sense of counselling skills being a 'stepping stone' to referral in helping to identify this need and by going from the 'superficial' into deeper areas of, for example, clinical or therapy settings.

Further training in counselling skills was considered by Adam (group 2) for more advanced skill development and by Eddie (group 3) in order to consider topics other than performance enhancement issues. Groups 2 and 3 discussed looking at other related fields to help on the issue of training, but Calum (group 5) did not find it helpful to consider them due to their styles of training being very different.

Members of group 1 considered formal training to be important. Mary (group 3) also considered it to be important and it was suggested that this was a reflection of her own training experience. Michael (group 4) argued that training was not essential, thus it is possible that he was suggesting that craft knowledge can be sufficient for sport psychologists' development.

Throughout the discussion it was highlighted that some people were aware of the benefits of counselling skills training and others were not.

A summary of the qualitative analysis for 'training' is presented in figure 4.9 on the next page. A more detailed examination of the analysis is presented in figure 4.10.

RAW DATA THEMES

HIGHER-ORDER THEMES

BROAD DIMENSIONS

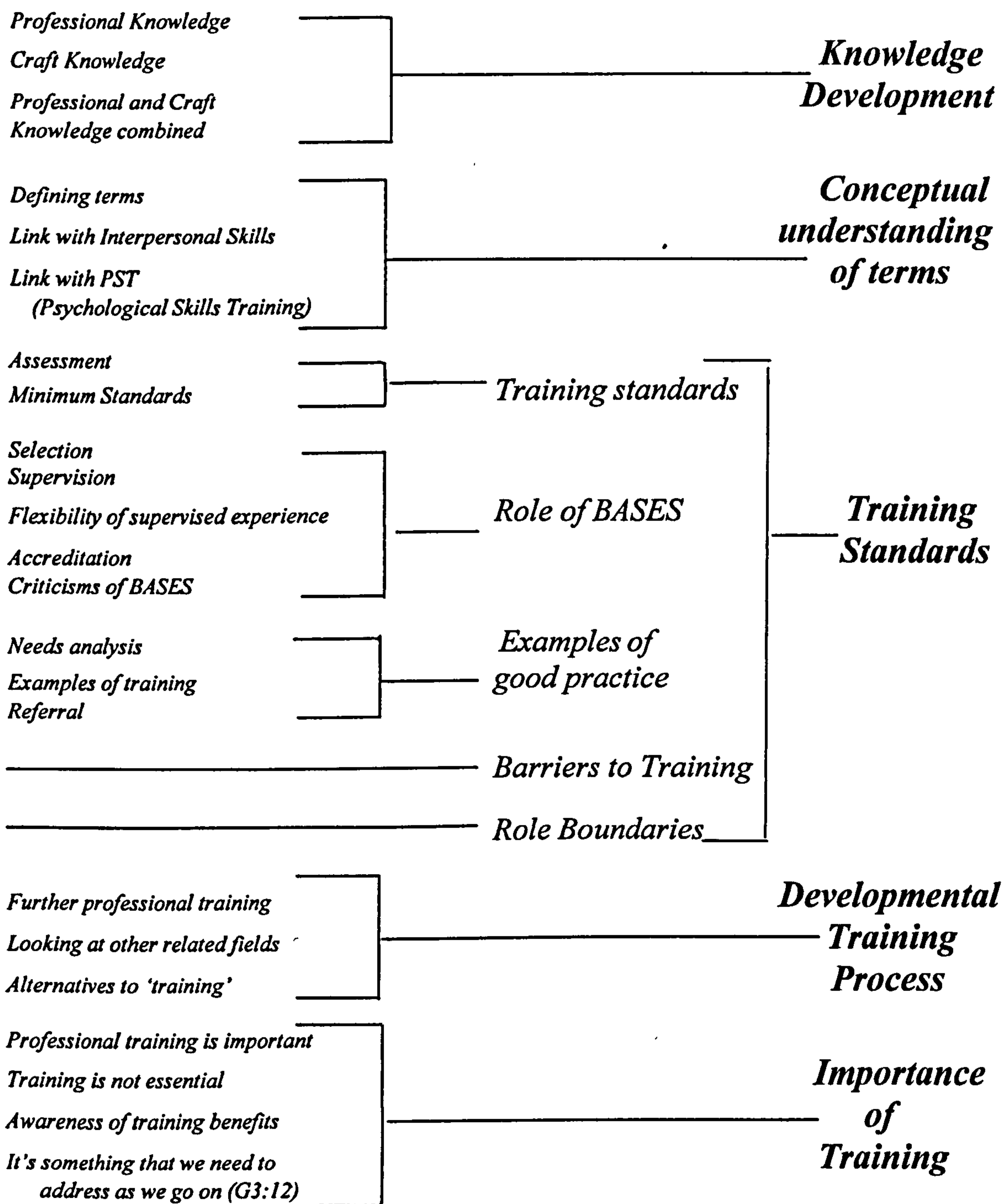


FIGURE 4.9 Raw Data Themes, Higher Order Themes & Broad Dimensions for TRAINING

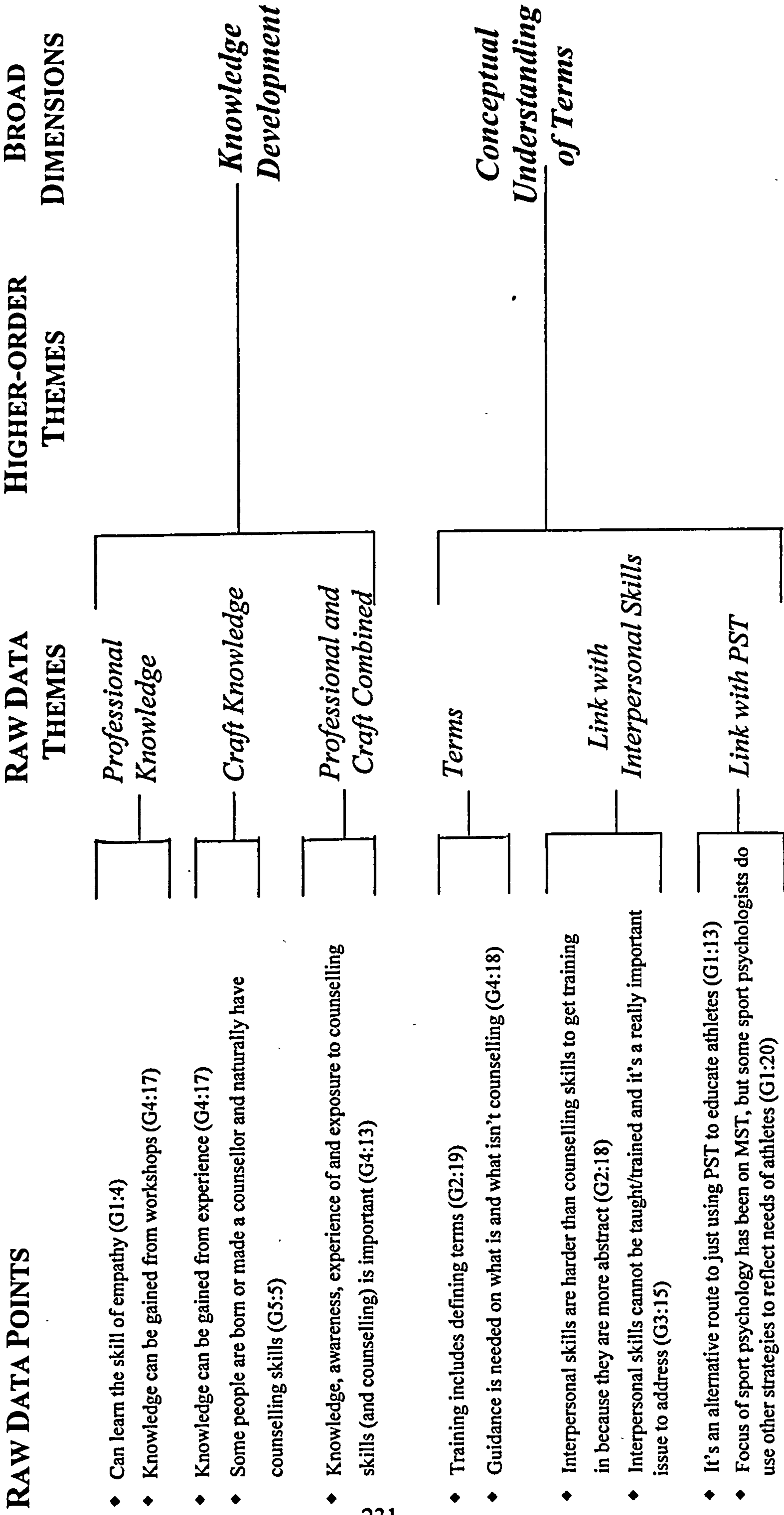


FIGURE 4.10 Raw Data Points, Raw Data Themes, Higher Order Themes & Broad Dimensions for TRAINING

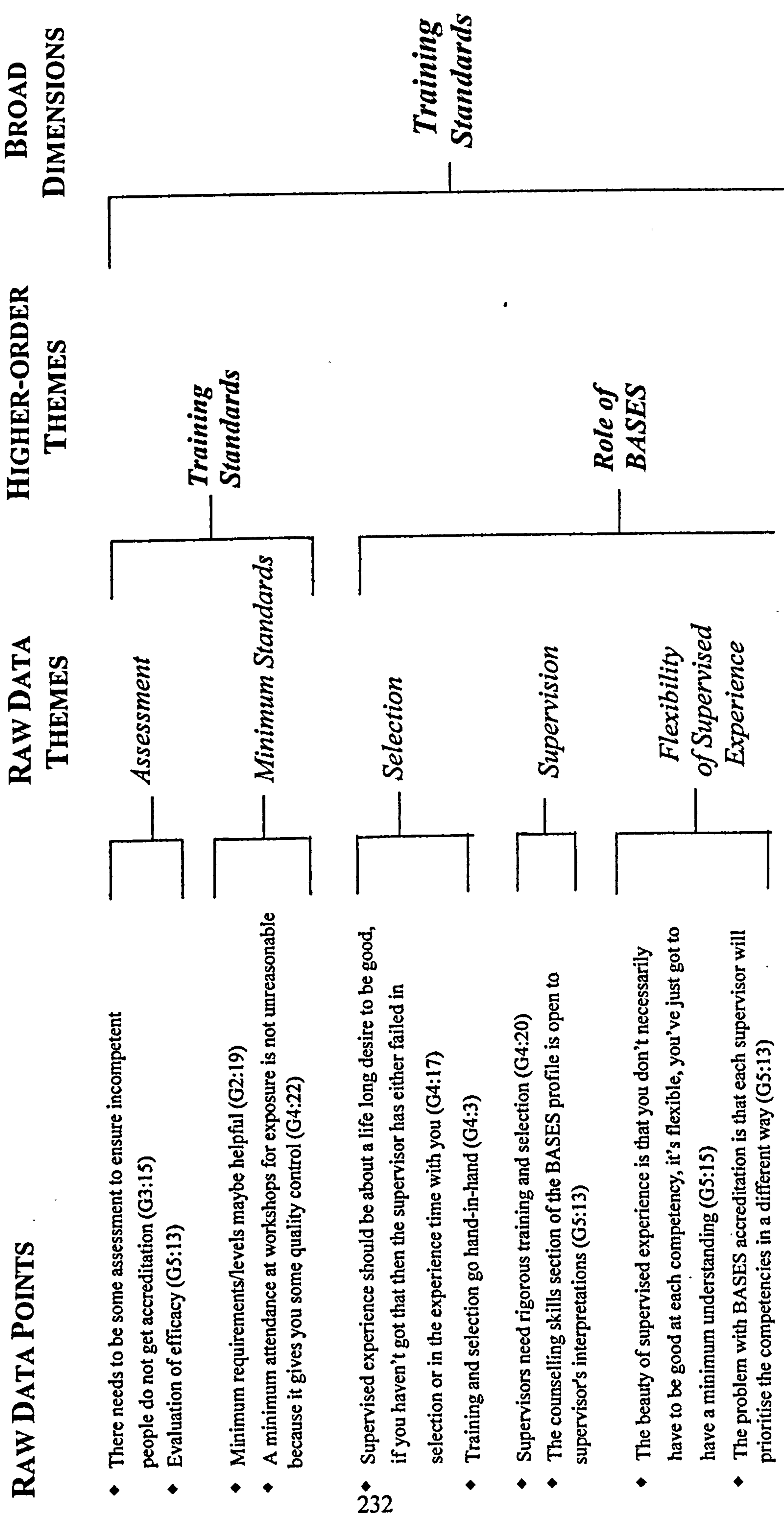


FIGURE 4.10 Raw Data Points, Raw Data Themes, Higher Order Themes & Broad Dimensions for TRAINING (CONT'D)

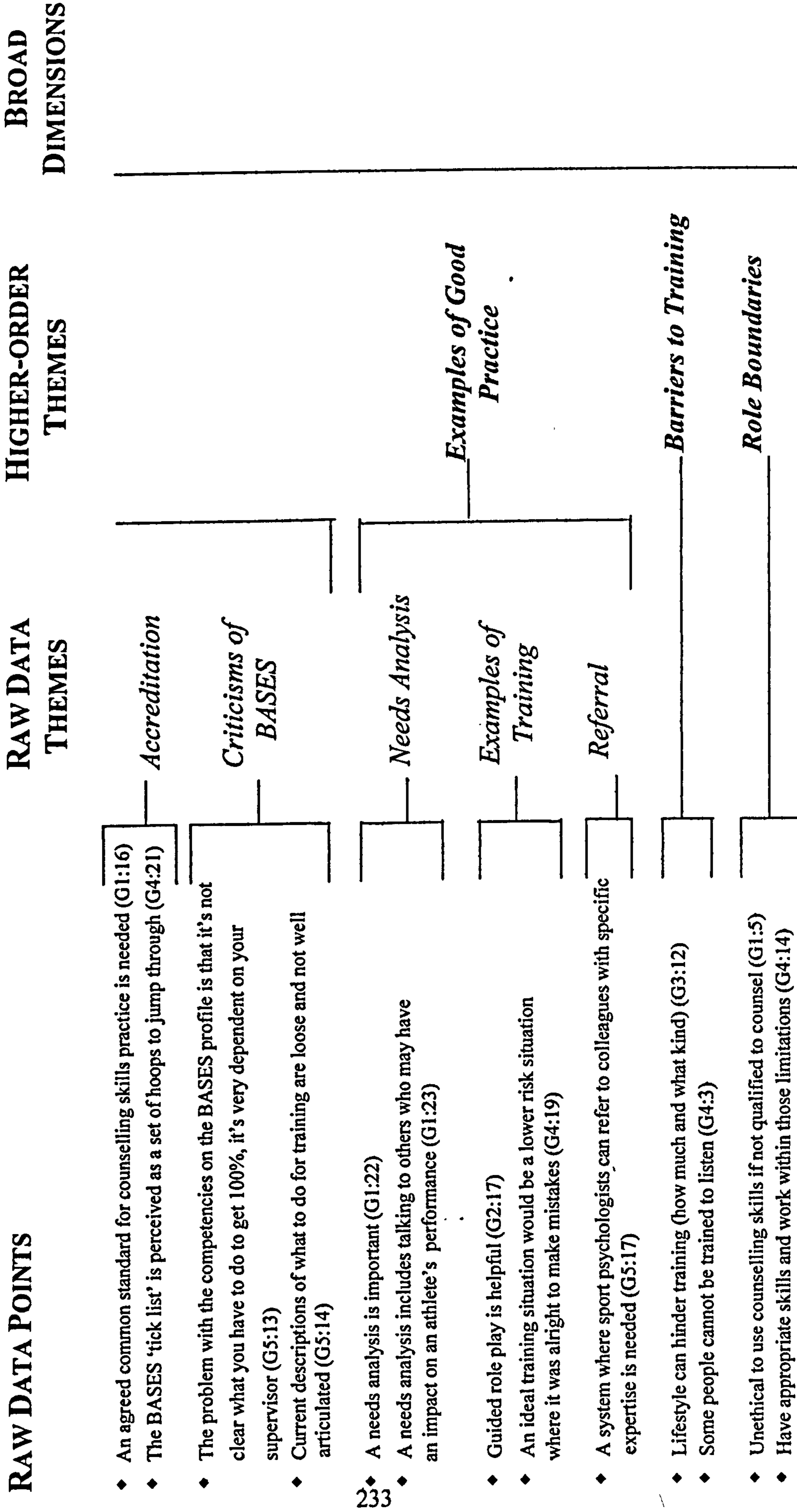


FIGURE 4.10 Raw Data Points, Higher Order Themes & Broad Dimensions for TRAINING (CONT'D)

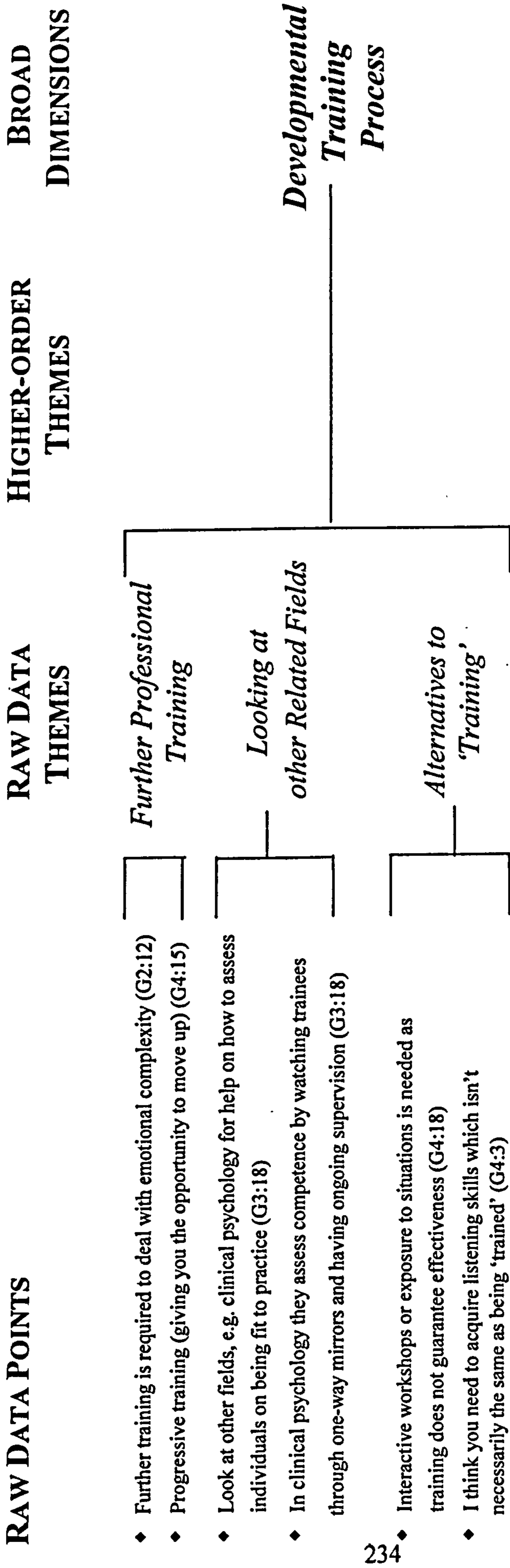


FIGURE 4.10 Raw Data Points, Raw Data Themes, Higher Order Themes & Broad Dimensions for TRAINING (CONT'D)

RAW DATA POINTS

RAW DATA THEMES

HIGHER-ORDER THEMES

BROAD DIMENSIONS

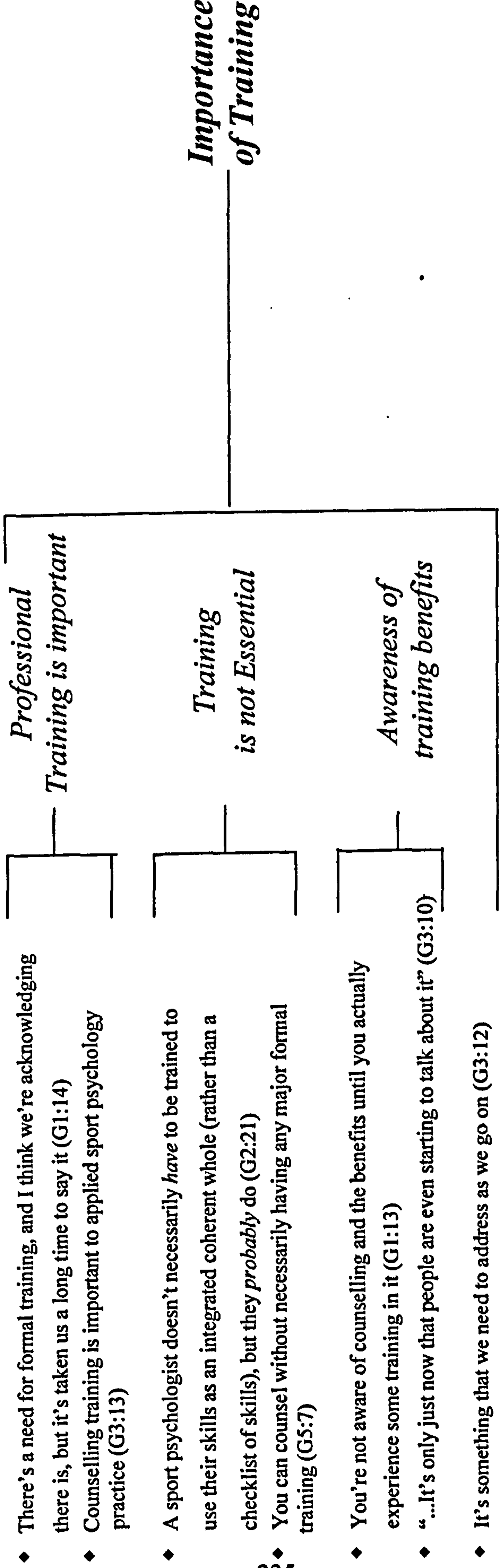


FIGURE 4.10 Raw Data Points, Raw Data Themes, Higher Order Themes & Broad Dimensions for TRAINING (CONT'D)

4.3.4.1 BROAD DIMENSION: KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT

Professional and Craft Knowledge

During the discussions on training, the themes of 'professional' (Schön, 1983) and 'craft' knowledge (McFee, 1993) emerged again from the focus group transcripts. The participants discussed training from perspectives that referred to knowledge development from professional training and/or experience and from craft/applied experiences. Many participants acknowledged the importance of both.

Jane (group 4) said she felt "a bit twitchy" with the term 'training':

Jane: Yeah, I mean I agree I mean this bit should be something like 'sport psychologists should have knowledge of' or 'understanding of where counselling skills fits in' or something like that, rather than training and need. It's the training bit that makes me feel a bit twitchy.

Alison: So where would you get that knowledge?

Jane: As we said before, from workshops, interactive sessions.

Michael: Experience.

Jane: Experience...even...you know, having groups like this, you sit down and you think "Well this sort of thing happened and I thought 'Oh'".

(Focus Group 4, page 17)

Group 4 concluded that knowledge could be gained from both workshops and experience. Gaining experience (or craft knowledge) rather than training is a notion that Michael puts forward throughout the discussion on training. He questions the idea that sport psychologists without formal training are incompetent:

Michael: ...all the people who are establishing the needs of sport psychologists who are saying "Sport psychologists *must* do this, sport psychologists *must* do that" didn't do it themselves. So, therefore does that mean that the people who are establishing the criteria are unqualified to establish the criteria, because if sport psychologists *need* those things then they are unqualified, and therefore we should definitely not listen to a word they say. If listening to them is worthwhile, then sport psychologists clearly don't need to have any of those things, because those people haven't done them. And it's the paradox of professionalising anything if you're not careful. What you do you just produce a cloning system, and then, ..., and then you lose and those, all that fantastic individualisation that people who didn't do those things would bring to this.

...

Michael: When was the first BASES workshop?

Jane: What, ever?

Michael: Mm, on sport psychology.

Jane: Oh, it was quite late on.

Michael: Absolutely.

Jane: It was very late on.

Michael: Mid-90's.

Jane: Yeah I think I'd already...

Michael: '94/'95? When was the first PAG day? Er, '90? O.k. So therefore we were all incompetent before that?

Jane: In theory.

Michael: Because there wasn't any training, so we must have been incompetent. But I don't believe that's true. So, I just think 'need's too strong a word, formalised training is not the answer. But people who, I'd say one thing in it, I'll accept one thing you need, the motivation to be good.

(Focus Group 2, page 17)

From these views, Michael appears to be suggesting that craft development alone can be sufficient for sport psychologists rather than 'needing' to have formal training.

Group 5 discussed the notion of some people having natural counselling skills and some needing formal training:

Rose: I think it's quite useful to have training in it, though I don't think you necessarily have to be a qualified counsellor. The course I went on I learnt loads from it, you know, I think you were sort of, some people are born or made a counsellor and you find it quite a beneficial interaction, and in others you wouldn't, and so it's a bit, some people naturally have those skills and some people don't, so it's quite good to be sort of be formally trained and the types of things you should be trained.

George: Yeah, I mean some people, like you say, some people do have those...listening skills, interpersonal skills that somebody feels that they can go and talk to them, get the stuff off their chests.

Rose: Yeah.

George: Erm, and they are counselling skills but they're not formally trained, it's just as luck would have it that that person has been, you know, socially learned to be like that.

Rose: Yeah.

George: But, yeah I agree there needs to be formal training.

(Focus Group 5, page 5)

Both Rose and George seem to suggest on the one hand that some people are naturally good at or have been 'socially learned' to use counselling skills and imply that these people do not need training, but, on the other hand, they recommend formal training. What is not clear from their dialogue is whether they believe that formal training is essential for everyone, or whether craft and naturally developed knowledge is sufficient. Geldard (1993) suggests that people who are naturally good counsellors can still improve their skills during counselling training.

4.3.4.2 BROAD DIMENSION: CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF TERMS

Defining the terms

George (group 5) argued that the counselling skills section of the BASES profile (for supervised experience and accreditation) means to have “understanding of the different approaches to counselling”. He goes on to state that “I don’t think they’re referring to counselling skills as we’ve defined them, you know like communication skills, interpersonal skills and listening skills” (p.13). He points towards a different understanding between what BASES want from their trainees and what they (the participants) perceive as counselling skills. George later refers to the BASES guidelines again and argues that just being aware of the theories of counselling skills is not sufficient:

Adam (group 2) suggests that ‘training’ would include, amongst other elements, the defining of terms. Michael (group 4) also states that the terms need to be clarified:

Michael: ...I’d say that...there’d need to be some...guidance given about, some information given about what sorts of skills we’re talking about in counselling, and what is counselling and what isn’t counselling.

(Focus Group 4, page 18)

Jane (group 4) feels uncomfortable with the word ‘training’ because of what it means to her:

Jane: It depends what you mean by training, the training bit, it’s like the counselling to me, the word ‘training’ means you sit down and you are trained. It’s the training bit.

...

Jane: I think they do have to have exposure to it. But the training bit, I always think of training is sort of going into the army and things like that, it’s sort of “We are now being trained in counselling”, I don’t think it works like that.

(Focus Group 4, page 16)

Link with PST (Psychological Skills Training)

Group 1 discussed the link between only using a PST approach as a sport psychologist and being able to use PST to educate athletes in conjunction with counselling skills. Group 1 were the only group to discuss this aspect because they were given a specific question on this issue to discuss: *‘It has been argued that sport psychologists use mental skills training in a technique-based manner to give symptomatic relief to athletes,*

but do not tackle the underlying causes of performance decline. What are your thoughts on this?'

Although this group were asked to specifically discuss this issue at this point they had actually already initiated ideas themselves about the role of the sport psychologist needing to extend to go beyond just teaching PST (p.8), about counselling skills being linked to taking a broader outlook than solely teaching PST and educating athletes (p.11), that sport psychologists are traditionally only taught how to use PST with athletes (p.12) and the notion of sport psychologists working in a superficial manner (p.17).

Laura argued that the emphasis of training might have been predominantly based on educating with PST, but also states that saying sport psychologists *only* use mental skills training (or PST) is a negative view of sport psychologists. Peter (also group 1) talks about mental skills (or psychological skills) training being predominantly emotion-focused which may help explain why sport psychology is perceived by some as not addressing underlying causes and focusing mainly on symptoms (e.g., Corlett, 1996).

Peter: I think from my perspective, I'd probably concur with that [question in italics above]. I would say that mental skills training obviously has great value, but they're predominantly emotion-focused. So what they're doing is they're tied to or hitting the result of what's come before, if you like, if you think about the process by which a response occurs, and then it affects your behaviour, so what a mental skills training package is doing is to somehow manipulate or control responses. If you think about anxiety, for example, then you've got high somatic anxiety then you might use PMR [progressive muscle relaxation] or something, for example, as a sort of quick fix, this will help that response, but it isn't looking at sort of the early stages and processes, if you like, the demands, the appraisal of that the coping, things like that. I know I'm going theoretical here but I suppose what I'm saying is that those are the bits, the bits that come before the response...are the underlying causes. Mental skills training packages don't necessarily do that.

Ben: It's like you're controlling the response and not actually getting into why the response happened in the first place aren't you?

Helen: Couldn't it though? Couldn't it be useful to look at things like appraisal and stuff?

Peter: It depends how you're using them. If you're using them in a problem-focused way.

Andrew: Which is what you see is different from a technique on here the flip chart] do you?

Peter: ...yeah...just clarify what you mean by technique-based, do you mean technique-based as in the mental skill technique, or the focusing on the technique of the athlete?

Alison: Mental skill technique.

Peter: Yeah. O.k.

Andrew: So that would be different from what you call a problem approach would it?

Peter: ...my understanding of mental skills training techniques, what we're talking about, are the ones that are predominantly emotion-focused, because of the way you structured the question. Now if they're not, if I'm wrong in that, then if you're saying that, well, mental skills techniques we're talking about are problem- and emotion-focused, then I would say that they do tackle the underlying causes or they

can do if they're used in the right way. But that takes more time. Obviously if you go in in a problem-focused way it's a more Socratic-type of approach, whereas as traditional mental skills approaches that just hit the relief of the response are more sophist in nature.

Peter refers to the work of Corlett (1996) in his response by talking about sophist and Socratic approaches. Andrew agreed with Peter about certain approaches tackling underlying problems and Peter argued that this is achieved by using more problem-focused strategies. From their discussion, a PST approach can be either emotion-focused or problem-focused which can influence either symptoms or causes respectively.

4.3.4.3 BROAD DIMENSION: TRAINING STANDARDS

Training standards

Groups 3 and 5 discussed the idea of assessment within a training programme:

Rachel: ...each of us reflects on ourselves and says "Do we need to go on a course?" and we come up with whatever conclusion and then say well "Do other people maybe need it?" If you think of the worst case scenario, do other people need to go on a course? Well yes they do, but now we're saying even if you put them on a course, it wouldn't enable them to do the job effectively. So what's the point of the course?!

[Laughter]

Mary: No, because presumably it has to be some sort of accredited course that they go on and therefore there has to be, or let's say there are certain recognised courses/qualifications that BASES will accept as an indication of competence.

Rachel: There's got to be some assessment which ensures that these people don't get that.

Tony: Mm.

Mary: Yes, that's right, but that they're able to apply these counselling skills effectively.

Rachel: Mm.

Mary: And so, they can't just go on the little, you know, round the corner shop do-dah bit and get a piece of paper that says they've done it, there has to be more to it than that. Which, of course, we're going to have to put in place if we want to become chartered. It's this sort of stuff that we're going to have to have.

Rachel: Can you teach someone interpersonal skills in 3 years?

Mary: No, but then they won't get accredited will they?

Rachel: No.

Mary: And maybe that's a really important issue that we have to address.

...

Rachel: There has been, up until now, as far as I'm aware...

Tony: It's very difficult to...

Rachel: ... no mechanism by which...

Mary: That's right.

Rachel: There was certainly nothing that assessed me on my ability to use...

Ruth: No.

Mary: That's right.

(Focus Group 3, page 15)

Most of group 3 appeared to agree that assessment is important in gaining accreditation, but acknowledged that such an element in the current system does not exist and that they were not assessed on their ability to use interpersonal/counselling skills.

Group 5 also mentioned assessment:

George: ...the wording of the competency of counselling skills is just basically 'to have an awareness of', and what I'm saying is there needs to be some assessment or some training to implement that into your sport psychology practice.

Robert: Yeah, that would be a good advance on a badly worded whatever it is. It's not a competency, it's a some measure of consciousness I would say, having an awareness of. You know, it would just be a badly, it would be something, the reason why it's difficult to meet the criterion because you don't know what it is, it moves, and just when you think you've got hold of it. And you can achieve it various ways which is obviously difficult perceptually. If I gained "An awareness of counselling" by reading two chapters in a counselling book, and you do it by six months internship in a, you know, mental institution, and then you can't really argue, well it's difficult...

George: It's difficult. I mean, in a way that's the beauty of the supervised experience is that you don't necessarily have to become, you know, the D.B.s at each thing, at each competency. You...you've just got to really make a sort of a minimum understanding.

(Focus Group 5, page 15)

Although George talks about a 'minimum understanding' above he later disputes recommending a minimum standard when the group was asked about this:

Alison: Should there be a minimum standard?

George: Mm.

Calum: How could you ever police it?

George: That's not, I wasn't saying that we have to have a minimum standard, what I was saying was that throughout the conversation we've had we've turned around and said that there's certain counselling skills that are fundamental to applied sport psychology practice. If they're fundamental that means we need them. The current supervised experience or accreditation doesn't require you to have those skills. That's what I'm trying to get at, that's what I'm saying.

(Focus Group 5, page 16)

Calum questions how a minimum standard would be assessed. Groups 2 and 4 also discussed minimum standards in training:

Bill: I think in terms of going back to the counselling skills, I think it would maybe be helpful if there could be some sort of nationally recognised qualification.

Kevin: Yes.

Bill: Like a minimum requirement, because it sort of says I think it [BASES] says 'Basic theories of counselling'. However many hours the course is it can sort of

say be the benchmark, like a sport and exercise science degree is to become a member.

Kevin: Unfortunately, although in theory that's great, what is necessary then, that you are taking the course? That you have taken an exam on the course?

Adam: The measuring of listening is very hard.

Kevin: Yeah, but you still remember what you were taught.

(Focus Group 2, page 19)

Group 1 reached a consensus about 'an agreed common standard' after answering a specific question on this issue (the phrase 'an agreed common standard' was derived from the BASES application form for supervised experience/accreditation):

Ben: So do you think that we need them in a common standard? We need counselling skills in a, well the answer is yes.

Alison: Counselling skills practice.

Ben: From what we've been talking about earlier on...

Andrew: I don't think anybody would say any different in this group! After what we've said.

Ben: It's a firm yes from all of us.

Andrew: I think we've qualified it at various times haven't we?

Helen: Again, this is saying not necessarily everyone uses it now, but in an ideal world I think everybody, all sport psychologists would, because it appears that they are necessary. 'Appears' because I don't know that from my own personal experience.

(Focus Group 1, page 16)

After Michael (group 4) had suggested that he wanted to see a different approach to accreditation than what he called a list that has to be ticked, the group was questioned further about a 'tick list' and minimum requirements:

Alison: But do you think there should be a bare minimum? I mean you could argue that that's what the tick list is.

Jane: Mm.

Alison: You must have at *least* this?

Niall: You must have been exposed to these things.

Jane: Yeah, mm, I think that's probably fair, given that you have to be exposed to all the other things. The problem I have is lists. What's 80%, what's 50%, what's a 100%? It's a nonsense.

Michael: It's a 100% of what you need.

Jane: Yeah.

(Focus Group 4, page 20)

'Exposure to' rather than 'training' was a phrase that the group as a whole was more comfortable with. In order to clarify what this 'exposure' meant to them, their perceptions of a need for an accreditation system was queried:

Alison: Do you agree with some sort of accreditation?

Michael: I suppose I have to.

Jane: You have to.

Michael: I suppose I have to.

Alison: For quality assurance?

Michael: I suppose you have to.

Alison: So where does that leave us then in terms of, like I said, what would you feel comfortable with in terms of counselling skills regardless of what's there at the moment, in an ideal world what would you like to see?

Jane: Well I think, what I said right at the beginning, you have exposure...and then maybe perhaps one or two workshops that you are required to do at some stage.

Alison: Compulsory? I don't mean specific ones, but some attendance? Is that what you mean?

Jane: Well then it becomes a tick thing doesn't it?

Alison: Yeah.

Jane: It's a catch 22 situation.

Michael: Maybe...

Jane: I would have thought most people would want to do, you know, I would need to know something about this and how it works.

Michael: A minimum attendance.

Jane: Yeah.

Michael: That's probably not unreasonable.

Jane: But there needs to be the option to be able to take that to higher levels.

Michael: Exactly, exactly, and the support.

Alison: That's what I said before, is there an 'at least'?

Jane: Which is why the 'at least' might be exposure to perhaps two or three workshops. I think going to one isn't, you know, not have one.

Michael: Well a process, engage in a process for a finite period.

(Focus Group 4, page 21)

The moderator continued to press the group in order to be clear on what they meant by 'minimum attendance' and 'exposure':

Alison: So you would be comfortable with having something that said says 'at least going to certain workshops'? Not specific workshops.

Jane: Or the equivalents. The equivalents might be something else,...but at *least* going to a minimum gives you exposure to things.

Niall: Yeah, yes of course.

Alison: Are you more comfortable with that kind of terms?

Michael: Yeah, I think 'exposure to' and 'engaging in'.

Jane: Yeah, yeah. Positive engagement.

Michael: Yeah, positive engagement in a minimum thing I think would probably not be unreasonable, but I think to address anything about the competencies and requirements for accreditation without addressing the competencies and requirements for supervision is actually, erm, non-productive. Because that stuff is stuff that ought to be reinforced all the time by your contact with your supervisor.

(Focus Group 4, page 22)

Although group 4 appeared uncomfortable with the terms 'training' and 'need', they felt better about using 'exposure' to and 'engaging in'. Jane was careful to stress that attendance at, for example, specific workshops need to be qualified by the phrase 'or equivalents'.

Role of BASES

During the discussions on the implications for training issues, an inevitable link was made to BASES and the current accreditation system. Various themes emerged including selection of trainees, the supervisory process, the flexibility of supervised experience, the accreditation system itself and criticisms of the BASES system. Each one is discussed below in order to reflect the amount of debate on this issue.

Role of BASES: Selection

Group 4 was the only group to consider this issue and it was always Michael who initiated the topic. It first arose in their discussion of listening skills:

Michael: I think there's maybe a selection issue here as well, I mean if you look at clinical psychology for example, who have to refine their listening skills quite well, I'm sure they get some generic training and they get lots of experience and feedback. But the fact of the matter is that they select them pretty carefully at the start and erm, for example, in sport psychology we don't really have any selection criteria, anybody can start to become accredited as a sport psychologist.

Jane: But do they work effectively? I mean the selection processes from the other end? The team could actually say "Well none of us can work with this guy".

Michael: That's quite interesting because there's lots of accredited sport psychologists who don't get the work.

Jane: Yeah.

Michael: Presumably for a reason.

Jane: Well for a variety of reasons, but that might be one of them.

Michael: Yeah.

(Focus Group 4, page 3)

Then it arose again during the discussion on implications for training:

Michael: So, for me...supervised experience ought to be about and...training ought to be about, it's not training, it ought to be about,...that when somebody has completed that ...they have a lifelong desire to be really good. And if they've got that, then, as a supervisor, you've probably succeeded, and if they haven't got that, then as a supervisor you've probably failed either in the selection process or in that experience time that they have with you. And probably most of that's in the selection process. If they don't come with the fire in their belly, it's very rare they're going to get it.

Alison: So selection process by?

Michael: By which you accept them. By which you say "Yeah, I'll supervise you".

Alison: So you as a supervisor make that selection?

Michael: Well at the moment yeah, that's how it is. And it's difficult to imagine how, so we'll have this panel, this BASES panel that'll sit there and candidates will be wheeled in and they'll say "O.k., show us the fire in your belly" and...you need to know somebody to know whether they have that, and...so that brings about a whole pile of issues about selection rather than training really....for example, it means that you'd never agree to supervise somebody you didn't know, and which means that somebody who didn't know anybody would be rather disadvantaged, you'd have to get to know some people first.

.(Focus Group 4, page 17)

Michael appears to be suggesting that the accreditation process commences at the initial stage of selecting a trainee to supervise. By this process the quality of sport psychologists, he argued, should increase. Rogers (1951) wrote about who should be selected for counselling training. He argued for some element of self-selection and reported that criteria was, at that time, based on the APA (American Psychological Association) for selection of clinical psychologists

Role of BASES: Supervision

Each group considered the importance of supervision in training. The supervision process was viewed as is critical to the success of training sport psychologists, as suggested by Barney et al. (1996). Group 1 were asked about their thoughts on the BOA statement that "... sport psychologists have had little or no formal training in this area [listening and counselling]" (BOA, 1999). One response from Andrew included the role of the supervisor in this process:

Andrew: For me, it...means that, I must be careful how I say this...people who are supervising don't necessarily have that formal training either. So then it becomes problematic when they're, possibly, when they're actually helping people with this work.

Alison: O.k.

Peter: It might be quite interesting that to look at the supervisor and the supervisee, to look at what they come out as at the end of the day and whether they mirror you know, the supervisor's approach.

Ben: Yeah, it would be very.

Peter: And if that's the case then maybe there is a problem there. Especially if the supervisor is...

Ben: Anti...

Peter: ...from a narrow perspective. Again, mentioning no names, but I can think of some.

(Focus Group 1, page 14)

These comments reflect the notion that often the content and style of the trainee's training is determined by the supervisor's theoretical or philosophical approaches to working. This can be both positive and negative in the sense that there is flexibility in the system to allow individualised styles of training, but also this flexibility allows more "narrow" perspectives to be used.

The idea of flexibility in the supervisory process was commended by Kevin (group 2):

Kevin: This is where I think we are lucky with the BASES supervision. If we're talking about this about in terms of BASES supervisorial context, then unlike AAASP [Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology], where AAASP has a checklist of things you have to have taken in terms of knowledge, so you may have to have had a module in counselling. BASES allows that interaction between supervisor and in the supervisee. The supervisee can have taken one workshop and learned all they need to know, and through discussion with their supervisor agree that that's enough information, "You're fine", or decide "I think I need to role play more often, can we set up some role playing?" "I don't think we can, but there is going to be another workshop, why don't you attend that?" And I think this is where the degree of knowledge and expertise agreed upon between the supervisor and the supervisee works really well as long as it's an honest relationship.

Alison: But going back to what Bill said is there a pre-requisite, is there a basic level at which they should have? You know you said [Kevin] they could go to one workshop and that would be OK if they agreed that or is there some sort of pre-requisite, minimum level if you like?

Kevin: Well yeah, there should be. The BASES accreditation committee would like to see supervisors accredited, and that would mean that the supervisors have sufficient knowledge and understanding and experience to supervise others, which would mean having the ability to differentiate whether or not a supervisee has the basic counselling skills or not. At the moment we leave it up to the supervisee.

Alison: I thought they had to be accredited?

Kevin: They do have to be accredited, it doesn't mean they are able to supervise. Just because I'm accredited to work with athletes doesn't mean I can supervise someone who's undergoing BASES accreditation and that is a completely different thing.

(Focus Group 2, page 19)

Kevin points out that being accredited is not necessarily synonymous with being able to supervise a trainee. An interesting observation is that Kevin talks about AAASP having a 'check list' of knowledge and competencies for trainees to have completed. He does not seem to view the BASES criteria in the same way, whereas other groups (as shown later) talked about their dislike of the 'tick list' system.

Mary in group 3 argued that whether or not 'explicit' training is needed to use counselling skills depends on the individual, how counselling skills is defined and on the supervisor. She suggested that there might need to be tighter controls over supervisors.

George (group 5) similarly says that “The problem with BASES accreditation is that each supervisor will prioritise the competencies in a different way” (p.13). Rose agreed “...the trouble with all the competencies...they’re not exactly prescriptive are they of how, what you need to do to get 100% in that box. It’s very dependent on your supervisor” (p.13).

The issue of good supervision was important for Michael (group 4) (and other groups) as he mentioned it several times and he ended the focus group with this thought:

Michael: ...unless supervisors have good counselling skills, it doesn’t matter what courses you put people on, they won’t develop good counselling skills.

(Focus Group 4, page 22)

Andersen et al. (1994) argued that the supervision of trainees in applied settings is “a crucial part of training” (p.238). They recommended that in order to enhance the quality of supervision, it may be helpful for the supervisors to have experienced being a trainee and received some extra training in the process of supervising itself.

Role of BASES: Flexibility of Supervised Experience

As shown above Kevin (group 2) perceived that BASES accreditation is flexible in its approach and he interpreted this positively. Group 5 also talked about the flexibility of supervised experience:

Calum: ...whatever you have within that box, if you want to use that terminology, that is all you can use anyway. Because if you’re attempting to use something outside of that then you’re going outside of your code of conduct anyway. So, whatever you put in there is appropriate, if you consider it to be appropriate for you as an individual, that’s fine. If you work outside of that then you’re working outside your code of conduct.

(Focus Group 5, page 14)

Calum refers to the system as being so flexible that it is possible to have as much or as little training in the ‘tick boxes’, but going outside this remit would go against the code of conduct. The group went on to discuss the terminology used by BASES:

George: It’s difficult. I mean, in a way the beauty of the supervised experience is that you don’t necessarily have to become, you know, the D.B.s at each thing, at each competency...you’ve just got to really make a sort of a minimum understanding.

Rose: I’m not sure I’d call it the beauty.

George: Well you can call it a problem, or, you know, the fact that there has to be an element of flexibility because of, I mean everything we've talked about today is contextual isn't it? It depends, it depends, it depends. I think the way that you would fulfil one of the competencies and the way that I might fulfil that competency might be completely different, but would still fulfil that competency.

Ian: And recognise that some people will far exceed that competency and will therefore be able to practice...within a much greater range of consulting situations than others maybe.

Alison: Calum you shook your head again.

Calum: People are just using terms that you can't find anywhere in the accreditation process. There is nothing within the accreditation process that talks about competencies or minimum standards, you won't find those phrases because it wasn't written like that.

George: But in the supervised experience it was, it was called competencies.

Calum: It was called, in the original documentation it was only BASES that imposed that as opposed to the people within an inch of the, ..., well specifically obviously within psych. It was never written like that and somebody wanted a label to put on it, but it was never designed to be a competency, it was designed to be, it was designed to provide opportunities for people to say "Well this is my area of strength", "This is my area of strength". We've talked all the way along about the fact that you might come in with a clinical psych. Background as opposed to a biomechanical background like yourself. Erm, and therefore why does everybody need to have the same?

(Focus Group 5, page 15)

Although this group may disagree on the terminology used, they appear to agree on the idea of flexibility within the accreditation system and this being a positive aspect. What is interesting that Michael (group 4) perceived BASES accreditation somewhat differently; he regarded it as more inflexible. He warns, "it's the paradox of professionalising anything if you're not careful. What you do you just produce a cloning system...and then you lose...all that fantastic individualisation that people who didn't do those things would bring to this" (page 17).

Role of BASES: Accreditation Criteria

Several of the issues for accreditation have already been discussed in the subsections above. Other points which emerged were: the problem of making counselling skills training compulsory, decisions about accreditation, the issue of the 'tick list' and views on improving the criterion for accreditation.

Eddie in group 3 highlighted his concerns for the accreditation system if training included compulsory counselling skills courses:

Eddie: There's a danger about saying that, yeah of course that sort of course [counselling course] would be useful...but whether you actually write something like that and say

like you have to do that to get accreditation, there's a danger of moving the goalposts too far.

Rachel: I know.

Eddie: "Oh, we're all there now, we'll just shift the goalposts so you lot can't get it"...so I think there should be some, if we're saying that people can get through without developing interpersonal skills properly then that's one way of doing it is to get the observed..., a minimum number of times...but without actually writing something like that in and saying you've got to go on a counselling course, but if, on the other hand, to get chartered status we have to do that then, you know, it's a decision we have to make and, you know, if we have to write it in then, you have to write it in.

Alison: Are you prepared to do that if you had to?

Eddie: Well I don't know, it depends, if we're already accredited would we have to go through a course like that?

(Focus Group 3, page 18)

His concerns reflect his idea of "shifting goalposts" and how this does not seem fair to the others going through the system. However, he does also suggest that this may be a necessary move in order to receive chartered status. His question at the end of the passage above reveals that he is not sure about whether he has attained enough counselling skills for him (and others) not to have to take more courses or do more training.

In terms of making decisions about accreditation, participants in groups 3 and 4 discussed this issue. Ruth (group 3) believed it can be someone who does not necessarily have the skills themselves:

Ruth: Someone's got to make a decision on what criteria to use to get through accreditation or to put in place for accreditation, and the decision's going to be made by a group of people, with some experience but not necessarily with the skills you're talking about.

(Focus Group 3, page 17)

Michael (group 4) talked about the need for value judgements:

Michael: At the end of the day somebody makes a value judgement, that's the whole point.

(Focus Group 4, page 11)

As shown in previous sub-sections several groups referred to the accreditation criteria being a 'tick list', 'check list', 'tick boxes' or 'a set of hoops to jump through'. Michael (group 4) viewed the 'check list' as inadequate:

Michael: ...behind questions like this I see...somewhere in the distant, somebody will take this research and they'll say "So these are the things that people need to be a sport

psychologist”, and they’ll devise a little list, and you’ll have to tick them. Which is what BASES accreditation...

Jane: Is about.

Michael: ...to a greater or lesser or extent is about. It’s about creating a checklist that you tick, and... those same people ask a completely different set of questions to me. When it doesn’t work, when you get people who can tick all the boxes and they’re crap, they say “Ah, we must have the wrong things on the list, let’s change the list”, they don’t realise that actually the whole idea of having a list is pretty much a waste of time because you can’t provide definite answers. And where I come from on all of these issues is you could be very good as a sport psychologist, with an extraordinarily limited set of skills, provided you only worked in a certain way with certain people. You could be incredibly effective. You might be much more effective with a wider range of people if you had a wider range of skills, and in particular you might be much more effective if you had very good counselling skills, you might be much more effective in a wide range of situations. But...defining those things and operationalising them in some way enable you to say “Oh yeah, you need this and that and that”, I don’t think you can do that, and that’s why every question you ask I’ll say some obscure thing like “How long’s a piece of string?” because there isn’t in my head a list of things that you need that much of that, this much of that, and that much of that.

(Focus Group 4, page 10)

Rachel (group 3) states that when she applied for accreditation “We had to tick a box” (p.10). In trying to locate where she has developed her perceptions of counselling skills she linked it to filling in the BASES form for accreditation “I’m locating myself to filling in those little boxes and ticking those little things” (p.8).

Participants in group 5 refer to filling out the BASES accreditation form and having the competencies in ‘boxes’, however, Calum argues that there aren’t any boxes to fill:

Calum: I’ve said my piece, I don’t think there should be boxes. I’m sorry, I don’t think they are meant to be boxes and I think that you can put in there as much or as little as you want providing you don’t work outside of that...It was never meant as a prescription, it was never meant to be a prescription of what you should do. So you could have 0% in some of the areas and still get accredited.

(Focus Group 5, page 14)

It is interesting that Calum argues against the idea of having ‘boxes’ to tick or fill out and yet other participants (in this group and in others) have this perception of the system. Taking this idea one step further participants from two groups perceive a notion of ‘jumping through hoops’ purely to attain accreditation:

Ruth: ...I think, if we’re going to be frank, that BASES accreditation has been usually about hoop-jumping. And hoops for counselling haven’t been there to jump. I mean that’s looking at it very cynically, but on the other hand, there were also, if you look

at the whole situation of time demands that are on people, particularly people like us in higher education. Where is the time? If it's not actually in the programme there, is there a hoop to jump? Where do you find the time? It's sort of something that I think we need to address as we go on, but it just hasn't become, my lifestyle hasn't allowed me to do that so far. But it's something that I've identified as something I'd like to do.

(Focus Group 3, page 12)

Alison: What do you think of that idea then as the tick list being 'you must have at least this'?

David: I would have thought it's a hoop I've got to jump through so I'll jump through it.

Michael: Exactly, that's exactly. Every person I've supervised their view of it is "This is a set of hoops, how do we best jump through them?" Now every person that I've supervised, as it happens I've also supervised for a Ph.D., if ever they even remotely thought like that about their Ph.D. I'd just refuse to supervise them. I'd just say "I'm sorry, we're from different planets".

Alison: So what's the difference?

Michael: What's the difference? Well the difference is that they're fired up about their Ph.D. and they're fired up about being a sport psychologist, but they're not fired up about BASES accreditation. When they get their Ph.D. we open a bottle of champagne and celebrate, when they get their BASES accreditation we say "Thank Christ that's over with!". I think that's about right isn't it guys?

Jane: Yeah.

David: Yeah.

Niall: We all "Thank God that's all over with".

Michael: And how do you do it?

Jane: Because you keep having to do it.

Michael: How do you do it? Get Fred's second year accreditation goals and just go down them and pick the ones out that you want because that's the easiest way to jump through the hoop. Change it a bit, put down yours, the only thing that's different is the case study...BASES accreditation is a set of criteria that has been put in place by a control freak who wants to control people and run the world, and that's what the problem is, they reflect that. And the whole of everything that I'm involved in in sport psychology is the exact opposite of that. It's about helping people to identify choices and do things that they want to do because they're fired up about it.

(Focus Group 4, page 21)

For these participants the idea of 'jumping through hoops', in order to satisfy accreditation criteria, is not a positive experience. It is interesting that Michael admits to copying and then changing the goals of another in order to 'jump through the hoops'. This does not necessarily reflect respect for the current system of accreditation.

In terms of improving the criteria for accreditation, Michael (group 4) said he would prefer a different system to the current one of accreditation:

Alison: ...what would you feel comfortable with them seeing at the end of this or adding to the profile or would you just prefer that it just stays as it is?

[9 seconds of silence]

Jane: Mm, that's a difficult one.

...
Michael: I find it extremely difficult to answer because...I'm philosophically opposed to GNVQs in sport psychology.
Alison: So are you suggesting that you wouldn't have any kind of list at all then?
Michael: I'm suggesting that...I would prefer a rather different sort of approach to accreditation than that approach.
Alison: Than the list of individual competencies?
Michael: Mm.
Jane: Yeah I think it would, I mean the things that we've said already about this sort of, you know, workshop BASES stuff where it might be that you say "Well there are some sorts of workshops that you must attend".
Michael: So then people...
Jane: But I don't think...
Michael: ...will attend them and tick the box...
Jane: And tick the box.
Michael: And will they be any better? And the answer is there's no evidence whatsoever to suggest that they will.
Jane: Or that they won't.
Michael: Or that they won't be.

(Focus Group 4, page 20)

Members of group 5 view the current criterion as unclear and make some suggestions:

Robert: I think where I think the current descriptions, loose as they are, become problematic to translate into what are benchmark competencies is that they're not expressed in those terms. You're encouraged to think about them in those terms, but they don't, like knowledge of relevant theoretical counselling approaches is a very nebulous thing. If maybe BASES took a, you know, almost took a leaf out of University validation books, you know, where you have to make explicit in knowledge or skills terms the outcomes that need to be achieved...an improvement might be to translate those loose descriptions into knowledge and skills outcomes which are demonstrable.

...
Ian: A certain criterion needs to be identified clearly...

(Focus Group 4, page 14)

Role of BASES: Criticisms of BASES

As shown above, BASES was criticised with regard to various factors. Several members of group 1 questioned whether work, which does not just use PST and examines underlying issues, is not published (and maybe not used for accreditation purposes) due to the dominant "scientific" perspective of the sport psychology community which (they suggested) is reflected in BASES:

Helen: I wonder whether, in like the research that's published, sport psychologists actually do tackle the underlying causes, but because they want to write it up in a

nice sort of symptom, problem-solving approach, like nice scientific kind of way, do you know what I mean? They don't mention that. Even though they know full well that they did sort of touch upon other areas or touch upon underlying causes, that for the sake of producing a nice scientific write-up, they won't mention that, they'll talk about the quick fix intervention strategy that proved very effective.

...

Andrew: Or it might be that you haven't seen it written up, because it's very difficult to write-up that because nobody wants to publish that kind of stuff.

(Focus Group 1, page 21)

Michael (group 4) suggests that there is no guarantee of obtaining any counselling skills from sport psychology training (p.11). This group also criticised the percentage system that BASES uses:

Jane: There's lots of things on the tick lists that people don't have a hundred percent in, on this old percentage thing, but I mean what's a hundred percent?

Michael: Exactly.

David: One hundred percent counselling skills!

Michael: One hundred percent counselling skills, exactly.

Jane: I mean it's just a crazy system in that sense.

Michael: Nothing should ever be...

Jane: Quantified...

Michael: ...required.

Jane: ...in that way. I think you should have experience or knowledge, or some basis, basis, BASES?

Michael: BASES!

Niall: You have to see yourself as having appropriate skills.

Jane: For what you do.

Niall: Yeah, exactly.

Michael: And operating within those limitations.

(Focus Group 4, page 13)

Group 4 perceived that the appropriateness of skills possessed by a sport psychologist is determined by the limitations that that person sets him/herself.

Robert in group 5 criticised the growth of the association.

Robert: I think it's a bit or a sort of a rod for our own back in a sense that I think our view, sport psychologists'/ exercise psychologists' view of what it is to be one of those things is a bit like Frankenstein's monster, it's sort of been pieced together from parent disciplines and things which begin "Yeah that should be important, so we'll have some of that", and it's been put together over the years and it's maybe worthwhile taking time to step back to say "Is it possible for anyone to do all these things?"...you have to be a transparent system to give anyone within the system a fair chance of attaining what they set out...it's fitness of purpose, and if you, on the basis of your practice you can provide evidence that demonstrates efficacy, however you want to define that, then you're competent.

(Focus Group 5, page 17)

Examples of Good Practice

Many of the participants gave suggestions for good practice and specific examples of the type of training that they thought may be useful to help develop counselling skills for sport psychologists. Andrew (group 1) talked about a needs analysis in order to ascertain what athletes and coaches want and need from a sport psychologist

Many of the examples of forms of training came from group 2, especially those who had experienced some formal counselling skills training. Henry (who had “minimal” training) suggested that it would be interesting to “see what kind of methods that a listening expert or teacher would adopt to try and help people listen more effectively and then see if those methods are the same thing that I tend to practice on a daily basis...” (p.6). Examples from the others included using reading, role-plays and video feedback (again the importance of the role of the supervisor was stressed by Kevin).

After Niall had described the difficulty in observing other sport psychologists during exchanges of a personal, intimate or important nature. Group 4 suggest that good practice may be to include some experience of the counselling situation for the trainee.

Niall: ...in terms of acquiring skills...it's not simple in terms of, you know, just go out and observe somebody.

Jane: Perhaps that why the profession actually insists that their trainee counsellors actually are counselled.

Niall: Yeah.

Jane: Because that's one way...

Michael: Because then they've experienced it.

Jane: ...then they have the experience.

Niall: Yeah.

Michael: Yeah it think that's a good practice.

Jane: Yeah.

Michael: We had a PAG day years ago, it was run by Richard Butler and Sheila Rodgers, on counselling. It was actually excellent for one reason, no it was excellent for several reasons, but one reason in particular it was excellent and that was that we did sessions in threes, where you had a counsellor, a counsellee and an observer, you see, and then we swapped around. And what was fascinating was that some of the people who had quite big reputations were absolutely crap! It was quite funny, and some of the people who were just like Fred had just started and never really done any of this, were actually great, and I thought that was good. It was interesting.

(Focus Group 4, page 15)

In this example, Michael describes a training situation that is very common in basic counselling skills training courses. He has perceived some benefits from doing this. Group 4 also discussed the benefits of practising skills without being under pressure:

Michael: ...there'd need to be some set of exercises that people engaged in that enabled them to experiment without...any...pressure

Jane: Yeah, yeah.

Michael: ...about "Have I passed or not?"

Jane: Allow them to make mistakes.

Michael: Yeah, allow them to make mistakes and allow them to ask questions about their mistakes, and seek help with their mistakes from other people in a completely non-threatening way. Erm, and that, and those experiences there'd need to be some choice in them so that they didn't feel that they have to do this, or "Oh shit, I've got to do that now, I really, not" you know. So I'd say if you've had those sorts of components and probably spread over a time frame of something like a year, then I think probably that'd be quite a good set of experiences.,

(Focus Group 4, page 18)

Robert in group 5 concisely summarise up what training should involve:

Alison: ...what kind of training do you think an applied sport psychologist, or somebody who has an interest in sport psychology, would need to use counselling skills effectively?

George: So you're asking the question what type of training do they need to develop those counselling skills, to develop effective counselling skills?

Alison: Yeah.

Robert: Knowledge of the skills, knowledge of the context, practice in the context and some way of evaluating efficacy.

Rose: Thanks Robert. Are we off?!

(Focus Group 5, page 13)

Barriers to Training

Several points were considered by each group that were categorised as potential barriers to training. Andrew (group 1) referred to the perceptions of 'older' sport psychologists being barriers to training:

Andrew: ...if you go to these meetings which, for example, from the BOA...a lot of the time people are saying we need action, more training in counselling, so they're actually saying that, so that's where the statement's come from [the BOA statement about many sport psychologist's not having formal training in listening or counselling]. But, where it has come from, it's come from the younger elements and the newer element into the group. It hasn't come from the older members. Now either, I think a lot of the older members have gone through teacher training, so I think that they see that slightly differently. Or, they don't want to say so because they feel in seniority-type positions, they ought to be saying things like that, I think there's a little bit of that element going through. That's me being a bit judgmental. Or...I think that having to go through formal training at this point is seen to be like a real drag and so on. It would strike me that the reason for that statement is that there is a need for formal training, and think we're acknowledging there is, but it's taken us a long time to say it.

Ben: ... at the end of the day my argument against it is what harm can it do? It's just another skills that you can use in practice and at the end of the day, I'm always

seeking knowledge. If I can pick up something from anywhere, it's bound to be beneficial. You know?

Peter: A lot of the more experienced people wouldn't have that attitude though, that's the thing.

Ben: As if they know it all.

Peter: That's another time constraint that they don't need. That's the point that Andrew's making where, you know, at the end of the day you need to be made more aware of...

(Focus Group 1, page 14)

Andrew gives insight into the perceptions of older members of the sport psychology profession. This links back to Michael's (group 4) statement where he questioned the idea that sport psychologists who are establishing the criteria without formal training are incompetent.

Group 4 talked about the issue of how far to go with training:

Alison: ...but how far down the track does a sport psychologist go then in having counselling skills?

Michael: With a small 'c'.

Alison: Yeah.

Michael: Well how far down the...being a human being track does a father go with his children? Because that's about the same distance I reckon. It depends how good you want to be at it doesn't it?

Alison: Is that how everybody feels?

Jane: Yeah...how long's a bit of string?

Michael: About as long as a father!

Jane: Yeah, I mean that seems impossible to answer. I mean you're asking something that's, it is one of those questions isn't it?

Michael: It, I mean, it's difficult, you can't say, you can't give a definite answer to the question, that's what the problem is isn't it?

(Focus Group 4, page 9)

The group realised the difficulty in putting a limit on how much training in counselling skill is needed for sport psychologists. By stating that "it depends how good you want to be at it doesn't it?" Michael seemed to be implying that gaining more skills is synonymous with being a better sport psychologist.

Role Boundaries

From focus group discussion on 'listening skills'

Group 4 considered the issue of training and chose to focus instead on 'acquiring listening skills' rather than being trained in them:

Alison: Do you think you need to be trained in listening skills as an applied sport psychologist (which you all are)?

Michael: ...I think you need to acquire listening skills, which isn't necessarily the same as be trained. I think... some people with all the training in the world wouldn't be very good at it. So I don't really think that training is necessarily the answer. Erm, I'm not a great one about training erm, I think you need experiences to acquire skills and that's a much less goal-oriented process than training, much less rigid as well.... you also phrased the question...you said "Do we think that it's necessary?" and...my answer to that question is no I don't think it's necessary. It would be desirable sometimes.

David: I think I would maybe take a stronger stance than that and I'd say that I think it's impossible to train someone to listen...impossible's a bit strong, but some people are sensitive to other people and some people are not particularly to other people, and those people who are not particularly sensitive to others they'll find it very difficult to listen, to really listen at a deep level.

Jane: It's a sort of thorny issue sort of training for things that are developed probably a lot through experience and then sort of, probably not quite such a strong view as that, I think sometimes it's probably of benefit having training in it's broadest sense in the sense of sort of...I don't know role play type things, so you get to know what other people are hearing. I mean I think that's important, because we could, all four of us, sit and listen to what somebody's saying and pick up different things from it...and I agree most of that comes with the experience, but it also comes with experience of the individual.

(Focus Group 4, page 3)

Group 4 point towards gaining experience in listening skills rather than formal training. This indicates that they hold 'craft' knowledge in high regard and touch on the notion of naturally good listeners. Michael viewed training as rigid and goal-oriented. They queried whether or not someone can be taught to listen. Some participants (in group 3) perceived that listening skills were developed through both training and experience:

Alison: Do you think it's something that you develop through experience or training?

Mary: Both.

Debbie: Both yeah.

(Focus Group 3, page 2)

This idea reflects that skills can developed through both professional and craft knowledge. However, the next part of the same discussion focused not on whether the skills could be taught, but rather on whether they were actually taught to sport psychologists:

Tony: You're never really taught how to listen though are you?

Alison: Are you?

Tony: I personally, people say to you "Now concentrate, listen to what I'm saying" and it's like somebody saying "Now keep your eye on the ball", it was on T.V. last night, I don't know what that means, I'm not really, it depends how long your concentration span is a lot of the time. I think people are good listeners if they have good

concentration, but I think without, I think it does come without experience. Because you will miss things when you first start out in this job that you wouldn't miss now, you would pick up on them.

Mary: Yes, but I think it's also a skill that can be taught.

Tony: I'm not saying it can't be taught, I'm saying I don't think it is taught very often.

Mary: It depends what you do, what training you do.

Alison: What do you mean?

Tony: Well, for example, BASES accreditation. I mean it's sort of covered in the profile isn't it? But I'm not sure how much of an emphasis is given on that.

Mary: But I think that there's developments within the, certainly obviously the psych. accreditation, in that we're beginning to look at the appropriateness of having counselling qualifications...

Tony: Yeah I agree with that, I think the best thing that could happen...

Mary: ...and therefore that the teaching of listening skills, the training of listening skills, is very much more encompassed within...counselling.

(Focus Group 3, page 2)

After considering whether or not listening skills were actually taught to sport psychologists, the debate explored BASES accreditation. What is interesting is the notion that although they accept that listening skills can be taught, Tony comes to conclusion that they are, generally, not (this is corroborated by the BOA (1999) statement on the lack of sport psychologists' formal training in this area). In the excerpt above, Mary links listening skills with counselling training which probably is a reflection of her professional training in this area.

From focus group discussion on 'interpersonal skills'

Group 3 discussed training in interpersonal skills at length because they used the term interpersonal skills interchangeably with counselling skills.

Tony: I think people who haven't got the interpersonal skills, it doesn't matter whether they go on a counselling course or not. If their personality and style is such that they're a complete cretin, then I don't think that level can be trained personally.

Debbie: Yeah, I actually think you're right.

Tony: People who really cannot communicate, we all know them, you can't hold conversations with these people, you avoid them like the plague. Do you reckon you can teach them? You might be able to teach them challenging techniques and listening techniques, but I'd love to see them put it into practice.

Debbie: Yeah, I think you're right.

...

Rachel: Can you teach someone interpersonal skills in 3 years?

Mary: No, but then they won't get accredited will they?

Rachel: No.

Mary: And maybe that's a really important issue that we have to address.

Tony: So you can only get accredited if you've got a reasonable personality then?

Mary: If you don't have interpersonal skills...

Tony: I'm specifically thinking about some individuals who I know who have no interpersonal skills, have no personality, I'm just thinking you can put them on any course in the world and they would still be a cretin at the end of it.

Mary: So therefore in terms of being an applied sport and exercise psychologist, maybe they shouldn't be accredited.

Tony: I'm not disagreeing with you, I think that would be a good thing!

(Focus Group 3, page 15)

It is Tony who, again, raises the issue about an interpersonal style and personality. He argues that if sport psychologists do not possess good interpersonal skills and are not able to communicate then no amount of training will help improve their skills. The other participants (apart from Mary) appeared to agree with Tony. Mary is the only participant who has been and is still attending a counselling skills training course. Mary points towards accredited courses that will enable BASES to accept competence in counselling skills after attending going on these courses and passing them.

Bill and Adam (group 2) briefly mentioned that they thought it was harder to obtain training for interpersonal skills:

Bill:...I think the counselling skills actually, some of the skills like the listening skills, it's easier to do that formal training. I think the interpersonal skills, and some of the things we talked about earlier, about how you are interacting with maybe a group, I think you have they are much harder to...

Adam: I think they are harder to define because they are more abstract.

Bill: Yeah.

(Focus Group 2, page 18)

Their points of view may reflect their personal training as Adam is a fully trained counselling psychologist and Bill had completed a basic counselling skills training course that includes listening skills.

From focus group discussion on 'counselling skills'

Training may affect the role boundaries that sport psychologists have in the approaches that they choose and are able to use and how they react in certain situations. In terms of theory, Ben (group 1) argued:

Ben: ... there's a whole host of core condition skills within counselling..., I mean depending on where you're coming from, within which theory you're coming from within counselling, at the end of the day counselling skills are inherent within all theories and basically they are: to be able to listen effectively, to be non-judgmental, to be able to paraphrase (which is a skill), to summarise, to reflect, to focus on feelings and emotions rather than logics or words, so that's what I see as

counselling skills. The ability to be able to pick them things up and reflect them back to the client, that's what I understand as counselling skills. And that, I mean, depending on where you're coming from, in Roger's it's to develop a therapeutic relationship with the client. Now, whether that's effective on it's own as a theory within sport psychology is debatable, but I still think that you can use the skills, there's always a time and a place for the skills.

(Focus Group 1, page 10)

From focus group discussion on 'counselling'

Group 5 discussed the idea that being able to counsel doesn't necessarily infer being a trained counsellor and that it isn't necessary to be a trained counsellor in order to counsel. Within the boundaries for sport psychologists, knowing when to refer to others is important:

Ian: I think one of the things that possibly we don't do enough is to refer to colleagues with specific expertise...it's not even in the model of...the world class performance plans, if you have a psychologist who works with this group regardless of their range of competencies there isn't, it's certainly as far as I know it's not normal practice for the ones to actually say "Well actually no, Calum he does a lot of work with injured athletes, maybe we should have him to do some work with some of the injured athletes, for example.

(Focus Group 5, page 17)

Bill: Returning to this individual I was talking about, now it's the process, you know, of this referral thing and referring onto that. Now, I'm in a support role and I see this person, now I can't just cut myself off from him now, because I feel I can't do this. So what I'd be prepared to do under your [Adam's] sort of definition is what I was thinking of doing with this person, is still listen to them and if he wants to discuss those things, in the absence of a trained counsellor, I'll listen but I won't try and delve into is helping him manage that emotion. Because that's where I haven't got the background knowledge in dealing with depression.

Adam: Yes, and that goes down to what I was referring to as the core counselling skills. The comment I didn't put into there was that they could be non-directive. So you are listening to what they say, you won't add to what they say, you will be an ear for them. And that in itself of is adding extremely valuable service. To me, you have done the listening you understand the emotional complexity and I think sport psychologists are more than able to do that without any doubt in my mind. It's what happens next with that emotional complexity is where the difference lies, and that's where I think further training is required, for the what happens next bit.

(Focus Group 2, page 12)

Referral was also often cited when the participants were asked to reflect on their applied experiences of using counselling skills (see appendix D for section on 'reflections').

4.3.4.4 BROAD DIMENSION: DEVELOPMENTAL TRAINING PROCESS

Further professional training

Adam (group 2) suggested that further training than that gained from the traditional sport psychology route is required in order to deal with emotional complexity (p.12), non-verbal training (p.18) and (from a knowledge point of view) depression (p.16). Eddie (group 3) suggested that further training was needed to deal with topics other than performance enhancement issues.

As shown previously, group 4 participants believed that it was important to have the options to take exposure to counselling skills further and move up in terms of progressive training.

Looking at other related fields

Some groups suggested looking to other related fields for information on how they, for example, assess and select trainees. Calum in group 5, however, found that this was not helpful when it was suggested because the styles of training are "very, very different so I don't think there's any comparison" (p.17).

Adam (group 2), on the other hand, suggested that BASES could learn something from looking at counselling and clinical psychology training. Bill and Kevin point out that a developmental training process does exist in BASES which currently includes re-accreditation.

Adam: And perhaps BASES could take a leaf out of, certainly the counselling psychology, clinical psychology where there is a prerequisite to a period of time where you need to be supervised post-qualification to ensure you have retained a certain minimum professional standard. Again, it's an open and full debate as to what constitutes all of these things.

Bill: There is re-accreditation isn't there [in BASES]?

Kevin: Yes, and there is also the discussion for more peer supervision of accredited individuals.

Bill: And I think that, in terms of some of the world class programmes, that some of that is built in, the peer supervision and about the quality of programmes.

(Focus Group 2, page 20)

Group 3 discussed looking at other related fields for help on assessing individuals on being fit to practice:

Mary: Yeah but how does, I mean what happens within, you know, BPS, or clinical psychology when they do this all the time? I mean how do they actually assess that aspect of it and determine whether or not you're fit to practice?

Tony: They watch them through like...

Mary: One-way mirrors.

Tony: One-way mirrors, glass similar to...

Mary: That's right and they continue on with erm, being supervised.

Tony: Ongoing supervision?

Mary: Ongoing supervision.

(Focus Group 3, page 18)

Alternatives to 'Training'

As described earlier, Jane (group 4) wanted to use a different word to 'training'. Michael stated "I'm philosophically opposed to GNVQs in sport psychology" (p.20). The words that they felt more comfortable with were 'exposure' and were less troubled with the idea of workshops rather than 'training' (Jane described 'training' in a similar way to being in the army, see earlier sub-section within training on 'defining the terms'). Robert (group 5) similarly argued that:

Robert: ...training tends to encourage people into, a bit like NVQ approach to, you know, it's a context-specific cookbook approach to the problem, if you want to call it. It's this, I do that.

(Focus Group 5, page 13)

He recommended having education and practice as well as training.

4.3.4.5 BROAD DIMENSION: IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING

The issue of training in order for sport psychologists to be able to use counselling skills and how important training in counselling skills is to applied sport psychologists were topics which created a lot of debate (various factors have already been discussed in several of the sections above).

Professional training is important

In reference to being shown the statement from the BOA which referred to sport psychologists having "little or no formal training [in listening and counselling]" (BOA, 1999), members of group 1 suggested that formal training is important:

Andrew: ...It would strike me that the reason for that statement is that there is a need for formal training, and think we're acknowledging there is, but it's taken us a long time to say it.

Ben: At the end of the day, it's another string to your bow. So what harm can it do?

(Focus Group 1, page 14)

Adam (group 2) suggested that formal training is important, but he also stated that 'formal' can have different interpretations:

Adam: ...I think it needs to be formal but not necessarily a part of a degree. I think it can be done formally within the context say of a workshop where you have the person who is running that particular workshop appropriately accredited, instruct at their desired level, be it first year level, or third year level.

(Focus Group 2, page 18)

Group 3 specifically discussed the importance of training in counselling skills:

Debbie: So would you interpret that [question on flip chart "How important do you think counselling skills are to applied sport psychology practice?"] as how important is maybe taking like a counselling course to learn more about counselling rather to learn more about counselling skills?

Mary: How important is it to gain counselling training is basically what you asked there yeah?

Debbie: Yeah.

Mary: I think that...based on my perception of the last 12 months I would now say yes, I wouldn't necessarily have said yes this time last year.

Rachel: Yes that?

Mary: That counselling training is important to applied sport psychology practice.

(Focus Group 3, page 13)

It is possible that Mary has developed this opinion from experiencing some professional training in counselling skills. It appears that her awareness of the benefits of formal training in this area has been enhanced by her experiences. Ruth perceived formal training as important in order to increase her own personal development:

Ruth: I have a feeling that counselling skills are broader than the counselling skills I've already, there is more available than I currently use, and I guess my sort of feeling that maybe I'd like to do more counselling skills training is because it's, I feel there's something I could learn that would extend my tool kit as a sport psychologist. I'm not saying I don't already use it, I don't say I've not already picked up stuff, but I'm saying I have feeling there's a lot, a lot more out there that I could use.

...

Ruth: Now I may not want to use any of that but I think to have a bit more knowledge about that, and that's why perhaps erm, I'd be interested in developing counselling skills, I think it's important, but not necessarily in a sense of using it every day, does that make sense?

Rachel: So why hasn't that been a priority? You think it would be useful, why hasn't it been a priority?

Ruth: Because, well for starters, well I think, if we're going to be frank, that BASES accreditation has been usually about hoop-jumping...But it's something that I've identified as something I'd like to do.

Tony: But it's also something you can get along without.

Ruth: Yes.

Rachel: That's what I'm trying to work out yeah.

Tony: Because if you didn't think that you could offer a sympathetic ear to somebody without actually offering them advice and actually get through what we could loosely term a counselling session, you'd do something about it wouldn't you?

Ruth: Yeah, I agree with you, but I feel though that I also want to develop my skills, personally as a, you know, I feel...

Tony: Well-rounded.

Ruth: Yeah, I'd just like to know more about it and potentially have perhaps more tools available to me which would perhaps make me feel a bit better about the job that I do. I'm not saying I can't do the job, I'm saying I don't necessarily just want to be erm, a person that always uses the same typical tried and tested approach. I might actually like to expand and look at different ways of delivering things.

Rachel: Can I ask you a question, is that still with your normal performers, normal I hate that word, normal performers, or these problem solving, these problem cases should they come your way or...

Ruth: To be honest, I don't really know an awful, if I knew, if I could categorise it and knew enough about it then I'd be able to answer that.

Rachel: Yeah.

Ruth: I think it could have knock-on effects in terms of how I do performance enhancement work.

(Focus Group 3, page 12)

Ruth acknowledges her understanding in this area is limited, but appears keen to address this by furthering her training and taking a formal course. It appears that some of the others are intrigued by her statement and ask her about this decision. Ruth appears to acknowledge the importance of both professional and craft knowledge.

Training is not essential

Although training was perceived by many in the groups as important, it was not necessarily deemed essential. Andrew (group 1) argues this point:

Andrew: ...some of the most effective counsellors that we know and most effective people in what they do, ...don't necessarily have the qualifications and so on.

(Focus Group 1, page 6)

Similarly, Michael (group 4) argues that they are not essential:

Michael: When was the first PAG day? Er, '90? O.k. So therefore we were all incompetent before that.

Jane: In theory.

Michael: Because there wasn't any training, so we must have been incompetent. But I don't believe that's true. So, I just think 'need's too strong a word, formalised training is not the answer.

(Focus Group 4, page 17)

When specifically asked 'What kind of training do you think sport psychologists need to use counselling skills effectively?' Michael stated:

Michael: None.

Alison: None.

Michael: Not when you say 'need', because that implies that if they don't have training they won't be able to do it, but some people only need exposure to situations to acquire the skills that will enable them to be effective.

(Focus Group 4, page 16)

Michael suggests that training is not essential for all sport psychologists and that craft development can be sufficient (via 'exposure to situations') for sport psychologists' development. However, Sanders (1996) offers the idea that that training facilitates the daily practice of professionals.

When group 3 discussed how important counselling skills are to applied sport psychology practice, Eddie touched on the issue of training:

Eddie: I think...in terms of it's importance for applied sport psychology, I think a lot of people will, a lot of people that I meet...at conferences, involved with BASES...are pretty good at using those skills anyway. A lot of people from higher education, I'm not saying they could be developing further, but I think, you know, I think the people who get through BASES accreditation, I don't think they get through, you know, if they can't develop a relationship with someone, they can't listen. So I think formal training might be a good idea,...so it is obviously important in answering this question, but I don't know if they should be actually if there's a *need* to have the people, you know, formally trained in it for BASES accreditation.

(Focus Group 3, page 14)

Again, the notion of craft development being enough for sport psychologists to gain accreditation is raised. Eddie suggested that some people would have developed good skills without necessarily having been formally trained. Tony pointed out that counselling skills training is "something that you can get along without" (p.12).

Kevin (group 2) gave an example of a sport psychologist who could get by with just good listening skills, but, he argued, this person had no understanding of theory and counselling skills and "a lot of people have questioned his or her skills" (p.20). From this

example, Kevin indicated that he perceives counselling skills are not essential, but nevertheless important.

Some participants perceived that accreditation is not necessarily synonymous with being effective. In their discussions of merely doing what is needed to become accredited, i.e., 'jumping through hoops' they implied that training is not essential in order to become accredited, but Kevin (group 2) highlighted that 'being effective' was a different issue: "It's not at all important at all if you don't want to be effective" (p.15)

Awareness of training benefits

Throughout the discussion it was shown that some people were aware of the benefits of counselling skills training and others were not. Mary in group 3 first took her counselling skills course because:

Mary: ...I have felt a need to possibly be able to broaden my scope and to be able to have more tools in my box to be able to use. Because not every athlete that comes to you wants the same response and if I don't have the tools there then I can't meet that athlete's needs.

Debbie: And do you feel that you're achieving that through the course?

Mary: Yes, I know that my interactions, certainly with my students, is much different than it was in September/October [now June] when I started.

(Focus Group 3, page 13)

As shown previously, Mary felt that her perceptions of training had altered since being on a course (p.13) and she now described counselling training as important to applied sport psychology practice. Other members in the group were not as knowledgeable and aware of the benefits as Mary:

Alison: ...What I was trying to get at is as well is, in terms of formal training, is counselling skills training, the kind that Mary's gone on, is that the kind of thing that would be useful for a sport psychologist, and if so what are the implications in terms BASES accreditation?

Tony: I think if we knew more about it, we need to know more about it.

(Focus Group 3, page 18)

Ruth: ...I certainly didn't *have* to go through anything formal. In fact I think it's only just now that people are even starting to talk about it.

Mary: Yes, that's right.

(Focus Group 3, page 10)

Robert (group 5) talked about the benefits of training:

Robert: ...I think, you know, the reassurance of some professional, some formal...familiarity with the aims and objectives of counselling is not a bad thing. You may actually end up thinking "Yeah I actually do quite well at this anyhow, but I've now given a framework in which to organise my practice". I may be able now to make decisions about what might be more appropriate in one situation than in another and...you know, I'm a great believer in education and life-long learning and without doubt there are things to learn from understanding models of counselling and the applicability of different skills in those contexts or those models.

(Focus Group 5, page 10)

Bill (group 2) highlighted the importance of training by talking about the benefits:

Bill: I think there's certain types of people who are naturally better than others, but without doubt you can improve. As I look back to myself, in what was a relatively short course, I think I benefited enormously from it. just in terms of becoming aware of myself and how I listen to people.

(Focus Group 2, page 18)

Henry agreed:

Henry: Yeah I agree with that totally. I think it would be nice to see what kind of the methods that a listening expert or teacher would adopt to try and help people listen more effectively and then see if those methods are the same things that I tend to practice on a daily...It would be quite interesting to see what kind of message that a tutor would recommend and try and include that kind of skill.

(Focus Group 2, page 18)

Ruth (group 3) identified that counselling skills training is "...something that we need to address as we go on" (p.12).

4.4 INTEGRATED DISCUSSION

This discussion draws together the main findings from the focus group study. The aims of the study were:

1). To explore how sport psychology practitioners use their relating skills by examining their understanding of relating terms and themes which emerged from study 2 and are fundamental in other fields (e.g., the field of counselling). This study focused on the terms 'listening skills', 'interpersonal skills', 'counselling skills' and 'counselling'.

2). To examine the perceived importance of counselling skills and the participants views on the implications of using counselling skills training for sport psychologists.

Rather than merely reiterate the results and focus on each broad dimension again, the following integrated discussion attempts to present how the terms were understood and interpreted by the participants, what the perceived importance of counselling skills was, how they use these skills in practice and what the implications are for training sport psychologists in the UK.

The literature on this topic has been shown to lack clarity in defining relating skills for sport psychologists especially in the UK. Biddle (1989) talked about sport psychologists working as "educational sport psychologists with no qualifications in counselling" (p.27) but later acknowledged that many sport psychologists find themselves in counselling situations (Biddle et al, 1992). Bull (1995) referred to 'educationally-based' counselling and sport psychologists having a 'counselling style' yet it is not clear what he meant by these terms. Although some authors (e.g., Sanders, 1996; Ray et al., 1999) have stated that many different definitions of counselling exist, it was not clear, before completion of the present study, what sport psychologists understood by the terminology which exists in the literature and the current training guidelines of the accreditation body for sport psychologists in the UK, BASES.

Despite BASES having on their 'supervised experience attributes profile' for sport psychologists the category 'basic theories of counselling technique', it is acknowledged that many sport psychologists in the UK have had little or no formal training in this area

(BOA, 1999). From the current study, predominantly with BASES accredited sport psychologists, there was a lack of clarity and diverging perceptions are highlighted on various aspects of this topic. These sometimes caused underlying tensions to emerge.

4.4.1 LISTENING AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Listening skills was a reasonably straightforward term for the participants to define. A listening skill was viewed as a communication skill, an interpersonal skill and a counselling skill. This corresponds with texts in basic counselling skills that define listening as an integral component of counselling (e.g., Sanders, 1996). Both craft and professional terms were used to describe listening skills. They were viewed as important for sport psychologists and other 'helpers' (as suggested by Egan, 1998). Terms such as 'integral', and 'essential' described listening skills for the relating role of sport psychologists. This confirms the results from study 2, where sport psychologists, trainee sport psychologists and athletes all viewed listening as an important skill for sport psychologists to possess (amongst other relating skills).

Also important for sport psychologists were interpersonal skills. Some groups (e.g., groups 3 and 4) decided that whilst these skills are not essential, a sport psychologist would be limited without them. Interpersonal skills were viewed as broad, complex, difficult to define and covering many different aspects of relating, including non-verbal communication and humour. The participants were able to distinguish between listening and interpersonal skills, thus confirming (from study 2) that the concept of listening can be viewed separately from the broader concept of interpersonal skills.

The skills of listening and interpersonal exchanges may also be referred to as skills of a 'helper' (e.g. Geldard, 1993; Sanders, 1996; Egan, 1998). Participants in the focus groups described these skills as important to the role of effective 'all-round' sport psychologists. Counselling has also been described as a form of helping (Murgatroyd, 1985, Sanders, 1996).

The next section discusses the main findings from the sections on counselling skills and counselling as these terms covered the majority of each group discussion. The focus is on the various understandings of terminology presented and how this relates to their experiences as applied sport psychologists. The first focus for discussion below is the participants' perception of different types of counselling. The implications for training are

also discussed below with regard to counselling skills as this relates to one of the main questions that was addressed, i.e., “What kind of training do you think a sport psychologist would need to be able to use counselling skills effectively with athletes?”

4.4.2 DIFFERENT TYPES OF COUNSELLING

During the analysis, ‘counselling skills’ and ‘counselling’ were interpreted as contentious terms to describe. It became clear that the participants differentiated between different types of counselling. The many different ways in which the participants referred to these types of counselling are illustrated in table 4.1 and are described as Type I and Type II to reflect this differentiation. At the bottom of this table are the terms which reflect similar distinctions in the literature.

Table 4.1 The two different types of counselling perceived by sport psychology practitioners

TYPE I COUNSELLING	TYPE II COUNSELLING
Listening skills	Listening skills
Interpersonal skills	Interpersonal skills
Communication skills	Communication skills
Being "switched on"	Active listening
Guiding	Athlete-led
No theoretical underpinning necessary (for relating)	Theoretical underpinning used (for relating)
Most sport psychologists use only this form of counselling	Sport psychologists don't do this, counsellors do
"Counselling with a small 'c' are things that everybody has and everybody uses in everyday life"	"Counselling skills with a capital 'C' are a collection of professional skills which counselling psychologists need to have in order to provide a clinical service"
Little or no awareness of counselling values	Awareness of counselling values
Counselling is something you don't need to label	"It's [counselling] just a label"
A broad definition of what counselling is	A tight or narrow definition of what counselling is
Help	"Pure", "purist", "proper" counselling
The dictionary definition of counselling, i.e., advice, guidance, support	Does not consist of giving advice
Superficial	More in-depth
Used for performance enhancement issues	Used for non-performance enhancement issues
Used when there are no problems?	Used when an athlete has a problem or "deviant problem"
Sport psychologists do counsel people	Sport psychologists don't counsel people if this definition of counselling is used
Little awareness of using the skills ('difficult to define because I use them without realising')	Awareness of using the skills
Something that can last for 30 seconds	Something which is agreed via a contract
Produces behavioural change	Produces emotional change
Working in a problem-focused way	Working in an emotion-focused way
Gained through going through supervised experience	Gained through supervised experience and basic professional training
Not linked to clinical issues or therapy	Linked to clinical issues or therapy
Other ways to differentiate the two types are:	
"Informal helping" (Egan, 1998)	"Formal helping" (Egan, 1998)
Working in a sophist way (Corlett, 1996)	Working in a Socratic way (Corlett, 1996)
Helping in a non-counselling way (Sanders, 1996)	Helping in a counselling way (Sanders, 1996)
	"Informed helping" (Sanders, 1996)
Directive counselling style (Bull, 1995)	Less directive counselling style (Bull, 1995)
Developed from 'practical' (Schon, 1983) or 'craft' knowledge (McFee, 1993)	Developed from 'professional' and 'craft' knowledge (Schon, 1983; McFee, 1993)

Some participants appeared clear in their understanding and differentiation between the different types of counselling. However, it is argued that some elements of the data highlight inconsistencies in a few of the individuals' views on the relating skills of sport psychologists. These are reviewed below.

- Although the profession arguably consists of 'formal' helpers (Egan, 1998) the participants' relating skills in this study were primarily based on 'practical' (Schon, 1983) or 'craft' knowledge (McFee, 1993) rather than formal training (BOA, 1999). These relating skills were perceived as being fundamental to the role of an effective sport psychologist (e.g., listening skills). Athletes stated in study 2 that they wanted their 'ideal' sport psychologist to possess professional and craft knowledge and relating skills.
- One individual stated that the counselling skills of a sport psychologist were skills that 'everyone has and everyone uses'. However, it was not clear what distinguishes the relating skills of a sport psychologist (a 'formal' helper, Egan, 1998) with the relating skills of 'informal' helpers, e.g., coaches and parents.
- Some participants used terminology that reflected notions of looking for distorted dialogue and underlying messages. These participants, however, made little reference to training of 'alternative' approaches to the more 'traditional' forms of training in becoming educational sport psychologists (e.g., humanistic). Several participants referred to counselling skills (Type II) as not being in their 'approach'.
- Many participants reported relating in ways that suggested they had little awareness of their use or development of these skills. They did not appear to be using the skills in an 'informed' manner (Sanders, 1996). It is argued that being aware of the potential responses available and having skills based on a theoretical foundation (in conjunction with applied experiences) is important in developing these skills effectively.

Sanders (1996) describes two forms of helping: 'non-counselling' ways of helping and 'counselling' ways of helping (see table 4.1). Egan (1998) describes 'formal' and 'informal' ways of helping (see table 4.1). It can be argued that applied sport psychologists are formal helpers as it is their primary role to help athletes and those people concerned with athletes, for example, coaches and team managers. Many of the participants in the current study, however, do not describe the attainment of their skills in any formal sense

and a theme which emerges in every section of the analysis is the distinction between professionally developed (Schon, 1983) relating knowledge and 'craft' (McFee, 1993) developed relating knowledge

It is interesting to note that some participants (Kevin, group 2, Michael, group 4 and Ian, group 5) suggested that the skills (e.g. listening, interpersonal, communication skills) are the same for both types of counselling. However, the skills of Type I counselling have been developed through 'craft' knowledge (McFee, 1993) and experiences whilst the skills of Type II counselling have been developed through both 'craft' and 'professional' knowledge.

Michael (group 4) described small 'c' counselling skills (or Type I) as 'things that everybody has and everybody uses in every day life'. He stated (as above) that the skills of small 'c' counselling (Type I) are the same as the skills of big 'C' counselling (Type II). Michael then went on to argue that big 'C' counselling (Type II) is something that sport psychologists do not do, it is something that that only professional counsellors use. This distinction is substantiated by reference to basic counselling texts (e.g., Sanders, 1996). What is not clear, however, from Michael's distinction is if the skills of Type I counselling are 'what everybody has and everybody uses', what distinguishes the relating skills of a sport psychologist (who is arguably a formal helper, Egan, 1998) from the relating skills of 'informal' helpers (Egan, 1998), for example, a coach?

During the discussion of listening skills a notion of 'looking for hidden agendas' or 'hidden meaning' emerged from several groups. However, this concept is one that is not reflected in the dominant 'scientific' literature that exists in sport psychology (Salter, 1997). The positivist paradigm does not refer to ideas of distorted dialogue and underlying messages, it refers instead to clear objective ways of knowing which are mind independent.

Group 1 commented on the 'scientific' debate. They suggested that the work of individuals who incorporate perspectives other than the dominant 'scientific' position, which (they argued) are more Socratic (Corlett, 1996) in nature, are not published due to the dominant "scientific" perspective in the sport psychology community. In contrast to group 1, an example from Ian (group 5) shows that he thought counselling was a 'hot topic' and that it is 'in vogue' at the moment to talk about it.

Members of group 1 suggested that people do not always have an awareness of using counselling skills. This leads to a question of whether this awareness is necessary. Bill (group 2) argued that it was important to go through the stages of learning from unconscious incompetence, through conscious incompetence and conscious competence to unconscious competence, i.e., to go through stages of awareness and knowledge and then

use these automatically. It is suggested that not having awareness of the relating skills being used reflects 'craft' knowledge (McFee, 1993) that has been developed through practical experiences of working with athletes.

Some participants appeared comfortable to refer to their relating skills in a Type I sense, but any suggestion of using Type II counselling skills sometimes created responses such as "we probably all do [use counselling skills] but we don't know how to categorise it" (group 3). This particular example reflects a group of practitioners at ease with their 'craft' developed relating skills, whilst showing little awareness of how they might link to professionally based counselling skills.

Summary

Different types of counselling were perceived by the participants, with various examples of this distinction being given throughout the focus group discussions. One differentiation, which was a recurring theme throughout the study, was the notion of the development of these relating skills, i.e., whether through professional training, or through craft developed knowledge (McFee, 1993). The idea of predominantly having craft developed relating skills despite being a profession of 'formal' helpers was discussed.

4.4.3 FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON TERMINOLOGICAL USE

The participants' use of terminology also reflected their 'craft' developed knowledge (McFee, 1993) that in turn illustrated the intuitive use of many skills that can be linked with professional counselling skills. For example, the participants' idea of 'being switched on' can be linked to the counselling skill of 'active listening'. The data also revealed, however, that some participants in the focus groups were somewhat uncertain with the terminology associated with counselling. It is suggested by the author that this uncertainty might be linked to their understanding of the topic via predominantly 'craft' experiences. One group who showed uncertainty was group 3. The next section highlights some of the reasons for this interpretation.

- Associating counselling skills with dealing with 'problems' and clinical issues.
- Using the perceptions of 'general society' to influence their views of counselling.
- Locating their perceptions with the BASES form for supervised experience which places 'basic theories of counselling technique' under the heading 'psychology'.

- The BASES 'supervised experience profile' requires knowledge in 'basic theories of counselling' yet several participants acknowledged that they were unfamiliar with the theoretical aspects of counselling skills.
- Recognising that their own knowledge and formal training was minimal in this area (this was matched by the researcher's own sense of feeling insufficiently trained at the end of study 1 with the junior archers).

Members of group 3 themselves sensed that they were uncomfortable with the terminology associated with counselling and they explored these thoughts further. Most members in this group felt more comfortable using 'interpersonal skills' to describe their relating skills. Many texts (e.g., Sanders, 1996; Egan, 1998) and the British Association for Counselling (BAC, 1999), however, refer to listening and interpersonal skills as integral to the skills of counselling. It is possible that these feelings highlight most of group 3's 'craft' developed knowledge (McFee, 1993).

Group 3's discussions revealed that they perceived British society to view counselling as something that is needed when there is a problem. Participants in this group suggested that this also reflected their own perceptions. However, some practitioners (in groups 3 and 4) also went on to suggest that they did not work with athletes who had 'problems' or 'deviant problems'. They may have be reflecting the idea that athletes are generally "psychological healthy" (Morgan, 1988). Corlett (1996), however, suggested that not dealing with problems and working only with symptoms in a PST-driven approach is working in a 'sophist' way.

Many participants in group 3 also perceived counselling as dealing with issues not related to performance enhancement, therefore this was not an area for them to work on with athletes. Research from Gould et al. (1989) and Sullivan and Nashman (1998) has shown that sport psychologists deal with issues related to both performance and non-performance (see also studies 2 and 3).

Some individuals in group 3 talked about gaining their perceptions from completing the BASES form for supervised experience/accreditation. The perceptions that developed from the BASES form may be a reflection of how this topic is covered by BASES. What is written on the 'supervised experience attributes profile' is 'basic theories of counselling technique' and it is under the heading 'Psychology'. By separating it in this way from those attributes placed under the heading of 'Sport Psychology' may have somehow alienated these concepts from some sport psychologists. It may have caused the uncertainty or tensions for those individuals who are trained primarily in physical education or sport

science rather than mainstream psychology (routes through PE or sport science represent the prevalent training backgrounds of most sport psychologists in this country (see method, study 2). Mary (group 3), however, suggested that the perceptions of counselling go beyond the BASES form and reflect the fact that they do not teach their students about counselling issues and counselling skills.

It is worth noting, that although the BASES list states 'basic theories of counselling technique' (Type II) many of the participants in the groups did not talk about using counselling skills in this way. Ruth (group 3) said she thought counselling had different theoretical approaches, but that it was a 'mystery' to her.

Henry (group 2) is explicit in suggesting that his sense of feeling 'threatened' with the terms associated with counselling has developed from his lack of knowledge in the area. This acknowledgement may help to explain the reaction of other participants. Henry stated that once the skills were broken down he reflected that it was the 'terminology that was putting him off'.

Summary

Some participants (especially in group 3) were uncomfortable in considering their relating skills as counselling skills. This was a reflection of various factors including perceptions of a link between counselling and 'problems', being influenced by the literature from BASES, being unfamiliar with the terminology and development of their knowledge through predominantly 'craft' experiences.

4.4.4 ADAPTABILITY

In each section where the terms were defined, the notion of being adaptable or flexible during interactions with athletes was discussed in every group. This was perceived as a significant element to the role of a sport psychologist and corroborates the findings of studies 1 and 2. Michael (group 4) cautioned against being too flexible and being inconsistent with individuals. Group 5 talked about the importance of adapting to the context throughout their discussions.

Where adaptability was discussed, this was linked to the theme of 'role boundaries' by suggesting that role boundaries of the sport psychologist may have to alter in order to be adaptable and flexible in approach. Role boundaries are also influenced by factors such as what skills are possessed to deal with various elements, the level of psychological depth a sport psychologist wishes or chooses to manage and time constraints.

Bull (1995) talked about a sport psychologist's 'counselling style' adapting in different situations, for example, the style being directive or non-directive. One participant (Rose, group 5) referred to this as being prescriptive or facilitative respectively.

4.4.5 TRAINING

Many participants in the focus groups appeared comfortable with the idea of formal training in professionally based counselling skills and stated it was important (this is similar to the findings from some respondents in study 2). In contrast, some individuals did not think that such an element was essential for applied sport psychologists. There were several reasons for this latter perspective, these are covered below.

- Some individuals stated that formally based counselling skills were no different to the interpersonal skills that they already possessed (which they have developed predominantly through craft knowledge).
- One participant suggested that sport psychologists are not necessarily incompetent without formal training.
- It was perceived that formally developed counselling skills (Type II) are elements without which one can be an applied sport psychologist.
- One participant reflected on the idea that it was the younger sport psychologists who want formal training. He stated that it had taken the profession 'a long time' to recognise the need for formal training in this area.
- It was argued that the dominant 'scientific' perspective may cause some sport psychologists to strive for a "professional high ground" (Schon, 1983). This may have, in turn, caused some to be uncomfortable with the idea of using 'formally developed' counselling skills when they referred to using predominantly 'craft' based knowledge (without formal training) for their own relating skills. Salter (1997) argued "the profession appears to be content to ride on the coat tails of mainstream empirical psychology" (p. 248).
- The idea of selection of trainees appeared to be very important for one individual.
- Supervision of trainees appeared to be very important for all groups and the role of the supervisor was viewed as critical to producing effective sport psychologists. The training of supervisors was suggested.

- A minimum standard was discussed in most groups with some suggesting that it would be useful. One group preferred a notion of a 'minimum attendance' at workshops.
- Various ideas for good practice were suggested which included role playing, use of video feedback and the ideal of sport psychologists experiencing some counselling themselves.
- Those who perceived benefits in formal counselling skills training were those who (generally) had received some training in this area.

Most participants in group 3 stated that they already possessed the skills that they need in order to communicate and relate with athletes. The skills to which they referred were predominantly craft developed 'interpersonal skills' (using their term) and they perceived that they do not need to obtain any more training in order to use relating skills. The data again reflects the idea that the actual skills of the different types of counselling might be the same, but the training on which they are based is different.

When asked to consider what training sport psychologists need in order to use counselling skills, Michael suggested that they do not 'need' any formal training in the sense of it being compulsory. He referred to the idea that other sport psychologists are not necessarily incompetent simply because they do not possess these formally developed skills.

As the BOA (1999) has stated, that there is currently little or no formal training in this area. One issue for future consideration is not what training has been considered sufficient in the past, but what is sufficient for sport psychology training in the future. Andrew (group 1) suggested that it has taken "a long time" to recognise the position of needing to develop these skills and acknowledges that it is the younger sport psychologists who seek formal of training.

It is possible that the dominant 'scientific' perspective may cause some sport psychologists to strive for a "professional high ground" epistemology that confines them to a narrow technical practice (Schon, 1983). Schon (1983) argues that professionals who opt for the high ground are

"hungry for technical rigour, devoted to an image of solid professional competence, or fearful of entering a world in which they feel they do not know what they are doing, they choose to confine themselves to a narrowly technical practice" (p.43).

Although sport psychologists arguably emanate from a relatively narrow perspective (Salter, 1997), it was interesting to note that the focus group participants did refer extensively to craft developed knowledge or what Schon (1983) refers to as being developed in the “swampy lowlands” of consultations

It is recognised that the craft knowledge (McFee, 1993) developed by professionals, in this case people working in sport psychology, are extremely valuable and it enables sport psychologists to offer many skills (e.g., Schon, 1983). One issue that emerges from the focus groups, however, is whether these skills should be developed on a foundation of both craft and professional knowledge.

The notion of being able to use these skills naturally was raised by several groups (1,4 and 5). However, even if the practitioners are natural counsellors (as David in group 4 suggested he is), Geldard (1993) argues that counsellor training can improve the effectiveness of these people.

Those participants who appeared aware of the ‘benefits’ of counselling skills training and viewed such training as important were (generally) those who had experienced some formal training in this area beyond what others described as ‘minimal’. These individuals pointed out that most sport psychologists do not refer to what they do as counselling and argued that “there’s a lack of appreciation of the need for counselling skills” (Kevin, group 2) in sport psychology in the UK. Ruth (group 3) suggested “it is only just now that people are even starting to talk about it”.

Mary (group 3) described how counselling skills training had almost ‘fast tracked’ her relating skills. For others, some kind of formal training in counselling skills was not viewed as essential because it was perceived as “something you can get along without” (group 3). For Kevin (group 2) the issue about the importance of training for counselling skills was whether the sport psychologist wanted to be effective or not. Kevin argued “[training] is not at all important if you don’t want to be effective”.

Summary of ‘Training’

Introducing the idea of formal training in counselling skills caused a variety of perspectives to emerge. A consensus was not reached throughout the groups as a whole on whether this form of training was essential or not. It was illustrated that many people had views based on their craft developed knowledge on this topic and some viewed this development as sufficient for their relating skills. Those who had experienced some formal training perceived what they saw as ‘benefits’ to the role of the sport psychologists in using

formally developed relating skills. Examples of good practice in training relating skills were given.

4.4.6 BASES

- Although some participants praised BASES supervised experience for being flexible, many criticised BASES accreditation on several points:
 - it was viewed as a ‘tick list/boxes’ and a ‘series of hoops to jump through’
 - for being inflexible
 - assessment of trainees and supervisors was felt to be important to introduce
 - the percentage system was described as a ‘nonsense’
 - the criteria was perceived as unclear

4.4.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Understanding the profession’s perceptions of terminology in one aspect of the role of the sport psychologist, i.e., relating, is important in furthering knowledge in order for applied sport psychology to move forward.

In the focus groups discussions, many of the participants described their predominantly craft-based skills and knowledge of their relating skills. The manner in which they discussed these skills reflected a sense of perceived competence in relating with people and highlighted one dominant aspect, being adaptable. One underlying notion that emerged, however, (which was interpreted by the team of co-analysts), was a general sense of a profession ‘ill at ease’ with the ideas of then professionalising their ‘craft’ relating skills and developing these on a foundation of professionally based relating skills.

A section on ‘Reflections’ of both participants and the researcher is included in the appendix (D). For reasons of space and word limit they are placed in the appendix, however, they yield useful insights into the process of the moderating and analysing of each group and the participants’ views on the process. This appendix also gives examples of the participants’ use of relating skills in practice. As with other sections of the discussions, these highlight the participants’ different understanding of the terms and their different training backgrounds.

A model of helping approaches for sport psychologists is shown in the conclusion chapter (chapter 5), this incorporates the ideas and reflections from the all the studies in the thesis.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis has explored the role of the sport psychologist from the perspectives of a sport psychology researcher/consultant, sport psychology practitioners and athletes. Emerging from the studies has been 1). a questioning of the training of sport psychologists in relating skills, 2). an examination of the perceived prevalence of issues in consultations that are not directly related to sport and/or performance enhancement, 3). how sport psychologists deal with these issues and 4). exploration of sport psychologists' perceptions and understanding of various relating skills that a sport psychologist might use. This final chapter attempts to integrate the main findings from the studies and presents a model of 'helping' skills that might be incorporated by sport psychologists.

The researcher has been on a methodological and conceptual journey spanning several years that has culminated in these chapters. The researcher's ideas on what constitutes appropriate research have changed along with her applied practice. At the end of this chapter a section on 'personal reflections of a research journey' incorporates the use of the 'first person' writing style to invoke an 'author-involved' text. This section adds to the legitimacy of the thesis by showing the development of the researcher during the whole process of inquiry (O'Hanlon, 1994). The development of the researcher was characterised by adoption of diverse methodological perspectives, the use of different writing styles and the use of reflection to illustrate various stages of the research process.

This final chapter has several objectives:

- Offer an integrated discussion of the key points from the research findings
- Present an integrated model of helping skills which can be incorporated into the role of the sport psychologist
- Reflect on the process of research from the perspective of the researcher and reflect on changes to applied work during this process
- Give recommendations on the basis of the work presented
- Suggest areas for further research

Although the emphasis of the research changed at the end of study 1, many interesting findings from this first study, which were not directly related to the role of the sport psychologist, emerged. These could have been explored further if the notions of 'issues outside of sport' and the relating skills of the sport psychologist had not become the

main focus for the next studies. Refer to the discussion of study 1 for a more detailed examination of these other findings and how they might be explored further in the future.

In 1988, Vealey identified using a broader, holistic perspective rather than the 'narrow, unidimensional performance model' that she had been using up until that time. Study 1 in the present thesis concluded that (from the researcher/consultant's viewpoint) a broader perspective might be important when working with athletes, thus concurring with Vealey's (1988) ideas on this aspect. The thesis moved on to explore this notion further by addressing the various issues that arise in consultations and the relating skills of a sport psychologist. It was shown in studies 2 and 3 that athletes do not always present challenges that can be addressed solely via the use performance enhancement strategies. In study 2, most sport psychologists and trainees perceived that there were different skills needed in order to deal effectively with issues outside sport. Although some respondents did not agree with this, listening skills, counselling skills and various interpersonal skills were deemed important attributes for sport psychologists to possess.

The role of the sport psychologist is one in which the sport psychologist must adapt to the needs of individuals and yet be consistent in dealing with those people. It is a role that arguably should reflect the diversity of approaches that exist in sport psychology, yet be formed on a foundation of both applied experiences and professional knowledge for skills that are as fundamental to working with individuals as relating. This latter perspective is the view of the researcher and several participants in both studies 2 and 3.

In terms of the views of the researcher, these ideas are based on several factors: 1). reflections of her consultations during study 1 and from several years as a practising sport psychology consultant, 2). the belief that without some element of 'formal' training in the fundamental skills of relating, quality assurance from the profession to the 'client' might be diminished, 3). the belief that if 'formal' helping is 'poorly carried out' this can do harm to those being helped (Egan, 1998), 4). from the perceptions of some of the respondents and participants in the studies, 5). studies by other researchers (e.g., Anderson, 1999a) who have shown that professional knowledge of sport psychologists is perceived to be important to athletes and 6). the views of other authors (e.g., Yukelson, 1998) who acknowledge the importance of skilled listening.

It is recognised that knowledge developed through 'craft' experiences (McFee, 1993) are important in the development of various skills (Schön, 1983). Egan (1998) referred to the idea of wisdom, he gave an example of someone who may be "brilliant academically but incompetent in social interaction" (p.20). He stated that wisdom forms the basis for practical intelligence or common sense. Egan (1998) suggested, "Knowing

“how” rather than merely knowing is critical in helping others” (p.20). This corresponds to what group 3 (study 3) had said about sport psychologists who have become accredited but have no interpersonal skills or no “personality”. It also links with the opinion of athletes (in study 2) on their “ideal” sport psychologist who wanted sport psychologists to possess professional knowledge, craft knowledge and relating skills. Intuition and craft developed knowledge play a major part in the relating and helping process.

It is argued that quality assurance may be difficult for the profession to achieve if all sport psychologists develop training of these skills only through such applied experiences. It is therefore proposed that development of these skills is based on both professionally based and ‘craft’ based knowledge and experiences. This is an issue that has been highlighted through the thesis. In study 1 the researcher felt “insufficiently trained” to deal with issues not directly related to sport. In study 2 athletes wanted their “ideal” sport psychologist to possess good ‘professional’ knowledge, seek to continue to develop their professional development, have ‘craft’ knowledge of the sporting environment and have good relating skills. Again, in study 2, some accredited sport psychologists and trainees highlighted the importance of training in counselling skills.

In study 3, several participants regarded counselling skills knowledge from formal training courses to be important and the distinction between the participants’ professional and ‘craft’ knowledge emerged throughout the focus group transcripts. It is acknowledged that this was not, however, the view of all the participants in the focus groups (study 3). Some did not believe that formal training in counselling skills was essential if development of ‘craft’ skills was included in the preparation of sport psychologists to work with athletes.

To continue the research in this area, one question to be explored is: Are ‘craft’ and professionally developed relating skills as important as each other in the role of the sport psychologist, or can relating skills be developed solely through applied experiences, i.e., ‘craft’ knowledge? Study 3 in this thesis assessed participants’ perceptions of this issue. It would also be interesting to examine the relating skills ‘in situ’ of those sport psychologists who had received some formal training in counselling skills and those who had developed their skills solely through ‘craft’ or applied experiences. Their interactions with athletes could then be compared and contrasted by, for example, fully qualified counsellors.

The following section touches on these points above in the context of the notion of ‘helping’. Elements of the three studies in this thesis and the available literature are integrated into a ‘helping’ model.

5.2 A MODEL OF 'HELPING' FOR USE BY APPLIED SPORT PSYCHOLOGISTS

In figure 5.1 (on the next page) an integrated model of 'helping' in the role of the sport psychologist is presented. Following presentation of the model, an explanation of the different components and how they relate to the findings of the previous three studies is given.

<p style="text-align: center;">← Core relating skills, interpersonal skills, counselling skills →</p> <p style="text-align: center;">developed from both professional knowledge and ‘practical’ (Schön, 1983)/ ‘craft’ knowledge (McFee, 1993)^{1,2,3}</p> <p style="text-align: center;">and the notion of always being “switched on” or using “active listening”³</p>	
<p>Approaches of ‘formal’ (Egan, 1998) helpers³</p>	
<p>Directive/ Prescriptive Helping</p> <p>this includes range of advice on PST^{1,3} and can include a notion of being able to transfer PST skills to other domains¹</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Non-directive/ Facilitative Helping^{1,2,3}</p>
<p>Approaches of helping used by sport psychologists in various contexts^{1,2}</p> <p style="text-align: center;">← It is adaptable and flexible^{1,2,3} →</p> <p>The flexibility allows the management of psychological depth (Ringer and Gillis Jr., 1995) and enables the use of ‘appropriate responding’ irrespective of the topic being discussed^{2,3}</p>	<p>Approaches of counselling used by professionally trained counsellors³</p> <p>Can cover ‘deviant problems’ and clinical issues³</p> <p>Counselling as defined by the BAC³</p>
<p>Referral to a counsellor or other expert is sometimes necessary^{2,3}</p>	<p>Referral from sport psychologists and other ‘helpers’^{2,3}</p>

Figure 5.1 An integrated model of helping based on professional and ‘craft’ based core relating skills for sport psychologists in different contexts (Figures in superscript denote the study from which this information was based).

“Helping”

Respondents' and participants' understanding of various terms was explored in studies 2 and 3. In study 2, it was revealed that athletes were not clear on what they meant by 'listening effectiveness', thus, sport psychologists' understanding of listening skills was examined in the next study. In study 3, it emerged that the practitioners were clearer with terms such as listening skills, but were not always clear and 'comfortable' with other terms, for example, counselling.

Perceptions of different types of counselling were identified from the data in study 3. These different types reflect the diversity in both the applied approaches and perceptions of sport psychologists. A quote from one focus group participant reads, "everyone counsels, depending on how you define it" (Robert, group 5). It is argued that this all encompassing description does not necessarily help to clarify the situation of the role of the sport psychologist specifically for relating skills. Several individuals in the focus groups felt "uncomfortable" (the participants' own words) with the term counselling, some also felt that athletes (reflecting perceptions of general society) might also feel uneasy with the idea of being counselled. The athletes (in study 2) did not refer to any notion of counselling at all. This may either reflect that it is not in their daily vocabulary to use this term (for whatever reason), or that they did not perceive this to be a role for the sport psychologist.

It is proposed that changing references to 'counselling' in sport psychology might help alleviate any feelings of being uncomfortable or uncertain that have been associated with the term (see study 3). Bill (group 2, refer to 'reflections of the participants' in appendix D) suggested that counselling skills could be called 'communication skills'. One suggestion from Henry (also in group 2) was that

"you could have probably have chosen a different word than counselling skills if the actual skills weren't going to be used for the 'counselling' process, in the sense that you could have called them 'rapport and relationship skills'." (page 29)

The simple term of 'helping' may be used to describe the range of approaches that a sport psychologist might use that incorporates the concept of relating skills. It is suggested that the term 'counselling' is used only to refer to the helping approach of professionally trained counsellors who are involved in therapeutic situations. Ray et al. (1999) referred to the expression 'helping' as vague. However, by adding in other terms to give direction to the notion of helping (i.e., directive/prescriptive and non-directive/facilitative), this may

make it less 'vague'. The term 'helping' was also one that several participants used in study 3 to describe counselling.

Using a different term than 'counselling' such as 'helping' to describe approaches of sport psychologists may help dissipate the 'negative halo' (Van Raalte et al., 1992, 1993) that can exist around being a sport psychologist. 'Counselling' may arguably add to the negative perceptions of sport psychologists and may link to notions of sport psychologists as 'shrinks' (Orlick, 1989; Butler, 1997). The use of the word 'helper' to describe the various roles of the sport psychologist is in line with the terminology of Egan (1998) who referred to the skills of 'formal' and 'informal' helpers rather than counsellors in his influential model of 'The Skilled Helper'. Using Egan's notion of a "skilled helper", Yukelson (1998) also described the importance of skilled listening in applied sport psychology.

Core Relating Skills

The model in figure 5.1 simply highlights various areas of the role of the sport psychologist. It is shown that the 'core' skills of relating (across the top of the model) are the same for each approach. A directive or prescriptive approach to helping would be proactive in advising athletes about the options available to them and suggesting PST techniques, for example, performance enhancement. It is suggested by the researcher that the core skills of relating are still applicable in this context in order to gain information and subsequently give good advice. The approaches to helping should be used in an appropriate way. An approach which only uses one type of helping at all times would not be conducive to 'appropriate responding'. The 'prescriptive' approach is typically used by educational sport psychologists (Bull, 1991a; Hardy and Parfitt, 1994).

Notions of "being switched on" or using "active listening" (that participants in the focus groups referred to) suggest a sense of readiness to pick up on what athletes are saying, irrespective of context. Several participants commented that their relating skills were not factors that they could "switch on or off", again implying a notion of readiness. This points towards these skills being useful when being either prescriptive and giving advice, or being facilitative, whichever is appropriate within the context.

A non-directive or facilitative approach allows the athlete to talk about various issues (directly or indirectly related to performance enhancement) that may be troubling him/her. These issues were found to be raised in consultations in both studies 1 and 2. In this approach, advice is not given but help is achieved by using the core relating skills in order to facilitate the athlete in problem solving (as participants in study 3 suggested).

Orlick (1989) contends that non-performance issues will 'inevitably' appear in consultations. It is argued by the researcher, therefore, that it is within the role of a sport psychologist to be able to 'respond appropriately' to athletes' concerns irrespective of the topic. This does not necessarily mean that the sport psychologist is an expert in that particular field or that referral to another expert is not needed. It is suggested, however, that a practitioner can use a repertoire of relating responses developed through both professional (Schön, 1983) and "craft" knowledge (McFee, 1993) in order to manage the psychological depth of the athlete (Ringer and Gillis Jr., 1995).

Ringer and Gillis Jr. (1995) suggest that there is a fine balance between empathic responding which may lead to deeper levels of psychological depth and "cutting off" someone who is talking for fear of deepening the level of psychological depth. They stated that the first cue that someone is operating at a deeper level might be little more than an "intuitive sense of unease" on the part of the listener (in their article it was a group leader). They suggest that this intuitive sense is developed in addition to the attainment of professional skills. This substantiates the conclusions above in recommending that relating and helping skills for sport psychologists are developed through both professional and craft based knowledge.

Adaptable

Throughout the respondents' answers in study 2 and the participants' discussions in study 3, the diversity of approaches used by sport psychologists is apparent. This diversity is reflected in the theme of 'adaptability' emerging as a central concept in the role of the sport psychologist (see the 'helping' model). The diversity within the profession has occurred as a result of: different theoretical approaches that are taken (for example, reference is made in group 1 (study 3) to both cognitive-behavioural and humanistic approaches), different training that people receive (for example, those who have taken a formal training course in counselling skills and those who haven't) and out of necessity when working with different athletes in various contexts (see 'Reflections of the consultant' in study 1 and comments from participants in the focus groups about context, for example, group 5).

It is suggested by the researcher that the role of the sport psychologist be adaptable in order to 'respond appropriately' to various issues and adjust to the individual needs of athletes (this is also reflected in the data from all the studies). The notion of initially being able to 'respond appropriately' is applicable even if the athlete is later referred on to, for example, a counsellor, or if time is limited within a consultation. 'Responding

appropriately' is linked to the idea in studies 2 and 3 of a holistic perspective that can use basic relating skills in order to work with athletes effectively. Bull (1995) recommended that a sport psychologist's "counselling style" should be able to adapt according to the needs of the athlete, for example, not using a non-directive approach to helping if they are not used to this style. Some participants in study 3 suggested that an adaptable approach also included what is worn by the consultant, i.e., type of clothes and jewellery.

Training in relating skills

In study 1, the researcher/consultant perceived herself to be "insufficiently trained" in using certain relating skills and questions were introduced at this point about the "traditional" training of sport psychologists. In study 2, some participants highlighted the role of counselling skills in sport psychology. In study 3, it emerged that introducing the idea of formal training in counselling skills caused a variety of perspectives to emerge. A consensus was not reached throughout the groups as a whole on whether this form of training was essential. Some (e.g., Mary in group 3) perceived that it was important to applied sport psychology practice, whereas others (e.g., Michael, group 4) perceived it to be important, but not essential for sport psychologists to experience as "some people only need exposure to situations to acquire the skills that will enable them to be effective".

Some participants (e.g., Eddie, group 3) suggested that they already possessed these skills, although many did not have formally developed relating skills. Again, the issue of whether 'craft' developed relating skills alone are sufficient in order for sport psychologists to work most effectively and appropriately with athletes emerges here. It is suggested by the researcher that the terminology which is used in the profession may be changed to alleviate any uncomfortable feelings associated with the idea of establishing their relating skills on a professional basis which has already been established in another field, i.e., counselling. A change to use the term 'helping' instead of 'counselling' was therefore proposed above.

In Egan's (1998) model of 'The Skilled Helper', he tackles the question of training for helpers and states, "effective training programmes can help improve the reliability of helping" (p. 13). He encourages helpers to become acquainted with the "ongoing debate concerning the efficacy of helping" (p.13). He argues that being aware of the debate helps to:

- 1). appreciate the complexity of the helping process,
- 2). become acquainted with the issues involved in evaluating the outcomes of helping,

- 3). appreciate that, poorly done, helping can actually harm others,
- 4). make the helper reasonably cautious,
- 5). give motivation to become a high level helper, learning and using practical models, methods, skills and guidelines for helping.

(Egan, 1998, p. 13)

In describing the basic steps of the training process towards becoming a 'skilled helper', Egan (1998) suggested that helpers need a helping model, plus a range of techniques and skills to make the model work. These include:

- advanced communication skills
- establishing working relationships with clients
- helping clients challenge themselves
- problem clarification
- goal setting
- development of an action plan
- the implementation of the plan
- ongoing evaluation

Listed above are skills and techniques that are familiar to sport psychologists as many practitioners suggested that they did possess these skills (study 3). However, Egan (1998) stated "the only way to acquire these skills is by learning them experientially, practising them and using them until they become second nature" (p.341). This highlights the importance of both professional training (where this practice can occur without any fear of inappropriate responses) in addition to learning that takes place 'craft' or applied experiences.

Petitpas et al. (1999) stated "the ability to build rapport, create a positive environment and provide concrete suggestions are highly correlated with successful sport psychology consultations" (p. 346). They go on to indicate that acquiring the skills and experiences necessary to do this are rarely used in most sport psychology training in the US, the same is true in the UK. They suggested that the key elements that distinguish counselling preparation from training in other fields are an emphasis on self-knowledge and adaptability. As shown above, adaptability appears to be an important for sport psychology practitioners in the UK. Petitpas et al. (1999) called for these aspects to become an integral part of training for other fields than counselling (including sport psychology).

They recommended a 'paradigm shift' in sport psychology training models from "an emphasis on skill-based instruction to greater awareness of self and the processes involved in the sport psychologist-athlete interaction" (p.347). The BOA (1999) has acknowledged that most sport psychologists in the UK currently complete little or no formal training in relating skills.

In commenting on Petitpas et al.'s work, Sachs (1999) suggested, "the qualities necessary for building a solid working alliance can only be enhanced by training that incorporates, for starters, the suggestions of Petitpas et al. (1999)" (p. 361). Petitpas et al. (1999) concluded their article by hoping that it spawned "considerable debate about current training practice in sport and exercise psychology in order for the field to continue to grow" (p.355).

It is not suggested in this thesis that the role of the sport psychologist must be able to deal with issues which are, for example, clinical in nature or that require the advanced training that a counsellor may possess. It is suggested that the role of the sport psychologist might adapt to include a more holistic perspective that encompasses both professional understanding and experience of the skills that are fundamental to being able to relate effectively with athletes. Using the theoretical perspectives (and expertise) of those trained in counselling skills may help sport psychologists use their craft-based relating skills in ways that have been central to the way other professionals help clients.

5.3 THE ROLE OF THE SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST

Over the past few years, authors have called for the role of sport psychologists to go beyond being educators and deliverers of PST (e.g., Bond, 1993, cited by Morris and Thomas, 1995; Hardy and Parfitt, 1994; Miller, 1997, personal communication; Bull, 1998). Jeff Bond argued that

"... it is no longer appropriate for sport psychologists to hang their professional hat on, or be seen to be the teachers of basic mental skills for sport. ...Purely educational sport psychologists...are selling themselves and their profession short and are doomed as far as future involvement in elite sport is concerned."

(Bond, 1993, pp. 8-9, cited by Morris and Thomas, 1995)

Although some researchers (e.g., Hardy and Parfitt, 1994; Hardy et al., 1996) may have recognised the 'complex and changing nature' of consultations with athletes, the

training background of sport psychologists in the UK is still predominantly focused on an educational role. It is argued that educating athletes in the use of PST for performance enhancement is an integral component to the role of a sport psychologist, but in order to reflect the nature of consultations the role must also adapt. This is the opinion of the researcher based on her applied experiences and on the results from all three studies. Hardy and Parfitt (1994) recognised that the service given to athletes should go beyond providing “consultant-prescribed psychological skills training” (p. 141), as several participants in study 3 suggested. None of the participants in study 3 disagreed with the idea of adapting the role of a sport psychologist to different contexts and people. Not all participants, however, agreed on whether this adaptation might include using counselling skills developed through experience on formal training courses.

Some participants in the focus group study did not respect various aspects of the current BASES accreditation system. Brian Miller (1997, personal communication) spoke to the Psychology Advisory Group of the British Olympic Association about the need for sport psychologists to supply more than just PST to athletes. He outlined that the current BASES accreditation system does not reflect the competencies needed in the elite sports world today.

The title of ‘Sport Psychologist’ has recently become a topic of debate in the UK. Discussions have been taking place between the two bodies that are interested in sport psychology, i.e., the British Psychological Society (BPS) and the British Association for Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES). This issue will continue to be a source of further discussions over the next few years. Sport psychologists must prepare themselves for the debate as the BPS wish to limit the use of the term ‘psychology’ and who can call themselves ‘psychologists’. Sport psychology needs to present itself as a highly skilled and specialised profession that has a programme of professional training and development that can offer a quality assured service to sports clients.

5.4 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON A RESEARCH JOURNEY

The next section reflects on the research journey that I have gone through over the last few years by utilising the ‘first person’ writing style to invoke an ‘author-involved’ text. It is a snapshot of pertinent issues in this journey due to reasons of brevity. The reflections of the research journey incorporate changes that have also occurred as a practitioner. I have continued to work in an applied practice in conjunction with completion of this thesis.

Borrowing from work using collaborative action research to further legitimise the work in this thesis, O'Hanlon (1994) argued that reflective research should result in development of the researcher as well as the research. It is not common within sport psychology to discuss such issues, however, this is more accepted in other qualitative genres (O'Hanlon, 1994).

From the beginning of the thesis both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were utilised due to reasons of appropriateness (Bryman, 1988). Development of the research is also illustrated by showing that towards the end of the thesis (in study 3) the emphasis is purely on a qualitative approach (again appropriate for the study). This used legitimisation criteria from the paradigms of post-positivism (for legitimising the technical aspects, e.g., the content analysis) and interpretivism (e.g., for legitimising the reflexive elements, the coherence and applicability of the results).

Development through the studies

In study 1 I felt like I was indeed immersed in the 'swampy lowlands' (Schön, 1983) of consultation work with junior archers on the national squad. Working with a squad of 14 archers who all wanted attention within a short space of time left me feeling exhausted after each weekend. This format continued with myself as the consultant for several years.

As I moved through the research journey in study 1, I became more interested with 'other' methodologies and philosophies of research. The focus for the next study was still post-positivist in the sense that it was appropriate to work in this way. But, as the research moved further, I felt a sense of not wanting to have to write in such a 'cold' and removed manner.

I had attempted to introduce a different style of writing in study 1 and a representation of myself appears at the end of that project. It was not, however, until I had finished study 2 that I felt it appropriate to explore the role of the sport psychologist in using relating skills further from a purely qualitative approach. Although study 3 does contain elements of post-positivism (e.g., the content analysis), there is a sense that I have acknowledged 'other' ways of knowing and incorporated these into the legitimisation criteria of study 3. This journey has (so far) culminated in the writing of part of this conclusion chapter in a more 'confessional' style (Van Maanen, 1988) that is rare in the constraints of an academic rubric.

As I completed the research, the terminology I used to legitimise the work moved through a transition as I began to accept other positions and ways of knowing. These

changes also occurred over the last few years as the contemporary debate in qualitative research became more prominent in sport psychology (e.g., Jackson, 1995; Sparkes, 1998; Biddle et al., in press).

At the end of study 1, notions of 'moving on' as a researcher accompanied feelings of 'moving on' as a practitioner. As I suggested in the discussion of study 1, moving towards an interpretive research philosophy may encourage a more Socratic (Corlett, 1996) philosophy of practice. Both focus on the experiences and behaviours of individual athletes and attempt to understand these elements using more in-depth methods than do positivist (orthodox) research or sophist practice. Developing different research philosophies may also encourage different approaches to working than is traditionally used in sport psychology, for example, client-centered approaches (Rogers, 1951).

After study 1 (with the junior archers) I reflected on the feelings I had in attempting to respond to the archers' discussions on issues not directly related to their sport, PST or performance enhancement. My background did not (at that point) include any formal relating skills training, other than attendance at an undergraduate course titled "Clinical and counselling psychology". This included no practical skills training and thus left me in a position similar to many sport psychologists in the UK today, i.e., with little or no formal training in this area (BOA, 1999).

During the work with the junior archers I had to use relating skills that I had intuitively developed, i.e., through my 'craft' knowledge (McFee, 1993). After feeling insufficiently trained to deal with the non-performance enhancement issues raised by some archers (these issues were not clinical in nature, simply not directly related to performance), I completed a basic formal course in counselling skills training.

In study 2, both relating skills and professional knowledge in giving advice were perceived as important to the role of a sport psychologist. Some respondents also indicated that relating skills were important for all issues in discussions, not just those related to sport or performance enhancement. However, the terminology that was being used in the respondents' answers was mixed, for example, the terms counselling and counselling skills were used in ways that did not clearly express what the respondents meant by them. I wanted to enquire further what the sport psychologists meant by these terms.

In study 3 I examined the perceptions of sport psychology practitioners (mainly accredited sport psychologists) on their use of relating skills, their understanding of various terms, how important they perceived counselling skills to be to applied sport psychology and the perceived implications for training. Although I knew that most participants had not

received any formal training in using counselling skills (BOA, 1999), I did not anticipate that some would be uncomfortable with the concepts related to counselling.

Counselling (in the Type II sense) is something that sport psychologists do not pursue unless qualified to do so as this would involve going over boundaries of competence. The skills that have emerged from counselling appear to be fundamental to relating as a sport psychologist, but this link did not appear to be acted upon by some in this community for several reasons (as outlined in study 3 and the conclusions above). (See also 'reflections' in appendix D for further elaboration on my reflections during the focus group study, these include reflections on the whole process of moderating and analysing the groups).

From as early as study 1 in the thesis I questioned the 'traditional' role of the sport psychologist and my own training in relating skills. From the responses to the questionnaires in study 2 (and through acknowledgement of the BOA (1999) statement and focus group participants in study 3 that their formal training in relating skills was minimal), I have queried the type of training involved in using relating skills whilst working as sport psychologists. Although other sport psychologists (e.g., Hardy and Parfitt, 1994; Hardy et al., 1996; Bull, 1998) had called for the role of a sport psychologist to go beyond a PST educator and utilise other roles, for example, mediator and counsellor, research has not explored in-depth the nature of relating skills in this 'expanding' role. A focus on relating skills within this role has emerged throughout the thesis. The role of the sport psychologist is clearer in some respects: in terms of the core foundation skills of relating which can be used in order to help athletes effectively and how these skills can be used in an adaptable way according to different contexts. It was suggested that helping approaches should vary according to context, but also be based on these foundation skills.

In order to close this reflective cycle (Gibb, 1988), it is necessary to look forward to the next phase of my development. My research interests will develop to incorporate the notions of using different methodologies (where appropriate) to explore psychological issues. I am also attempting to incorporate a more holistic perspective in my support work with athletes. In reflecting whether I have sufficient training to deal effectively with athletes' concerns (irrespective of the topic), I have arrived at the conclusion that I need to experience more formal training that is based on the theoretical framework and expertise of counselling. These skills are not something I feel I can leave to my intuitive skills alone.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

From all the studies in this thesis (including the results of study 1 that are not directly related to the role of a sport psychologist but which are covered extensively in the discussion of study 1) several recommendations have emerged:

1. An LDI (Life Development Intervention, Danish et al., 1992) perspective may encourage a more holistic approach. This stresses the notion of a transfer of skills and this may help athletes cope with other factors in their lives other than those directly related to their sporting performances.
2. Utilise both task and ego-oriented (Duda, 1996) forms of elicitation when using performance profiles for baseline assessment.
3. When used in any target sports, invert the scale on the performance profile to make it sport-specific.
4. The approaches to helping should be used in an appropriate way. The sport psychologist should adapt his/her approach in dealing with different contexts. An approach which only uses one type of helping at all times would not be conducive to 'appropriate responding'. The issue of managing psychological depth is important here. The 'prescriptive' approach is typically used by educational sport psychologists (Bull, 1991a; Hardy and Parfitt, 1994). A suitable model for 'formal' helpers when using a more 'facilitative' approach may be Egan's (1998) model.
5. Core relating skills of a sport psychologist should be based on both professional (Schön, 1983) and 'craft' knowledge (McFee, 1993).
6. BASES might wish to consider:
 - Changing the terminology used in their literature from knowledge in 'basic theories of counselling technique' to incorporate terms such as 'helping' or 'relating' skills
 - Not having separate categories for 'psychology' and 'sport psychology' on any literature
 - Including the notion of both professional and craft knowledge for relating skills
 - Making the accreditation criteria clearer for trainees and their supervisors to follow
 - Having assessment for supervisors
7. Several recommendations have emerged from moderating, analysing and presenting findings from the focus groups:

- It is recommended that the summariser is able to listen to the audiotape or watch the video of the groups. This helps to avoid specifying one individual comment without reference to another participant's comment that may have been contradictory. It is this summary that can then be sent to participants for their comments and reflections as part of the member checking process.
 - A definition of an interaction for the purposes of analysing focus group data now exists for use in further focus group research.
 - In spite of the complications that can arise, it is important that interactional data is incorporated into research using focus groups.
 - Although illustrating the earliest levels of content analysis is not always possible in published work due to constraints of word limit, where possible, incorporate some examples into the analysis of exactly what participants actually say in context, i.e., do not solely present individual comments.
8. Use methodologies and philosophies of research which are appropriate to the inquiry, rather than what is traditional or accepted.

5.6 FUTURE RESEARCH

Following on from the findings in the thesis, it would be interesting to examine the discourse that occurs between sport psychologists and athletes. A comparison could be made between these interactions and communication that occurs between, for example, counsellors or clinical psychologists and clients. Another comparison could be made looking at the communication and relating skills used between more 'informal' helpers, e.g., managers and staff, teachers and students or nurses and patients.

Similar focus groups to those highlighted in this thesis may be used in different cultures with sport psychologists and athletes to assess their perceptions of the same terms.

As stated earlier in this concluding chapter, it would be interesting to compare the skills 'in situ' of those sport psychologists who had received some formal training in counselling skills and those who had developed their skills solely through 'craft' or applied experiences. This would be attempted in order to explore the notion of 'craft' developed skills alone as sufficient for a sport psychologist to use in relating effectively with athletes.

More research is needed on other aspects of the 'expanding' role of the sport psychologist, for example, in dealing with organisational issues in sport.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CASE STUDY FROM STUDY 1

The case study below is an example of the applied work that was completed with each Junior archer on the squad. Full details of theoretical perspectives underlying various PST techniques shown in this case study are given in the method section of study 1.

After the sport psychologist introduced herself and the idea of sport psychology to the whole squad of archers on the Friday evening of the first weekend. The archer in this case study met with the sport psychologist at some point during the weekend for 45 minutes. She had already completed the GAQ (General archery questionnaire), performance profile elicitation question and SPSQ (Sport-related Psychological Skills Questionnaire). In this first meeting, the archer's answers for the GAQ and performance profile questions were clarified and background detail was gained.

A1. Background information, Squad Training Weekend 1

The archer presented in this case study was a 17 year old female archer. She was at college studying for her 'A' levels. She had been shooting for 4 years and this was her first Junior squad. Her Personal Best (PB) FITA score was 1144; when she went out and got this PB she reported that "it just happened, I was concentrating so much on the wind". Since she has started shooting she reported that she has been breaking a PB nearly every time she goes out.

Her goal level of scores for the next outdoor season was in the 1250s. To reach this goal, she thought she had to improve her fitness, and "get a better mental side". Her strengths in archery were that she wanted "to get there" (to the top of archery). Her perceived weaknesses in archery were that she gets "wound up" and nervous. Her perceived strong points in competition were that she can shoot in the wind.

Her ultimate ambition in archery was to have a "reasonable rank in the world", to shoot as a senior for Great Britain and go to the Olympics. What she wanted from the sport psychologist was some help and advice on how to overcome getting nervous and "wound up".

A2. Objectives for squads (stated in weekend 1)

For the next four squads she simply stated she wanted help and advice and support so that she can improve next season.

A3 General Archery Questionnaire (GAQ) & Performance Profile Responses

The information in this section (A3) covers only the factors that were identified from the GAQ and Performance profile. It covers work completed at each weekend.

Prior to the first weekend she completed the GAQ, this asked her to consider the key factors that she had to be good at to be a better archer. She responded with the following constructs:

- Fitness
- Control of nervousness
- Not getting wound up/upset during a shoot
- Conviction in the shot
- Confidence she can shoot on amber
- Only shooting shots that are 100%
- Find out more about tuning
- Practice
- Facilities
- Not scared of failing/not achieving what she knows she can

The performance profile form of elicitation (Butler, 1989) asked her to consider the qualities of an "ideal" archer. The qualities she listed were:

- Good technique
- Fit
- Shoots each arrow one at a time, doesn't worry about what's gone or what might happen
- Self-confident
- Isn't afraid of failure because knows won't

As shown from the lists above, some different constructs were elicited from the two types of questions. The two forms of elicitation were combined into one table (see table A1). Focusing only on the psychological factors for the mental training aspect of the programme (the other factors were included on a separate profile for the archer and coach to consider), her scores at each measurement point (squad weekends 1, 2 and 4) were as follows are shown in table A1.

Table A1 Archer's response scores using the GAQ and performance profile elicitation questions over weekends 1, 2 and 4 (the score of '1' represented 'not very good at all' and the score of '10' represented 'the best I can be')

Construct	Self as Now (S, 1 to 10)			Importance (I, 1 to 10)			Discrepancy (D = I-S)			Score plotted on profile (10-D)		
	Weekend 1 (W1)	W2	W4	W1	W2	W4	W1	W2	W4	W1	W2	W4
Control of nervousness	1	1	7	9	9	9	8	8	2	2	2	8
Not getting wound up/upset during a shot	1	3	7	9	9	9	8	6	2	2	4	8
Conviction in the shot	4	4	7	9	9	9	5	5	2	5	5	8
Confidence I can shoot on amber	3	3	5	9	9	8	6	6	3	4	4	7
Only shooting shots that are 100%	2.5	3	5	3.5	3.5	7	1	0.5	2	9	9.5	8
Not scared of failing	1	1	4.5	9	9	7.5	8	8	3	2	2	7
Self-confidence	3	3.5	7.5	8	8	8	4	4.5	0.5	6	5.5	9.5

W

The scores plotted on each visual profile are shown in figures A1-A3 to illustrate the change in discrepancy scores over time.

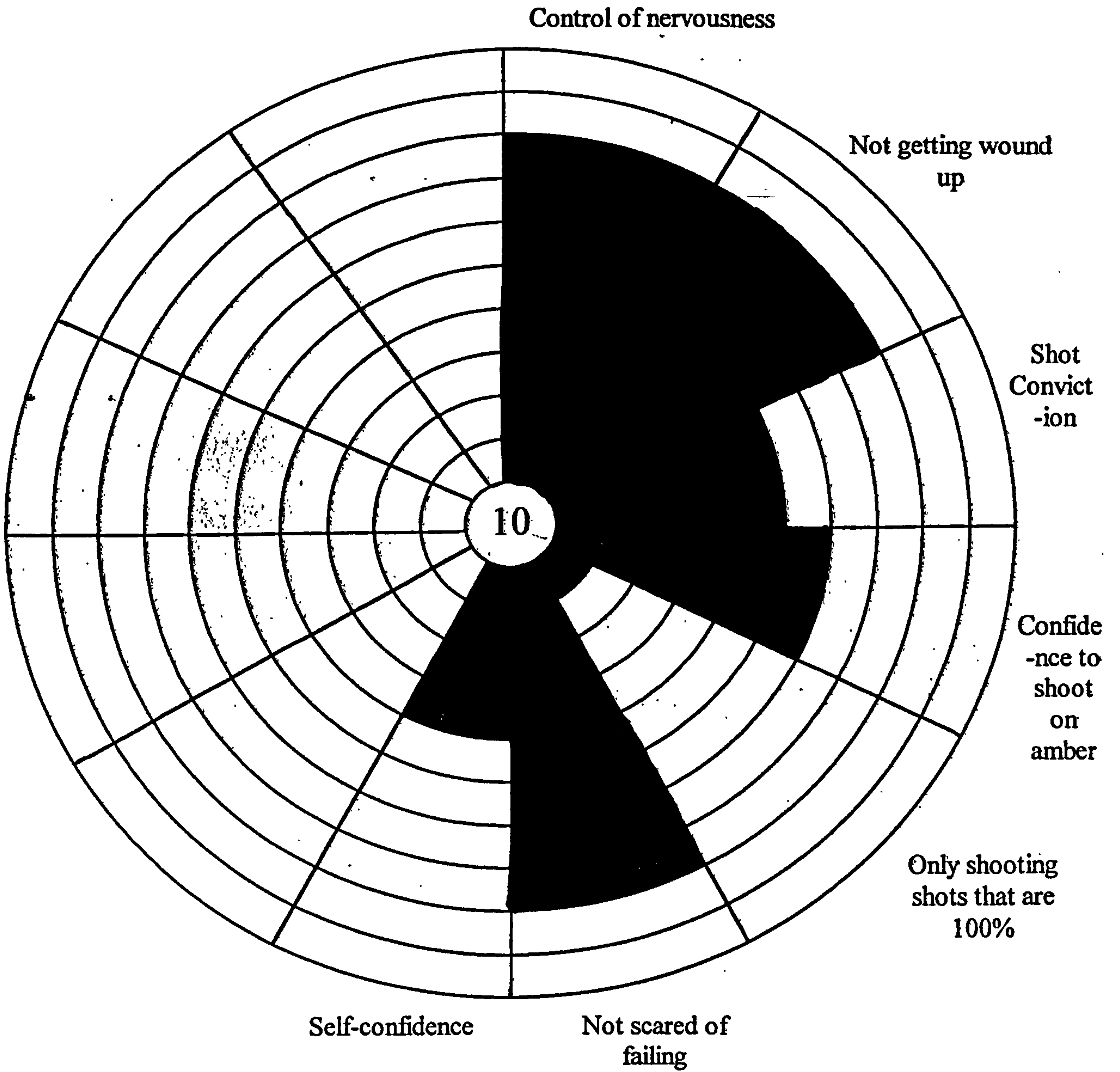


Figure A1 Performance Profile/Target for archer at squad weekend 1

Control of nervousness

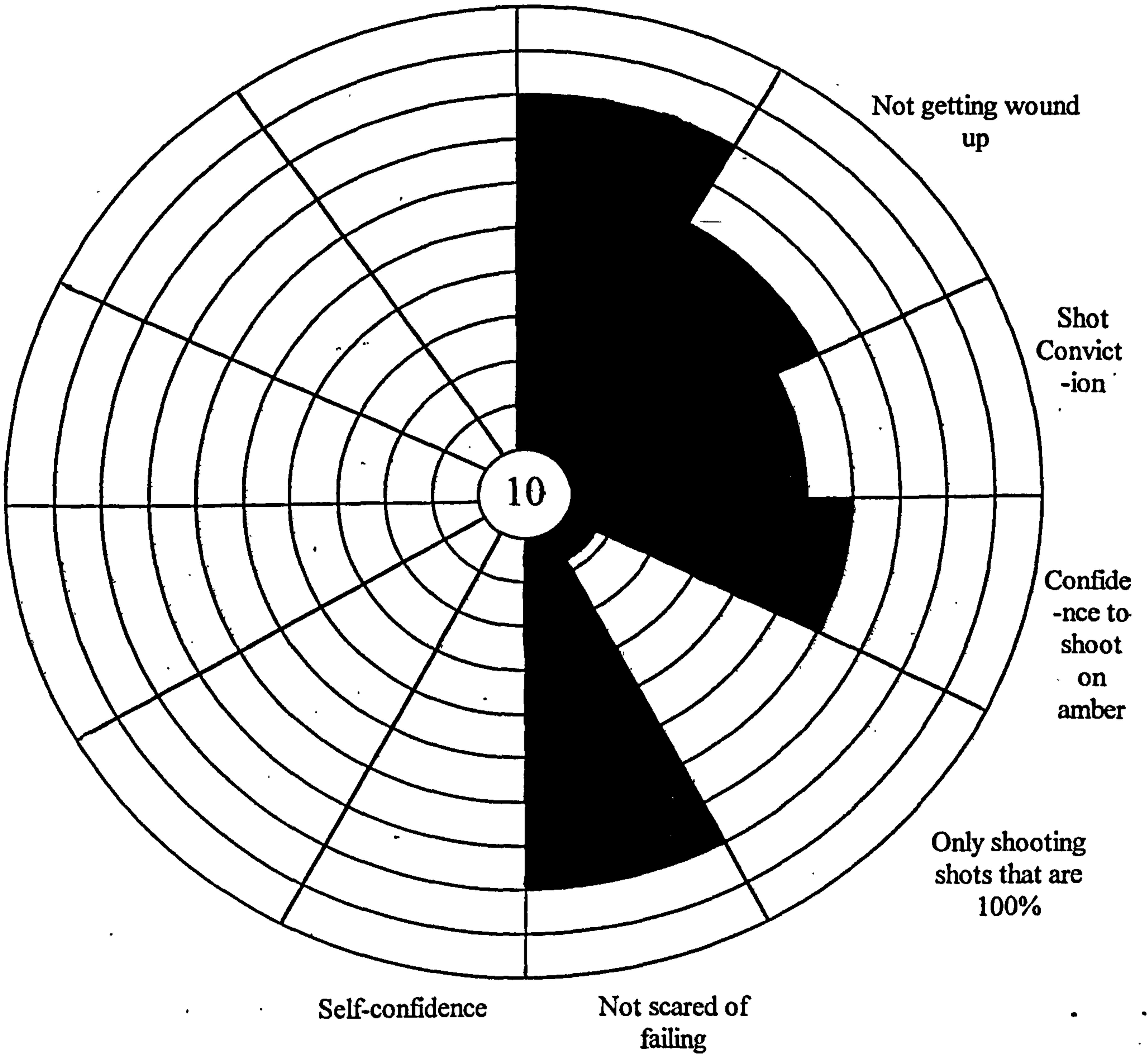


Figure A2 Performance Profile/Target for archer at squad weekend 2

Control of nervousness

Not getting wound
up

Shot
Convict
-ion

Confide
-nce to
shoot
on
amber

Only shooting
shots that are
100%

Not scared of
failing

Self-confidence

10

Figure A3 Performance Profile/Target for archer at squad weekend 4

The scores plotted on the visual performance profile/target above are a representation of the discrepancy between the two scores of self as now (self-efficacy) and importance (to reflect self-esteem, the Jamesian perspective, James, 1892, used by Harter, 1992). These discrepancy scores were subtracted from 10 in order to plot a figure which was archery-specific on the profile/target. The objective was to try and reduce the size of the area shaded on the profile to get closer to the '10' ring in the centre of the profile/target (as shown in figures A1-3). The GAQ (task-oriented, Duda, 1996) elicitation question, the equation used, the addition of an importance dimension and the reversal of the '10' ring from the outer to inner ring was a change from Butler's (1989) original performance profile. In Butler's profile, the self as now score only is plotted onto the visual profile.

Taking into account of how good she thought she was at each of these factors, and how important they were to her, the information in table A1 suggests that the most pressing psychological training needs were in control of nervousness, not getting wound up and not being scared of failing.

Each of these factors were related and were tackled together by examining the anxiety and feelings of low self-confidence. She reported that the nerves were a combination of 'feeling' nervous (somatic anxiety) and having a sense of fear of failure (which she stated was an 'intrinsic part of me'). The problem was worked on via the introduction of physical relaxation. This was a variation of progressive muscular relaxation, PMR (Jacobson, 1938) which stressed the idea of learning how to relax for different situations, not just shooting, and how to use the notion of being able to relax quickly. This was used in conjunction with imagery (introducing the use of each sense into the imagery or imagining and incorporating the notion of stimulus and response propositions (bioinformational theory of Lang, 1984)) which was introduced in the group workshop and it was explored how these might be incorporated into her programme (see method section of study 2).

A short imagery script was developed in order for her to use this whilst not shooting and a very short version of relaxation was used to release tension whilst waiting to shoot, e.g., taking deep breaths, releasing tension from the shoulders. A personalised audio tape was made to enable the archer to work further on the techniques described and encourage her imagery skills.

Short-term success via goal-setting was introduced to help the fear of failure as she described shooting badly as failing and then stated "you'd be really useless" (if failing to shoot well). This idea of failure was also tackled by dealing with the 'failure' when it occurred. To this archer 'failure' was not getting an arrow in the '10'. She was a high achiever who liked to achieve as many things as possible. This was one aspect that was

achiever who liked to achieve as many things as possible. This was one aspect that was worked on by trying to refocus attention after each arrow and not allowing previous arrows to affect the next one. The preperformance routine work of Boutcher and Crews (1987) and refocusing routines of Ravizza (1991) were used to help with this element.

Getting into the same routine with each arrow and starting again if the routine was not correct was worked on. Also, cue words were used at various points in the action of shooting to help her focus her attention on what she was doing rather than thinking about previous or future arrows. This was used in conjunction with the imagery to help keep the focus on the arrow that is in the hand or knocked on the string. This was a topic that was covered at various points in the squad weekends as it was also one of the most common problems that archers reported.

Table A1 shows a considerable perceived improvement of most of the factors that she listed above as being key areas that she had to be good at to be a better archer or the qualities of an elite archer. The score for 'only shooting shots that are 100%' was the only score not to increase, this may be explained by looking at the importance score for this construct which rose in weekend 4. The scores remained fairly stable through the taking of the measures again at weekend 2 and rose in weekend 4. The biggest improvement that she believed she made was in her control of nervousness and not getting wound up/upset during a shoot which were constructs identified to work on throughout the programme.

It was interesting that she did not score herself a '10' on any attributes (even at the end of the programme) as she stated "I'm never ever going to put 10 - ever. I'm never going to be the best I can be 'cos I can always get better". This suggests she has a tendency to strive towards perfection. She is someone who works hard and may not be satisfied with achieving factors that others may be satisfied with, she is a high achiever in all aspects of her life (see diary information below).

A4 Sports-related Psychological Skills Questionnaire (S.P.S.Q.)

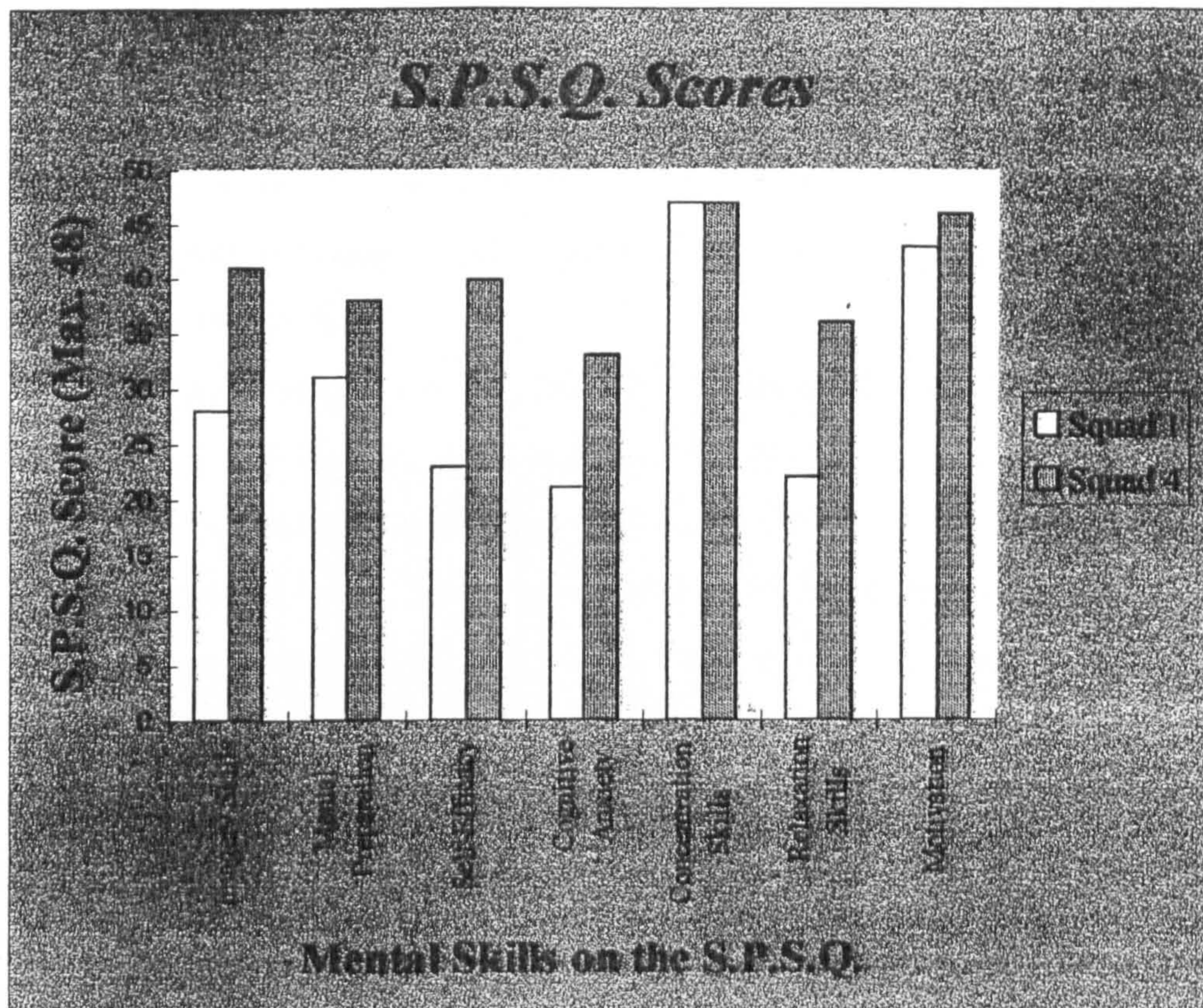


Figure A4 SPSQ scores for archer in squads one and four

As there were no norm tables or standardised scores for this questionnaire, the scores were divided into bands:

8-16 = Very low

17-24 = Low

25-32 = Moderate

33-40 = High

41-48 = Very high

This results in squad one showed that she scored low on the self-efficacy scale, low on cognitive anxiety (the ability to control cognitive anxiety), and low on relaxation skills. She scored very high on concentration skills and motivation.

This suggests that most of the time she was able to focus on the task quite well apart from when she started to worry about her performance and have a fear of failure (see above). In the first interview (in squad one) it emerged that this was the main reason (as she perceived it) for any poor performances. She also stated that this was a problem that

affected her in many aspects of her life, particularly at college. She scored very highly for motivation, which suggested that she was prepared to work hard to achieve success.

The difference in scores between squads one and four was marked in that she improved on all the mental skills that were assessed apart from the concentration which stayed the same at a very high 47 out of 48. Even her very high motivation score increased from 43 to 46 out of 48. The biggest improvements came in her self-efficacy score, relaxation skills and imagery skills. By the last squad she scored either 'high' or 'very high' on all of the mental skills.

A good example that may illustrate the doubts that she had about her performance plus how one technique that was covered had worked for her is described below. She wrote to the sport psychologist in between squad three and four to describe this episode.

She was about to take a physics exam at college. When she turned over the exam paper she panicked and started to believe that she could not answer any of the questions. She said that she lifted out her toolbox and started to use the brief relaxation technique of counting down from 20 in three's and counting on exhalations. By the time she had finished this exercise she was able to read through the questions properly and answer the ones she could. This illustrated that she was able to transfer the skills learned at the squads and used them in another domain, i.e. this showed evidence of LDI (Life Development Intervention, Danish et al., 1992) transfer.

A5.0 Diary

In between squads one and two the archer was asked to keep a diary to assess her current level of mental training and level of other activities going on in her life. The diary showed no evidence of mental training, but showed that she lead a very hectic academic and social life, all the activities going on her life included:

- Archery
- Viola
- Duke of Edinburgh Awards
- College
- College Orchestra
- Ranger
- County Orchestra
- Work/job
- Getting fit
- University interviews

- Reading
- Craft
- TV
- Socialising with friends

In weekend two, the first workshop was on goal-setting. This was to be an important aspect for this archer in order to co-ordinate her activities and prioritise each one. It incorporated the need to prioritise what was the most important to her and cut down on some activities in order to cope better. She needed (and liked) the structure of the goal setting, although she found it a little difficult and this caused some stress to be placed upon her. She contacted the sport psychologist in between squads two and three and it was decided that she should modify the goal setting to suit her own system.

She really enjoyed keeping a diary and she continued with this practice even after the second squad. She found that this was more useful to her than goal setting sheets, but she tried to keep in mind the information that was given to her about practising good goal setting. This seemed to work very well and helped her cope with all the many things that she had to do as well as focus on her archery goals.

Taken as a whole, the results suggest that she became more confident with her archery. She also seemed to be coping better with all the things that occurred in her life. She reduced the number of activities that she did and concentrated on her exams in the summer. The combined mental training techniques such as the relaxation and imagery seemed to help her cope with her anxiety. The goal setting (through her own adaptation) helped her take some pressure away from her in terms of prioritising the activities she did and not necessarily viewing goals as something that must be achieved 100% (i.e. winning). In the modified Consultancy Evaluation Form (Partington and Orlick, 1987b), on the question of how effective she found the goal setting she gave it a rating of +4 (out of a scale ranging from -5 to +5).

A6.0 Conclusion

She was one of the brightest young archers on the squad and her academic life was obviously very important to her. She reported that she gained an awful lot from the psychology on squad and in answer to the question of the sport psychologist's effectiveness on squad (on the C.E.F.) she gave a score of +5. Her only complaint was that she wanted more one-to-one time to help with individual problems. This also was a factor identified by the sport psychologist. Communication was encouraged over the competitive period.

From the mental training for archery feedback questionnaire, this archer reported that she had used goal setting all season to help her and her 'personal focus' had improved to one in which she did not consider an element of failure prior to shooting. She reported using mental training during training some of the time which incorporated imagery when shooting was going well (in order to reinforce the good shooting) and when not going well (in order to remind herself of what a good shot felt like). Mental imagery was also the key technique for her during competition as well as a relaxation technique of counting down which she found 'quick and very effective'.

She reported using relaxation prior to exams, positive thinking to help her have a 'better outlook on life' and imagining herself back at home when she was homesick. This shows evidence of transference of PST skills.

In terms of the mental training introduced on the squad she stated that "my overall impression was good. Mental training is something you have to develop for yourself and, to me it seems, mainly by yourself. The direction and approach and guidance was very helpful. She also commented that some of the techniques were hard to grasp if only covered once in a workshop. This was an inevitable disadvantage of the 'egalitarian' system (Bull, 1995) when time is limited.

APPENDIX B

***Questionnaire for
Accredited Sport
Psychologists***

**The information on this questionnaire is strictly confidential.
It will not be used to identify the respondent in any way.**

**Please return this questionnaire
within the next *two* weeks**

***If you have any questions or comments
about the questionnaire, please contact:
Alison Pope***

**Alison Pope
Postgraduate research student, LJMU
BASES accredited Sport Psychologist
Registered Sport Psychologist of British Olympic Association**

1. How long have you worked as an applied sport psychologist?

2. How long have you been BASES accredited for scientific support?

3. What qualifications do you possess which are relevant to being an applied sport psychologist?

The following questions are about the various issues that you may discuss with athletes and how you deal with them

4. Have any of the following issues been discussed in meetings between yourself and athletes? *Tick YES or NO in column B.*

Column A	Column B	
	Have you ever discussed these issues with athletes?	
Issue	Yes	No
a. Coach-related issues		
b. Issues to do with politics in their sport		
c. Issues to do with their friends		
d. Issues to do with their spouse/partner		
e. Issues to do with their family		
f. Financial issues		
g. Issues to do with team officials		
h. Issues to do with competition officials, e.g. referees		
i. Issues to do with their team or squad mates		
j. Issues to do with training facilities		
k. Issues to do with competition facilities		
l. School or college issues		
m. Work-based issues		
n. Issues to do with time pressures		
o. Other issues (please specify)		

The next questions are about issues outside of sport and their influence on athletes' training and competition performances

9. Do you believe that issues outside sport ever influence an athlete's ability to train effectively?

YES

NO

10. Do you believe that issues outside sport ever influence an athlete's ability to compete effectively?

YES

NO

The sport psychology research literature and BASES have highlighted a number of qualities of a sport psychologist. I am interested in your own thoughts on these.

11. Please rate how confident you feel about offering the following qualities when working with athletes and rate how important each quality is.

For confidence:

1 = Very confident, 2 = Confident, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Less confident, 5 = Not at all confident

For importance:

1 = Very important, 2 = Quite important, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Less important, 5 = Unimportant

Qualities	Confidence (1-5)	Importance (1-5)
Possessing knowledge about applied sport psychology		
Being a good listener		
Being able to deal with personal concerns		
Being accessible		
Being able to relate to athletes and coaches		
Being creative		
Being open and honest		
Being punctual		
Being energetic and hard working		
Possessing knowledge about coaching issues		
Possessing knowledge of other sport sciences, e.g. physiology		
Having the ability to inform and educate athletes and coaches		
Having the ability to provide feedback for athletes and/or coaches		
Being at ease with people		
Being able to organise group activities		
Being able to assess an athlete's needs		
Being flexible enough to meet individual needs		
Being able to assess a group's needs		
Being able to understand the psychological demands of various		
Having worked in a variety of sports		
Having experience of being a sport performer		
Being a natural leader		
Being charismatic		
Being patient		
Having experience of being a coach		
Having accredited status		
<i>Please list below any other qualities that you think a sport psychologist should possess</i>		

***Questionnaire for
Trainee Sport
Psychologists***

**The information on this questionnaire is strictly confidential.
It will not be used to identify the respondent in any way.**

This questionnaire seeks to establish the kinds of issues that are discussed in a meeting between athletes and trainee sport psychologists. It is also designed to assess sport psychologists' perceptions of the impact of issues outside of sport on training and competition performances. It requires trainee sport psychologists to rate their confidence in various qualities and then rate the perceived importance of these qualities.

Your answers will be compared with accredited sport psychologists and (where applicable) with athletes of different standards including elite (some of whom will have had experience of working with a sport psychologist).

It is hope that this research will help formulate the ongoing developments in training for sport psychologists.

**Please return this questionnaire
within the next *two* weeks**

***If you have any questions or comments
about the questionnaire, please contact:
Alison Pope***

Alison Pope
*Postgraduate research student, LJMU
BASES accredited Sport Psychologist
Registered Sport Psychologist of British Olympic Association*

1. What year of supervised experience are you in?

1. What year of supervised experience are you in?

2. What qualifications do you possess which are relevant to being an applied sport psychologist?

The following questions are about the various issues that you may discuss with athletes and how you deal with them

3. Have any of the following issues been discussed in typical meetings between yourself and athletes? Tick YES or NO in column B.

Column A	Column B	
Issue	Have you ever discussed these issues with athletes?	
	Yes	No
a. Coach-related issues		
b. Issues to do with politics in their sport		
c. Issues to do with their friends		
d. Issues to do with their spouse/partner		
e. Issues to do with their family		
f. Financial issues		
g. Issues to do with team officials		
h. Issues to do with competition officials, e.g. referees		
i. Issues to do with their team or squad mates		
j. Issues to do with training facilities		
k. Issues to do with competition facilities		
l. School or college issues		
m. Work-based issues		
n. Issues to do with time pressures		
o. Other issues (please specify)		

The next questions are about issues outside sport and their influence on athletes' training and competition performances

8. Do you believe that issues outside sport ever influence an athlete's ability to train effectively?

YES

NO

9. Do you believe that issues outside sport ever influence an athlete's ability to compete effectively?

YES

NO

The sport psychology research literature and BASES have highlighted a number of qualities of a sport psychologist. I am interested in your own thoughts on these.

10. Please rate how confident you feel about offering the following qualities when working with athletes and rate how important each quality is.

For confidence:

1 = Very confident, 2 = Confident, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Less confident, 5 = Not at all confident

For importance:

1 = Very important, 2 = Quite important, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Less important, 5 = Unimportant

Qualities	Confidence (1-5)	Importance (1-5)
Possessing knowledge about applied sport psychology		
Being a good listener		
Being able to deal with personal concerns		
Being accessible		
Being able to relate to athletes and coaches		
Being creative		
Being open and honest		
Being punctual		
Being energetic and hard working		
Possessing knowledge about coaching issues		
Possessing knowledge of other sport sciences, e.g. physiology		
Having the ability to inform and educate athletes and coaches		
Having the ability to provide feedback for athletes and/or coaches		
Being at ease with people		
Being able to organise group activities		
Being able to assess an athlete's needs		
Being flexible enough to meet individual needs		
Being able to assess a group's needs		
Being able to understand the psychological demands of various		
Having worked in a variety of sports		
Having experience of being a sport performer		
Being a natural leader		
Being charismatic		
Being patient		
Having experience of being a coach		
Having accredited status		
<i>Please list below any other qualities that you think a sport psychologist should possess</i>		

***Questionnaire for
Athletes who have
worked with a Sport
Psychologist***

**The information on this questionnaire is strictly confidential.
It will not be used to identify the respondent in any way.**

This questionnaire seeks to establish the kinds of issues that are discussed in a meeting between athletes and sport psychologists. It is also designed to assess the impact of issues outside of sport on training and competition performances. It requires athletes to rate the importance of various qualities of sport psychologists.

It is hoped that this research will help formulate the ongoing developments in training for sport psychologists. This will mean a better psychological support service for athletes based on their input.

**Please return this questionnaire
within
the next two weeks**

***If you have any questions or comments
about the questionnaire, please contact:
Alison Pope***

Alison Pope
*Postgraduate research student, LJMU
BASES accredited Sport Psychologist
Registered Sport Psychologist of British Olympic Association*

1. How long have you worked with a sport psychologist (if worked with more than one, please give details)?

The following questions are about the various issues that you may discuss with your sport psychologist

2. a). If any of the following issues arose would you like to discuss them in a typical meeting with a sport psychologist? Tick YES or NO in column B (where not applicable to you, write N/A)

b). Which of the following issues have actually been discussed in a meeting with a sport psychologist? Tick YES or NO in column C (where not applicable to you, write N/A).

Column A	Column B		Column C	
	Would you <u>like</u> to discuss these issues?		Have you <u>actually</u> discussed these issues?	
Issue	Yes	No	Yes	No
a. Issues to do with your coach				
b. Issues to do with politics in your sport				
c. Issues to do with your friends				
d. Issues to do with your spouse/partner				
e. Issues to do with your family				
f. Financial issues				
g. Issues to do with team officials				
h. Issues to do with competition officials, e.g. referees				
i. Issues to do with your team or squad mates				
j. Issues to do with training facilities				
k. Issues to do with competition facilities				
l. School or college issues				
m. Work-based issues				
n. Issues to do with time pressures				
o. Other issues (please specify)				

The sport psychology research literature and the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES) have highlighted a number of competencies or qualities of a sport psychologist. I am interested in your own thoughts on these.

7. Please rate how important you feel the following qualities are using the scale below:
 1 = Very important, 2 = Quite important, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Less important, 5 = Unimportant

Qualities	Importance rating (1-5)
Possessing knowledge about applied sport psychology	
Being a good listener	
Being able to deal with personal concerns	
Being accessible	
Being able to relate to athletes and coaches	
Being creative	
Being open and honest	
Being punctual	
Being energetic and hard working	
Possessing knowledge about coaching issues	
Possessing knowledge of other sport sciences, e.g. physiology	
Having the ability to inform and educate athletes and coaches	
Having the ability to provide feedback for athletes and/or coaches	
Being at ease with people	
Being able to organise group activities	
Being able to assess an athlete's needs	
Being flexible enough to meet individual needs	
Being able to assess a group's needs	
Being able to understand the psychological demands of various sports	
Having worked in a variety of sports	
Having experience of being a sport performer	
Being a natural leader	
Being charismatic	
Being patient	
Having experience of being a coach	
Having accredited status	
<i>Please list below any other qualities that you think a sport psychologist should possess</i>	

8. Outline below what support you think an 'ideal' sport psychologist should give you

These last questions ask you to draw upon your experiences of working with a sport psychologist. They ask you to reflect upon how effective you think the sport psychologist was at listening to you talk about different issues (if you've worked with more than one sport psychologist, please take one of them and use as an example)

9. In your experience how effective was your sport psychologist at listening to you talk about issues related to sport?

1. Very effective
2. Effective
3. Neutral
4. Ineffective
5. Very ineffective

10. Can you outline below the reasons for your answer in question 9?

***Questionnaire for
Athletes who have
NOT worked with a
Sport Psychologist***

**The information on this questionnaire is strictly confidential.
It will not be used to identify the respondent in any way.**

This questionnaire seeks to establish the kinds of issues that athletes would like to discuss in a meeting with a sport psychologist. It is also designed to assess the impact of issues outside of sport on training and competition performances. It requires athletes to rate the importance of various qualities of sport psychologists.

Even though you have no experience of working with a sport psychologist your opinions are important. It is hoped that this research will help formulate the ongoing developments in training for sport psychologists. This will mean a better psychological support service for athletes based on their input.

**Please return this questionnaire
within
the next two weeks**

***If you have any questions or comments
about the questionnaire, please contact:
Alison Pope***

Alison Pope
*Postgraduate research student, LJMU
BASES accredited Sport Psychologist
Registered Sport Psychologist of British Olympic Association*

The first question is about the various issues that you think you may like to discuss with a sport psychologist

1. Which of the following issues do you think you would like to discuss in a meeting with a sport psychologist? *Tick YES or NO in column B (where not applicable to you, write N/A)*

Column A	Column B	
	Do you think you would like to discuss these issues?	
Issue	Yes	No
a. Issues to do with your coach		
b. Issues to do with politics in your sport		
c. Issues to do with your friends		
d. Issues to do with your spouse/partner		
e. Issues to do with your family		
f. Financial issues		
g. Issues to do with team officials		
h. Issues to do with competition officials, e.g. referees		
i. Issues to do with your team or squad mates		
j. Issues to do with training facilities		
k. Issues to do with competition facilities		
l. School or college issues		
m. Work-based issues		
n. Issues to do with time pressures		
o. Other issues (please specify)		

The sport psychology research literature and the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES) have highlighted a number of competencies or qualities of a sport psychologist. I am interested in your own thoughts on these.

6. Please rate how important you think the following qualities are using the scale below:
 1 = Very important, 2 = Quite important, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Less important, 5 = Unimportant

Qualities	Importance rating (1-5)
Possessing knowledge about applied sport psychology	
Being a good listener	
Being able to deal with personal concerns	
Being accessible	
Being able to relate to athletes and coaches	
Being creative	
Being open and honest	
Being punctual	
Being energetic and hard working	
Possessing knowledge about coaching issues	
Possessing knowledge of other sport sciences, e.g. physiology	
Having the ability to inform and educate athletes and coaches	
Having the ability to provide feedback for athletes and/or coaches	
Being at ease with people	
Being able to organise group activities	
Being able to assess an athlete's needs	
Being flexible enough to meet individual needs	
Being able to assess a group's needs	
Being able to understand the psychological demands of various sports	
Having worked in a variety of sports	
Having experience of being a sport performer	
Being a natural leader	
Being charismatic	
Being patient	
Having experience of being a coach	
Having accredited status	
<i>Please list below any other qualities that you think a sport psychologist should possess</i>	

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP 1

Alison: I recently sent out a questionnaire to four groups of people, some of you filled out the questionnaire, all of you in fact I think did. Accredited sport psychologists, trainee sport psychologists, athletes who had worked with a sport psychologist and athletes who had not worked with a sport psychologist. The respondents were asked to rate the importance of various qualities of a sport psychologist (amongst other thing, this is one of the parts). When the results were combined several interpersonal and practical qualities were rated as the most important, these were: being a good listener, being able to assess an athlete's needs, being able to relate to athletes and coaches, having the ability to feedback to athletes and coaches and being open and honest. Those were the five most important to them. When the athletes only were asked "What would you like an 'ideal sport psychologist' to give you?" The most common answer was "to listen" (amongst many other answers), but er, the one that came up the most was to listen. so I was wondering, "Do you think there are any differences between: listening skills and interpersonal skills?" to start us off.

[Silence for 7 seconds]

Alison: Would anybody like to start off?

[Silence for 6 seconds]

Peter: It depends on the definition of interpersonal skills obviously. Erm, do you want us to provide that? Or do you have a preconceived idea of what it is?

Alison: I don't, no. I'm interested in what you think what each one is, and whether there's a difference between them.

[Silence for 7 seconds]

Peter: Well, I would probably say that listening is a major part of an interpersonal skill base and that communication, for example, is an interpersonal skill, but in order to communicate effectively you have to be able to listen. Listening is the foundation upon which everything else is based. If you don't listen effectively, and that's what athletes want you to do, then everything else that comes out may not be effective. So there is a difference.

Alison: So you're saying there is a difference and listening is part of interpersonal skills, is that correct?

Peter: Yeah.

Alison: Anybody else?

Helen: I agree with Peter in that listening is a part of interpersonal skills. But I do think that you don't necessarily get the two coming together. You might have someone who can like draw things out of an athlete, through like other interpersonal skills, but at the same time they're not particularly good listeners, but they might not necessarily know when to listen and when not to listen.

Peter: Yep.

Helen: So, I think that even though listening skills are like part of the tools of interpersonal skills, you might not necessarily get the two together. You might have somebody who's got good interpersonal skills in drawing things out of the athlete, but not necessarily the best listener in the world, and likewise you might have somebody who's the best listener in the world, but isn't a great person at instigating conversation or building up conversation or communication with an athlete or anybody.

Ben: I think I entirely agree with that. That's, to me interpersonal skills is a sort of style and an image that you've got. Now some people have got the 'gift of the gab' image and style. I mean I've seen, not mentioning no names, but I can think of one straight away, that is very like brash and, not in your face, but you know, he can talk a good talk basically. But whether he's a good listener, that's a different matter. I would...

Laura: He probably thinks he is.

Ben: I don't know. So, there would be, to me there would be a difference there yeah. But does he communicate well with the people that he works with? I should imagine he does.

Laura: But there's no point communicating something if you haven't listened to what they've said is there?

Ben: Yeah, but I think there's also...

Laura: You're just going to communicate what you think rather than what you've heard.

Ben: Yeah, but that might be down to the philosophy of your practice anyway, the way that you work anyway. You might be...

Laura: You might decide you're not going to listen?!

Ben: You might be just, you might just go into consultancy as being an educator and nothing else, so, anyway, I think you've got to develop your style, your interpersonal skills to the philosophy that you're going to be working to anyway.

Helen: And to who you're going to be working to. Like if you're working to a whole team and you're not in a one-on-one situation very much, then maybe listening skills aren't anywhere near as important as your interpersonal skills, your ability to communicate and educate and to deliver materials is far more important than your ability to listen one-on-one. In contrast, if you're with an athlete on a one-to-one basis maybe listening skills are more important. And again it depends on the type of athlete you're working with. Like if you've got an athlete that wants to use you as a sound board, listening are obviously important, but if you've got an athlete who wants results, then maybe they're not as important.

Ben: No, I think to be honest, I always think listening skills will be important, but there is cases where I should imagine you get athletes that need to be told what to do I think. But you've still got to be able to listen as well, so, although there is a difference.

Andrew: You see journalists appear to me to have superb listening skills, but in many cases they have no interpersonal skills at all because they're not often necessary. They have set questions and what they're doing, they're very accurate at picking up the information, they're almost like tape recorders really and then they interpret that afterwards. They don't necessarily have any interaction going on with you at all, depending on what kind of journalist they are. That happens a lot of the time. I think I'd go along with most of what people are saying in the group that it seems to form part of the interpersonal umbrella, but again, I then think about communication. Communication can be just in an oratory sense, you know, Hitler was a terrific communicator, erm, I don't know about his interpersonal skills. But he certainly didn't have a communication in the sense of having a two-way communication, he had a one-way which was extremely effective. So I guess it's er, it sorts of hits me what I think most people seem to be saying.

Ben: Mm, it's part of style I think you know. Some people are just naturally good at being like, not loud, but sort of the image where they can just get along with whoever's coming along or put the act on that they're getting along with whoever's coming into the situation, but whether they're good listeners. I think listening's a fine art, I mean from the counselling that I've been doing it's a major, major thing.

Andrew: It's also how you do that listening isn't it? I mean we all know the passive/active stuff, but it's also about how then you interpret the listening into how you want people to go a little bit further with what they're saying. So if you're using a kind of descriptive feedback, which is one way of using non-judgement at all, you know that's extremely effective, but it's extremely ineffective in a pub with your friends. Isn't it?

Ben: That's it.

Helen: Mm.

Andrew: So I see it as one of many skills.

Alison: Which one?

Andrew: Well I see them as different and I think they can be interpreted differently according to the context they're used in. But I do, I personally see them like I think most people are saying as being different from each other but they're certainly linked.

Alison: So, going back to what Peter said right at the very beginning then - in a way are you saying interpersonal skills are made up of, listening skills are within interpersonal skills?

Ben: They are within, but they are different as well.

Alison: Yeah, which is what Peter said at the beginning, is that still ...?

Peter: Yeah.

Alison: O.k. that's fine. O.k. then, on the basis of what you said then, I'm just taking it a little bit further, I appreciate that you're all coming from different perspectives, different schools of thought, can we get to the basics first of all, I was wondering if you could say What do you understand by the term 'counselling skills'?

Ben: Erm, there's a whole host of core condition skills within counselling erm, I mean depending on where you're coming from, within which theory you're coming from within counselling, at the end of the day counselling skills are inherent within all theories and basically they are: to be able to listen effectively, to be non-judgmental, to be able to paraphrase (which is a skill), to summarise, to reflect, to focus on feelings and emotions rather than logics or words, so that's what I see as counselling skills. The ability to be able to pick them things up and reflect them back to the client, that's what I understand as counselling skills. And that, I mean, depending on where you're coming from, in Roger's it's to develop a therapeutic relationship with the client. Now, whether that's effective on it's own as a theory within sport psychology is debatable, but I still think that you can use the skills, there's always a time and a place for the skills.

Alison: Mm. Anybody else? What do you understand by that term?

[5 seconds of silence]

Helen: I'm quite confused by that term.

Alison: You're quite confused?

Helen: Yeah, like I wouldn't really feel very accurate in describing any sort of, not any counselling skills, but defining it like categorically. I think like we learnt what Ben has just basically summarised in the lecture in module on counselling. I still think that counselling skills are things that a lot of people use in every day life, very unaware that they're using them, and there are things that people believe that they're using when, in fact, they're not.

Laura: It's probably better if you use them naturally isn't it?

Helen: Yeah.

Laura: Because otherwise they're going to go, you know if you put on this big counsellor act when you're with people and when you're outside of that situation you're really kind of not like that then that's...

Helen: Yeah.

Alison: Are you talking about people in general or are you talking about when you're in a sport psychology situation?

Laura: If in a counselling or a sport psychology situation all of a sudden you've changed and you become this person who's going to be empathic towards everyone and congruent and all the rest of it, and then outside that situation you're not. Like she [Helen] was saying it's things that people use anyway in everyday life, but surely that's the idea, that you can use them. And you probably use them differently, but...

Helen: I don't think it's like a football skill that you learn how to pass and passing becomes one of your football skills. I think it's something that develops and becomes part of your personality.

Ben: I don't understand that.

Helen: I don't think it's things you can switch on and off.

Ben: But you think you could learn the skills do you?

Helen: You'd learn them, but you'd learn and develop them, I think, after a longer period of time, than like you would maybe other sport psychology skills like intervention strategies or...

Ben: But it is like a sort of physical skill that you're learning isn't it if you think about it?

Helen: Yeah.

Ben: I mean to be empathic has a different meaning all together. Whether you've got the ability to be empathic, I don't think you can learn that. Rogers he even said that he didn't know whether he was truly empathic within his lifetime. I think you can learn the skills, and you only learn the skills by practising them.

Helen: Yeah, but...

Peter: But the skill of empathy is something that you can learn isn't it?

Ben: It is a skill that you can define and learn and be better at, but whether you are truly empathic to a person, it depends on that person and that situation that you are in.

Peter: Yeah.

Ben: And I don't think you can say "I'm empathic", you know what I mean? As a skill, "I've got the skill of being empathic"...

Peter: Yeah.

Ben: ...you can't say that. I don't think you can. That's a personal opinion. I mean that's from the pure counselling that I've been doing.

Peter: You could only say that if you could actually operationalise that. So you can show somebody, as we do when we're doing counselling, when we're doing role plays, or whatever, you know. That's when you distinguish between what counselling skill is and what counselling is, which will be your next question! Possibly! I was going to make the point that, what you said first off, it's probably about right - it's all the things that you can demonstrate, the skills, and I think you can demonstrate them - you can demonstrate congruence, you can demonstrate paraphrasing, you can demonstrate all those things. And the crunch comes with the first word, you know, what we understand as counselling, what counselling is. But the skills, for me, are fairly straight forward...

Ben: Yeah, I agree with that now.

Peter: My understanding of that is fairly straight forward, it's the bag of tricks and you can use them and you can demonstrate those things.

Ben: To me, it's just like using imagery, goal setting, you know the components of using imagery and goal setting, it is a skill that can be learned. There is certain skills that can be learned.

Alison: Andrew?

Andrew: Ah yes, I'm just thinking about it. Yes, erm, what would I add to what's been said so I'm not going over the same grounds? I understand the skills that have been outlined, erm, I would add to that one of the skills I think is being to take a situation to a conclusion, rather than er, just seeing them as they are as it were. So that would be a skill to me. Erm, and the other skill I would say was understanding how I'm presenting myself to that particular person as well. Er, and I suppose the third skill I'd add to that was that erm, which I do see as a skill of counselling, is that in my experience a great number of the people who are involved with counselling or been involved with sport I don't think they particularly like me and I don't think I particularly like them, but that doesn't mean that we can't be effective, and I see that as a skill as well. So, yes, I'd like to have empathy, and I'd like to like them, but that doesn't necessarily happen. So those are the three extra skills I would say. Bringing it to a conclusion, being aware how I presented myself to other people and understanding that they or I may not like each other, but I think we can still be effective. So that's what I understand as an addition to what's been said.

Ben: So, are you saying that self-awareness of your own practice, you see as a counselling skill as well? A reflection of yourself?

Andrew: Yes.

Ben: I think that's quite important as well, and I think that is a skill as well - being able to recognise your own faults and to be able to recognise where you're coming from. But what opened my eyes to that was being in and doing some counselling (the introductory course and the certificate that I've done) otherwise I don't think I would have been able to do that, effectively.

Alison: O.k., as Peter alluded! [Turn flip chart] What do you understand by the term counselling?

Ben: Well, I'll start off. The term counselling to me is, I get the impression that there's sort of a 'pure' sort of counselling in the fact that if you're using a client-centered approach you have to try and establish the three core conditions, by using the skills to get to them three core conditions, and you're running along a theory and erm, applying what the thought of the theory is, and that theory within that is to self-awareness. Basically you're not giving advice to the person, you're getting them to think about things themselves, so that's what counselling is to me. I do see a big difference between counselling and counselling skills.

Andrew: Right, tell us about that. What's the difference between counselling and counselling skills? That's quite interesting.

Ben: Well, because, if you try and get, in sport psychology, now I'm looking at ways that you can apply counselling skills in sport psychology. I think, if you used a client-centered approach to counsel somebody in sport psychology, you're going against your boundaries unless you're a trained counsellor. Do you understand what I'm saying there?

Andrew: I understand what you're saying yeah.

Ben: So, to be able to DO counselling, to counsel an athlete, you'd have to have a postgraduate diploma in counselling. But, to be able to use the skills within sport psychology, you can use counselling skills within sport psychology.

Helen: But, what's the difference then between using the counselling skills and counselling as such. Like if you're erm, if you're a counsellor with your postgraduate diploma aren't you just sort of

using the skills very, very effectively compared to somebody who's using counselling skills who hasn't got a...

Ben: Well no because you're trying to get people within counsel-LING to be, you're basically challenging them, you're basically questioning them to get them more self...

Helen: So, you're just using more basic skills?

Ben: You're just using the fundamental skills. If you start stepping over your boundary and going in to try and counsel people, you're going into clinical psychology I think. You're going into that realm, and there's a sort of grey area.

Helen: So, you're just using sort of, in a way...

Ben: You're using the skills to facilitate your practice, and your practice maybe as an educator to educate the athlete that you're with. But, if you're in a, if you start going into 'what is counselling, pure counselling?' it's something that, unless you're qualified to do...

Helen: So aren't the counselling skills then that we use in sport psychology more communicating skills rather than counselling skills? Because if we're not qualified to counsel we shouldn't be saying that we're using counselling skills. We should be saying that we've developed communication skills.

Ben: Well they are in a way more effective communication skills.

Laura: We can still use the skills, call them something else. But the ultimate aim of what we're doing isn't to be a counsellor. We're just using the skills in a different way.

Helen: Isn't it a bit sort of er, unethical though to be saying that we're using counselling skills if we're not qualified to counsel?

Laura: But we're not saying that you're a counsellor though are we?

Ben: There's different bodies as well, the BAC is the body for the counselling, the British Association of Counselling. Now you get that award if you've done a postgrad. diploma. Now CENTRA is the national body for using counselling SKILLS, so you can have a certificate in counselling skills and practice counselling skills, but you can't counsel. Do you know what I'm saying?

Laura: So it's people who use it in a psychological profession isn't it?

Ben: In theory you can't counsel. So you could be somebody who works in industry and just has, as part of a management team, and have counselling skills and has a certificate in counselling skills. It promotes discussion between your employees. I see it as a sort of stepping stone to referral as well. Because you can, you may be able recognise more often, a little better the fact that somebody DOES need counselling, you know with the counselling skills that you've got.

Alison: Peter?

Peter: Yeah, I'm not sure whether we've answered the question because we seem to be crossing over again into the skills bit.

Alison: It sounds like you're making the distinction.

Peter: We're trying to define counselling by saying "well it's these skills". Now, you could just say, because people do say, that counselling is guidance, full stop. That's what you understand by the term counselling. Now if you take that simplified view, then we would probably all maintain that we guide in some way.

Ben: Yeah.

Peter: But it's how we do that that I think is the key to this. I mean, I would maintain that I use guidance in my role as a trainee sport psychologist, but is that counselling? Is there a difference between guidance and counselling? Is counselling a special form of guidance?

Alison: Do you think you need to know?

Peter: Erm, I would argue [sigh]... I suppose that if I say well I'm using guidance then I might take that as my baseline if you like, my, that's what I do. Now, if I guide in a problem-solving way, like in a cognitive-behavioural way, which a lot of sport psychs do, then that'll be fine for one type of situation, but another situation may require a more client-centered approach. We've talked about this before, you know the sliding scale, and I would hope I could adapt to the athlete need, so I think I would argue that I would be guiding and I would be counselling in any situation, but it's then that I use the skills to do that. So, I'm working in a problem-solving way. I'd still be guiding, I might be taking more of a lead on that, whereas if I was working in a client-centered way, then the athlete would be leading. That's my view on it anyway.

Alison: Andrew? Anything to add?

Andrew: Er, well I understand by counselling, in the context that we're discussing here is, I've just called effective support and guidance. That's what I see it as and I, I would have a problem with these boundaries business because presumably a counsellor isn't allowed to mention the word 'sport'.

Peter: Mm.

Andrew: Otherwise they're going over their boundaries aren't they?

Ben: Mm.

Andrew: So, you know, that's trite of me to say it like that, but what I'm saying is I see it as problematic if we talk about boundaries in that sense, although I appreciate when you're talking from a legal point of view or what you mean by clinical, all that sort of stuff. But for me it's effective support and guidance, and a good coach would have that. A good friend would have it, all the other things, but what they may not have, of course, is a theoretical underpinning as it were, to those kind of things, to perhaps take it and use it to its most effective. Although that's, some of the most effective counsellors that we know and most effective people in what they do, erm, don't necessarily have the qualifications and so on. So, for me, the term as I use it is effective support and guidance.

Alison: O.k. Laura would you like to add anything?

Laura: No [laughter]

Alison: It's all been said? O.k. Just quickly then, would you distinguish between listening skills and counselling skills?

[6-seconds of silence]

Laura: Listening's only half of it isn't it? Once you've got like, again it's like a two-way thing, so if you can use the skills for listening and communicate that to someone else, but you've also got to be able to use different skills to reflect that back to them and to help them move on through their problem.

Ben: I wouldn't see that there's a difference between them, or distinguish between them. Like Laura says, there is, it's a two-way process. One is, well listening skills to me are counselling skills, but you've also got other counselling skills, on the ability to reflect back, paraphrasing, summarising.

Peter: I'll give a similar answer as I did to the first question - listening is a key part of what we understand as counselling skills.

Helen: But I think it's more, I think listening skills would be more important as a key part to your counselling skills...

Peter: Yes.

Helen: But to be an effective counsellor you'd *have* to be an effective listener. Whereas to have effective interpersonal skills you wouldn't necessarily have to be an effective listener.

Ben: That's true.

Helen: So that's an integral part, well it would be quite an important part of counselling skills.

Alison: What is, listening?

Helen: Yeah.

Alison: Right. Listening is an integral part of ...

Peter: counselling skills.

Andrew: Well I support that, and say that I can't see how you would have counselling skills without listening. But, you could have listening skills without counselling skills. That's how I would see it.

Peter: Well, when you do a counselling course, normally the top thing [listening skills] is what you do first isn't it? You know in a course. You'll do perhaps two weeks of listening skills before you move onto anything else. Which suggests that it's very crucial.

Alison: O.K. moving on then, in a recent Olympic benchmark document, which Andrew has seen, for psychological support services, er, it was produced by the Psychology Steering Group or the P.S.G. of the British Olympic Association. O.k.? One part of that, did you catch that?

Helen: No sorry.

Alison: A recent document that the psychology group of the BOA issued said this statement, (it was one section of the document): "Listening and counselling are important parts of any sport psychologist's work" What do you think?

- Ben: Yep. They are. Full stop. I mean at the end of the day, you have to extract some information from your client and if they perceive that you're not listening to them, they won't tell you what you need to hear at the end of the day.
- Helen: I also think, from being in my first year of accreditation, you're not necessarily going to have those skills with an athlete and you've got to, you've got to be able to produce something to get you through your consultancy, because like say, we've done like a counselling module, that's all the counselling skills that we have developed will have come from that, and they're probably quite basic.
- Laura: Yeah, because they ran, at times, side by side didn't they, so...
- Helen: Yeah. So you're not necessarily going to be like, in a sport psychology consultancy position, with counselling skills and listening skills developed. So you're going to have something, to kind of, to do basically. You know, you're going to have like other interpersonal to kind of get you through your sessions. And that's what I'm saying, I think they're sort of things that are more developed, like you're not going to go in and, sort of, happen there. You might after a period of time, but I think from my own experience, like immediately, I could walk from like a session with an athlete and think like, you know, "I'm sure I didn't say the right thing there and I'm sure I've probably gone against every counselling principle" when he's been telling me a problem and how I've responded to it.
- Andrew: I was thinking, you know, I can see what you've actually said, I'm interested in knowing, could you, in fact, go to say a group of athletes who were in this room here and deliver some educational stuff on mental skills training? I assume you probably could.
- Helen: Yeah.
- Andrew: Right. And you might deliver that in a fairly formal way.
- Helen: Mhm.
- Andrew: And you might do that on four or five occasions, you know, four or five squad weekends, and, would you actually need any other skills other than being able to deliver that and being able to answer a question, which would be a direct one that was associated with skills? You wouldn't go any further, you wouldn't actually ask them anything?
- Helen: No, I don't think you would. I think you can come across many teachers that haven't got particularly good listening and counselling skills, but are excellent teachers. And they're in that interpersonal environment every day of their lives for thirty years, but they might not necessarily have good listening and counselling. So, it's an important part of like, in the way that you're saying, if erm, it's needed.
- Andrew: So to be an all-round sport psychologist, to be an all-round completed sport psychologist...
- Helen: You would need that.
- Andrew: You say you'd need that, what you just said about the teaching side, plus these other listening and counselling skills?
- Helen: Yep.
- Andrew: That's part of?
- Helen: Yeah, because the chances are you're not going to not always be in that education-type situation.
- Ben: There's the other scenario whereas sometimes, I suppose, I mean looking at Collymore and the problems with Gascoigne and things like that, it seems to me as if they've gone through all their lives and nobody's ever listened to them. Just been there to listen to them. They've not wanted advice, they just want somebody to listen to them I think.
- Helen: Yeah, but you don't know though do you? Somebody might have listened and listened badly.
- Ben: Yeah, well, all I'm saying is there is also the need for somebody to just, as a sport psychologist to be in there and not feel that you have to give something to them, you know? You don't have to give something to them. Purely by being there and being an effective listener.
- Helen: But are you failing them if you're in a one-on-one situation and they require counselling skills or sophisticated listening skills and you haven't got them?
- Ben: Oh yeah, I think you would be, yeah.
- Helen: Well should you be in that situation then? That's the question really, well it's not THAT question [on flip chart].

Laura: Isn't the idea that everyone should have some kind of basic, kind of, knowledge of it, and then you won't be put in that situation? That would be the better solution rather than saying "Oh I'm not going to go there if I can't do this".

Helen: But, the system as it is doesn't say you have that does it? I mean we're in situations now where we haven't got that knowledge.

Andrew: It's implied I think.

Alison: We're going to tackle that a little bit later on, about training. Does anybody else want to add anything to this particular statement?

Andrew: I suppose I would add something. One of the things I think is quite interesting which is why I posed the question to Helen there about that, is that in my own personal experience, it's only my own personal experience, it doesn't matter, I mean it can be generalised, is that over the years of dealing with elite athletes, both as a coach and as a sport psychologist, one of the things that's interested me most, really, is that I've used some fairly conventional kind of anchors to actually work with these people, you know, the usual sort of stuff, as a sport psychologist and someone in a counselling sort of situation. Fairly solid anchors, fairly straight forward sort of stuff, and I've found that erm, it's effectiveness is very limited, especially on mental skills training. Now that's an elite athlete, because most of the elite athletes who've got to that level have already developed some of the highest sophisticated systems of dealing with all sorts of things which we kind of always, I always assume that they didn't have that. And what I've found is that the stuff that you sometimes apply and start doing, even though you may have questioned and everything else, you're just going through it and making sure the basics are there, soon run out, then where do you go? Because they've still got the problem there which these mental skills don't take care of, and therefore what you then start to have deal with are other things, which *may* involve some of those things. They may not of course, but they may involve some of those other things. If you're going to take them up onto what I call "The next zone", and for them that's all they're interested in is going up onto that next zone; er and I think it's involved stuff that goes well beyond what we normally are involved with as sport psychologists, some of which is involved with counselling.

Andrew: You're actually jumping ahead. We're going to come to that later. But, that's a very good point because we'll be coming to that later.

Andrew: Peter was going to say something?

Peter: Yeah, I guess just looking at the statement as a whole and the build-up that you gave to it erm, the emphasis, in terms of the, who was it that this is quoted as from?

Alison: The psychology steering group of the BOA produced this document.

Peter: Yeah, hasn't their emphasis changed though a bit? In terms of their view of counselling?

Alison: This is the latest statement. It changed from 1992.

Peter: So it seems to be moving on a little bit. I'm just looking at the wording. 'An important part' I think appears to have changed somewhat from what it used to be. It appears now to be coming to the fore and probably next time it'll be even, the language will be even stronger in terms of the emphasis placed on listening and counselling. I'm not sure that's the case, but I think that's the case. I'm just looking at the statement as a whole and they seem to have shifted, perhaps along with current thinking or current trends in terms of trying tease these things out. Maybe that's erm, emphasising what Andrew's saying about the need to have these on board when we're working, particularly at the elite end.

Andrew: Yes, it's an interesting one, although it may come into the other questions, so stop me, because the BASES one seems to me to *not* be doing that.

Peter: Yeah, yeah.

Andrew: In fact in my experience, they're looking at, I mean some of the reports I've had back for people I'm supervising is that "We want your reports to be more scientific". And I'm thinking, "Yeah o.k.". You know you can imagine what that opens up as a can of worms "What do you mean as scientific?" "What do you mean by effectiveness?" and so on. So, I think the two er, this is interesting and you may have actually put your finger on it, the fact that they're [BOA] dealing with elite whereas BASES is dealing with a wide range of people as it were.

Peter: As well, in the context of what Helen was saying initially, about what does 'important part' mean? I mean in BASES for example, it says 'basic theories of counselling', I think it's the wordage, the terminology that's used.

Andrew: Mm.

Peter: Now from your perspective [Helen's] what you seem to indicate up front is that what you've done so far isn't enough.

Helen: Mm. Well, no it's not.

Peter: Now some people would argue that the course that we've done, for example, last semester, would be enough. BASES would argue that.

Helen: But I think it's also like for me, it's like I was saying before, it's something you have to kind of develop. It's not like a theory that I could learn and then suddenly write a really good essay on it, you know, you don't just change your whole interpersonal style overnight. It's something that happens in trial and error and you have to look back at your meeting with the athlete and think "Well, I could have used that there, I could have used like empathy there", you know whatever, you'd want to use. It'll take a while, because when you're, it's like when you're teaching, you make like thousands of decisions a minute, but you're not always aware that you're making those decisions. Do you know what I mean? It's something that you change like subconsciously you begin to keep your eye on the corner of the field, and notice the missing cone, or the spare cone, that's a safety hazard. You know, you don't assess the area, you just start to do it naturally. And I think your use of counselling skills and listening skills is something that develops naturally into your interpersonal style. It's not something you just learn and the next day it's there, you produce it. Especially when you're talking to someone on a one-on-one, you haven't got the time to make those decisions and change what you going to say.

Peter: So, are you saying that what you've done thus far, talking about the distinction between counselling and counselling skills?

Helen: It's like you learn the skills (I know what the skills are)

Peter: But you just need more time?

Helen: Yeah, I need time and experience to produce those. It's like in teaching practice, you learn teaching skills, but it's time and experience that'll make you an effective teacher, not your knowledge of teaching styles. My knowledge of counselling skills won't make me an effective counsellor, it's the time to develop those in a practical situation.

Ben: But you have to be aware of the counselling skills.

Helen: See that's the thing.

Ben: You've been introduced to them now, so you're aware of them now, so you can reflect on yourself and whether you were effective in using counselling within your own practice. Now, obviously you're not going to be effective straight away.

Helen: But that's not to say that I'd be a better counsellor than someone who has no awareness. —

Ben: That's exactly right.

Alison: O.k. [hand up to signify 'stop']. I think we're going to revisit these things we're going to talk a little more about training later on. I'm aware that the tape's just stopped, shall we just take a couple of minutes to take a break and grab some more refreshments.

5 minute BREAK

Alison: We've been talking about four different skills so far, I'm wondering if you can now, this is a much briefer one for me, if you could just say How fundamental do you think each of the skills are to sport psychology practice, so let's just take the first one: How fundamental are interpersonal skills to sport psychology practice?

Helen: Very. Well I might be jumping the gun, but yeah I think they are. If you described that scenario, that Andrew was talking about, like an education sort of thing, they're vital really aren't they.

Ben: It depends. I'm still having a little bit of a problem with the definition of interpersonal skills. I see interpersonal skills as your style and the way that you can communicate. And I think it important to know your own style and be comfortable with your own style.

Peter: There's a distinction between interpersonal style and interpersonal skills though isn't there?

Ben: Yeah.

Peter: If your talking about the skills then yes it is fundamental, but to any practitioner, not just sport psych.

Andrew: One hundred percent.

Alison: One hundred percent? O.k. let me go onto the next one then. How fundamental are listening skills to sport psychology practice?

Ben: Again, I don't think you can't operate without them to be honest. If you've not got the ability to listen effectively, and when I'm saying effectively I mean without being judgmental. We've just had a case straight away where somebody's been listening to somebody and they've just judged what they've said straight away. Bad listening skills. They're not seeing underneath what they're actually saying, they're coming from somewhere. So they are vitally important.

[nods all round]

Alison: You don't have to agree. I'm just interested in your opinion.

Laura: Yeah, they are, I think they are important. You can't help someone with a problem if you don't listen to what the problem is in the first place can you?

Helen: If that's what you're doing as a sport psychologist. If you're not sort of in an education programme or workshop. If you're in one-to-one situations.

Laura: But why don't you think it's important in a group as well?

Helen: Because you might just be there delivering like a seminar on goal setting and be able to answer questions effectively.

Peter: I suppose if you're counselling sport psychology practice like working with an athlete, in an applied sense, rather than an one-off educational hit, if you like, then something has to condition your practice doesn't it? You have to design your package, or whatever you're doing with the athlete, around something. And the only way to do that is to find out what's basically going to work for that athlete and the only way to do that is to listen.

Helen: Yeah, so you'd need it for your consultancy really wouldn't you?

Andrew: Yeah, I think it's a hundred percent at the end of the day, even though there's the educational side we talked about, because you've actually got to speak to the coaches and the athletes and you've also got to deliver what they want before you even stand up and deliver it. So you've got to find that out, and, in that sense, as an all-round sport psychologist in a support role, for me it would be one hundred percent as well.

Ben: I'd say it would be one of the major things, to be honest.

Alison: For you?

Ben: To me it is, yeah. There's such a distinction by effective listening and ineffective listening. There is such a distinction.

Alison: O.k. The next one then in the space: How fundamental are counselling skills to sport psychology practice?

Ben: Well we've sort of made the link that listening skills is part of counselling skills, so if you're saying counselling skills is an umbrella term, listening skills is within it.

Alison: If you're saying that listening skills are part of counselling skills, what about the other part that isn't listening necessarily. How fundamental are they? How fundamental is counselling skills as a whole to sport psychology practice?

Ben: I'd say they're quite important again. One of them is to be non-judgmental, I'd say that's quite important. You're going to get some coaches that seem very brash and seem very erm, you might not like them, but you've still got to be able to listen to them. You've still got to be able to get something out of them.

Helen: They're fundamental, but there's probably a lot of people working out there without them.

Alison: But they're fundamental to you, you say?

Helen: Well, I can't really say that though, because maybe I shouldn't be working the athlete, do you know what I mean? Because I don't think they're developed enough. My own personal ones at this level aren't developed enough, but it's not a worry, as in I'm only what, four or five months into first year accreditation, do you know what I mean?

Laura: Ultimately though?

Helen: Ultimately yeah. But, initially, and maybe even people that are accredited for a longer time, aren't using them, possibly.

Andrew: This fascinates me, I mean the whole thing really, we could go on forever and we don't need to do that. But yes, it seems to me that it is a fundamental, it's one of a number of fundamental skills that you may or may not be needing to use, but it needs to be there. I went for a recent appointment to the eye hospital there, and the guy who dealt with me, I'm sure he was extremely good at what he was doing, but I wanted to hit him. It was just the way he dealt with

me as a person was unbelievably bad, and anything I asked him, he just dismissed as being foolish. There was one part when I didn't hear him, he said "Are you hard of hearing or something as you're getting older?" And I thought [laughter from all]. So it went on. So it seemed to me that he was very good at what he did, I'm sure in terms of the technical eye stuff and all that sort of inspection and things. But I mean it seemed to me he wasn't getting the best out of me in trying to give him answers, and therefore I would see it as a, to me it's a fundamental skill, that you *may* need at times.

Alison: Counselling skills?

Andrew: Yes, yes.

Peter: I think the important part of what you said is "maybe at times". So, yes it fundamental, but the skill in sport psych is to know when to use it and how to the best effect.

Ben: Mm.

Peter: It's not, you're not using it all the time, but you have to have it as part of your competency don't you?

Andrew: You certainly want it. You might use other things which are just as effective which don't involve that at all.

Peter: Yeah, sure.

Alison: Are you suggesting then that it's, fundamental, what do you understand by the word fundamental? Do you think it's necessary?

Ben: If you had to say there was, say four things that you had to have to be an effective sport psychologist, I'd say one of them was that you'd need counselling skills, to be an effective practitioner. So, in that case, I'd say they are fundamental. That's a personal opinion.

Alison: O.K. Anybody else.

Andrew: Yes, it would be for me as well, but I'd take a particular line on what sport psychology is, which is a humanitarian approach, or humanistic approach, which is not what everybody would take. Therefore, it's fundamental in my work.

Alison: Would it be fundamental to everybody's work?

Andrew: No, I don't think it is. I think there are effective sport psychologists around, I think they're effective, but I think they're limited. I think they're limited. But I think they're effective.

Laura: It depends how far you're going to take what you're going to do. If you're just going to deal with at the surface things, then you're going to go in teaching them PST techniques, then you probably wouldn't need them as much as someone who's going to take a bit of a broader outlook on how you're going to try and work with someone.

Helen: Mm.

Ben: I still think there's a need there though. I mean, just doing mental training with an athlete, you still really need to listen.

Helen: But it's not saying like...

Andrew: That's not counselling.

Helen: ...if you haven't got counselling skills you're not going to say you're a bad listener.

Andrew: No.

Helen: It's like what you were saying about the eye person, the eye doctor, like at the end of the day, it's the result that counts and if your eyes are better.

Andrew: Yeah, his were listening skills, not counselling skills, that he required. Or interpersonal listening skills.

Helen: You probably do get good sport psychologists who have limited counselling skills who are very good at what they do. Limited in terms of like the humanistic approach, it might be, but in the approach that they take, it might just fit the bill nicely.

Peter: Yeah, I think it does, in terms of your use of counselling skills, it does depend upon which perspective you're coming as a sport psych. Andrew's outlined, if you're coming from a humanistic perspective, you're probably more aligned to those things and then use them more than someone who's coming from a different perspective. But, that's not to say that the person who's coming from that different perspective shouldn't have them as part of their armoury if you like. Because they will need them at some point, I would argue.

Alison: And is that what you mean by fundamental?

Ben: Mm.

Peter: Yeah.

Alison: Is that what you're suggesting?

Peter: It's difficult. I mean, fundamental to me means it's part and parcel of something that you have, it doesn't mean that you always work with them. But then again, as I've outlined, it depends from which you're coming, because there are four or five different perspectives. Erm, if you're coming from a humanistic perspective you probably work with them more of the time, I would argue.

Alison: O.k. Just then take that onto the final one, the fourth skill, How fundamental is counselling to sport psychology practice?

[7 second delay]-

Peter: See previous answer.

Helen: How did you define counselling Ben? You said about challenging and...

Peter: Guidance and support.

Ben: Guidance and support.

Helen: I mean like say you had a meet with 16 international athletes and you had them all for like two hours. How much guidance and support can you really give? Do you know what I mean? Like ideally you might be able to give them loads. But, if your time or access to the athlete doesn't allow you to deliver guidance and support then we could argue that they're not fundamental because of the constraints of practice.

Laura: Mm.

Andrew: For me, they are one hundred percent, in terms of counselling, from my approach. But, again I would argue that there are people around who are effective sport psychologists, I think they're negative, but that doesn't mean that they're not ineffective. They're effective for what they do, and they don't have that [counselling] as a fundamental skill. I think they have listening skills. I don't think they necessarily have counselling skills fundamentally. I mean they are still very, very effective and they take a very hard line, scientific gathering, analysis, produce and deliver that kind of analysis to the athlete which is helpful and helps them do better. There's no doubt about that at all. But, I think they're limited to that. Whereas I like to think that if you take another approach, which is the one that I'm used to dealing with, I think it has broader applications and in that case it would then be fundamental.

Alison: Counselling?

Andrew: Yes. Counselling would be fundamental for a broader more encompassing approach. Because you could still use all those other aspects, but you've also got an additional tool in the bag.

Ben: Yeah, I agree with that, yeah.

Andrew: So when it's fundamental, it's fundamental to my approach, but it's not fundamental necessarily to everybody's approach, counselling.

Ben: So would you say Andrew that you need to be, as part of your training, you would need to be trained as a counsellor as well as a sport psychologist and, like, integrate them both together within your own practice? Or do you just need the counselling skills and the sport psychology.

Andrew: For me it would be training as something else, yes. It might be as a teacher. I mean the work involved in training teachers is fundamental counselling as well. A huge amount of it is really involved with the way in which they deal with things. They're usually very good at it, or they are these days. Erm, so it wouldn't necessarily have to be what you might call directly call counselling skills, you know, counselling training as such, it could be, but it would incorporate those similar skills yes.

Helen: Would you say, if erm, like your time with the athletes was limited, even though you're saying it's fundamental to your approach, would you say you use it in your approach like all the time, half the time?

Andrew: Well it might be, I know what you're saying there. If I had 16 for two hours, am I going to do it, is that still fundamental? It may be something that would be doing with them. If I was doing something which involves something about awareness and team building, even though there was a limited of time on a one-to-one basis, I'm still having to actually operate that group as if they were one. And therefore, there are interpersonal skills some of which would be the things that underlie counselling will come into action. Some of those things. Just a simple one about me being aware of me, for example, would be one of those. But as I said, some people don't do that, and they can still be effective.

Alison: O.k. [turn flip chart]. In the same BOA document that I referred to earlier, it was also said that "...many sport psychologists have had little or no formal training in this area" (they were specifically referring to listening and counselling). How do you feel about this statement?

Ben: Well all I can say is, the training that I've had, even at a certificate level, and an introductory level, has really opened my eyes to myself, and to how ineffective I was at this before I had counselling training. So that's a personal point of view. I'm a lot better listener I think than I what I used to be, which probably wasn't very good in the first place. I feel as if I am a lot better now. So all I can say is you *do* need a bit of formal training in counselling, because it does open your eyes. You begin see where the theories that, how you can relate the theories of counselling and counselling skills within your own practice, with a bit of training in counselling.

Laura: It's not something that's pushed very much though. I mean it has been in the last kind of year, but up until then, it's always, you learn about like psychological skills training, and you think "Yeah I'm just going to go in" and your going to be able to like goal setting or imagery or whatever. And these skills are just totally left to one side, so most people go into that situation. I mean I don't about the other people who do BASES, but when you first go in, I mean, we've done a little bit of counselling, but it would have been, we should have had more I think, and it isn't something that you think about that much until you actually go into it. So when you get in that situation it's a bit kind of, if you hadn't have had any, or hadn't been aware of it, you're just kind of going in and going "Right, I'm going to do this. That's what you do" and you come out again.

Ben: It sort of gives you an alternative route, doesn't it?

Laura: Yeah.

Ben: There's an escape route.

Laura: Yeah. It also makes it easier to even do that one small thing, if that's all you want to do. But it's not something that you read about, or I mean it is changing a little bit now, but I think it should, you know, there isn't really that kind of emphasis that should be on it.

Helen: Mm.

Andrew: Emphasis on?

Laura: There's the emphasis purely on the psychological skills training.

Andrew: Oh right, sorry.

Laura: But not on the other skills which you could use.

Andrew: Is the key word here 'formal'? [posed to the group]

Laura: Yeah.

Helen: We hadn't had formal, but we had the module.

Andrew: That's formal isn't it?

Ben: That's formal.

Peter: That's formal yeah.

Helen: Oh is it?

Andrew: That's how I interpret it. Would you interpret it like that?

Ben: Yeah.

Helen: Oh I thought formal would be like some sort of, what you've done [Ben], like certificate, or some sort of recognised...

Ben: Just a course. A course on counselling.

Andrew: Informal would be like what we're doing now I guess. Whereas formal would be, you'd have a syllabus set up and all that sort of stuff and you got through it. That's how I see it.

Helen: Oh right o.k.

Peter: I guess erm, 'how do I feel about this statement?' erm, obviously, I'm saying obviously, I obviously believe that it is fundamental to what we do. So, sport psychologists who are out there are limited, in my view, in their effectiveness to deal with the athlete as a whole. They're working in little boxes, and the boxes in which they're working are conditioned by what they have done in the past and probably that's because of the failure of the accreditation systems in previous years. You could argue, and a lot of people do argue, that the current one's still limited. I also guess that the key word is formal, because most sport psychs out there would feel that they can listen and counsel to some extent, but one they don't necessarily know when they're doing that and don't know how to do that. they don't have a formal framework or haven't been told or had any experience of how to do that and when to do that and when you

should actually do that. Erm, so I wouldn't say that the sport psychs who are out there currently working who are accredited don't have any of these skills, you know we don't know, but they haven't gone through any training or maybe they've developed some of the skills and they just don't know...

Ben: That's it.

Peter: ...they can't, they couldn't tell you when they were using the skills or when they weren't. That's the key thing I think. When you practice, you obviously have to practice in a particular way, and your practice should be conditioned by what you do, who you're working with in what situation. And that's the key thing. It's having the skills and then using them appropriate to what you're doing. And I don't think a lot of sport psychs can do that.

Andrew: Mm, it's interesting that because if you go to these meetings which, for example, from the BOA, or a lot of the time people are saying we need action, more training in counselling, so they're actually saying that, so that's where the statements come from. But, where it has come from, it's come from the younger elements and the newer element into the group. It hasn't come from the older members. Now either, I think a lot of the older members have gone through teacher training, so I think that they see that slightly differently. Or, they don't want to say so because they feel in seniority-type positions, they ought to be saying things like that. I think there's a little bit of that element going through. That's me being a bit judgmental. Or, they sort of, I think that having to go through formal training at this point is seen to be like a real drag and so on. But it is interesting that there's also little call among sport psychologists to say why don't we set up our own regional support groups, and then when you actually sort of say "Well why do we need this?" then it's obvious to me that there are certain things that they feel insecure about, including me alright? And therefore having some support around, which I think is fundamentally really about counselling each other and helping each other. It would strike me that the reason for that statement is that there is a need for formal training, and I think we're acknowledging there is, but it's taken us a long time to say it.

Ben: At the end of the day, it's another string to your bow. So what harm can it do?

Laura: Isn't that what you were saying before when you were saying that those two things are fundamental, so surely it should be like...

Ben: Well that's what I'm saying. You know, at the end of the day my argument against it is what harm can it do? It's just another skills that you can use in practice and at the end of the day, I'm always seeking knowledge. If I can pick up something from anywhere, it's bound to be beneficial. You know?

Peter: A lot of the more experienced people wouldn't have that attitude though, that's the thing.

Ben: As if they know it all.

Peter: That's another time constraint that they don't need. That's the point that Andrew's making where, you know, at the end of the day you need to be made more aware of...

Ben: And that's quite disturbing because, as Andrew said earlier on, as sport psychologists we're trying to teach people to be, as a humanistic sport psychologist, you're trying to teach people to be reflective on themselves, but if some sport psychologists are not being reflective on themselves, how can you teach other people to be reflective about what they do?

Andrew: The other interesting thing about is that peer review is going to be part of accreditation in the future or maintaining accreditation. Peer review being, I presume everyone understands what that means and if you don't I'm sure you've got a good idea what it means as such, and that, if you're going to be involved in peer review then I would suggest that counselling skills would be a pretty essential element in feeding back information to each other.

Helen: Yeah, I think it's as much like the opportunity to put counselling skills into practice. Like formal training, like the module was great, but without supervised experience running alongside, it'd be kind of not pointless, I wouldn't say pointless at all, but by the time I'd done the module I'd kind of forgotten and then I've met the athlete...

Laura: yeah.

Helen: ...and I wouldn't necessarily have remembered to be putting specific things into practice. Whereas...

Laura: It was good when we actually got time to try them out.

Helen: Yeah.

Laura: When we went for that day...

Helen: Yeah.

Laura: ...we actually got to try them out more, and you had like a longer time than "Right just practice this for five minutes" or whatever.

Helen: It's like doing a B.Ed. without having teaching practice in the fourth year. You'd learn all your teaching styles and then it wouldn't be sort of like until the end you'd kind of put them into practice, it's nice to sort of do it simultaneously so you can kind of go out of counselling and meet your athlete, and think "Oh God", or "Oh great".

Ben: Can I just stop you there, I mean the whole point of the formal training that I've had in counselling is the fact that it's an ongoing process anyway.

Helen: Yeah, that's what I mean.

Ben: I mean, my lecturer at the counselling that I do she says "We just show you the skills, you should be practising them out there all the time anyway." You know what I mean?

Helen: Mm.

Ben: So, my argument to that is you should be doing it all the time, you know what I mean? Then building up, not your knowledge base, but your experience yourself in every practice.

Andrew: Well the other interesting thing about it is that many sport psychologists have little or no formal training, formal training being the word there just for me. For me, it also means that, I must be careful how I say this, erm, people who are supervising don't necessarily have that formal training either. So then it becomes problematic when they're, possibly, when they're actually helping people with this work.

Alison: O.k.

Peter: It might be quite interesting that to look at the supervisor and the supervisee, to look at what they come out as at the end of the day and whether they mirror you know, the supervisor's approach.

Ben: Yeah, it would be very.

Peter: And if that's the case then maybe there is a problem there. Especially if the supervisor is...

Ben: Anti.

Peter: ...from a narrow perspective. Again, mentioning no names, but I can think of some.

Alison: Going on from what we've just said then, I think this is very related what are your thoughts, then, on including actual counselling skills practice to an agreed common standard on the BASES supervised experience profile?

Laura: It wouldn't match the rest of them!

Helen: Agreed common standard.

[Laughter]

Laura: Well nothing's agreed is it? I mean [more laughter] you can send in anything. Some people will send it back, but other people, they won't. So, it'd be a good start.

Alison: But do you think we need to start somewhere?

Laura: Yeah.

Helen: An agreed common standard - that is so difficult.

Laura: Well you could do like so many hours of experience or whatever couldn't you? You know like you do with coaching or whatever.

Helen: Would be you be like assessed though like, you know, how would that work?

Laura: You'd have to have you [Ben] doing your act of your 'problem athlete'.

Andrew: To help us answer this question, could you just help me with this, I'm not quite sure what you mean by 'actual counselling skills practice' to an agreed common standard. Do you mean that somebody supervising would watch this and then decide whether you have in fact reached an agreed standard?

Alison: This is the wording from the BASES, front of the BASES competency profile example, and it says these skills, all these things which you need to have are, to be accredited, will eventually hopefully come to an agreed common standard. That's where I've got the wording from, from BASES.

Andrew: As they do with their coaching bits and any other bits in there as well?

Alison: They give any other information as to how that will be, you know, dictated, but some sort of agreed common standard which has been got via a consensus. I'm interested in your thoughts really.

Andrew: My thoughts would be really, that's fine because it would try to match some of the other things that they're attempting to do to get agreed common standards on, which are, things like you know, understanding research, I can't remember all of them, there's lots of bits and pieces that we have to meet now. Erm, it would seem to me that it would at least give parity to that, that would be my one thought, at least it would give parity to counselling, which I obviously think is important. As some of the other aspects, which are in there, which are fairly well detailed you know I think, given that finding an agreed common standard is difficult, and that strikes me that they regard those as more important at this point in time, or maybe they haven't just got around to this one. So, that would be my thoughts, it gives parity and I see that as being useful.

Ben: But then again, we've got the, what is the common standard that we could have? I mean, for me, I've got an idea in my mind that I'm coming to a stage now, with the certificate, that I've got enough knowledge of counselling skills now if I take it any further I'm going into therapeutic counsel-LING, you know, actual, going a bit further. I am sort of getting another profession sort of thing, I'm going into being a counsellor then if I go any further.

Alison: But to go back, Andrew said that counsel-LING was fundamental to what he does, are you, when you said that [directed to Andrew] did you mean the same as Ben in a kind of therapeutic way?

Andrew: I think there are times when that actually happens, without a doubt at all. But it's necessary to take that a bit further, and you can put various labels on those kinds of interventions, and some will be moving towards, I think what you were saying which was more towards a kind of clinical approach?

Ben: Mm.

Andrew: But they're very blurred and very grey some of those areas, you know they're not *obviously* clinical, which you might leave totally alone, and you should leave totally alone I guess if you're not qualified in that area. But there are things which are much more on the border there which are much more difficult to find your way around, you know.

Ben: Mm.

Andrew: And I think you do what you think's best at that moment in time. But, I mean I don't have a problem about them judging what these common skills are eventually, because you have to do that in everything you do in your life as far as I'm concerned and if someone makes a judgement about whether in fact you've reached a standard as a counsellor for an examination, someone has to make a judgement about that. I don't have a problem with that at all.

Ben: It's just what is it though?

Andrew: Well, again, I mean, yes people presumably have asked that kind of question of all sorts of things where they've had to put qualifications out, they've actually had to ask what it is and actually then put a standard on that.

Ben: It's like a minimum standard that you could come upto, that BASES would need to do.

Alison: Today, for the purposes of this discussion, I'm not really interested in what that agreed standard is. I'm particularly interested in what are your thoughts on including this on *a* agreed standard, *an* agreed standard, rather than what is that agreed standard.

Ben: So do you think that we need them in a common standard? We need counselling skills in a, well the answer is yes.

Alison: Counselling skills practice.

Ben: From what we've been talking about earlier on...

Andrew: I don't think anybody would say any different in this group! After what we've said.

Ben: It's a firm yes from all of us.

Andrew: I think we've qualified it at various times haven't we?

Helen: Again, this is saying not necessarily everyone uses it now, but in an ideal world I think everybody, all sport psychologists would, because it appears that they are necessary. 'Appears' because I don't know that from my own personal experience.

Ben: But I think you do. I think you're on the, valuing your own...

Helen: No but I mean like in terms of, I wouldn't, I don't necessarily know what approach I'm going to take, whether it's going to be sort of like a quick fix sophist, whether it's going to be a Socratic, humanistic-type approach. Do you know? That's not something I kind of decide before I go in, I'll kind of feel my way around first before I decide what would be more effective

for me, because I might find out that this Socratic thing maybe doesn't pull the money in, or is ineffective for me. You know, there's many things you have to take into consideration. So I'm biding my time!

Ben: I don't think, my aims and my goals are not to make money, I wouldn't be in this to make money.

Helen: I'm realistic though.

Ben: I think...

Helen: I know I have to eat and live.

Ben: Yeah, but even then, I think if you're going in with that sort of mind set that, you know, it's going to be my way of making money, you are going to be always falling onto this sophist approach.

Helen: No, not necessarily, I think you go into it and you sort of, you know, you want to get good (I'm careful not to steer too much off the subject here), but you get good efficacy from like, you know, your job and you enjoy it and all the rest of it. But you do have to, you know, at the end of the day, you have to be realistic about life, do you know what I mean?

Ben: Mm.

Helen: Life is you have to pull in an income. So, if your principles are being challenged, then maybe you stop doing it.

Peter: That's right. You've got to be flexible haven't you? As a sport psych, you've got to go into any situation with the ability to work in a particular way. I mean if you're going to use the sophist/Socratic ideology then you may work in one way or the other depending on the client's need.

Alison: Believe it or not, you've jumped the gun again! Oh, Zoe's changing the video tape, we may as well take the opportunity to change the audio tapes. Hold any thoughts you have for a moment.

Change of tapes

Alison: Traditionally, sport psychologists only deal with performance enhancement and teach mental skills training (which is something you have mentioned before). Problems outside the area of performance enhancement should be left to others, for example, counsellors or clinical psychologists, etc. What do you think about this statement?

Ben: Well right at the very beginning of this focus group, you put down that you asked athletes what they wanted from a sport psychologist, elite athletes, and they put - to listen. So, you're going against what that's actually saying. The needs of the athletes are for you to be able to listen to them, and that is a teaching sort of, erm, different sort of role that you're going over there.

Alison: Are you suggesting that regardless of what area the problem, if you like, is in performance enhancement or outside of that, you...

Ben: You still need counselling skills.

Peter: As a counter to that, if you're interested in performance enhancement and teaching mental skills training for an athlete, what's the first thing you want to do with them, before you do any of that?

Helen: Listen.

Ben: Listen.

Peter: Right. So, it depends what they mean by problems outside the area, performance enhancement because I would argue that listening is not outside, it's a skill that is integral to anything. I guess what you're getting at here is other life development issues, maybe.

Alison: Possibly, or there is another side or which is: everything could affect the athlete's performance, everything could be related to performance enhancement.

Ben: Mm.

Alison: You know, there's between performance and 'other' things.

Helen: It's not black and white is it? You could be dealing with an athlete who has a problem outside the sport, but by teaching them mental skills, in the context of sport, they can transfer that over to other outside problem and solve that outside problem and you might not necessarily have counselled them on that outside problem. But, the mental skills you're teaching them are aiding them in life, you know like the LDI [Life Development Intervention] thing. But, it depends what kind of depth your interventions go, well not interventions, maybe consultancy. You know you might work at just like a superficial sophist level, in which case mental skills training might be

alright, and then it's up to yourself really as a sport psychologist. If outside things keep arising that the mental skills that you're teaching them aren't enough to facilitate or alleviate the problem, like maybe you should either go a bit deeper or leave it to somebody else.

Andrew: Yes, I like the word that you used there when you're talking about superficial. I mean I'll give you two things which, I think, raise the question quite strongly. I mean the first is as a coach we're dealing with performance enhancement and probably teaching mental skills training in some form or other as a coach. That means when a girl or guy says to me "I've got a real problem with my husband or wife, you've been divorced Andrew, do you have any kind of words of wisdom for me?" Oh, nothing to do with performance enhancement. But it's about how superficial that is. I'm not actually producing an intervention and trying to go into detail about how they're going to deal with their relationships. I'm just saying you know "Well, I just got good solicitor!" You know? That's what I might have sort of said. That's a superficial approach isn't it? And one that's been very real to me in the last ten days, with one of the people I'm dealing with, and only on the phone (which is interesting as well), it's not face-to-face but it's on the phone, in fact this guy's been very, very successful at the moment, he said "Some of the other players are getting really envious, and their wives aren't talking to my wife, Andrew. You know, it's becoming a little bit problematic, they're shutting her out because they don't like the fact that I'm successful" and so on etc., etc., and his very words were, you know, "What advice would you give me Andrew?" those were his very words. "What advice would you give me Andrew?" You know, you're on the phone here now, you've got nothing else to go by, now where am I as a sport psychologist with that kind of question? I can't give that advice, because that's outside my role, or do I listen carefully and ask further questions, all the usual things, etc., etc. I think it's about the depth.

Ben: It's sort of inhumane basically isn't it to just deal with performance enhancement issues and mental skills training? Because how many times in life do you just deal with things that you're, you go to work and you just deal with the skills or whatever you do in your life at work, and you just deal with what you do at work. As soon as you go home you're dealing with a whole different atmosphere and a whole different set of problems again isn't it?

Andrew: But would you, in this case here where it says "Should be left to others, for example" for me, the way I work is, what I hope I recognise is that this isn't something I can deal with at this moment or I've gone a bit beyond the superficial here, ooh, ooh, I need someone who I need to refer this onto immediately and say "Look I think you need some help further on that this and I can't give that to you" and think it's recognising that that's what it would be for me. To move onto someone like a clinical person that may start to move from more superficial to the more therapeutic line.

Helen: Yeah, I think it's more like if a problem comes up, if you're talking about just dealing with performance enhancement, mental skills training and pressures of life, then that kind of superficial approach is alright. It's like if there's is like a problem a named problem that we are not qualified to deal with then you have to obviously, do you know what I mean? But if a problem hasn't arisen, the skills that you're teaching them will transfer to outside of performance enhancement. Like with college work or job work or anything, so it's not confined to performance enhancement. But, maybe the problem of like a, if a serious problem arises outside, then maybe it's move up.

Alison: If that's the way that traditional sport psychologists work, does that mean that the role of a sport psychologist should therefore expand from what you've just said?

Helen: But they probably didn't traditionally work like that did they? Because even though the sport psychologist's might be talking in terms of performance enhancement, there's nothing to say the athlete didn't go away and apply everything he learnt there to three other aspects of his life.

Ben: You see one of the things you use within performance enhancement is goal setting, and time management within goal setting. Now, if you're going to use time management, you've got to incorporate where these other people are coming from. Their relationships that they've got, whether they work, you know? There's some elite athletes that work part-time, so they also include, you know, the sport within where they work. So, their not purely working from performance enhancement I don't think.

Alison: Is that a role of a sport psychologist?

Helen: Yeah, because you can't look at sport without looking...

Ben: At the whole picture.

Helen: Yeah.

Ben: You can't time manage or do your goal setting if people haven't realistically got the time to do that.

Helen: Mm.

Alison: I got this statement from quite a few different articles and books, I mean you've probably seen it yourself, *traditionally* sport psychologists will only deal with these things.

Andrew: Is there a reverse of that? I mean I trained as a cognitive psychologist originally in a pure cognitive sense as a first degree, er, and that's interesting really because we would not really, call it training, educated's probably a better word, educated to deal with performance either. So, that's where our boundary lay really, we weren't supposed to deal with things like performance or sport and so on. But we were dealing with these other things. And that's, that almost seems to me as unrealistic as that's [the statement] unrealistic really. Because you're going to move over towards the performance side, I can't see how you can't, you know. And I suspect that [], in his own research dealing with injuries and so on, I'd be quite interested to know whether the fact that sort of area was really starting to move more towards sort of these kinds of things. Because certainly my own research of preparing people for an Olympic games, as my own research, what I found really was that a whole lot of the assessment procedures I was using which were traditional ones were really of very, very little use in real terms, and it was only when I started moving towards what we've been talking about, these counselling kind of assessments, I was actually really getting to the nub of the problem in the first place. I couldn't always deal with it, but at least it allowed me to find out what was wrong.

Ben: Yeah.

Andrew: So, I think traditionally that might have been the case, or not, I'm not really sure, from what you just said [Helen], I'd not really thought about it the way you just said it then until now. But I suspect that it's certainly changing.

Alison: Does that first sentence [in statement] reflect sport psychology training do you think or not?

Helen: I've only been training for four months, it doesn't reflect what I've done!

Alison: Well what you know of.

Helen: Yeah.

Andrew: Does sport psychology training meaning you're doing a sport science degree then maybe a masters?

Alison: Whatever training you've gone through to become accredited.

Ben: Well this is the thing, I mean, we've all been taught a different sort of way anyway. We've been taught to not think as if we were traditional sport scientists, we were all sort of going along picking up skills from everywhere sort of thing.

Alison: So there is a sense again that there is a traditional way of going down training?

Ben: There is a sense to me, but it's teacher-educator orientated, and we're more, I think we're more facilitators.

Alison: In this particular institution?

Ben: In this institution yeah.

Helen: Maybe it's just that we know it's alright to deal with other areas...

Ben: Yeah that's about it really.

Helen: Whereas maybe other people being taught are giving the impression that it's not alright, just steer clear of it, just do mental skills. Whereas we, even though we know and have to use mental skills training as like a fundamental part really, erm we know it is o.k. to be aware of, or touch upon other areas, or maybe transfer the mental skills training to other areas, whereas maybe other people don't, I don't know. I mean you can't say that unless you are aware of how others are taught or trained.

Laura: Mm.

Peter: I guess in terms of performance enhancement, then, as a sport psych, you're looking at all the factors that are potentially effecting, that's what you're interested in isn't it? You know, whether that's a sport-specific factor or life-specific factor, it must be of interest to you, if, at the end of the day, it affects what your athlete's doing. Now, I think I follow Andrew's line on this is that if it's an outside problem let's say, then I'd want to know more about it, I'd want to be able to understand it. So you might use counselling skills to make them self aware, etc. But

then you've got to say "Well, can I do anything about that? Is that a problem that's within my remit because it does affect my athlete in their sport?" or is it something that from a problem solving perspective, from doing something about it, it's something that I should say "Well no" you know "somebody else can help you with this".

Laura: It depends how far into the problem you get before you find that though.

Peter: Yeah. So I guess, it's knowing where to draw the line between, from my perspective I'd want to understand the problem, and its causes, its antecedents if you like, and how it's affecting the athlete. But then I've got to say to myself, "Well can I do anything about that? Can I do an effective job with that? Should I be trying to do something about that?" And I guess my line would be "Well, yes I can with this, no I can't with this" and when I say can't I make sure it's can't and I make sure it's can't and I make sure I refer on.

Andrew: And also it's about expectations from people outside about what they expect us to do about what we should be able to do. I had a brief which has now been going on since January with a particular formula racing team, and they just sort of said to "Look, what they need is a kick up the arse mate, and that's what we want you to do" and I said, you know, "can we go a little bit further than this briefing?" "Well, that's all it is as far as we're concerned. They're spoilt little brats can you sort them out?" Now I have a few problems with that obviously, but I mean what was interesting to me was it wasn't *that*, what was interesting was the fact was that was how they saw me. Had I, you know, I'd presented to these people before this, so I was thinking to myself, you know "Gosh, is that what I presented to them? Is that what they think I do?" And I started to worry about what I'd done as a presentation then, you know, so it is interesting about where that comes from in a way isn't it as well?

Helen: People do see you though as like a Mister Motivator-type thing. I remember my first training session with the athlete and coach and he was doing all of his technical practices and every now and again the coach would just turn to me and say "Any psychological input?"! I'd be like "Yeah, go on!" [laughter from all]

Andrew: That's interesting isn't it?

Ben: Don't you think though that we've sort of erm, made our own rope with this because we've sort of sold ourselves in the past as sort of being performance enhancers, as teaching mental skills training, you know? As being, we've got the skills, we can show you what to do. We can help you with, you know, what to do and really, we're not that.

Laura: But aren't you still trying to help them improve their performance even if you don't just do it through teaching them mental skills aren't you? That's your ultimate aim...

Andrew: yeah.

Helen: Mm.

Laura: ...or one of your aims is to help them improve their performance. And if it takes looking at other things outside, just the mental skills to other things that are affecting their performance, then you're still getting the same result, you're just making sure that, even though if you're going to teach them certain skills, that other things aren't going to stop them, stop you being effective.

Ben: But it's the, the big word there is performance-based, everything's sort based on how well they do.

Laura: That's what they do for a living, they're sportspeople.

Ben: I wouldn't go down there. I think you can still be effective without getting them to be number one in the world or whatever.

Helen: But if you went into a job and you had to outline what you wanted to do, if you were to be completely maybe honest like that and said "I'm not here to not necessarily enhance your performance, but to make you a better person", some sort of humanistic-type speech, I wonder like how many would say "Mm, I don't know if this is really for us we just want somebody to come in and produce results"?

Ben: That's probably true, but you've got to look at yourself and say "Can I be effective in doing that job. that pure performance-based job" and I don't think...

Helen: No, obviously other things have got to come into it.

Andrew: Performance, meaning just doing something better than you did before.

Ben: Mm.

Helen: Helping them get to their full potential.

Andrew: That they've decided that they want. That would fit in with you wouldn't it?

Ben: Mm.

Andrew: That's still the same.

Ben: Mm.

Alison: Can I just close that particular one, I'm aware again of time. I'm on the final question. But I think it does tie in with other things that you have said before as well, you have mentioned this. It has been argued that sport psychologists use mental skills training in a technique-based manner to give symptomatic relief to athlete, but do not tackle the underlying causes of performance decline. What are your thoughts on this?

[7 seconds of silence]

Alison: I see you nodding Peter.

Peter: Give me more time.

Laura: If you went just to do mental skills then, it's probably true, but if you're going to go beyond that, that's what you're aiming to do now isn't it? To go beyond just going into the techniques on the surface problems, to go a bit deeper and look at the underlying causes.

Ben: I think that we have to look at what the athletes', their needs are, you know, what they want, the athletes' needs are. And by purely going in with this mental skills training approach I don't think you are meeting the athletes' needs. There are things coming out from just what you've been saying you need to be able to listen to them. Sometimes I think athletes want somebody who will sit there and listen to them. They have pressures at home with wives, spouses, family commitments, they have pressures with coaches, getting on with coaches, they have pressures with earning a living and I think sometime if you just sit there and listen to them you are being an effective consultant by just being there to listen to them, and that's where your counselling skills come in.

Helen: I do think though you can apply mental, I think there's like a bit of a distinction that doesn't necessarily have to be the case. I think you can apply mental skills training to underlying problems, or underlying causes. Like say it's a marriage that's breaking down, erm, you could sit down with an athlete and apply goal setting to their marriage. It might sound a bit, but you could, you know. If they made sure they got in straight after work three times a week instead of one, you know, that's going to help their marriage. If the dinner's when it's supposed to be or you're there when the dinner's supposed to be there, you know, it's I think, I don't know I get the impression that there's a bit of mystical aura about the underlying causes and the underlying problems and it's all a bit psychological, all a bit in-depth, and you know, we're not really there to be able to tackle it. If it's anorexia you can't do mental skills, but you probably can, you know, eat a 1,000 calories a day instead of 500 and that would probably tackle anorexia.

Laura: You're on dangerous ground there aren't you?

Helen: Oh yeah, I know, but what I mean is, like obviously I wouldn't do that! But, there doesn't necessarily have to be a distinction between using mental skills training and attacking underlying causes. You know, I think you could use them to tackle underlying causes. It's not a case of stopping mental skills training and now we're going deeper, and they no longer apply.

Alison: It might actually be better to have the word 'only' then, it has been argued that sport psychologists *only* use mental skills training.

Helen: Oh right yeah.

Alison: Would that?

Helen: Yeah, that would make it a clear distinction then yeah.

Alison: Is that a better way of...

Helen: I suppose yeah, so you're basically saying that if they'd only use mental skills training to do something that was performance-based and nothing to do with why their performance has declined. Yeah, do you understand what I mean now?

Alison: I think so. Anybody else?

[4 seconds of silence]

Alison: Does it help to have the word 'only' there?

[5 seconds of silence]

Ben: Yeah, I think it does.

Alison: Sport psychologists *only* use mental skills training.

Laura: It's a bit of a negative view to have of sport psychology though isn't it? You could say that you only do this, or they only do this and there's a whole range of people doing all different kinds of things. I think the emphasis maybe has been on that, but there are people doing different things, and that starts to come down to training.

Alison: Where do you think the emphasis has come from then?

Laura: People coming from different areas with different ways of working.

Ben: I think research has started, I mean the qualitative research has brought to the fore, you know, you're getting interviews with consultants that say basically "Mental skills training is not enough for what I'm doing with my athletes. The needs of my athletes are greater than just mental skills training. mental skills training is a technique that I can use, but I need other things, you know I need to be able to do other things."

Alison: So you've heard that particular statement before? Or a similar statement?

Ben: Well, I've seen similar stuff, but not in them words.

Peter: I think from my perspective, I'd probably concur with that. I would say that mental skills training obviously has great value, but they're predominantly emotion-focused. So what they're doing is they're tied to or hitting the result of what's come before, if you like, if you think about the process by which a response occurs, and then it affects your behaviour, so what a mental skills training package is doing is to somehow manipulate or control response. If you think about anxiety, for example, then you've got high somatic anxiety then you might use PMR [progressive muscle relaxation] or something, for example, as a sort of quick fix, this will help that response, but it isn't looking at sort of the early stages and processes, if you like, the demands, the appraisal of that the coping, things like that. I know I'm going theoretical here but I suppose what I'm saying is that those are the bits, the bits that come before the response erm, are the underlying causes. A mental skills training packages don't necessarily do that.

Ben: It's like you're controlling the response and not actually getting into why the response happened in the first place aren't you?

Helen: Couldn't it though? Couldn't it be useful to look at things like appraisal and stuff?

Peter: It depends how you're using them. If you're using them in a problem-focused way.

Andrew: Which is what you see is different from a technique on here do you?

Peter: Erm, yeah, erm, just clarify what you mean by technique-based, do you mean technique-based as in the mental skill technique, or the focusing on the technique of the athlete?

Alison: Mental skill technique.

Peter: Yeah. O.k.

Andrew: So that would be different from what you call a problem approach would it?

Peter: Erm, my understanding of mental skills training techniques, what we're talking about, are the ones that are predominantly emotion-focused, because of the way you structured the question. Now if they're not, if I'm wrong in that, then if you're saying that, well, mental skills techniques we're talking about are problem- and emotion-focused, then I would say that they do tackle the underlying causes or they can do if they're used in the right way. But that takes more time. Obviously if you go in in a problem-focused way it's a more Socratic-type of approach, whereas as traditional mental skills approaches that just hit the relief of the response are more sophist in nature.

Alison: So you go back to the word traditional. You get the sense that that is what's gone on in the past.

Peter: Yeah, that's right. I sort of initially concurred with that statement.

Andrew: I mean that same statement is directed at medical doctors.

Ben: Mm.

Peter: Yeah.

Andrew: Constantly.

Peter: Yeah.

Andrew: But I think in some ways it's very simplistic, because obviously what you present is a symptom initially, and they look at that symptom and case history tells you as a medical doctor there's likely to be four causes of that particular symptom because case history has shown that to be the case. So when you have a chest infection, it's likely to be caused by this, this, this and this. And they seem to just go down a line which says "Right, if I take the pulse, that tells me there's a good chance of that. Here's a pill to actually relieve that symptom." Which is actually

reliving the underlying cause as well to some extent I can see. I think that's how a lot of medical people would sort of look at that I guess. And I suspect that some of the time, with what you've just been saying there, Peter, is true about the approach that you use may in fact quite well tackle the underlying cause of the problem, it might well do.

Peter: Mm.

Helen: I wonder whether, in like the research that's published, sport psychologists actually do tackle the underlying causes, but because they want to write it up in a nice sort of symptom, problem-solving approach, like nice scientific kind of way, do you know what I mean? They don't mention that. Even though they know full well that they did sort of touch upon other areas or touch upon underlying causes, that for the sake of producing a nice scientific write-up, they won't mention that, they'll talk about the quick fix intervention strategy that proved very effective.

Laura: Maybe their not aware of how, you know, a few things they've done.

Helen: Or maybe they are aware.

Laura: Like just talking and listening to them, how that's helped them.

Helen: Yeah.

Laura: And they could say "Well I've done this as well, you know, I've teached them and, like arousal regulation" or whatever. So even though they have kind of dealt with the underlying things, because they've just wanted to talk about it, they've done that as we and they just think "Well that's the thing that's made the difference".

Helen: Like maybe they do know though and they want to ignore that because it'll effect the validity like the write-up if they "Well, we also had like an hour chat in the lift going down, and I sussed out this and this" do you know what I mean?

Laura: Mm.

Helen: Because it's hard to imagine that how like all these like sport psychologists have all been going around, you know, just doing this sort of like mental skills thing for like years and nobody's ever touched on the underlying problems and like sport psychology is recognised, do you know what I mean?

Ben: It seems inhumane doesn't it?

Helen: It just seems impossible I think.

Andrew: Or it might be that you haven't seen it written up, because it's very difficult to write-up that because nobody wants to publish that kind of stuff.

Ben: Yeah.

Helen: Yeah.

Laura: Mm.

Andrew: So what you're really talking about here is where priorities on publishing goes and yes, they nearly always go towards scientific, at the moment, hard scientific. It's very hard to find journals that publish anything else.

Helen: Mm. But it's not to say that the experiments weren't, er didn't touch upon these things.

Andrew: Or that they were writing up support, which we were talking about, rather than just straight research, yes. No you're right.

Helen: Mm, yeah.

Andrew: I'm sure.

Helen: But maybe they just sort of ignored it for career purposes to get stuff published, I don't know.

Alison: I don't know, you can't.

Helen: Because nobody knows what went on unless you were there really.

Alison: O.k. that's a nice ending. Erm, was there anything that we've missed? The aim of the focus group was to explore on thoughts on counselling skills in sport psychology, is there anything that you'd like to mention now that you feel has been missed?

[5 seconds silence]

Alison: No?

Ben: Just I think, I sense from the group that we do seem to know, you know, that there is an inherent need for counselling skills within sport psychology consultancy. And we've got, you know, one of the top sport psychologists in the room who's actually saying so. It gives me confidence to...

Helen: But nobody even knows what sport psychology is though, like athletes.

Ben: That's exactly true, and it's partly our responsibility you know, to educate people and to know what their expectations of us are.

Helen: But we don't know what they. I don't know what it is, do you know what I mean?

Ben: But that's part of the thing isn't it? To go and find out, we need to find out what athletes' expectations are.

Helen: Yeah.

Ben: Because at the minute we've got sport psychologists telling sport psychologists how to train to be sport psychologists. Do you know what I mean? We've not got the input from other people saying...

Laura: Like who?

Helen: I was going to say!

Ben: Well your athletes, your coaches. Who do you work with? Get them to tell you what they need.

Laura: Well surely that's an individual thing that you do when you first go into your consultation.

Ben: No, I'm saying is like...

Laura: In a consultation, you've got find out what they want then.

Ben: No, research, a piece of research that can find out, for example, professional football, right, where it's going to get to the stage now where were going to be starting to send in sport psychologists into clubs, working in clubs, right? Now if we go in with this mental skills package that we've got, right? And we go in there, I can do imagery, I can do goal setting, I can that, that, that. That might not be what they want, we don't know exactly. We don't know exactly what they want. That's what I'm saying, we need to find out exactly what they want.

Laura: But you can't, you've got to do that on each thing that you go into because everyone's different, everyone wants different things. You can't say that every football club will want exactly the same thing...

Ben: Well it's true.

Laura: ...because they won't.

Ben: That's true, but, you know, what we're saying here is that there is more of a need than just mental skills training.

Andrew: You'd do a needs analysis wouldn't you? And that's what I would see you as doing anyway. It's interesting because I've been reviewing a lot of lottery applications over the last four years for money, and looking at the sport science input of that. It's very interesting to see what they actually put down in the physiology and psychology and what have you, about what they intend to do, and that's quite interesting really in itself. And I for one, if I see that they haven't got the words 'Needs analysis' in there then I immediately write a report to that effect. That, you know, unless they've been working with that particular group or team for a long time, so I suspect that's what you're actually both touching on, I suspect. Because it is about a needs analysis which is different for different groups, and then you find t out and then you see where your limitations are, and then you set out, you know, your goals, your rules and your roles, I guess, you know, as normal, and where your boundaries are going to lie as far as they're concerned.

Laura: But it's still hard for them to say what they need if they don't know what you can offer.

Andrew: Well that, I think becomes part of the prelim needs analysis as well about that. And it's, you know, often when you go into a particular group like that, it's also about erm, finding out whether they all have the same perceptions about if there is a particular problem there or the same perception about what they think is needed for enhancement.

Laura: Mm.

Ben: Mm.

Andrew: Erm, as if you're go into industry and doing the same thing, what you're asking, one of the, certainly, rules that I have is that people ask me to come I say "Yes, I'm prepared to come in, prepared to come, but providing you allow me to talk to other people besides yourself". And what I'm looking at is the people who are likely to have an impact on that a particular performer.

Ben: Mm.

Laura: Mm.

Andrew: That's who I want to interview and I identify who those people are who are likely to impact on that person's performance and talk to them, as I see it. Once I know that, then it means that at least I can see lots of different perspectives about what's going on, and then I can then

together make a presentation saying "That you can, maybe I can deal with this, maybe I can't, you know, as I understand the problem".

Ben: But the way we are at the moment we are just being told what to give, sort of thing, aren't we within BASES? BASES are telling us what to go out and give. But we don't really know whether we're being effective.

Andrew: I don't see it that way. I don't see it telling us what to give. I think what they're saying is "These are the limitations that you have to work under if you want to be called accredited, and you want us to cover you".

Ben: Mm.

Andrew: I see that slightly different. I mean you could say that, but I think their guidelines are saying "Don't go beyond these boundaries because this is what we've actually accredited you for. If you've got additional ones that's fine" or what have you. I suspect it's slightly cautious of them.

SUMMARY

Alison: O.k. I need to wrap it up there. Right [], the summariser.

Summarise: I suppose overall people seem to have the consensus that interpersonal skills are different from listening skills, as interpersonal skills are related to personal attributes and style more than the refined question of listening. So, it was possible to differentiate on that. I got a sense that was a consensus view.

This notion of what counselling was, I got the sense that, you know, counselling skills was pretty well understood and everybody had a pretty clear view of what constituted counselling skills. I wasn't sure that a consensus got reached initially on what counselling was, and then towards the end, you could see that that consensus did get firmed up because there began to be discussions on grey areas and therapeutic, the term therapeutic came very late on, and my sense there was that the group had reached a point where they understood they might have to hand on in certain situations, and so words like superficial and therapeutic began to kind of get banded around.

My sense was there was a general feeling there that people could engage in, if you like, counselling to a degree, and I was sensing some unevenness here, people could engage in counselling to a degree and the degree of that counselling would depend on their training. And that is a comfort zone that possibly everybody would find difficult to standardise, you know, that someone could, for example, be trained upto diploma, you know, or certificate level and opt out of a situation much earlier than somebody else might who has trained to the same levels. So you would, do you know what I mean?

There's this sense of kind of handing it on. Andrew mentioned notions or so of, you know, kind of, erm, training to be teacher trained and so on, and so again coming on from this notion of the group's view of 'formal', 'formal' training, I sensed er, I sensed that there was an acceptance that as you move forward, as sport psychology moves forward, inevitably this formalisation of training will become a factor, you know, if you look back it hasn't done, but if you look forward it's difficult to see in ten years if it won't become more prominent. I was just sensing that from the flow of the conversation. Although presently what counts as formal maybe just something that's debatable.

Finally, I got a sense that the group didn't think that sport psychologists just did mental training. I think there was a feeling that they had mental skills training to offer, but they would also be able to respond, if you like, in a more informal way, more humanistic fashion on personal issues which are, not detached from sports performance, but implicated within some strand or some thread. So if an athlete should have an argument with his father in the car on the way to the venue, then that wouldn't be a detached incident, I mean it wouldn't something that you would expect the group, I sensed, of sport psychologists to shut the door on erm, necessarily. However, it may not necessarily be something that they would zone in on with mental skills training. Maybe just sit there, give that for ten minutes to settle down before they go and get ready for competition just to get something off their chest basically. So a lot of the points seem to be kind of, if you like, spinning around, and a lot of the general consensus points on the big issues, you know there were not separate issues raised every time every time we flipped the chart, but issues were being resurfaced.

Anyway, that was just my sense, but just one final thing which did occur to me which I haven't mentioned was this notion of differentiation. For example, interpersonal skills seems vital, listening skills vital in all situations, counselling skills vital depending on what your remit was, depending on how you work, and counselling vital depending how you work. There were interesting points raised there whether people actually knew how they work. You know, you can say that things are, you know, kind of, er, if you were working in a humanistic context, then counselling skills are essential, whereas if you were taking a more sophist view of sport psychology, a mental skills driven view maybe, in isolation, then that wouldn't be such an issue, you know. I got hints later that there was queries about whether you're aware of that, you know, that if you didn't know where you were coming from that could even compound that thinking.

That was just my view, I'm not sure if I said anything that seems to be misrepresented. And again of course everybody's given their view, and that's just mine. It's strange isn't it? That's just my interpretation of all your interpretations.

FOCUS GROUP 2

Alison: Right, I recently sent out a questionnaire, which some of you filled out actually for me last year, and it was to accredited sport psychologists, trainee sport psychologists and athletes. This questionnaire asked for information on, amongst other things, qualities of a sport psychologist, erm, and what support athletes wanted from sport psychologists. Several similar terms and themes were coming up from this and I realised some seemed to be using the same terms but in different ways, as if they were meaning something slightly different. So, what I was wondering was if I could get your ideas and thoughts on the different terms, we'll start off going through four different terms that seem to have come up, erm, so I'd like to start with listening skills. Could you tell me what listening skills mean to you?

[3 seconds silence]

Kick off anybody.

Adam: Well from my point of view, I think of listening skills in some specific ways, one of the first ways is: am I actually hearing what the person is saying to me, and words they are using? The second thing is: am I understanding what they're saying from the intention of what they mean, not what I think they should be saying. So that is purely accuracy of information, accuracy of intention are the main things. I use that very broadly.

Listening skills within a counselling context is, starts with that, for me, and then progresses to 'Do I understand what they might be *feeling* about what they're saying, or their underlying beliefs about the specific situation they're talking about?' So it's trying to give more of a personal meaning of what they're talking about.

Bill: I think for me, listening skills in a one-to-one situation with an athlete is enabling them to say what they want to say and giving them the space to do that. I think sometimes you can almost get into a debate with them and actually interrupt the flow of conversation. Thinking back to earlier days when I was training, and I think to me the listening side of it is giving them the, they stop when they want to stop and you're not intervening, or recognise sometimes you can intervene, but when it's applicable to do that.

Kevin: And I also think, I agree with both of what you're saying, in addition I think it's asking the right questions. It's asking the questions that will facilitate the answers that you're looking for, erm, the question that are going to draw upon emotional response, to draw upon the true meaning to the statements, to the problem, if it's a presenting problem that they want resolving. In sport psychology you need to find out as soon as possible what that problem is, what the issues is that they want to work on, and asking the right questions that then...

Bill: The guy who supervised me erm, there was a forum once of sport and exercise psychologists there, and somebody asked him the question "What was the key skill he felt?" and he said "It was asking perceptive questions" which would echo what you [Kevin] said, that a lot of people can listen, but it's the ones who can spot when to ask the right question.

Alison: Would you say that's part of listening skills then?

Kevin: Yes.

Bill: I think it is, because if you don't listen, you don't pick up on, you won't enable yourself to pick up the perceptive question.

Kevin: I think it is the most important skill that I have, is the ability to listen. It's giving time, it's allowing the emotion to enter into the thought, it's allowing the interaction to be comfortable, but that's all prompted by asking the right questions.

Henry: It's been quite good listening to you all speak there! I've actually picked up a lot more about listening skills than I probably ever knew before in terms of how you categorised it into its specific components. I think to add something, erm, in terms of, I think maybe it's an indirect skill associated with listening, but actually making sure that you are switched on at the times when you know your athlete or performer is saying erm, almost expressing words most meaningful to them.

So for example, if you've got a player after a match or a competition that they've performed in erm, knowing when they are most likely to want to talk about it, or most likely to express and reflect in a way which is going to make them improve. Being able to be there and, at that time, being able to listen to what they have to say, I think that's a skill in itself. So there's being able to listen at the right time and knowing when your athlete's going to talk which adds to the skill itself. But I agree with everything that's been said so far.

Kevin: And I find that the most draining emotionally, in terms of my own energy, that I have to be switched on all the time. When I'm with a client, if it's a group, especially a team, because you never know when that moment is going to arise and this is the time that I have to be paying attention, this is when all my energy has to be focused on listening appropriately and hearing the right response, and I come away from some sessions just drained because it's so much energy.

Adam: This is the, I think erm, the part of listening or listening skills which is so misunderstood, because the person who is listening well appears not to be doing anything it's therefore seen as something which is passive. There's a phrase that is used called 'active listening', which is what I understand, from what we're talking about, it is trying to understand what somebody is trying to say, even though the words they're using may be clumsy. I think that's the point that you're making, it's being able to distinguish between what seems important from what doesn't seem important, and the judgement of what's important is not mine as the listener, it is the person themselves. So it may seem, what may seem as a minor incident to me, in fact something I may have been oblivious to in an interaction, may have been a critical event for somebody that has side-tracked them away from their performance.

Kevin: I recently was talking to an athlete and it was the first time I had met her and I asked her if there was anything she wanted to talk about and she said "No", I said, you know, "Any problems with training?" "No" "So what you been doing recently?" and an hour later we finished talking and all of these issues, you know, start coming up that she has problems with travelling and eating and her coach and it goes on and on and on. It's prompting that willingness to talk and that comes from paraphrasing, you know, "Well I think what I hear you saying is that you and your coach aren't getting along, is that right?" "Oh it's not that we don't get along, but we have some communication problems" "Well what does that mean 'a communication problem'?" I just go on and on and you're right [Adam] it is *not* passive listening at all.

Adam: It's interesting that you're talking about paraphrasing, we've been talking about the perceptive question at the right time, the moment when you do something. I find the most challenging thing about, what I would refer to as a good listening skill, is knowing when to keep quiet because actually keeping quiet and allowing the person to make a decision as to whether to say more or not to say more, because although there may be quiet I'm of the opinion, certainly with one particular [athlete] who I talk with, and they feel quite embarrassed and I think at times quite ashamed as to some of the things they talk about. And there's an internal struggle making a decision "Should I or shouldn't I voice this concern? Will he judge me in some negative way or not?" and sometimes just being quiet and giving even permission to say "It's O.k. when you're ready" I think is a, it's one of the least obvious listening skills, but for me one of *the* most important.

Bill: I think there's some situations where the listening skills, you have to be at your very best and even then, sometimes that's not good enough when you're working with big squad situations and maybe you're just up for a day and you've got to see X amount of people and they pencil in 15 minutes with each person, and you've got to be in there asking perceptive questions from the first minute and I find them quite, you know you were saying [Kevin] about quite draining. To actually sit there for three hours and you don't, just when you feel sometimes you're getting somewhere with somebody, you've got to get to the key issues in 15 minutes, and this is where I see counselling as being a facilitator and helping people come to their own decisions or conclusions about things. I think sometimes that's, a sport psychologist *has* to also provide advice, and this is where the intervention or sometimes the mental skills comes into it, where just discussion is enough, whereas there's other times where you've also got to intervene and give advice on how you might tackle this, rather than, I think the counselling course I, counselling skills course I did was based around listening and facilitating the person's own understanding of themselves and their problems. I think

sometimes you can go as far as that and then you're placed in another situation that you're there as the advisor, you have to equip them with the skill and that's I find that quite tough sometimes.

Adam: You make some judgements as to how far to go and when to stop listening and start being active.

Bill: Yes.

Adam: It is a judgement call.

Bill: Yeah.

Adam: From mainstream psychological background, there's a very big difference I find between the person who is listening to provide a support, for someone to blow off steam basically, then, just chatting if you like, then there's counselling and counselling psychology, which is producing some kind of emotional change. I think there's a whole area of sport psychology that is not to do with emotional change, but to do with knowledge. You were talking about somebody who had problems with fitting into a timetable different aspects of their training, work or study, for example. I remember talking with er, a youth tennis player who had, in the course of the week had already scheduled something like 40 hours of time already preplanned, and come Monday morning 40 hours of her week was booked, at 15. Erm, there was a problem with tennis or there wasn't a problem with this, the problem was there was just too much, not enough time for her. That was a judgement I made. So there's listening and understanding and in that situation it's one of advice-giving and saying "Well do you appreciate that part of the pressure you're under is function of just the environment you're living in." It is not to do with specifically one thing, it's the context and everything. So I suspect there is a question of 'When do you stop being the listener and start being "an expert"?'

Bill: Yeah, because I think of where sometimes what you're doing there, with lots of time you can let them explore change themselves of what are the options open to them, and kept to, I think well sometimes you have to step in and say "Well in this situation why don't you think about this, this and this?" and I think that's maybe where you're not listening anymore and you're, you've flipped into what you call expert, an expert mode.

Alison: Are you saying that there is like a time and a place to use listening skills, and there is a time and a place to advise?

Bill: I think a lot of it for me is probably time constraints rather than, I don't know, rather than, go on...

Henry: I was thinking as when you're looking as a coach, for example, with a player or let's say as a mental skills coach I think it's very difficult to not listen and not advise if you try and look at sport-specific, say, technical skill rather than mental skill, I got a good example even from just this morning, about the importance of being perceptive or being switched on when a pupil starts making a comment to you about their performance. Erm, working with one girl, and this was simply as her coach not necessarily as a mental skills coach, and erm but she's trying to develop her own independent thinking about her own [game] and where she's going with it, and er we've had some well let's say some problems, not problems, but more importantly, er, indications that sometimes she can't make her own decisions, er she's not really developing a great awareness tactically of the game. And in this particular session erm, we had a drill where I said "I will rate you out of 10 for a particular down-the-line shot that she was playing and er, she had about three or four shots in and I'd prefer a rating of 9,8,7 and I gave her three on one occasion and, erm, the first thing she said to me "I can understand the sevens and the eights, but why the three?". I could have said, I could have just said "Oh, because of this, because of that", but, erm, the most impressive thing was that she had actually questioned me on why I'd actually rated her on a three and wanted to find out more about it, find out more about technically done incorrectly, which I told her, I talked it through with her, erm, but they did reinforce her after that, you know, "It's good to see you actually questioning my actual rating, finding out why I did rate it, because the actual purpose was to try and find out if you could have some sort of opinion for yourself". If I hadn't have been switched on it might have been that that was it, but I was able to try it at least reinforce to her "Well that's exactly the kind of quality and that you should be having it as a player. You will be able to question, if you have an opinion, more importantly trying to search out for reasons why that was only a three out of 10 and look for reasons to try to produce an 8 out of 10 shot.

Alison: You know when you say you were switched on, do you mean that you had your listening skills switched on at that moment in time, what do you mean by switched on?

Henry: No, I suppose my listening skills I don't just switch them on and off, they are always on, but I have to process that information that I had picked up and heard and almost like, assess the value of it. In the sense that I could have just heard it and then just given her some sort of technical feedback and that was it, but to me it was more important that I actually stopped the [next stage] coming in and we came [together] and discussed it. More importantly, because what I wanted to get out that erm, particular scenario was to reinforce to her the importance of her questioning or her raising the issue of "Why did you score the 3?" that's a sign of a person who is thinking on their feet and a person who is looking to try and improve aspects of their game. So I think it's listening skills, in terms of active listening, the point that was made there is that it's not just about taking information or hearing it, but it's also about making sure you process it correctly and it has a consequence, you know for helping the person out.

Adam: One of the things, what I'm hearing is...

Kevin: Good active listening skills!

Alison: Mm.

Adam: ...is erm, as a counsellor, let's say for example, I'm in a session and I'm hearing all kinds of things because I have a certain body of expert knowledge, based on learning etc., etc., that it is going on in the background, so to speak in my mind. That is going on in the background and then I'm hearing what has been said to me, occasionally I'm doing what I referred to earlier as 'information gathering listening', which is just making sure I've understood what is said and I've heard, actually heard what has been said to me. Then what seems to happen for me, and I notice other people are training, is they say something, or the way in which they say it triggers something in my mind which says "There is more to this comment than meets the eye". It may not be the words they use that maybe erm, and inflection and sound or the tone of voice, it may be erm, a change of where they look. But there's some non-verbal cue that just says "There is more to this" and that is using the expert knowledge plus experience to filter information, and then to guide down relevant channels. And the point that you were making Kevin, about what is relevant, and being perceptive and incisive in questioning, and you are saying Bill about having a short period of time, the better that experience and the more acute one's ability to identify the issues from the peripheral things, the more effective one can be, and that to me is where the energy is, is in that kind of role called perception. Plus something we've not said but something I would call professional intuition, just giving a sense for no apparent reason, but a sense of - that's important. If I give you an example, yesterday I was refereeing in a tournament, and there were two people I was refereeing, at the end of the [event] one lost, both were [competing] on the same squad one is younger and got ahead earlier and got beaten, and in the end they were walking away swearing to themselves and in tears, and I went and looked at them, I started walking with them and I looked at this guy and I asked him "Are you listening to me?" and he said "No not really" and I said "Well can you hear me then?". And that got his attention. There was nothing he said that led me to conclude that, other than a sense that I could talk to this guy but all I would do is bounce off a brick wall and I didn't know the guy very well. Now that is listening by observation and I would not like to separate out unless you are using telephone conversation, for example. I think that you get a lot of feedback observation of the non-verbal, well perhaps you can call it non-verbal listening if you like.

[10 seconds of silence]

Alison: Did you have a different, presumably you two (Bill and Henry) have presumably less counselling skills training, did you have a different view of the listening skills were?

Bill: I don't think so, I think a lot of what you've talked about it - paraphrasing and non-verbal communication and nodding and mm and showing signs that you're listening. I think I've covered all of those it's probably to what depth and what experience you've had in the training process and actually getting better at those.

Henry: I think I actually do, I think I do actually do all those things. I suppose I don't think about doing those things when I'm actually doing those things, if you see what I mean. Most of my work is probably with younger sports performers and I'm always fairly vigilant, I'm always let's say yeah

I'm always doing those things with them on and off [the playing area], and also particularly I also particularly pay great attention to what goes on between the coach (the actual individual coach of the players) and the players themselves. Because I've got a good opportunity in my work to actually go onto [the playing area] with the coach and player and just observe and listen and interact as the coach works with the player with me wandering about at one end or the other of the [playing area]. So that's probably built in my qualities to do that to at a junior level. At a senior level I probably done less of that because I probably have less contact with senior athletes. But I'll tell you one environment where I do do a lot of listening is in social environments with people, you are actually, you know, intermixing, milling with friends and people you don't really know or colleagues at conferences for example, er, I tend to be always switched on about exactly erm you know, what they're saying to me and also what I'm saying to them, and also trying to you work it out, for example, what they think of me or what the actual interaction is taking shape. I've always, that's almost been like a personal interest of mine, the coffee table phenomenon, at the dinner table just scanning the room, scanning the actual table itself and seeing well who is listening to each other who is not and who is taking an interest in this and who is not and things like that. I probably think that even just that skill or that interest of listening from a social point of view probably enhances my skills in a coaching or psychology sense as well.

Bill: I think you pick up situations where you recognise that people want somebody to listen to them...

Henry: Yeah.

Bill: ...and I think I recognise my blocks to listening. If I'm going in with an agenda, I recognise now when I've gone too far with that, when I'm actually going to talk to somebody but I'm not really going to listen to what they've got to say, I just want to get my piece over. So what I think I've got better in that respect, I recognise where I'm quite poor.

Henry: You also have the people who want to listen to you...

Bill: Yeah.

Henry: ...quite easily. I mean you're pleasantly surprised by the ones who are who you can tell are taking an interest in what you are saying.

Kevin: You definitely remember them!

Henry: Those are the people who you probably want to attach yourself to because they've realised, you know, what I'm saying is obviously important to them, but you also sometimes get a bit deflated by people who just obviously aren't taking anything in, erm, and it might well even be of the opposite sex, for example, when you're talking to them to thinking "I'm clearly getting nowhere and that's it". You know it's as simple as that, I mean obviously the ones who do listen in that sort of situation are the ones who actually build a bit more confidence. So I think there's natural things that happen in life which make you much sharper, much more sort of er, what's the word? Erm, make you listening to them a much more valuable skill to possess, so you need to make sure that you listen to them, particularly if you're interested in that person and what they have to say.

Alison: We are going to go on and talk a little bit about training later, but in terms of listening skills, just sticking with listening skills, do you think you need to be trained in how to listen or can you go with what you've got?

Adam: Erm, I think my view is biased with my background, I categorically would say that training is required and the primary reason is the one the Bill was just talking about which is, it is summarised in this nutshell in a discussion with myself and one other person arguing with an agenda, the question is 'whose needs are being met at this moment if I'm there to help somebody else?' If I'm there in a formal sense to help somebody else say in a sport psychology role, I'm there to meet their needs in a particular way and the awareness of when I'm not doing that are numerous and subtle, and are quite significant in the outcome, of the of the interaction.

Kevin: My experience has been to that if you don't have good listening skills you will not be an effective sport psychologist. Some people are better at it than others, er, in general a broad generalisation, women tend to be better than men. But the men that are attracted to counselling, and sport psychology I include in that, tend to be better than a lot of men who were attracted to other kinds of careers, accountancy or engineering perhaps. But no matter how good you are you can do it better, and I think that this requires an education. I think the supervised experience that BASES provides

its excellent because it allows individuals to get those, to develop those skills in a relatively safe environment where they've got someone to fall back upon if they do something inappropriate.

Whether or not you need to have formal training, formal education I'm not sure.

Alison: We'll come back to that later. I'm just wondering about listening skills.

Bill: I think there's certain types of people who are naturally better than others, but without doubt you can improve. As I look back to myself, in what was a relatively short course, I think I benefited enormously from it. Just in terms of becoming aware of myself and how I listen to people.

Henry: Yeah I agree with that totally. I think it would be nice to see what kind of the methods that a listening expert or teacher would adopt to try and help people listen more effectively and then see if those methods are the same things that I tend to practice on a daily basis by being observant and listening to everything that's around me. Possibly too much as well, you know, sometimes I'm criticised of listening to too many things and maybe getting the wrong end of the stick because my ears are always open to things. But it would be quite interesting to see what kind of message that a tutor would recommend and try and include that kind of skill.

Alison: OK, have you got another point? No? Well another term, well it was a theme that came up, so it wasn't just listening skills, but this theme came up an awful lot as well

Kevin: These are themes that individuals would like to have formal training on?

Alison: No, this was going back to the original questionnaire that I sent out.

Kevin: Right.

Alison: The kind of support that athletes wanted, and the qualities of a sport psychologist, they were actually saying this.

Kevin: The athletes?

Alison: The athletes were saying this particularly, and the sport psychologists. Also as a general theme there were many different areas to this, but as a general theme this was one that was coming up as well, as well as people saying listening skills are important. What do you understand by the term "interpersonal skills"?

Bill: I'm just thinking, like the Partington and Orlick - the consultant evaluation form, there's, some of the broad questions about, I'm pretty sure there's something in there about listening and I think it said something like "fitting in with the team" and they just think of the work I do when you're in a team situation you meet a range of characters and I think it's being able to adapt to that different person. You can be in a group of people and you can be sort of like switching the way you deal with people very, very quickly and I think you can get some quite difficult people to work with.

Kevin: That's artificially though, you have to be honest...

Bill: Yeah.

Kevin: ...and sincere...

Bill: Yeah.

Kevin: ...with your interaction. You can't just be pretend that you are interested in everyone. There maybe some people that you're not going to have an interpersonal relationship with.

Bill: Yeah, but being able to actually, you can dislike somebody but being professionally in that situation that you have to offer them the same service.

Kevin: Yeah.

Bill: That's an interpersonal skill I think.

Henry: I suppose it's the difference between not being everybody's friend and in the team situation, but being everybody's facilitator within a group situation, or even if you don't necessarily like them on a personal level, you can be facilitating their performance, on a professional level, so being facilitatory in that sense.

Bill: Mm. But it's almost like you know, how to get to their, you know, what their pitch is, what language. I think to me what language you use with somebody else, like I might swear at one person

Henry: Yeah.

Bill: Because that's their level, and another person, it might be quite an intellectual conversation, so I think that would probably come under that [interpersonal skills].

Kevin: Knowing your audience...

Bill: Yeah.

Kevin: ...is really important.

Adam: Again because of the mainstream background that I'm coming to this, there are levels of this. Now to me interpersonal skills, at the broadest level, refers to any kind of relationship between two or more people. That could be two people who ignore each other, to two people who are very close, be it professionally or personally. Both examples are demonstrating certain kinds of skills, I would prefer it the second to the first, but both happen. So to me the interpersonal skills are located in the space between the people, that intangible abstract space between the people. Whereas the listening skills I have them in my head, interpersonal skills would be the paraphrasing, summarising, the bits happening between us. How am I demonstrating what am I thinking or feeling, it's through words or gesture or other means.

Alison: Are you saying there that listening skills are within interpersonal skills, is that what you've have just said?

Henry: Mm.

Adam: What I'm saying is listening skills have a path which happens inside my head that you can't see unless I tell you or show you in some way. The methods I use to you are some interpersonal skills. I can choose to show you in that way of swearing, I can choose in a way of being very intellectual, I may be trying to express the same thing but the way in which I express it is audience-dependent, if you like. So that what I would see, the communication between the people, and that it can be, it's been mentioned hasn't it? Professional, you don't have to like someone to work with them, for example.

Kevin: It can be much broader, or more narrow, whatever it is, to things like how you react, to how you dress. Do you want to try to be their friend? Do you want to just be distanced? Do you want to just be a coach? Are you a consultant first, coach second? Consultant second? Interacting with parents may be different from interacting with children, than with the coach, than with the director. Again it's that awareness of who you are talking to and how close you want to get to that individual and how much do you want to show all of yourself to that individual. Things like dress, how you dress, are very important. Working with the client, if you come being overly dressed up that will turn off some clients and they will think "that person is not approachable". If you come in a like Henry is, in a tracksuit, for most clients they see that as a better approach, because they can relate to you, you are just like us. You may have a degree, you are may have an elevated position, but it doesn't matter because you are just one of us. You know, you've got dirty shoes and a T shirt that's ripped and falling apart (Henry doesn't!), but in general. That's all part of the interpersonal skills. I've often thought about those things before I go to meet a client, you know, do I want to have long hair? Do I want to have a beard? Erm your jewellery, are you going to wear a watch? Those things can all be very important non-verbal cues.

Bill: I noticed once when I went to work with golf think I had a light sweatshirt on from some work I had done before, and then I went in and the session was held up in the clubhouse and I was immediately not in with the dress code. The lads changed from their golfing gear, they walked into the clubhouse and they're immediately changed and its very, very smart dress. Now I immediately felt "Well I've made a big mistake here".

Kevin: How do you know that in advance though?

Bill: Because nothing was said, that was a big oversight.

Adam: I think if you're talking about some specific skills in that situation, erm one of the most important interpersonal skills to facilitate communication is what I would refer to as "construct of humour". Again if you are not naturally a humorous person don't try it, because it will come across as fake. If you do see, if there is a funnier side to something, and you pick the moment obviously, as we said earlier, it can go a long way to overcoming things because it shows some things that are implied but not said, it empathises with the person.

Bill: I think the humour bit is important because so often you go and talk to groups for the first time, and the negative connotations of a sport psych and that's a barrier you have to overcome quite a lot and I think humour is a really important in that, and getting to the right level, and the pitch and making them feel comfortable with you. I think that I am not afraid to make myself the butt of

jokes and to try and encourage them. I'm just thinking about the interpersonal things as well, with the [team sport], it's clear that you get some people you know that you are working with and you can work well with and others are just totally not interested in what you do. Part of the interpersonal skills, again is not forcing if you're talking to a group, I say "Look this is the way I work, these are the things I do, if you're not interested, you're interested and I'm fine". Because I'd rather have half an hour with you than two 15 minute sessions and you're not the slightest bit interested. I'd rather have half an hour of quality time with somebody else. And [] says he's changed his attitude towards that now, where he'll ask for 15 minutes with everyone and then you make a decision. And I'm still, at the moment, I'd still go for the 'You take it as it comes and if you like it then you can buy into it'. That's an area I'm really concerned about with this interpersonal bit - is not trying to force it.

Kevin: That's the big issue though, we could get into, whether or not athletes should be required to have mental skills training or it should be an option. But we could spend many hours on that. I don't know if that's relevant?

Bill: But interpersonal skills are vital then if you are forced into it, they're vital.

Kevin: Yes, true. You're right.

Adam: Making a tactful change, one of the things I've found in interpersonal skills, we've spoken about language erm, there's a squad I work with and there's a sub-group within that that I purely have psychological input in a sport psych. point of view, and there are about two people who will have more or less a formal sit down chat about things. One of them might say "I have confidence problem with this particular coming, can I have a chat with you about it?" In literally those sorts of words. there's another person that would have similar difficulty but wouldn't say it. They would communicate in all kinds of other more subtle ways. So knowing the person, and invariably with that person, it's probably erm, a three-minute conversation from one end of the gym to the other putting kit away, is where that concern is aired. And that is enough for that person because their concern has been noted, that's all they want. They don't want anything else. Other people want advice or suggestions. All this person wants to know is they've been heard and that's quite sufficient. So, that's a different kind of skill - to be casual, to, whilst packing away kit, talking about something else, all starting with something neutral and safe and then say "Is there a reason why you asked me this question?" Guessing that we might agree, that gives the person an honourable way of saying "Actually there wasn't". Whether there was or wasn't is not the point, and if there was then that could lead to a discussion. So these are the sort of skills I would, have used.

Alison: It sounds like interpersonal skills is a very broad area really isn't it?

Adam: Yes.

Alison: Yep. I'm going to make it more specific now, another term which came up from the sport psychologists and trainees, not the athletes [writing on flip chart] is counselling skills. What do you understand by that term, counselling skills?

Kevin: To separate it, from listening skills and interpersonal skills?

Alison: Yep. Yeah, I mean in a way, do you distinguish between them as well? Is another question.

Adam: For me superficially they could be synonymous. Erm, looking beyond the superficial surface erm, counselling to me has an implication, it may be my own view. The implication of counselling is there is some agreement that somebody would like something to be different. There's almost this, it could be formal, but it is an informal contract between the client and myself, say I've got this "I'm going to talk to you about a problem which I would like to be different". So to me counselling skills implies listening which is the understanding of what the issues or issues are about, understanding some of the emotional consequences of those issues, which could be specific to the sport, or could be more general to the person and that would come out from the listening. Thirdly, some way of negotiating a change, and the way in which that change is negotiated depends on another label which is the model of how you counsel. What approach do you use to promote change? They would come under training issues perhaps.

Kevin: I think that's excellent because how I separate mental skills training, educational training from counselling is that third part. It's that negotiation of change. You can provide an education, you

can provide advice, you can say "Here is what, here is how goal setting works, here's what imagery's all about". But until you actually sit down and say "This is where you are at point A, this is where you want to be at point B, how are we going to get there? Is there something I can do to facilitate that?" That's when that becomes counselling in my opinion.

Alison: It's interesting that you use the term 'counselling', and I specifically put up 'counselling skills'. Because the next term that I wanted you to discuss was 'counselling'. Do you make a distinction between the two?

Adam: Counselling skills is, for me they start, they're what I refer to as generic counselling skills which are founded on listening. The classic ones are warmth, empathy and genuineness, the classic ones, demonstrated through active listening. They are generic foundation core skills.

Kevin: Counselling is a process, counselling skills facilitate the process.

Alison: I'm going to write that up now [writing 'counselling' on flip chart]. What I'd like from you is what do you mean by each one? And do you distinguish between them?

Adam: I would go with Kevin.

Kevin: Counselling is a process that facilitates change, and counselling skills enable that facilitating. Those include the interpersonal skills, the listening skills, the theoretical underpinning that you use for the advice that you give. The tools of information, mental skills training that you use to provide the change. The amount of time that it takes to facilitate the change, that's all part of the counselling process.

Bill: To me, I think it comes into levels of competency as well. It's almost like these [the words on the flip chart] are levels of proficiency. Where I always remember something from the course I did, you know, you're not a counsel-lor, you have undergone, you know, your skills might have been increased and that, I think that's a lot of what you said about, they would fit into that. Listening and interpersonal skills fit into these counselling skills. But counselling to me demonstrates some level of competency at that some prior agreed, whether it be a qualification or something, that you are now a trained counsel-lor.

Kevin: I hope the next term you put up there is therapist. Because that's really where I start to think that there is a distinction between what I do and what I don't do. Er, I think sport psychologists are fooling themselves if they are not considering themselves counsellors. Because if a counsellor counsels, then that counselling process is being done by a sport psychologist, unless they are just providing an education, saying "Here is the information, here is the techniques, go read it, I'll give you some books some pamphlets, go read it on your own, or I'll explain it to you, but I'm not going to facilitate you're use of it". Once you get into facilitating use of it, and you start listening and you start hearing things that you weren't expecting to hear perhaps, and it starts becoming more counselling than it is just education. I think we all do that. I think the, I don't think there's a fine line, I think we do it. I think there's a fine line between counselling and psychotherapy. But even a lot of contemporaries would disagree with me especially if you're speaking of say cognitive - behavioural therapy. What I do is pretty much cognitive - behavioural therapy. But perhaps the, I'm intervening at a less neurotic, psychotic level.

Henry: I suppose from my opinion from listening, again listening to that, erm, is the issues that I've always had a view that sport psychologists have seen counselling, the term counselling as when an athlete has a problem and it's about perhaps using mental skills training techniques to work on that problem, but it's the athlete that brings the problem to you first and you talk through it and then sort of try and remedy it with change, rather than the positive view that you took Kevin about that counselling is just part of the mental skills training education process that we are facilitating at the same time rather than just giving information and letting them walk away with it. So I think that certainly erm, you know if you look at the term counsel to be an expert adviser to facilitate that process, then everything that I do is counselling with a sport performer. But the connotation comes through that when you are counselling you are almost like er, dealing with a person in a crisis, for example and working through that, possibly by giving advice on mental training techniques. Certainly that's the feeling I would have found even though it's nice to hear that that's not necessarily the case.

Kevin: I think the big problem is that in protecting our turf, the psychologist from the kinesiologist from the counsellors from the Chartered or licensed individuals all want to say that "Because I have a licence or because I'm chartered or because I have a degree in counselling then I'm the only one that's trained to do that and I'm the only one who should be allowed to call myself a psychologist or call myself a counsellor", rather than embracing the differences that we have and agree that what we do is similar than trying to separate and compartmentalise ourselves and protect our turf and say that nobody else can do this. If you're not a chartered psychologist then you can't call yourself a psychologist. You know, if you don't have a degree in counselling, you can't call yourself a counsellor. Er, I don't agree with that.

Adam: Can I ask you a question [Kevin] what you were saying a moment ago, is it possible for somebody to use counselling skills without counselling?

Kevin: Very much so. Erm, if we are including things like the interpersonal skills and the listening skills then yes. Er, if we preface counselling, if we define counselling as the process of change, facilitating the process of change, you could just hear someone say that "I want to learn about goal setting", "Oh okay, here is a book about goal setting. Try it and let me know if it works. If it doesn't work I'll try to tinker with it a little bit and get you back on track". Is that counselling? Maybe not. Does it involve listening skills? Yes. Does it involve some sort of facilitating change? Yes. Erm, but that's not a very much interaction, you know counselling may be a step beyond that.

Adam: It's interesting because this is a theme that can "rage" between professions and within professions. Erm, one of the key things that I find there's a big difference and that is change at what level? I asked that question rhetorically and also outwardly because one can facilitate intellectual change, "Read this, here's information", that to me is not counselling because that is not facilitating change. To me for counselling there would perhaps specifically be facilitated an emotional change, which is the, which to me is subtle at one level, but fundamental difference between how I would see a sports psychologist who does counsel, with one who doesn't counsel. For example, it is possible to do mental skills training with people week in week out, for months or years and not be involved in emotional change. It's possible to do relaxation techniques and focusing techniques to moderate the levels of arousal, I don't see that as producing a change, I see that as managing and moderating an existing emotion. Now in the first example, I would not call myself a counsellor or counsel that person, I suppose, applying counselling skills in anyway shape or form because I'm just providing education but I'm not sure about change. Whereas in the second situation I probably would count myself as a person who was engaging in a counselling process because I'm allowing the person to go through a competitive experience, and then guiding them through the learning process after that, and may be making a change in their emotions, or maybe making a change in their, well hopefully, their skill levels. Erm, but again it's different, that's different from the senior athlete, for example who comes to see you after a particularly bad er, bad race after a major championships but who wants to look for reasons to explain what happened and looks for techniques to use to try and maintain some degree of self-confidence going into the next event that they are about to face. Yes, I think there is an important difference between using skills at different levels. I would add to that an idea which is part of the counselling process, in my opinion, would not target what to learn from this situation or competitive experience. But an opportunity for the person to actually experience the feelings they felt by having gone through that experience, which is a different kind of debrief, if you like, than a debrief which is reset some goals before going into this, "How did you manage them? What difficulties did you have in achieving them? What did you find easy what did you find it tough? How can we build on this for next training?" and such like. Which are using all those skills which you are talking about. There's a part about counselling which is about emotion which the other levels, to me, do not directly address. They indirectly address them, they don't directly address them. I remember talking with, some years ago, a racing driver about fear. It was the sort of thing that they didn't think about because their comment was "If I thought about it I wouldn't do it". Because they'd had in the past a particularly big accident, they weren't badly hurt but the "what if I was?" scenario was very strong in their memory. So the discussion there for me was not so much should they or shouldn't

they motor race, for me was how do they resolve the emotional conflict between knowingly putting myself at risk, based on the evidence of having been at risk in a graphic way?

Henry: When you argue about the fact that you require emotion to be at that particular, at a level, which is appropriate to term it counselling, it almost requires an emotionally significant event for you to talk about. Because I, let us bring [my sport] into the situation again, I might have one athlete who might have a natural routine, pre - and post - match which we could go through that in terms of building and getting it as much out of the competitive experience as we can. But there might well be one at a particularly significant event that it takes place in that athlete's career, or that athlete's season.

Adam: Yes.

Henry: Let us take for example, losing a tennis final in three sets having been 4-0 up in the final set, let's say Novotna's demise...

Adam: Yes.

Henry: ...at Wimbledon '93, you know. Then you might well argue that then you might be saying that that is a probably the proper version of counselling if you actually had a sport psychologist sat down with her and debriefed with her in at that particular match situation.

Adam: What I am suggesting is what are you debriefing, are you debriefing the tactical choices, or are you debriefing the approach to the match, why she'd changed why she didn't change at certain times approach? Or are you discussing the emotional effect of her as a person as a consequence of that event? Erm, I would say the second one is closer to a purist view of counselling, although there are shades of grey in this quite clearly from my point of view.

Henry: I think one issue you might want to get into is the closeness of counselling to the old clinical, sort of, chestnut. In the sense that how much are you actually allowed to be a counsellor if the area you are talking about as a sport psychologist is something which is not necessarily performance-related or is indirectly performance-related. Because I always thought, I always had an opinion as a young psychologist that there are certain counselling topics that are OK, but there are other topics of counselling in which you will almost become like a social worker or a clinical psychologist.

Alison: Is there such a thing as a topic of counselling?

Adam: Yes. Bereavement counselling, post - traumatic distress disorder, panic disorder, phobic disorder, anger management, alcohol addiction.

Kevin: Eating disorder.

Adam: Eating disorder was the next one on that list. One can tackle a particular issue, whether you are dealing with the problem is always the debate.

Kevin: And this is where I think if there is training that it is necessary for a non-clinically trained sport psychologist, but it is that awareness of when this is an issue that I am no longer capable of handling, and when is this an issue that I need to turn over to the eating disorders expert.

Henry: I think therein lies the difference in the fact that we might all have good counselling skills, but whether we can actually execute the counselling process probably depends, to a great extent, upon knowledge of the actual topic area we are dealing with. In my opinion, since I could probably counsel a person who has wrong attributions so when it was they've finished a championship often try and shift the emotion around and say "Now look, can you use them this way?" and build on from the process. If you have got a person with a drug disorder trying to counsel that individual I might have great listening skills and great interpersonal skills, knowledge of how to deal with that particular issue is on the fringe, it's not my area. So my ability to be a person engaged in counselling is, to some extent, limited by the knowledge of what I am talking about.

Alison: There was just one thing that I wanted to go back to, and when you said [Kevin] "All sport psychologists counsel", how do you feel about that as a trained counsellor [Adam]?

Adam: I have two broad reactions, one personal and one professional. The personal one was "No".

Alison: No...?

Adam: No, it's a little bit protecting the area, that's one personal. More professionally I would say "No", but qualify it. I would say that...

Alison: Sorry, do you mean that no they shouldn't, or no they don't?

Adam: Probably both.

Alison: Right.

Adam: But primarily for the reasons that are you [Henry] were saying, about you don't know what you are dealing with. So actually inappropriate intervention can create more harm than doing nothing is a view I have. If you were not sure what you want doing, if you don't have the background knowledge, or I was going to say if you are not sure what to do, tampering makes it worse in general. I would say that all sport psychologists effectively use counselling skills. Skills to get people to change to various ways.

Alison: Even if they are not trained in counselling skills?

Adam: I think so because, because I think we are looking at intellectual change and knowledge of change, and you were talking [Henry] about debriefing people and so on, and listening, I think you've already said that you're going you've sussed their level of how to talk. Those that you are using are kind of counselling skills. It's pitching the way you relate interpersonally to the audience that you have. You were aware of the golf scenario [Bill] through not knowing misjudged it by dress. Erm, if you accept a fairly narrow definition of counselling and the process of counselling as 'the act of intentional addressing of emotional conflict of some kind' then I don't think all sport psychologists do that. Some, I think sport psychologists are able to do that, provided they have the appropriate training. What constitutes that appropriate training is a source of some debate I would imagine.

Bill: So there's some emotional conflicts that you can deal with and others which comes into all the different disorders, which you've got to recognise which...

Adam: For example, when is something a sport-specific emotional issue and when is something a global issue for that person manifesting in their sporting performance?

Bill: Yeah, I think sometimes you can get, like what you were saying [Henry], which was the performance enhancement issue. I've had one experience recently where I'm performing a role, in terms of performance enhancement, now it's clear that this person had personal issues and it was only when he started to refer that he'd already been to the doctors and he'd been prescribed anti-depressants, which set alarm bells ringing and so I referred him onto the club doctor now who's made a diagnosis. Because, although there's severe performance enhancement issues to be dealt with, I don't feel he's, it's even worth talking to him about those until this like major area of his life has been erm, addressed.

Kevin: And the reason that I think that all sport psychologists do counsel is that as Henry you were saying that you might be trying to focus on an athlete's attributions, performance-related attributions. If you are, if you have agreed to change the behaviour, change the cognitions, you will effect affect, you will effect emotions. And so whether or not you think that you're trying to facilitate a change in emotions, it's likely that you will facilitate a change in emotion. Maybe it's going from really happy to being ecstatically happy, erm, or maybe it's just a minor change in emotion. And that's why I think that I agree completely with you John that there needs to be an awareness, there needs to be training. There is a difference of maybe a degree of levels of counselling. But I think all psychologists who provide advice, other than just straight education, seminars, lectures, erm, are engaged at some level in counselling.

Adam: Yes, I understand that, as I said the narrow definition that I was getting, explicitly...

Kevin: Explicitly changing emotion.

Adam: Yes. This is stated, this is agreed.

Kevin: Mm.

Adam: One can implicitly change emotions in the way you described.

Kevin: Right.

Adam: Yes, you do change, if you change behaviour and you change a misattribution, for example, affect will be influenced, I agree with that.

Kevin: But you would not call that counselling?

Adam: Erm, I would say you're using counselling skills.

Kevin: Mm.

Adam: If I'm targeting the emotion...

Kevin: And you've communicated that with the person?

Adam: ...yes, if I'm targeting the emotion, rather than targeting the behaviour and then have, by default, an emotional change. It may be a theoretical difference which I would quite happily concede. To me it's an important distinction from my background, because if the kind of content of conversation, and the intensity for the potential of what can go "right or wrong" in such discussions, the stakes are added quite significant when you start actively looking at the emotions.

Bill: Returning to this individual I was talking about, now it's the process, you know, of this referral thing and referring onto that. Now, I'm in a support role and I see this person, now I can't just cut myself off from him now, because I feel I can't do this. So what I'd be prepared to do under your [Adam's] sort of definition is what I was thinking of doing with this person, is still listen to them and if he wants to discuss those things, in the absence of a trained counsellor, I'll listen but I won't try and delve into is helping him manage that emotion. Because that's where I haven't got the background knowledge in dealing with depression.

Adam: Yes, and that goes down to what I was referring to as the core counselling skills. The comment I didn't put into there was that they could be non-directive. So you are listening to what they say, you won't add to what they say, you will be an ear for them. And that in itself of is adding extremely valuable service. To me, you have done the listening you understand the emotional complexity and I think sport psychologists are more than able to do that without any doubt in my mind. It's what happens next with that emotional complexity is where the difference lies, and that's where I think further training is required, for the what happens next bit.

Henry: Do you think that emotional change, erm do you think behavioural change occurs because of emotional change of?

Adam: I'll give you a typical psychologist's answer and say "Yes and no". You can change behaviour through changing emotion, but I would suggest more generally the effect us that Kevin was talking about in changing behaviour you're changing the content of information processing loop in the thinking and thereby people can challenge how they then reappraise the situation, as a consequence of their reappraisal or reattribution of the situation, they may or may not feel differently. Erm, thereby lies with the level of input because, for example, many people I've spoken with would say "I know what I'm doing doesn't help me but I'm still doing it". And to me they have intellectually change, they know it, they haven't personalised it they haven't actually said "It's a problem for me." They have acknowledged a general problem but they haven't believed it, it's not relevant to them and that's the grey area between sport psychology and the person you know very well and the listening is trying to get it a bit more personal. When it comes to "Well I believe this", I was talking to somebody this morning, a very different context, and it doesn't matter how much they do they still feel miserable. But equally if you talk with them because they feel so miserable, erm in a clinically depressed way they're not going to actually put anything in any sense positively because they are clinically depressed, and they will filter it in a clinically depressed way, which is the problem that you would have with that person. So I think if you have somebody of that severity who is very clinically depressed and that's difficult, that's a judgement call, that depression it would need to be changed first. If you don't know that's what you're dealing with then you end up hitting your head upon a metaphorical brick wall.

Henry: You made a comment about the fact that almost like counselling is reserved for the outcome of emotional change. If, for example, that person realises that "Yeah, I'm still doing this behaviour, I'm still miserable, I'm still pissed off" and then not changing, are you still saying that the role that you're doing is not counselling because you haven't changed? Because if they don't change then it's not counselling.

Adam: If you are asking me is it good or successful counselling, this is another question.

Henry: The reason why I said that was that was because say you've got this athlete this negative attributer who he might have said to me, for example, after a session "It really puts things into a different perspective and I feel really happy about my situation now" like a throwaway remark. But then his behaviour changes and he actually erm, changes some of the structure of the sessions to try and build up for a particular event with the things that he's learnt in mind. Now I can't necessarily quantify emotional change there with him, but as his coach can quantify behaviour change into it.

Adam: Yes.

Henry: So that was the point, that was making the sense that is the role I've had with that person in terms of changing his attributional profile and then allowing his behaviour to change, is that not counselling because I might not have shifted emotion because I never assessed his emotional profile but I know his behaviour has changed as a result.

Adam: If you are looking at the very specific tight definition I used, probably not. If you are looking up at a broader definition, then you have. And to me I think it is a theoretical point as to where you draw the line. I view this very much as a continuum rather than this or that, and for me I have a point on the continuum where for me I say this is kind of where it ends. Another person may say "No it's over there", it varies accordingly so it is a continuum rather than a black and white issue.

Alison: I'm going to stop that particular one there because we have overrun a little bit on that one. So I'm sensing that we've overrun a little bit, I've got three more questions, does anybody want to grab a drink now?

The next thing that I want to look at, they are all linked with each other. We've looked at the definitions, everybody has different perspectives, we all come from different schools of thought, [on flip chart] how important then are counselling skills to applied sport psychology practice? just talking about counselling skills now.

Adam: I understand that, again, if you're looking at interpersonal skills and listening skills, the set of all those things that we've been talking about, I'll say they're integral. I would probably go so far as to say one couldn't be an effective applied sport psychologist, or an effective applied psychologist without them.

Alison: Are you saying they are very important to you?

Kevin: Essential.

Adam: Essential.

Alison: Essential?

Adam: Yes.

Kevin: It depends on how you define applied sport psychology.

Alison: I mean it out there working with athletes, as opposed to being an academic.

Kevin: Yeah, I'd say essential. But on the scale of one to seven, I would say seven.

Alison: Not one to ten?!

Kevin: Nine, ten! [Laughter]. Erm, yeah very essential.

Henry: I mean to me applied sport psychology, for example a one-day that you know, spending three hours [in the training area] with [athletes], one-to-one or in a group session as a coach. Another day, for example, working with parents of those [athletes] and the coaches of those [athletes], trying to educate those parents and work with them on a one-to-one basis to try and almost maximise their performance environment for those kids. To the next day, going to do a three hour workshop teaching [athletes from a different sport], you know, and having to try and develop, having the interpersonal skills with, you know, with 25, 30 year old women about their [abilities]. And so those are examples of applied sport psychology in practice, and without using the term or process of counselling, which I might do to some extent with some of the [athletes] and some of the parents, but the actual skills themselves, and the listening and interpersonal skills with it, they are all critical. They are all critical, I think they're the most fundamental skills but that you need to try and apply knowledge that you have. Knowledge is the most important skill to have, if you don't have that there is no point in any of the skills, but having that knowledge and being able to deliver it probably comes as a function of having interpersonal and listening skills at the same time.

Bill: But you can have all the knowledge in the world, but if you haven't got the counselling to deliver that...

Henry: Right OK, I was viewing that there, that the listening and interpersonal skills were part and parcel of that process. Yeah, I take your point know, I wasn't, I'm trying to backtrack now to the difference between the counselling process and the counselling skills. Erm, but they're integral yeah.

Alison: To me, counselling skills, and what I was trying to get at there was the counselling skills you develop through training as well, so not just the interpersonal skills, the listening skills.

Adam: Can you give us some more examples of what do you think those specific skills, might be?

Alison: I'd prefer it if that you come up with these things, counselling skills that you would develop through training as a sport psychologist.

Adam: I'm asking the question because I'm coming to sport psychology at the root which is about side of the mainstream sport psychology background.

Alison: Maybe someone can help you. What kind of counselling skills would you get if you are trained as a sport psychologist?

Adam: That you wouldn't have if you didn't train as one?

Kevin: I came through a very unusual route. I initially was wanting to be a clinical psychologist and worked as a social worker/counselling psychologist while applying to clinical programmes, and then found out there was this thing called sport psychology and changed my mind. My PhD is actually in experimental psychology with a specialisation in the psychology of sport and exercise and it allowed me a lot of academic freedom to choose classes, so I chose a lot of counselling - related classes. So I have a very broad background that includes a lot of counselling, yet also providing the access to a lot of educators who were trained in physical education, method of sport psychology. So through all of those influences, it's really hard for me now to separate where I learned something, and where I didn't. But my experience with talking to people at conferences who come from a more P.E., sport science background, there is less formal training in counselling, and there is less, for example, role playing in front of a camera and debriefing on the use of listening skills and body language. There maybe some theory presented in a classroom but there is less practical role playing awareness than you might get on a typical psychology course in counselling or clinical psychology.

Henry: What were those of four terms you used, four skills, the four things: warmth, empathy,...

Adam: Genuineness, warmth, empathy, genuineness.

Alison: There was three I think.

Henry: Just three, OK. I like that, I mean, again it just comes back to down to the counselling skill itself, I still think listening and interpersonal skills as being good, having warmth, empathy, etc., you brought in body language as well. I mean it would be a nice to try and list down, for example, the techniques which made a skill which then helped the counselling process happen. I mean we are not talking about here counselling that we have just debated, but the skills that make up that. I would still define listening and interpersonal skills as being able to come across and communicate to an individual, be it player, parent, coach in that respect in that we should have facilitated their performance.

Kevin: So what aren't we including?

Henry: I don't know.

Kevin: The counselling skills. If it's an overt contract to change and emotion.

Bill: But in my training, just going through the normal sport science degree, and then a PhD, and part of my supervised experience was working under a clinical psychologist, so I was observing a clinical psychologist in terms of how they would operate on a one-to-one. The counselling course I did was done by trained counsellors under the Rogerian perspective of warmth, genuineness and empathy, and really that covered the core elements of that work with the listening, and all the elements that we've discussed, the paraphrasing, reflecting, erm, summarising and the non-verbal, verbal communication and how you show me you are listening, how you structure a room, sort of the nuts and bolts of counselling, counselling skills. In the early part of the discussion I think we have raised most of those things and I think that's what I see as, those things [pointing to flip chart]...

Kevin: So whether or not we are trying to engage in official counselling we all need counselling skills?

Adam: Yes.

Bill: Yeah.

Henry: I think the key question there is, I think what we're confusing, is how important are counselling skills to applied... [change of tape]

Alison: Sorry, can you say that again please?

Henry: How important are counselling skills to applied sport psych.? Because all I mentioned, and again Bill reinforced that, is that there are certain skills which they might well form part and parcel of the

counselling process, again dealing with the misattributing athlete, for example, or are we just talking specifically about how important is counselling itself to applied sport psych..?

Alison: I'm talking about counselling skills. It sounds as though there is a distinction.

Henry: There is a difference.

Adam: Certainly in my mind there is a distinction, and not to recycle it back down that route. For me, what I'm understanding and it's, certainly helpful way for me to clarify in my own mind, I'm thinking of counselling skills very much under the umbrella of communication skills.

Kevin: Yes.

Adam: So the methodology which I use to communicate what I know to help somebody resolve a problem with which they have in sport, i.e. applied sport psychology. So to me I would see the counselling skills and communication skills interchangeably. If that is the case then I would see counselling skills as part of the communication process, fundamental, to the point that Bill made earlier which is - I may have the best knowledge about an area, if I can't use that knowledge in any meaningful way that the other person can understand and make relevant to them then I may as well not have it.

Kevin: Yes, I think there is a word missing [from the question on the flip chart]. You need to have 'effective' in front of 'applied' because things, you know, it's not at all important at all if you don't want to be effective.

Adam: Mm.

Henry: Mm.

Kevin: But if you want to be effective it's very important.

Adam: Mm.

Alison: Do you then, OK you said, I mean it's almost going back, but just to reiterate, you say there's a distinction between counselling skills and counselling?

Adam: Yes.

Alison: How does everybody else in the group feel, just so we are clear on that?

Kevin: Again I think to me counselling is a process and counselling skills facilitate the process. The definition of what counselling is could be debated, and what constitutes counselling, but I think counselling skills are what allow you...

Bill: Yeah, I think I was mainly coming from what you said [?] and thinking that whenever I use the word counselling that inferred some sort of psychopathology, or something like that, and I think that's. Although I think I use counselling skills a lot but it's almost recognition that I can't deal with this then that's going over to some sort of counselling role.

Kevin: Do you think that comes from this perception that permeates our profession that if I'm not trained, I can't call myself a counsellor, I don't counsel?

Bill: I think on a personal point of view it's unease with going into things that I don't feel comfortable with dealing with and I think you can...

Kevin: And this is where I think I get to the degree, the levels of counselling that we get involved in and a I think it's a misnomer for a lot of my colleagues to say "you know I never get involved in counselling, I'm not trained for counselling, I will never counsel. And I say "I think you're fooling yourself because at some level I think there is some counselling that takes place".

Adam: I would agree with you on this. When I was studying in America I noticed a difference in the use of what counselling means or implies. Counselling in this country implies more the view that there is something wrong with the person. My impression of counselling in America, in the States, is that it's not. I think in this country that kind of counselling you are referring to would come under here as 'guidance'.

Kevin: Right.

Adam: The terminology would be different to mean this same thing.

Kevin: Yes.

Adam: So I think there's a cultural difference in the meaning of the term.

Kevin: Interesting point.

Adam: Certainly applied sport psychologists guide people, there is no doubt about that, if you want to what to achieve, that's what you need to do. That would be guidance, and I would agree with you.

Kevin: I think Americans are often make the distinction between counselling and psychotherapy or counselling and clinical psychology.

Adam: Yes.

Kevin: There are programmes degree programme in both counselling and clinical and the approaches that the clinician deals with more abnormal psychology than a counsellor, a counsellor facilitates life skills.

Adam: Yes.

Kevin: And, would say that what we tend to do is counsel, what we tend not to do is deal with the psychopathology unless you're trained as a clinical psychologist, and then I'm not sure there is a real need for a clinical sport psychologist, a clinical psychologist maybe appropriate.

Adam: But I think what I'm hearing now, our views are agreed, the words are different.

Kevin: Erm, the terminology, yes.

Alison: Maybe could it be suggested that when you said that there are degrees in counselling, that's what sport psychology does? Maybe it could be suggested that there's degrees of counselling skills that they use as well and they are not going into counselling in the sense that you understand counselling (Adam), but they are going into counselling in the sense that you understand counselling (Kevin)?

Kevin: I don't know that there's different skills, I think there's different knowledge and different treatment, reactions.

Adam: The point I was going to make, and it's not directly related to the point here, and this is very much dependent, I'll preface it: to me applied sport psychology is saying, as a person aspiring to be called this officially, erm, 'I have a certain theory knowledge, I have a certain body of theory'. As a counselling psychologist who is trained I have a certain body of knowledge which talks about the detailed understanding, for example, of things like depression, anxiety, panic disorder, eating disorder and addictions, I may specialise in a subset of those. I can see in applied sport psychology there maybe the range of different things but I may specialise in mental skills training or I may specialise in another area. The point I'm making is what makes the difference? It's not the level of counselling skill, but it is the level of knowledge and understanding. The point that Bill made, I think very clearly, is you said you "Didn't feel comfortable..."

Bill: Yeah.

Adam: Working at that level. It's not saying, talking in the first person, "I can't work in that way", but "I don't feel I am qualified through knowledge, experience and training to work in that way". So what I would think here we're looking at, I think the communication skills are all about communicating the knowledge I have. If you are saying counselling skills in the specific way I was referring to then I think there would need to be an additional body of training, from an knowledge point of view which says - this is what happens when people are depressed. This person knows he's clinically depressed, you can talk about behaviour or performance, but you're missing the point. If the person is demoralised but not clinically depressed then it maybe this approach would be the right one.

Kevin: Yes, because then you start to bring in, you know, a bit of psychiatry as well. Maybe it's a, there is a biological reason for the clinical depression-that's an imbalance of electrolytes or something and they need something of a drug therapy, which is something that most of us are not capable of handling, yet it may be essential before you can move on to any other performance related issues.

Henry: I think there's something we have to get over maybe, to an extent, is the fact that if you use the word - so how important are listening, communication, reflection, interpersonal appraisal skills, for example, to applied sport psychology then using those terms I would not sort of feel any degree of threat of any or any sort of problem because I use those all the time. Yet those are the fundamental sub-skills of, I think what we all share in here as, what a lot of counselling skills are. And yet the term counselling skills almost like relates to the counselling process which, because of maybe the lack of knowledge at a certain level say in disorders, etc., etc., er we feel frightened by, or we can't cope with, which is completely understandable. And yet if you actually just break down, take away the counselling process and don't talk about the issues which are outside of our remit, let's say

outside our knowledge base, then we come back down to simple skills that we all do, and reflection, interpersonal listening etc. are just fundamental.

Alison: What do you mean by fundamental?

Henry: Fundamental skills to do our applied sport psychology practice. Whether we are actually trying to be always shifting a person's emotion or talking about misattribution or what have you, then listening to a performer on court, for example, listening to a performer after a match, or listening to a parent talk to you are about the diet of one of the players you were working with, erm, reflecting after a match on video with a person, erm and talking, getting him to talk about the actual experience of the match itself. I think the able to communicate on court with them in a particular session, like being able to communicate to work an audience at an all presentation at a conference, erm, or at a workshop, for example, they're all fundamental skills that we require. Now they are not necessarily, they are all part and parcel of this counselling process issue, but it seems to me we've put those four other skills under the umbrella of counselling skills. I think that sometimes we can get sort of drawn away from the fact that actually we are very, very good at it and also using, as a fundamental part of our actual practice, what are counselling skills. And yet it would probably be terminology that put us off.

Kevin: It's interesting, it's ironic. If they are fundamental why is it the we don't teach them until late in graduate school or post-graduate?

Henry: Yeah, it's left to chance.

Kevin: It's left to chance?

Henry: Yeah.

Bill: But I think you if you look at the aims and objectives of an undergraduate programme, then the aims and objectives of a lot of undergraduate programmes are not to provide people, it's about providing knowledge, a lot of the time.

Kevin: A very broad awareness of the topics, you're right.

Bill: There's not the space within an undergraduate programme to go into that...

Kevin: Sure. And most people in that audience are not going to become applied sport psychologists.

Alison: From what you were saying before, just to get this clear in my mind to, are you saying that counselling should be used or is always used in distressing situations or when there's a particular problem as opposed to when things are going well you don't use them?

Adam: From my opinion what I'm saying is providing my definition of how I use it. What I think needs to happen is to get a consensus which says - this is the term counselling, for applied sport psychologists it means this. Now I haven't a problem where you draw that line, as long as I know where that line is, I know where I stand in relation to it. That's all I'm interested in. To me counselling, and my background is in counselling psychology which has a direct implication of therapy, which is a word that you mentioned sometime ago (Kevin), we're now looking at issues not sport-specific to that person but more global issues in the person's psyche that are manifested in sport. If they were an actor it would manifest in their acting performance, if they were an artist it would manifest in the art expression. Because they are athletes it happens to manifest in their sport performance, so they're beyond, they are not sport-specific would be my definition.

Henry: But surely there are, erm, sport-specific emotions such as stress and anxiety, for example, where, as a sport psychologist, you are trying, for example, let's say change an appraisal of anxiety and to shift emotion that way. So there must be topics within the counselling remit which are typically performance enhancement based or sport-specific based rather than depression as an emotion.

Adam: I'm not going to get in a side-track about depression. I would see it as the, what is done in applied sport psychology, from what I can tell, as part of what a counsellor would do, it's a subset of it. I think a counsellor can do that and more in that particular area.

Kevin: I also think there's a semantic issue about defining the client's needs as problems, you might call it goals, you might call it areas of improvement. There's a lot of ways of referring to what the client needs other than calling it problems. If you phrase things as problems then you are buying into the problem mind set that 'There is something wrong with me because I have this problem'. It's not that something needs to be changed, which could be the exact same definition, you know,

it's just a different connotation to the athlete. If you have a goal to improve a negative behaviour, change that negative behaviour to a positive, then the negative behaviour is a problem, but let's phrase it in terms of an area that you need to change to improve to get better at, it's a goal, it's a target, or whatever, takes away that negative connotation, but it's still a problem, it just depends how you define it. I mean I forget who it was, some famous psychologist said that "All we do with is solve problems", well if you were defining the need to change as a problem then that's probably true.

Adam: To take this idea further, in doing what you have done I would see it as the direct remit of the applied sport psychologist is saying "You see it as a problem, perhaps if you see it this way, you may see solutions or options to do things differently, or to think about it differently whatever the case maybe". Where I think I would go is whether somebody does that and they do all the "Correct things, the right things" to achieve the identified goals or aims, erm yet they persistently find some way of not quite achieving it, something seems to impede that final bit on a repeated basis, then there is some psychological obstacle other than what's happening in the current environment that is maintaining that inability to achieve that goal. And that to me is where somebody like myself, or somebody with the additional training would be required to understand what is that obstacle. And that it is the skill of reframing things, etc. which I think are central to applied sport psychology situation where they have been done, they have been done faithfully, they have been done entirely correctly, a person has worked very well honestly at them, and yet they find themselves persistently stuck. The decision now requires something else and that something else is what I would call counselling in a specific way.

Kevin: I might define it as something else but under your definition I agree.

Alison: Anything to add?

The next one really tackles what we have been talking about a little bit as well, training. What kind of training do you think a sport psychologist, and a I'm thinking in the applied sense, would need to use counselling skills effectively?

Henry: I think that again, before we get into this, is it more a case of are we defining again counselling skills in terms of those subskills again and how do you train individuals to be good at those particular skills, or are we defining counselling in terms of helping the sport psychologist to develop a greater knowledge of areas so they can be counselling at a higher level. So I just make that point.

Alison: Again you are using the term of counselling when people have made the distinction with counselling skills and I specifically am wondering about counselling skills, it's interesting that you said counselling.

Henry: Right, it's just that if we are going to talk about counselling skills and to me talking about how can I, again, listen, communicate, reflect, er, develop my interpersonal abilities, using questions to communicate etc. more effectively in my work. Because I tend to sort of go along with the discussion about how those do make up counselling skills, whether they are the part and parcel or not of the counselling process.

Kevin: Yeah I think beyond doing the necessary reading, some sort of guided role playing sessions is helpful.

Alison: Is that done in a formal way?

Kevin: Yes. Informally it can happen, especially with the BASES supervision process you can observe a trainee, the accredited individual observes the trainees, gives feedback after the session. That's role playing in a very, at a very high level, at a very important level where the supervisor needs to be very careful to intervene if necessary. But you can take it out of that actual client context and, you know, do a little like this and one individual pretends to be the athlete maybe even has a script of what the problem is and you can create scenarios at whatever level of the psychological intensity you want.

Adam: Mm.

Kevin: And then video or tape, debrief as a group, point out strengths and weaknesses of the individual, what did you miss, you know, was your body language right?

Bill: I think those experiences relate to the level of supervised experience. Like a first year of experiences would be based around those contrived role plays.

Kevin: Yes.

Bill: I think if you take the third year as moving increasingly towards independent, just observing them on one-to-ones, that is where I would expect to be doing that that sort of supervision.

Henry: Before Adam gets in there, can I ask him in terms of defining those role playing scenarios within trying to develop counselling skills, what kind of problems or scenarios you would create to try and help the person to develop their counselling skills?

Adam: It depends on a couple of things broadly, one is the level, the current level of expertise of the person and two, what are you training them to achieve? Erm, if you were somebody say going to be able to have the erm, listening skills, verbal skills, communication skills, to talk to someone with a major life traumatic experience, you are talking about a very different kind of dialogue than you are with somebody who is going to their first County competition. I'm not belittling the skills, you are talking about a different kind of intensity of skill and you are looking for different kinds of summary, different kinds of reflecting of what information, what are you listening for. So I think to answer that question [on flip chart], to move on, you asked "Whether it needs to be formal or not formal?" I think it needs to be formal but not necessarily a part of a degree. I think it can be done formally within the context say of a workshop where you have the person who is running that particular workshop appropriately accredited, instruct at their desired level, be it first year level, or third year level. I would also be suggesting that this may be a by-product of such role play exercises. I think it is important that if, through the role play exercises, you can use a personal but not intimate experience as part of the role playing, you are "on the receiving end of that" it can provide you with a very good insight into what you are expecting with the people you will be working with later on. This is very underestimated, particularly if you are having, as we discussed earlier, the probing questions, or insightful questions, or I use the word incisive questions. If you are at the receiving end of that you may have far less "compassion" for the person on the other end and if you felt what it was like "to squirm on the end of the such questions". I think it provides a very useful experiential learning quite apart from an knowledge and practical learning.

Bill: Yeah, but the brief course I did and what they'd offer and when we did the role plays they'd often say "You can go with what's up top, i.e. anything, or you can choose an issue" and I think when you really got into deep issues they were good sessions and a I think you tap into that, that gives you an idea of what it's like for somebody to be really soul searching. But I think the counselling skills actually, some of the skills like the listening skills, it's easier to do that formal training. I think the interpersonal skills, and some of the things we talked about earlier, about how you are interacting with maybe a group, I think you have they are much harder to...

Adam: I think they are harder to define because they are more abstract.

Bill: Yeah.

Adam: But in the way that you mentioned Kevin, you mentioned at the beginning, erm, our discussion could be used to ignore what we said but look entirely at how we are saying it.

Kevin: Yes, agreed.

Adam: Through the video, and one for you to get people to rate the audio tape and get people to rate the video but not the sound, to see the non-verbal versus the verbal, it can be done in that way, and the video tape and the audio you can say "Well I want you to listen to this and comment from what you are hearing not what you are seeing". And that little exercise, for example, where you have a role play of a personal but not intimate situation where you are actually sitting back to back, where you are reliant on hearing tone of voice, content, inflection and importantly pauses and, erm, rather than use the vision as a means, which is something that we do a great deal without awareness. So I think video can be very useful. That's what I would do that as a more "advanced kind of listening skill".

Henry: Mm.

Bill: I was just thinking of an exercise that we've did using vision doing mirroring and that was quite fun. Mirroring what somebody else does in the counselling situation.

Alison: What did that teach you?

Bill: Just about your own movements and, as Adam said, picking up signals from people...

Adam: Then copying!

Bill: So you are picking up your own individual quirks and I think that was quite good.

Alison: Can I just go back to something that you mentioned at the beginning of when you were talking about this [Adam], taking it back to training because that is what I am particularly interested in, you said that they could get the skills from a workshop?

Adam: Yes.

Alison: Did you mean one workshop or, I am thinking about the level of training that someone would need in counselling skills to be a sport psychologist, one workshop, several workshops?

Adam: No, but I wouldn't off-hand put any specific figure. It would require, as Kevin mentioned, pre-requisite reading, and I think added to that would be interactive dialogue in the form of discussion with anecdotes to illustrate the point that they are relevant to the audience. And that's what I would call intellectual learning. It would also define terms, "When I am saying this, I mean it that", that kind of process. The second bit would be to say "OK, pick a scenario and role play it, and your job is purely to do this". I would have thought in one day that you can have an intellectual introduction and an overview of practising the verbal skills. The form of saying two role plays, by two I mean twice, you've been on both ends of the role play. I would call that an overview. I would have thought that you would need to have probably at least another two days to then discuss the details of bits and isolate the skills of "Why you did you ask this question then?" for example, might be a relevant observation and we spoke about questioning earlier. It may be "Why you didn't you ask a question at this point?" It's trying to understand the thought process that you had whilst listening, it is something which is important "How am I filtering the information I am getting and then using it?" That, I would have thought, it would take a fairly lengthy role play of about 20 minutes to half an hour and then that a debrief so it is time consuming. I would have thought a couple of days of that would be an introduction.

Bill: I think it's difficult to say how many workshops because, your comment at the start [Adam], about certain people evolve towards these things...

Adam: Mm.

Bill:...so at the start you're going to get differing levels of competence.

Adam: Yes.

Bill: ...and so you come to assume that a one-day, a two-day is going to get people up to a requisite level, unless there is, I don't know, unless there is some sort of objective evaluation or assessment.

Kevin: This is where I think we are lucky with the BASES supervision. If we're talking about this about in terms of BASES supervisory context, then unlike AAASP, where AAASP has a checklist of things you have to have taken in terms of knowledge, so you may have to have had a module in counselling. BASES allows that interaction between supervisor and in the supervisee. The supervisee can have taken one workshop and learned all they need to know, and through discussion with their supervisor agree that that's enough information, "You're fine", or decide "I think I need to role play more often, can we set up some role playing?" "I don't think we can, but there is going to be another workshop, why don't you attend that?" And I think this is where the degree of knowledge and expertise agreed upon between the supervisor and the supervisee works really well as long as it's an honest relationship.

Alison: But going back to what Bill said is there a pre requisite, is there a basic level at which they should have? You know you said [Kevin] they could go to one workshop and that would be OK if they agreed that or is there some sort of pre-requisite, minimum level if you like?

Kevin: Well yeah, there should be. The BASES accreditation committee would like to see supervisors accredited, and that would mean that the supervisors have sufficient knowledge and understanding and experience to supervise others, which would mean having the ability to differentiate whether or not a supervisee has the basic counselling skills or not. At the moment we leave it up to the supervisee.

Alison: I thought they had to be accredited?

Kevin: They do have to be accredited, it doesn't mean they are able to supervise. Just because I'm accredited to work with athletes doesn't mean I can supervise someone who's undergoing BASES accreditation and that is a completely different thing.

Bill: How can the accreditation committee make that judgement whether the person is able to supervise?

Kevin: Well because there are some people who are giving poor advice.

Bill: Are they notified?

Kevin: Yes.

Alison: Are they a struck off? Are they just advised?

Kevin: Erm, there's a lot of adjectives to describe what they are, erm, at the moment there's not any discipline.

Bill: I think in terms of going back to the counselling skills, I think it would maybe be helpful if there could be some sort of nationally recognised qualification.

Kevin: Yes.

Bill: Like a minimum requirement, because it sort of says I think it [BASES] says 'Basic theories of counselling'. However many hours the course is it can sort of say be the benchmark, like a sport and exercise science degree is to become a member.

Kevin: Unfortunately, although in theory that's great, what is necessary then, that you are taking the course? That you have taken an exam on the course?

Adam: The measuring of listening is very hard.

Kevin: Yeah, but you still remember what you were taught.

Bill: And I think this comes back to, ultimately, the supervisor making an endorsement at the end of whether you, when the supervisee makes the submission, but you endorse that submission.

Kevin: The supervisee is going to abide by the code of conduct.

Adam: And perhaps BASES could take a leaf out of, certainly the counselling psychology, clinical psychology where there is a prerequisite to a period of time where you need to be supervised post-qualification to ensure you have retained a certain minimum professional standard. Again, it's an open and full debate as to what constitutes all of these things.

Bill: There is re-accreditation isn't there?

Kevin: Yes, and there is also the discussion for more peer supervision of accredited individuals.

Bill: And I think that, in terms of some of the world class programmes, that some of that is built in, the peer supervision and about the quality of programmes.

Adam: Something away from...

Kevin: That goes away from the establishment view, watching me, watching you.

Bill: I supervise two people, Adam's a supervisee, and another guy, and he's about to make his second report and basically what I've said to him is that I will not endorse his, I said "I won't endorse your work, I'm not going to put my name to it unless I feel that you're..."

Kevin: Nor should you.

Bill: Yeah.

Kevin: You shouldn't, yeah definitely, don't put your name on it unless you believe in it.

Alison: So it seems to be like an ongoing issue as to the level of training?

Kevin: Yeah, well in all aspects of counselling.

Adam: I think the level and type of training and the most important thing, because we've found, in this discussion, the elusive quality of how you define things let alone how you measure what you define. Erm, as in the case of interpersonal skills, a lot of what we've been talking about is the space between people and I can sit and nod in the right places, ask the occasional appropriate question and perhaps summarise a few points, but you have no idea if I have understood what you meant.

Henry: I think there is a lot to be said as well, Kevin said about sort of pre-course reading or reading material beforehand. I mean even though I've got differing opinions about the NCF, for example, one of the things that sometimes is useful is to actually, some of the mental skills workbooks is to actually receive an education in the first part and then do activities in the second part. If you want to try and find a person and bring to a person up to speed or, for example, reinforcing the skill that person already has then there's a lot to be said to in terms of making sure they have some

educational resource to work through, and perhaps activities with the people to show that they've done. That might require a reference or a written letter from someone you have been doing the listening activity with, erm, almost like there's a checklist to the fact that they've actually done the couple of sessions of what was required before they enter the course itself, it doesn't need to be that...

Kevin: And as a rule a real world evaluation, when you start working with an athlete if you don't do these things well and the athlete says "Take a hike!" He says "Why what's wrong?" "You don't listen to what I say" "OK thanks", "Go and get some listening skills and come back in six months".

Bill: But you don't get the opportunity to make use of your knowledge base unless you can do these, when you think about establishing a rapport and using all those things you don't get to do some of them nuts and bolts of mental skills training unless you can...

Kevin: It's a catch 22, you can't get the experience unless you have these skills, you can't get the skills unless you have the experience. You can get a lot from the book, but unless you have some like role playing experience.

Bill: But sometimes I see people at conferences or other people you meet and you think "I bet they're good", and often you can have all the knowledge but you think "Yeah, I can relate to that person".

Kevin: That's like, I shouldn't say this because its on tape, a person whose one of the most erm, accomplished, experienced wealthiest sport psychologists who is often criticised by a lot of other people erm, I've been told by someone who knows this individual well, all that the individual has is good listening skills. This person doesn't really have the counselling skills, doesn't have the understanding, real understanding of the theory, but because he or she is a good listener then has been effective and successful with one or two individuals, high profile individuals and a lot of work has come into the individual, they're now self-employed, no longer an academic, making lots of money, working with professional athletes and a lot of people questioned his or her skills.

Adam: In the research as to which kind of treatment is more effective, they come down to one thing and that is the quality of the relationship.

Kevin: Yeah.

Adam: These is down to the intangibles: warmth, empathy and genuineness seem to be at the cornerstone. You can get away with a lot if you've got a good facade unfortunately.

Kevin: Yes. And it can be a facade, it doesn't have to be genuine. Even though genuineness, it's fake genuineness.

Henry: Wanting just to answer this, it's quite interesting that we're actually using the term counselling skills and it does come back to this point about defining exactly what counselling is in the sense that we're developing all these listening skills, interpersonal skills etc. yeah, whether we have counselling skills or not at the end of the day will depend upon whether we actually get that knowledge of being able to deal with the actual, not problem, the area that we are given in the sense that, the reason why I asked Adam that question earlier was - are you happy calling them counselling skills when they might be skills which we can't really call, not part of the counselling process because we're actually not doing counselling?

Adam: I refer to them as the tools of my trade. They are skills. You can learn to listen, you can learn to reflect, you can learn to summarise, the one thing you can't learn is something called intuition. You can suggest in a workshop format a formula where you do this, then you do this, then you do this and that's how it looks, and that's what you say, there's are the don'ts, these are the do's and off you go. And there are people who when they do it, they are almost going though this checklist, and it's not working. Other people who are going though the identical sequence, but they integrate into a coherent whole. And that is the difference between doing a set of skills and becoming that kind of work.

Alison: Well does a sport psychologist need to be trained to do that?

Adam: To do those skills?

Alison: And to integrate it as a whole.

Kevin: Not necessarily.

Alison: Not necessarily.

Kevin: But probably.

Bill: Your comment about, I think isn't counselling, what is it? 50% of behavioural change is down to the personal characteristics of the counsellor?

Adam: Something like that.

Bill: Has counselling training changed to reflect the inclusion of those?

Adam: Counselling psychology has, and there's a debate between counselling and counselling psychology, clinical psychology hasn't, in this country.

Kevin: I think that's true in the States too.

Adam: Counselling psychology has taken all of these things on board because it's a much newer development professionally. And then there's a premium on the quality of the relationship. In counselling psychology terms it would be a therapeutic relationship. It could be the psychologist-athlete relationship. But whatever the names of the people, the quality of that relationship is, it's not vital, but it's very important to the effectiveness of what else you can then do. But we're talking about a quality that we've not mentioned, but implied, and that is called trust. And interestingly there's been some research which says if the client trusts me, they may work effectively and get positive results irrespective of whether I trust them as the counsellor.

Alison: Let's not go down there, stick with the training. Has anybody got anything to add about training? To summarise you said that counselling skills were, some people used the words essential, vital, and in terms of training, training is important, but to what level we're not sure. Has anybody got anything to add?

No, O.k... Finally what I'd like you to do, and some of you have been doing it as you've been going along, so if you haven't got any more stories to tell that's fine, but I'd like you to tell the rest of us was there a time when you used counselling skills, in whatever sense you know counselling skills, when you used counselling skills effectively? If you have already shared it then that's fine.

Bill: Erm, good listening skills, I think sometimes when you're placed in a situation where you have like a, for want of a better word, a clinic when you get 15 minutes with each person. In that situation I'll never write down notes as I go along, and at the end of it I'll try and use my memory to remember what I covered with each person, and that might be a two hour session with 8 different people, and to try and make notes on those discussions, I think when I can do that, to me that's evidence that I've shown good listening skills. If I can recall the sort of basis of those discussions which will maybe form, next time I go to meet them I'll have just some bullet points I've discussed with each, and often I pretty much remember when I see them what were the issues for each person. What I have trouble with is names more than what their issues are.

Adam: It maybe a way to do that kind of skill as part of a more advanced level training. In some sessions you may well be taking notes, but your job is to be able to summarise the main points afterwards.

Bill: I don't know what other people's views on whether you do note taking. Again on the brief counselling course that I did they frowned on that and said that could be a distraction from the process, if they see you writing "What are you writing down?"

Adam: It depends very much on the approach you are using. In traditional psychotherapy I would say it would not be the case. Rogerian non-direct it would not be the case. With cognitive-behavioural model it is in fact explicitly stated and indeed the notes become part of the interaction they are actually shared, so it is used actively within the session, that's why I've been trained to do that.

Bill: In some situations I do take notes.

Kevin: I always ask if it's O.k... I usually say that I have a pad on me, which is true, and that I'm going to see you again, so that we don't start over from the very beginning, it's useful if I've got some notes so that can look at my notes before I talk to you and say "Oh I know what we talked about last week". And then if I write more often than less often then don't feel intimidated if, you know, we talk for 15 minutes and I never write anything and all of a sudden I start writing something, "Oh what did I just say?". So, if I'm writing frequently, even if it's just a note or a word or two just to refresh my memory, because what's important for me is that, not only for memory but to read my handwriting I have to write up my notes or type up my notes that same day because if I look at it two days later, I won't even be able to read my own handwriting much less know what we were talking about. I didn't have anybody say that it was, that they wouldn't allow me to write,

but I definitely have noticed at times where they appeared uncomfortable, you know, writing something, and if that happened I would usually share it with them and say "This is all I'm writing down, let's talk about it".

Bill: I think the nature of the discussion is important as well. If it's, like what I call, quite a deep issue then maybe I think it's inappropriate. Sometimes it's more sort of goals or things like that, you just say "I'll jot that down as I go along", so I think sometimes that might be...

Kevin: That's true. You want to make sure that their confidentiality is up front, that you're not going to share this with anybody, yet at the same time, you know, if they're saying something about their mother and you start writing down 'Oh mother is a real bitch', you know, they're going to go "What? I didn't say that", "Well that was my interpretation of what you said", it's like "Oh wait a minute, I don't think that's quite right". So there are some things that you don't want to say, some things you don't want to write.

Adam: This is when the paraphrasing and summarising is particularly important to because you maybe have a 10 or 15 minutes quite meaningful discussion and what I frequently try to do is "Let me try to summarise to make sure I've understood what you've meant". I use that phrase very specifically because the they may have used words that meant something different to me, and sometimes what I'll do is I'll actually write down the paraphrase.

Kevin: I also think that it shows that what they are saying is important.

Adam: Exactly.

Kevin: Now if you do write down these things, you know, "This is what I think I hear you saying and I think it's important, so I'll make sure I write down in my notes". Most people I talked to you don't have a problem with that.

Bill: Some of the [athletes] I've worked with, sometimes the discussion will be based around an initial profile or something, and at the end of a brief session, from summarising I would say "What you said you are working on is one, two, three".

Adam: Yes.

Bill: And that's just a minute thing at the end.

Kevin: That's right, that's right. It's very useful.

Adam: There was a particular person who asked me if I would see them individually, and the original reason was that a lack of motivation, they'd been an international competitive [athlete] for some years, had achieved obviously a fairly high standard and had never previously had a problem in motivation for training and such like. Yet that was the reason that they came to me. In discussing with them, what I found interesting was somebody who was so poorly motivated, struggles with the training, still maintained the same level of results in a competition. So to me I thought to myself "Well it may be motivation, clearly the performance at competition remained pretty good, therefore the quality of the training hadn't diminished, the quantity might have but the quality had been improved", and I got chatting with them and what had transpired was for the first time in their life, for a period of about 12 to 15 years, [their sport] was not the most important thing in their life. They had recently met somebody, they had been married about six months, obviously lived together, a career was becoming to be an issue and they were beginning to talk a little bit about a family and how that may alter their circumstances. It became quite apparent that the they were resenting the time away from home with the training, so in the sense the problem of motivation didn't have anything to do with the quality of training, it had more to do with re-evaluating the importance of their training in a revised lifestyle. So that altered quite significantly the mode of working then, so then it became how could we alleviate the guilt for training X hours less when they felt they should be training more, but being at home with their partner. So it became a guilt-alleviating exercise and the quality versus quantity debate became all important.

Alison: So would you say that was a time when you used counselling skills successfully with an athlete?

Adam: Very much so. And an awareness of an overall life situation other than just a sport-specific thing. To listen carefully to what they said and to accept that their view was motivation, and to accept their view, but not necessarily to agree with. The difference being "I believe what you tell me, but it doesn't mean I agree with you", which allowed me to use my a professional knowledge

to interpret and perhaps come up with and an alternative view of reasons as to why their motivation had been less good than it had been previously.

Alison: And who do you think that made you feel when you knew that, you know, "I've been quite successful here"?

Adam: Very rewarding. It's very rewarding.

Bill: Yeah, I think one of the stages, again on this counselling course, we talked about four stages in change going from our unconscious incompetence, conscious incompetence, conscious competence, unconscious competence. I think maybe one of the counselling skills is making them going from unconscious competence to conscious, sorry, unconscious incompetence to conscience incompetence.

Adam: To know what we're doing!

Bill: To know what we're doing! And then be in a position to actually take on board some of the things we've talked over, some of the skills work, you know, the advice part of it enables them to be at the stage to want to start using them. Does that make sense?

Alison: Yeah, when you've read the transcript! Henry?

Henry: Yes, I think, I don't know if it's a short-term or a longer term example, I mentioned the sort of the elite athlete who had an issue before the World Championships, it was a very contentious time to work with, in fact I suppose I couldn't call it working with, but their coach was desperate for the person to talk with someone who had a different ear on things, a different perspective on something that happened in the previous two months with the athlete to try and at least allow the player to enter the competition with a bit more self-confidence and a bit more, I suppose, confidence that things weren't going to go totally bad in that particular event itself. So I had a good, effectively three or four hours with that particular athlete, and I did take notes down and he was quite happy for up that to happen. But again I don't like taking notes, I only take notes if they are going to be useful to me to think about techniques, or strategies, or things to say, or things to come back to in the conversation that I want to try and bring back. The beauty of taking notes with the athlete in that particular period of time we sort of rebuilt the history of what happened to him, erm, and tried to change his perspective on what happened to him, you know, you've tried it and allow him to enter with glass psychologically full rather than empty. Erm, the notes allowed me to try and list down almost like erm, self-talk statements and positive cue words which he actually turned to, for example, in the period building up, in the actual event itself. So they were only just simple techniques to try and allow him to enter, or to try and reinforce the perspective that we'd talked about and worked through together over that period of time. And you find that exceptionally useful. Erm, and I think the most effective, the way that, I thought even in that limited time that I was effective at least for that moment or that period of time. He did perform well in the competition to an extent, but more importantly he actually phoned me up two days after our initial consultation and the next, and the next, and the next, erm, and then he also quoted me in the national press as well, which you never expect to get. But again it was a sign that well at least at that point in time, you know, it helped him and we've continued working together since then on a much more a sort of "OK let's start again, because that was simply a perspective exercise, you know, let's try and meet each other, you know, when there are no problems taking place let us try and to meet each other and talk through things and to try and maximise your performance when it's fine". So that was the sort of a short term example of something which I found satisfying within that short space of time which sometimes just doesn't work.

Alison: Using counselling skills?

Henry: Yeah. But the longer term example again probably comes back to down to the more broader definition of counselling, erm, in the sense of a young [athlete] who had very, very poor mistake management and very, very bad emotional control in competition, erm, to a point where, in an event, where I was with the [athlete] two years ago. It's an event where you sit with the [athlete] in breaks, you give them advice during the breaks as a way of helping to establish [] in breaks, and er, to a point where there was a picture in the coach's magazine of this girl chucking her [equipment] and it flying over my head! And then it goes "The sport psychologist [at competition]"!

Kevin: Oh great!

Henry: And everyone had a chuckle at that! It was at that point when I started working with her on a one-to-one basis saying "OK I've made my psychological assessment of you now!"

Adam: The non-verbal behaviour!

Henry: I have three stitches in my head now! But erm, going through the process of basically using the thought-stopping, countering, and reframing techniques because she was having typically very negative self-talk, erm, a very negative outcome orientated young girl, quite a high degree of pressure from home, you know, which was again part of the package, part of the actual intervention that I took with her. But then a lot of homework-based sort of activities where she was able to take away the negative statement that she'd actually expressed and reframing positive statements and then practise them [in training] which would be with myself. So we try and role play and we create [competitive] situations where she was able to try and practice self-talk and just make the dead time live between points in a positive way rather than in a negative way. That was just done over a rigorous basis, every session that I did with her, also every session that the individual coach did with her as well. So it was built on a much more continuous programme. The way that I suppose being, I suppose labelled as effective was we've now developed a charting sheet, we look at body language and self-talk between points, it gets like a mental behaviour checklist. We'll look at the kind of reactions that she's developed that she used to have but the routine she now goes through, and myself and the coach, every time we go [training], rates how effective she is between points in terms of showing normal body language, very neutral, very, very positive, but then she's also got the category of is this 'tough stuff', 'OK stuff', 'duff stuff', 'very duff stuff', and that's the categories that she's labelled. And to actually chart between points allows us to come up with a percentage of the amount of time, percentage of points she's actually being behaving positively, behaving negatively gives her stats in terms of how positive, you know, she has become and the upward curve goes on and on. Over a two year period that's been the most satisfying thing for her and myself. Now whether you define that as counselling, I would certainly define it as helping the person to control her emotions in a performance situation, you know, by a fairly structured training programme.

Alison: OK, thank you. Do you have an example?

Kevin: I think I've already given you some, but I think the one that was most interesting was the individual who said she had nothing to talk about and then continued to talk and talk, and reveals that there were four or five things she wanted to work on, that she didn't think she needed to work on, she wasn't even aware that there were issues that she needed to work on, and then went and competed two weeks after that and qualified for the junior world championships and e-mailed me from Germany saying "The things that we talked about worked" and that makes it all worthwhile.

Adam: I have worked with another British [performer] and there's a concept that erm, we would be working on which is erm, limiting problems in terms of negative self-talk or such like and a month later I got an e-mail; attached to which was a report of the team match between four or five countries and within this, and she was the captain of the team, was this phrase that she and I had worked on months before, between matches we discussed this, the concept was damage limitation, and the importance to the self-belief and self-confidence of limiting damage. And I smiled to myself because this was entirely a spontaneous generalisation from work between myself and one person that was indirectly being used with the team somewhere else and there was; then there was a performance improvement as a consequence, I smiled to myself.

Kevin: I know when I'm effective, that I'm effective is when after I come away from a session with an athlete and I've learned something I can use for myself when I play golf! "Hey I can use that". I must have done something right to generate that kind of response from the person, erm. Maybe because I'm taking too much credit for that, you know, it was the athlete's thought process that degenerated it anyway but I'm hoping that my question, my counselling skills facilitated it to some degree, now I can use it!

Alison: Right finally, I'd just like you to again tell a story if you've got an example, was there as a time when you felt you didn't have the skills, the counselling skills to meet the situation?

Kevin: That's easy.

Alison: That's easy?

Kevin: Year, my first experience was my "internship", erm, and my supervisors never watched me, never observed me, occasionally I would meet them to discuss what I was doing it. And er, so I was really operating in a context where I was not competent. And they were working with the women's basketball team, the collegiate basketball team daily and going with them on road trips. A lot of things happened that worked really well, but a lot of things, and I think most of it came down to er, not having had the experience, not having had any kind of role playing experience, training in anticipating the experiences, anticipating what people want. And in that team of, what was it, 12 women, there were probably eight of them that I was able to get along with well and four that would have nothing to do with me. And I think now, looking upon that I could have probably done something with those four, but I didn't know how to do it then. I blame my supervisors to a certain extent, because they didn't really get involved in that supervision. It makes me want to be a better supervisor.

Bill: I can't think of any, I'm trying to think back to early skirmishes.

Alison: Specifically to do with counselling skills.

Bill: I don't know if it's specifically counselling skills, but almost at first, when I was first training if I had a one-to-one I'd have prompts. So I would have something that was in sight so that I could refer back to if I was losing, if I felt uncomfortable. It was almost, I felt I wanted it to be very structured in the meeting, what things we were going to discuss and I think, as you become better at maybe at the counselling and the listening skills, you don't need to have prompts of what you need to discuss in a meeting, you can be far more unstructured and go with the flow of what they say.

Alison: What do you mean by a prompt, not a physical thing?

Bill: You know, it was like bullet points of what you want to cover in the meeting.

Alison: Oh right.

Kevin: The questions.

Alison: And you felt that didn't work as well?

Bill: It worked but it was there as something to give me confidence that if I felt I was flagging that I could refer back to that, whereas now I don't think, I don't go in with those sort of things it's just open book.

Henry: I don't think I've had any, enough encounters with athletes who've had real problems, like if you're talking about counselling in that sense. Erm, and in a situation where I've thought "Ooh, I can't handle this, I haven't got the knowledge, etc.". There's been one athlete who erm, within the peer group situation but she never actually owned up to me who, for example, who I believe and people believe to have anorexia or bulimia, erm, but never approached me with the issue so I never approached the issue. Erm, whether she had done that, if she had done that, you know, faced with that then obviously that's an issue for referral as far as I'm concerned. But I've never had that problem to deal with. Erm, I suppose because I work more with young performers the only sort of erm, issue where I handle being effective at counselling is probably again, it's probably not counselling as such, it's very, very sport-specific, is back to that tournament where I was a coach on site, where you do have lots and lots of athletes to deal with and actually trying to give the right advice in breaks! When they're down in the final, you know, and to actually try and stop, in some respects, a girl from crying her eyes out because she's [close to] losing. I mean, on one occasion erm, knowing that girl really well, knowing one girl really well who wasn't coping effectively, I said, you know, "Well, what you can do is you've got to sort of wipe the sweat off your T-shirt because you're going to be shaking hands in a games time!" for example, and that worked with her because she laughed and she actually came back and [closer] before she lost the match. But there's a number of situations like that where I couldn't call them counselling but you have to think on your feet, and you sometimes haven't got the knowledge of the person, perhaps, to be able to help, to facilitate coping with emotions if you're putting it into a counselling slant. Erm, but in terms of actual knowledge of problems of drug disorder, etc., things like that, levels of knowledge, I haven't been faced with that problem as yet.

Alison: O.k..

Kevin: I think that's an important issue though that you brought up, Henry, in that because we are, we believe we can help, and we're sort of expected to help, whatever help is. If we get into a situation we're not quite sure what to say because we don't know the person, we don't know the situation, we tend to want to say something and I'm not sure that's always the best. A good strategy might be "I don't know, I can't help you, go away!" politely, but you feel like "Oh I've got to say something, I've got to do the right thing here, what's the right thing?" I think that sometimes we should just say nothing.

Bill: It's a difficult one isn't it? It's like forcing it on them type of thing.

Kevin: Yeah.

Bill: Because we had one athlete recently who's had a real slump in form and we've left it on this sort of open basis that you can, you know, 'I'm available for psychological support, mental support' all this sort of thing, and it's almost like a pride thing I think where they won't come forward because it's almost accepting there's a problem, and then I guess, where I feel, through observation, there's clearly something I can help with, especially when the coach is saying 'It's not technical'. But then I can't go forward because I feel if I go upto them then that's, "Well you have got a problem".

Kevin: That's right.

Bill: And so I've just kept to my word and kept back.

Kevin: It's all you can do if that's the rubric you're working with.

Adam: I've approached the sport psychology as an already established counselling psychologist, so I can't think of situations where I've had difficulties because of lack of counselling skills. The area of being in a situation where advice is being sought in a pressure cooker situation of a major international tournament with someone who you don't know, then you realise that saying the wrong thing is worse than saying nothing, in my opinion, is experience which you need to learn and sometimes acknowledging the fact that "I just can't help this person". As tough as it is for them and as distressing as it is for me I actually, I'm going to actively decide not to help you because whatever I do I think I'll make it worse. That's become my problem, not their problem, and I've been in that situation. The other situation I've been in is because I have a very sensitive ear to emotional issues, or perhaps risking making more of an issue than there is. For me I need to be cautious and perhaps take a little bit more at face value rather than read too much. Because of the bias of the people I'm working with, they tend to underestimate 'Will they kill themselves or hurt, whoever, their family?' this is not quite the same thing as if I had a competition. So 'Very angry' in a sporting sense means something different than 'Very angry' in a clinical sense. The implications are different and suggest, if you like, recalibrate my sense of intensity is the area I'm looking at, getting more experience in what we've been chatting about, is the need for that, experience. In terms of counselling skills, I think I've got that.

Alison: I'll finish it there. Thank you very much for that, I hope you, it seems like you've learnt something from each other anyway, that's what I've heard.

I'm just looking to wrap this up now and get a bit of feedback from you. The aim of the focus group was, as you know, to explore your views and understanding of counselling skills in sport psychology, was there anything that you felt I've missed or was there anything that you wanted to add?

Henry: No, but I think that, well I've certainly learnt a lot from the process. I think it was interesting the debate about, again, the counselling process and counselling skills because you could have probably chosen a different word than counselling skills if the actual skills weren't going to be used for 'counselling' process, in the sense that you could have called them 'rapport and relationship skills'.

Bill: Call them communication skills.

Henry: Or call them communication skills which might be sort of more valid given the fact that some of the stuff we would be using those skills for wouldn't be counselling, for example, as defined by Adam. But if you define counselling in terms of, you know, helping others out who've got

particular areas to improve, then in a broader sense then those are valid. But I thought that was quite interesting.

Adam: I was just wondering, if you like, de-emphasise the debate of what is counselling, what isn't counselling erm, from my point of view, as an applied professional, to me it's far more pragmatic to think about, in this model you're talking about you're at A, you want to get to B and I would draw an arrow between A and B and to me I see my role as all about how do I achieve the arrow? I know where I'm at, I spend time identifying where I would prefer to be, that's the next part, and my role is to help facilitate the arrow or arrows between the two. Now you can call it making tea if you want, but that needs to be done in an ethical and efficacious manner, and I think there are certain skills which erm, communication may be generic across all these different professionals. I would say the sport physiologists would require a certain kind of listening skills in terms of understanding their situation, etc., etc., etc. Erm, the difference is whether these skills are central to what you're working with. As a counselling psychologist these are my primary skills, this is what I use to get my job done. I think in a skills training package, I do a lot of training, for example, in a stress management sense, one can go through that without using those skills in a primary sense, they're there in a secondary sense. And to me, if they are primary skills to get that arrow achieved, then that's the important thing for me, not the name of what you call it.

[8 seconds of silence]

Alison: O.k.. was there anything that you thought I would ask and didn't?

[5 seconds of silence]

Did you come with any preconceived ideas of what I was going to ask?

Adam: I took it at face value.

FOCUS GROUP 3

Alison: I sent a questionnaire out last year, which some of you filled out, and quite a lot of different information was obtained from that. It was sent to accredited sport psychologists, trainee sport psychologists and athletes. It was looking at, amongst other things, qualities of a sport psychologist, and the kind of support that athletes want from a sport psychologist. Now a lot of different terms were being used by people, athletes and sport psychologists, I'm really wondering if you can tell me what you understand by the different terms that were coming up (and themes). So there's four different terms that I'm going to be putting up here [on flip chart] and I just want you to discuss what you think is meant by the terms. So, what do you understand by the term listening skills?

[5 seconds of silence]

Debbie: Being able to listen in an empathic way.

Alison: Yeah.

Tony: I think, I filled out this questionnaire, I think a lot of it, when you feel as though you've got something to offer a particular client, I think sometimes the tendency, particularly if time's against the clock, is to jump in and offer them things before fully listening to what they've actually got to say, and sometimes I think you've got to hold yourself back and take a little bit more time to really understand things from their perspective rather than just [] what your gut reaction might be in terms of trying to offer them some sort of help, particularly in, you know, emotional counselling sessions and things like that.

Mary: To me it's taking in erm, all the erm, information I suppose that the athlete is offering me, that's verbal and non-verbal, and processing that information.

Alison: When you say non-verbal, can you say what kind of things you're looking for?

Mary: Erm, body language, so that's erm, body position, it's not only in terms of erm, how they're sitting, well in terms of how they're sitting, but also how they hold their arms and whatever, erm, eye contact, tone of voice, whether they lean forwards, lean back, how reticent or not they are when speaking.

Alison: Does anyone agree with that, that's it's not just the verbal, it's also the non-verbal?

Ruth: It's about collecting information to evaluate or assess the situation and sitting back, you know, and collecting as much information as you can, whether it be non-verbal or verbal.

Rachel: That would embrace both listening and observation.

Alison: You distinguish between the two?

Rachel: I would yeah. [] Put the two together and you're embracing the whole picture.

Alison: Debbie, what would you say?

Debbie: Yeah, pretty much the same things really. I think [] obviously you can combine the two, both the observation and listening.

Eddie: Quite often that's all, erm, quite often that's what the athlete wants just someone to listen to them, there isn't a specific issue or a specific problem, they just want someone, and as Debbie said just then combine them. There's no real agenda, no real major problem, they just want someone to talk to.

Ruth: So are you saying that listening skills aren't just used when there's a problem?

Eddie: Erm, yeah, well you can expand that right out. Of course you're always listening for little things they've given you, if you're involved with the team or you're watching a training session you're always still switched on, you're always still listening then, it's not always in a face-to-face situation is it I think.

Mary: I think it's a matter of active listening too in terms of the listening skills, because you've got passive listening where you're almost allowing stuff to flow over you, and then you've got the active listening where you're really concentrating on what it is, the information that's been given to you. I think there's a real difference there.

Alison: Do you think that's a greater skill, or just a different skill?

Mary: It takes more concentration to be an active listener.

Rachel: It's more tiring.

Tony: It takes more experience as well. I think when you first start in one-on-one sessions a lot of it, you're so busy concentrating on the next thing you're possibly going to say...

Mary: Yes.

Tony: ...that you're not listening properly to what they're saying, and I think that that does come with time but I found that very difficult when I first started working one-on-one with very good performers. I was so conscious of trying to get what I had to offer over to them, that I wasn't listening to what they were saying to me. I don't think I do that now, but I certainly did start.

Rachel: I think that's partially experience as to what the functions of listening can provide...

Tony: Yeah.

Rachel: ...outside of what listening is. Because there's what listening is and then there's the functions it serves and it becomes, you move from, you move onto another stage where you start realising how powerful listening is and what functions it serves.

Tony: Mm.

Mary: And for me, listening can also mean silence. And that's, again, you know, it comes with experience, it's the ability to allow the silence to be there if you feel it's necessary, and you only know if it's necessary because you've actually been listening.

Debbie: Mm.

Rachel: I think quite often you know whether you've been listening or not by how tired you are.

Tony: Yeah.

Debbie: Mm.

Mary: Mm.

Rachel: Because it requires quite a lot of concentration and you come away mentally exhausted even though you haven't actually done anything.

Tony: Mm.

Rachel: And you think "What's caused me to be so exhausted?" It's because you've literally been that attentive for that.

Alison: Do you think it's something that you develop through experience or training?

Mary: Both.

Debbie: Both yeah.

Tony: You're never really taught how to listen though are you?

Alison: Are you?

Tony: I personally, people say to you "Now concentrate, listen to what I'm saying" and it's like somebody saying "Now keep your eye on the ball", it was on T.V. last night, I don't know what that means, I'm not really, it depends how long your concentration span is a lot of the time. I think people are good listeners if they have good concentration, but I think without, I think it does come without experience. Because you will miss things when you first start out in this job that you wouldn't miss now, you would pick up on them.

Mary: Yes, but I think it's also a skill that can be taught.

Tony: I'm not saying it can't be taught, I'm saying I don't think it is taught very often.

Mary: It depends what you do, what training you do.

Alison: What do you mean?

Tony: Well, for example, BASES accreditation. I mean it's sort of covered in the profile isn't it? But I'm not sure how much of an emphasis is given on that.

Mary: But I think that there's developments within the, certainly obviously the psych. accreditation, in that we're beginning to look at the appropriateness of having counselling qualifications...

Tony: Yeah I agree with that, I think the best thing that could happen...

Mary: ...and therefore that the teaching of listening skills, the training of listening skills, is very much more encompassed within er, within counselling.

Alison: Now you're making a link yourself with listening skills and counselling?

Tony: Yeah.

Mary: Yes.

Tony: As opposed to just mental skills training or any of the other roles we fulfil, yeah.

Alison: Is that where you see that slotting in in terms of practical training?

Mary: Personally I would say yes.

Rachel: Why?

Mary: Because erm, I think irrespective of whether you feel you are purely a performance enhancement coach you will find yourself in situations that go beyond that and I think it's

important that erm, you have at least a modicum of skills to be able to deal with a broader range of issues that you've got to come face to face with.

Rachel: So what you've just said comes over to me as saying "So you have the performance enhancement then you have the other areas of working" and that's where it fits in the other areas?

Mary: No, no, there's definitely a crossover, but I think, I mean some people could argue that "If I'm a performance enhancement coach I don't need listening skills because I'm dealing with set mental skills, if you like, that I am going to train someone to do". I'm not saying this is how I think. But there's a possibility that someone could say "Well why do I need "counselling" skills in order to provide someone with mental skills training?" and I actually disagree with that.

Ruth: I don't think you can do the performance enhancement role without them. How can you evaluate a situation if you don't listen?

Alison: Are you talking about counselling skills now or listening skills?

Ruth: I'm talking about listening skills.

Tony: I think listening skills are universal, the way I took it that you meant is if there's a place for training of listening skills then that may be more towards, is that right?

Mary: Yep.

Tony: I thought that where we went to start with, I was saying that I didn't think we were really trained, I'm not saying we couldn't be trained, you can be trained to listen but we weren't really trained for it, and I understood it that you [Mary] thought the place for training people in listening skills maybe more along the counselling line.

Mary: That's true but I don't think there's any reason why we can't encompass the training of listening skills within some of the applied sport and exercise psych. modules that many institutions teach. If it's, if we're applied, those skills I think we need to...

Tony: Mm.

Mary: ...encompass some, you know, things like listening skills, communication skills.

Alison: That's interesting that you're equating listening skills with communication skills, do they go hand-in-hand, are they the same?

Mary: No they're not the same, but you can't communicate with someone if you don't listen. You can't communicate let's put it that way, you can't communicate as *effectively* with someone if you haven't first listened to them.

Rachel: I mean I think there's two things: one, because we've come here to discuss counselling...

Mary: Yes.

Rachel: ...and the first thing you've put up is listening skills.

Tony: Mhm.

Rachel: We're all, almost as if you've guided us in that direction to discuss it, you know, it's the first heading you've given us so we're discussing it as a counselling issue. That doesn't mean to say we necessarily see it that that's where it sits or see that it is only a function within that framework, it's just that that's the framework, you know, you've put upon us in a way.

Alison: Would you see it in a different framework then if you weren't here to discuss the counselling skills in sport psychology?

Rachel: I'd say listening is probably THE most important skill of a sport psychologist, but I'd also say it for a coach.

Debbie: Yeah.

Rachel: I'd say it for a huge number of things, but it's just one of those things very underrated and not often brought to the forefront.

Tony: It's a lifeskill. It's not just a sport psychology skill or a psychology skill, it's a teacher's skill, a manager's skill.

Ruth: Yeah, for that reason I wouldn't see it necessarily as just falling under counselling.

Alison: Do you think there's such a thing as bad listening?

Rachel: Mm.

Eddie: Pardon?!

Alison: That's appalling!

Eddie: I had to say something.

Rachel: Well you could expand then.

Eddie: On what?

Rachel: Bad listening.

[14 seconds of silence]

Eddie: You're either listening or you're not.

Alison: I had some nods when I said "Is there such a thing as bad listening?"

Mary: Yeah, bad listening is putting your own interpretation on what it is that you're listening to, and then giving that interpretation back to the person you're listening to.

Tony: Leading them.

Mary: Yeah.

Rachel: Or listening more what you want to hear.

Tony: Yes absolutely.

Mary: Yes, that's what I meant.

Rachel: Sorry.

Mary: Yes, yeah, yeah.

Rachel: Are you alive [Ruth]?

Ruth: Mm.

Rachel: Sorry did I wake you up?!

Ruth: I was just thinking about it. Is it, is that right? That's it's putting your own values on it or is it just misinterpretation?

Rachel: Yeah.

Tony: Yeah. You may talk to somebody and they might be listening to you intently but they're not hearing what you're saying, and I think, you know, you need to rephrase it or they need to rephrase it, but certainly if they've got a fixed opinion on something it is more difficult to get them to actually listen and interpret what you're saying. Thinking of his line manager now!

Rachel: I kind of went the same place!

Tony: I was just thinking about a conversation I had this morning when I was being listened to intently, but the actual message I was trying to get across was very cloudy. It will have to be reinforced a number of times!

Alison: So you're saying he wasn't listening or he just had bad listening skills?

Tony: He was definitely listening.

Mary: He wasn't hearing.

Tony: He wasn't taking any notice.

Alison: What's the difference?

Mary: I actually usually put it the other way around that often I feel as if I'm being heard but not listened to. So hearing for me doesn't require necessarily the level of understanding, but if I feel as if I'm being listened to then there's a level of understanding that's going on. You're using it the other way around [Tony].

Tony: Mm.

Mary: But I think one or the other means that there's no level of understanding or they're not willing to understand your point of view, and the other one means that they are trying to understand you and put themselves in your shoes and not.

[6 seconds of silence]

Alison: Anybody else got anything to add on listening skills before I move on?

The next theme that came up, now this wasn't specifically referred to in this way, but I've lumped them all together because there was many. Remember this is what athletes wanted from a sport psychologist and also what sport psychologists were saying is important as well for being a sport psychologist. What do you understand by the term 'interpersonal skills'?

[11 seconds of silence]

Tony: I think, the way I would interpret it would be the manner in which I would conduct a session with somebody. So, let me try and, say I had poor interpersonal skills, I could have poor listening skills.

Alison: Does one necessarily...

Tony: I think if you've got good interpersonal skills you'll be a good listener. I think if you've got good interpersonal skills you will be a good communicator, a good disseminator, or a clear disseminator of information. I think you would allow your personality to come out with them and for them to be comfortable with you all of those, I think interpersonal skills is really

multi-faceted. Listening we sort of got down to hearing, understanding, etc. I think interpersonal's a lot broader than that.

Ruth: I see interpersonal skills as being how you interact with other people and the nature of your interaction.

Rachel: Mm.

Ruth: So, as you said [Tony], listening skills is just one small, very small subset of that. Maybe it's to do with body language, communication, erm, behaviour, attitude. I see it as being a much broader concept.

Mary: Development of a relationship with someone isn't it really? It's the ability to develop a relationship with someone at whatever level is appropriate.

Alison: Would you distinguish between listening and interpersonal skills?

Mary: No, I think they, interpersonal skills, good interpersonal skills, as Tony said, you incorporate good listening skills.

Alison: If you have good interpersonal skills will you always have good listening skills?

Mary: No.

Rachel: There's probably a general category isn't there of skills you'd put down that would comprise interpersonal skills and listening would be one of them?

Alison: So almost in a hierarchy, interpersonal would be at the top, the broadest?

Rachel: If you're talking about the sort of skills at the level of listening, yeah.

Debbie: And that, well obviously, er, if you're good at interpersonal skills you might not actually be good at all the other, say six others that come within that.

Rachel: But generally...

Debbie: Yeah generally, yeah.

Rachel: You're getting a balance that get you in the right direction.

Debbie: Yes.

Rachel: So just because you were good at listening wouldn't necessarily mean you had good interpersonal skills. If you couldn't communicate verbally back, it's no good being able to listen if you can't.

Alison: That was my next question really, does it work the same the other way, if you're good at listening are you necessarily good at, do you necessarily have good interpersonal skills?

Rachel: No because it doesn't necessarily make you a good communicator per se just to be a good listener. I mean it's working in the right direction, but we could all be very good at sitting and listening but we couldn't be able to express ourselves in the right manner in a way that we're understood, like using the appropriate jargon. So even though I might be very effective at listening I might not be effective at communication per se.

Alison: Is that part of listening, to give it back, not just to take it in and to understand, but to almost reflect back, if you like, to demonstrate understanding not just to understand?

Mary: I think so, because how else does the person who's talking to you know that you're really listening if you're not actually giving something back.

Tony: I think it's the way you give it back.

Mary: Right.

Tony: The manner, like we always talk about talking at a sport-specific level, you can talk to them in a very friendly manner with a lot of empathy, you know, you can make them feel very comfortable, and you'd say "Yeah, I've got good interpersonal skills". But, you may say something inappropriate in the detail with which you're communicating and they could walk out of your office and say "What do you think of that?" and say "Oh he was crap, he didn't know what he was talking about". So I think it's the manner with which you communicate, sorry the content with which you communicate as well that can give you good interpersonal skills, or, sorry, is encompassed within having good interpersonal skills.

Rachel: That's not, is that an essential part of listening skills?

Tony: No it's not an essential part of listening skills. You can listen and interpret, but then you've got to somehow relay the information again. Although you may think you understand it, I think when you're listening to people you've got to try and communicate in their language from their perspective as well. I think that would give you good interpersonal skills.

Alison: From what you were saying at the beginning, are you suggesting that it's almost like a style?

Tony: Yeah, I think so, it's something that I would use. I would use the word 'style' or 'personality'. Take two different scenarios: say you're working with somebody who is particularly bright, and say you're working with somebody who is particularly unbright and you're doing essentially the same sort of session. I think if you've got good interpersonal skills you can read the situation, you can hear what they're telling you, you can adapt your style and your manner and your mode of delivery to that individual. Alright you're still making an assumption that you're not absolutely sure about, i.e., one person's very bright, one person's not so bright, but if you've still got to try and get over a general message and you've got a certain time to do it, you can adapt your interpersonal skills to the situation I think.

Rachel: I'm not sure what you're saying Tony.

Tony: Anybody else?

Ruth: I'd say you're talking about, when you say 'style', I think what Tony's trying to say is if you're communicating to different people at different levels and it's having that ability to switch.

Tony: That's, yeah.

Ruth: And perhaps that is part of interpersonal skills. That you don't have to actually have, you might have your own personal style that you have when you're communicating with your friends, but when you're communicating with other people you can switch into another mode say...

Tony: Yep.

Ruth: ...or assess the situation. I think that's what...

Tony: So you're quite adaptive.

Ruth: Yeah.

Tony: I think is an interpersonal skill that's quite...

Alison: Is that what you meant then what Ruth was saying?

Tony: Yeah, I just meant you tailor your style or you're the way in which you interact with the person after you've listened to them.

Debbie: But that's not the whole of interpersonal style though is it?

Tony: No, again I think it's a lot of different things, I mean you [Alison] could probably give us things and we could probably rank them and discuss them, we're trying to come out with the individual parts straight away.

Alison: Does that make sense [Rachel]?

Rachel: Mm.

Alison: Eddie, anything to add?

Eddie: Not really, people have covered most of it. Erm, I think that bit about reflecting is really important, and what Tony was saying about the content and showing that you, you know, you do understand what someone's saying to you, I think that's the most important part of listening. Because that's where you sort of, in talking back to them you're starting to develop a relationship, that's the key to it really.

[6 seconds of silence]

Alison: Good, I shall move onto the next one. The next was brought up by a few different people, not the athletes, but the sport psychologists. What do you understand by the term counselling skills?

Tony: Having good listening and interpersonal skills!

[Laughter]

Alison: So that's your answer then?

Tony: Yeah.

Eddie: I think when people start using that term, in the framework of sport psychology, I don't think they're talking about interpersonal skills and listening skills, because they are skills we need anyway as a sport psychologist. For me, when people start talking about counselling skills in this context it's about dealing with issues other than er, performance issues. Getting further training to deal with those sorts of things that crop up.

Alison: So, it's issues that are not performance enhancement?

Eddie: Yeah, when I see that mentioned, and when I hear that mentioned that's what I always think about, I don't think about counselling skills as being specific skills that you've developed to enhance a relationship that you've got as a sport psychologist, because I think you should be

doing this, you should have those anyway to a certain extent, interpersonal skills, the listening and the communicating. That's what I understand by it, I don't know about anybody else.

Tony: Mm.

Debbie: I think you're right, but I think performers probably would say that they are receiving counselling, they're just going to see a sport psychologist, but we're just looking at performance enhancement skills.

Rachel: You see the most athletes of anyone here [Debbie], to what extent do you think that you use counselling skills?

Debbie: Erm, I agree really with what Eddie's saying, when I see the term counselling skills I don't really see that as sport psychology training as being counselling particularly, I see that as more erm, something that we shouldn't necessarily be dealing with. Erm, I see it more as the interpersonal and listening skills that's all part of it, they're important parts of it. But I would imagine if you ask them they think they're receiving some sort of counselling.

Alison: Have you ever asked anybody?

Debbie: No I haven't, no.

Rachel: We have a phrase here, 'academic counselling'.

Tony: That box that the coffee tray goes on.

Rachel: Which none of us ever, ever do which is supposed to be counselling on specifically academic issues.

Eddie: I mean athletes might call it counselling, "I'm off seeing the psycho", "I'm off seeing the shrink".

Debbie: Mm.

Tony: Mm.

Alison: Are you happy with them saying that?

Eddie: Erm,

Rachel: Yeah.

Eddie: Yeah, because it's part of, especially if it's a team sport, or in a squad situation, it's just part of the banter, it's just part of the relationship.

Debbie: It's very tongue-in-cheek when we say it.

Eddie: Yeah, of course.

Rachel: It's often quite a good thing.

Debbie: Yeah.

Rachel: Yeah, it's not negative in the context that they frequently use it.

Debbie: Because they've started to realise that that's not what it is, a sport psychologist.

Rachel: But it shows that where the relationship has got between you that they can have that sort of banter.

Ruth: Yes, yeah.

Eddie: I think you have to, some people might be phased by that, early in training I think you have to have, you know, a bit of confidence in yourself to be able to see that that's where, you know, that's the stage of that sort of relationship is that, you know, you can just take that and things, it's just part of the banter, except some people might get het up about it.

Ruth: It has an indication that you've actually become assimilated as a part of the team, if that kind of banter goes on normally, and in a sense, that means that you are recognised as having a role erm, and they're joking with you, you're part of the group.

Alison: But they think they're getting counselling?

Ruth: No, but they might be called a psycho!

Alison: We're moving away a little bit from counselling skills. But you [Debbie] started off by saying that you feel that they think they get counselling from you whether they do or not.

Debbie: Yeah.

Tony: I'm not sure that's ever happened with me, it's been the other way round. I've may have put in a public report, after working with a team, and I will have divided that er, report into say mental skills, advanced mental skills, performance enhancing skills, general support and counselling. And then they'll ring you up and say "What you had to counsel people?". A lot of the applied papers as well, term it 75% performance enhancing, 25% counselling. And I would agree with Eddie and Debbie, I see it the same way, but I think it's very difficult to

separate. You may go in to do a performance enhancing mental skills session, and for ten minutes out of the hour you actually might be doing some counselling as well.

Eddie: I don't think it matters what they call it.

Tony: No it's just a label.

Eddie: Someone might call it counselling, they might not have a clue what they mean by counselling, it's just a word they use to describe what's going on.

Alison: What about you as a sport psychologist, does it matter what you call it?

Eddie: Does it matter what I call it?

Alison: Yeah.

Eddie: Erm, I think it does. I just call it help. If you need some help or anything. That's all I call it.

Tony: Or a chat about it, have a chat about something.

Eddie: Try not to give things labels.

Debbie: Mm.

Tony: Yeah, as soon as it goes into the realm where you're moving away from the performance then I tend to think of it as counselling. So things like home sickness, erm, relationship problems without doubt view as being counselling, or I'll try to counsel somebody.

Alison: You would try to counsel somebody?

Tony: I would try to, I would see it as moving away from performance enhancing. I would classify it, for, example, if I had to classify how an hour had gone, we'd spent 45 minutes on goal setting and 15 minutes on home sickness. I'd classify that as being part counselling.

Alison: Why is that?

Tony: Erm, the way I've been brought up I think, what I've read.

Rachel: I'm trying to locate why this counselling thing is, sort of, you know, how's it got to the position, because everyone seems to be agreeing that it's not part, you see it as this attachment, that it's not part of the performance enhancement stuff, it's this other stuff that's preparing to deal with these other issues that on a day-to-day basis you mightn't. And I'm trying to work out as an individual how I've come to this sort of, I agree, how have I come to this sort of position whereby I think counselling, half of me says "Well counselling's not about that", you know, I was with someone for two hours last night, I was offering him counselling, but I would never, ever in a million years use that phrase to describe it because, for some reason, I've attached this 'other meaning' to this phrase counselling. And I'm trying to locate why because, you know, flippantly I said, you know, we all have academic counselling but we don't, you know advising someone academically, is not some separate bit of the job or something, you know, as an academic, because that's what you do all the time.

Mary: Mhm.

Rachel: In day-to-day communications with students you're advising them, so why can I academically have that as a normal part, and yet within sport psychology it's something that I see as bit more deviant, I'm trying to think of a word.

Tony: Mm, it's the word though isn't it?

Rachel: And I swear that I've tried, the best location I can find for this is the BASES form. I mean I'm locating myself to filling in those little boxes and ticking those little things.

Tony: On your profile.

Rachel: And I don't know, I mean it's a long time since I did that form, but I sort of recall counselling skills belonging to the sort of mainstream psychology bunch of skills working with other disorders or other, you know, population groups or other problems. So I've sort of located, I might be completely wrong, but I'm trying to locate in time how I've now decided counselling skills is working with deviant problems or, you know, issues other than those which, because what we do arguably is counsel people.

Eddie: That's what I said at the start it's what, because you can still use those [on flip chart] to handle issues like that that crop up.

Mary: Yeah, but I think that...

Rachel: What's the word, what's the definition of counselling?

Mary: But I think the placement of counselling goes beyond that BASES form, I think it's the fact that we don't use it, I certainly don't use it in any of my teaching, in terms of sport and exercise psych. Whether I'm doing an applied module, whether I'm doing, not doing an applied module. Counselling come within those parameters and maybe we need to expand our

viewpoint on this and say "Alright, so let's encompass some basic skills within some of these applied stuff", so we take away this label that it is out here and only people who, you know, deviant people need counselling skills. And counselling takes on this broader feature that we counsel athletes and we counsel athletes as much about performance enhancement as we do on anything else.

Rachel: What's the definition of counselling?

Alison: I'm going to write it on. You see the next term is counselling. Do you distinguish between the two [counselling skills and counselling]?

Rachel: Do you have a dictionary with you? I feel a huge need for a dictionary!

Alison: I'd like to know what you think before you looked it up in the dictionary. What do you think counselling is and do you distinguish between that and using counselling skills?

Rachel: To offer help and advice.

Alison: That's your definition of counselling?

Rachel: Yeah.

Mary: But it's really, it's having the athlete erm, problem solve for him or herself isn't it as well? So we're not offering solutions.

Tony: We've got a very negative connotation though haven't we?

Rachel: You're offering help though aren't you? If you say you're offering help then what you're talking about is the manner in which you provide that help, rather than the fact that you're offering it.

Mary: Yes.

Rachel: Of course, you know, the approach would be, you were talking about, I think you were talking about the approach where offering help could encompass a huge number of approaches couldn't it? It could be just formal straight one-way advice "Do this, that or the other" or "How do you feel about it?" "What do you think?" "Have you explored?"

Eddie: I think it's got a lot to do with code of conduct, because you realise that well maybe perhaps to become a counsellor I need to do some professional training, so all in all I don't do that.

Rachel: Yeah.

Tony: Mm.

Eddie: It might be some of that, but of course we do, I mean there's skills that you use, I mean I started off by saying what I thought counselling was dealing with stuff over and above performance. But the skills that you would use are those skills [on flip chart]. Or they should be.

Debbie: Has anybody done a counselling course?

Mary: I'm doing it at the moment.

Rachel: Definition of counselling?!

[Laughter]

Tony: Now you're not listening!

Mary: Yeah, been there, done that! Erm, there was this big debate over erm, counselling skills, and counselling skills is what you apply in a given situation and counselling is the process.

Ruth: My understanding of counselling skills, I think is that somewhere there are, not necessarily a fixed set, but there are a number of approaches to counselling. And because I've not actually received any formal training I believe I do do counselling but I wouldn't have the knowledge necessarily what my style, what approach I'm adopting. It's almost, and again it's to do with this formalised training and this identification of it as being associated with a branch of mainstream psychology that we probably haven't had that background to sort of label it.

Tony: But it is within the profile. It doesn't come under the sport psychology section of the BASES profile does it? You've got psychology, you've got communication skills, you've got counselling, and then right at the end section D - sport psychology. So that's probably why we have a different perception of it.

Eddie: You looked at that form this morning didn't you?!

Tony: It just so happens...

Alison: I told you not to prepare!

Tony: I didn't prepare.

Rachel: I will defend him on this, he had a reason to look at the form.

Tony: I had a reason to be involved with the profile this morning, so I'm not this horrific swot! But, it's a label that we're not comfortable with, we don't really understand. Other people are not comfortable with, for example, Americans use the term counselling all the time and it's an accepted part of their culture. It's not an accepted part of our society. "My little lad's going for tuition for his maths lessons", "Oh he's going for maths counselling" ooh I don't like that bit on the end. And it's a word that we're not comfortable with because it has negative connotations. Dealing with outside performance enhancing, dealing with problems, offering help and advice gives this idea that there's something wrong with you if you need counselling.

Alison: Do you think Americans see counselling differently?

Rachel: Mm.

Mary: Mm.

Alison: Does it mean something different in America?

Tony: They use like the word 'therapy'. If somebody's "I'm undergoing therapy".

[Laughter]

Tony: They would never, you even have to think about that, say you're going to use it, i.e., a therapy technique with performer, you would never say "Right now we're going we're going to have a session of rational emotive therapy"! "Am I a nutter?", you know, we don't like the word. We're not comfortable with that word [counselling] either.

Alison: Why do you think that is? When you say we, do you mean sport psychologists?

Tony: In my opinion. No, it goes outside generally.

Debbie: Yes.

Mary: Society in general.

Alison: This country?

Mary: Yes.

Tony: Yeah. It is, it's the attitude that we don't like to admit that we need help.

Mary: That's right. It's this stiff upper lip approach that we can deal with it all ourselves.

Rachel: You know in America you're not one of the trend setters if you're not in therapy.

Tony: No, if you haven't got a therapist there's something wrong with you!

[Laughter]

Mary: That's right yeah. I mean they have athletic counsellors, and athletic counsellors are your sport psychologists, if you like, they call them athletic counsellors.

Alison: So somebody who's trained in sport psychology could then call themselves an athletic counsellor?

Debbie: Well they can't call themselves psychologists, so they've got to call themselves something else.

Alison: O.k.

Tony: Certified consultant it is over there isn't it?

Alison: So they could then be called an athletic counsellor?

Mary: If they're in university situation.

Alison: Without having specific counselling training?

Mary: I don't know, I can't answer that question.

Eddie: Do we know what counsellors do over there? I mean have they got the same counselling system that we've got over here?

Mary: It's all State-based isn't it? That's the problem.

Alison: Do you know what counsellors do over here?

Mary: Yes, they tend to, as Ruth was saying, they tend to adopt a specific approach if you like, so you can have, you've got a humanistic, you've got Gestalt, you've got Rogerian, you've got I don't know this, that and the other, and they tend to adopt a certain approach. And they will stay with their approach, that's their style of counselling and that's what they are most comfortable in, and so people will move around finding themselves a counsellor who meets their own needs, whether it's in your face or problem solving with a coach.

Rachel: In dealing with what?

Mary: People see it as problems.

Ruth: Yeah, yeah.

Mary: If you go to a counsellor.

Rachel: Maybe that's why we're.

Alison: That's something I was going to come to, I'm getting the sense that you're seeing counselling as something that deals with problems, is that right?

Mary: It's something that is interrupting your way of life at the moment and you'd like to deal with it.

Rachel: Is it a case of we're seeing that way, or...

Tony: I think we're saying that's how other people see it. If you're getting a divorce you see a relationship counsellor, you know, and I think that is the perception. I'm not sure that we would always associate counselling skills.

Rachel: We're shying away from the words aren't we?

Debbie: Yeah.

Ruth: But I think in counselling practice people would not usually go to see a counsellor unless there was some problem that they had that they wanted some advice and help with.

Mary: Yes.

Ruth: So I think, in a sense, that's where it comes from, is that that's how the role is defined in this country. You don't go when there's nothing wrong.

Alison: So in terms of counselling skills then as sport psychologists, remember I'm interested in what you think not what you think other people think, er, would you use counselling skills in your work or is it something that, would you use it all the time, is it fundamental or do you use it when there's a problem?

Debbie: I think it comes back to what Ruth said that I'm we probably all do, but we don't know how to categorise it.

Tony: Mm.

Eddie: That's what we do, that's what they are.

Mary: I mean there are certain counselling skills that we would employ all the time, and there are other counselling skills that would only be appropriate to employ in a given situation.

Rachel: I suspect many of us in our day-to-day dealings with, in our consultancy or work with specific clients, spend most of our time trying to get away from this issue about sport psychology is about solving problems.

Mary: Yes.

Rachel: So we want to try and move away as much as possible from this concept of problems and you're there to solve problems, and I suspect a lot of us see counselling as dealing with problems, and so therefore as part of the matrix we also shy away from the word counselling or any words that identify this person as having a problem.

Alison: Counselling skills as well?

Rachel: No counselling, the word counselling, I don't think I'm shying away from them all. I think I recognise that a lot of the skills I might use would be classed as counselling skills, but I think that's maybe one of the reasons why commonly, I certainly shy away from the word counselling because it probably represents and what it embraces, it embraces problems I wouldn't want, you know, spending my time telling them about sport psychology's not necessarily about problems.

Alison: Do you think you need to be trained to use counselling skills then?

Debbie: Well we obviously all don't!

Eddie: We are, but we are, we go through supervised experience.

Ruth: No, you can certainly have, I certainly didn't *have* to go through anything formal. In fact I think it's only just now that people are even starting to talk about it.

Mary: Yes, that's right.

Rachel: We had to tick a box.

Eddie: You might not have been taught them explicitly, but as part of your training you would be in situations where you had to use those skills.

Ruth: Yes.

Mary: Yes, that's right.

Eddie: So it might not have been explicit the stuff that you picked up.

Rachel: It depends what you consider counselling skills to embrace doesn't it?

Eddie: Mm.

Alison: Well in terms of, using your words [Eddie], explicit training, do you think explicit training is needed then to use counselling skills?

Eddie: It depends on the individual.

Mary: Well I think also it depends on the supervisor.

Rachel: It depends on how you define counselling skills as well.

Mary: That's right.

Eddie: Yeah.

Mary: I erm, I did a couple of City and Guilds evening classes before I'm doing my current one and I have to say that I probably learnt quite a lot from that that I did not get from my supervisor. Maybe that's because of the supervisor as opposed to that it should have been, you know, it should be an implicit part of, or an explicit part of BASES accreditation.

Debbie: So why did you do those courses?

Mary: Why?

Debbie: Yeah because you're already accredited.

Mary: Not when I did the City and Guilds one.

Debbie: Oh right. And that was for your accreditation?

Mary: Yes.

Tony: I think this is a very messy area. I've just been trying to equate something that I think would come under a sport psychologists heading, say a cognitive restructuring technique, and then try to apply that to a counselling situation. And I think we would advise a coach not to teach certain mental techniques because they, for example, might not be qualified. Say right, cognitive restructuring, where you're going to try over a period of time to alter your behaviour by altering the way you think. Is that a sport psychology technique? I'm asking you, do you think that's a sport psychology technique?

Rachel: Oh you're asking us?

Tony: Yeah, I'm asking you!

Eddie: Of course it's not.

Tony: Of course it's not.

Alison: Of course it's not did you say?

Eddie: Yeah.

Tony: Do sport psychologists use cognitive restructuring?

Rachel: You're joking now are you?

Tony: I'm not no.

Mary: Of course we do.

Tony: Of course we do.

Mary: But it's not called that and I'm not sure that necessarily we use it very well.

Tony: What's not called that?

Mary: We don't call it cognitive restructuring.

Tony: Ooh, I don't know.

Debbie: It is on my profile for accreditation!

Alison: I do, a lot of my...

Rachel: What else do you call it?

Mary: I think you'll find, I mean they'll be a lot of people who would not understand the term cognitive restructuring.

Debbie: Oh yeah, no I wouldn't tell somebody that.

Tony: No, no, no.

Rachel: Not to performers.

Mary: No, but I think that I also feel that there's people who are going through accreditation who would not fully understand the term cognitive restructuring.

Rachel: Not who are accredited though?

Mary: Well hopefully not no.

Tony: Cognitive restructuring, reframing, it's all.

Alison: Can you link it back to counselling skills?

Tony: This is what I'm trying to do, say, for example, you're dealing with somebody who's really suffering from er, pre-competition nerves and you decide "What I'm going to do is we're going to undertake a cognitive restructuring programme er, and try to help them", and then somebody comes in and, I'm going to use an example I don't know that much about, say they've got a distorted body image right, which is starting to go a little bit outside of the sport

psychology performance area and you're going to try and get to perceive themselves in a more positive light. Again you're undergoing some sort of cognitive restructuring technique. I find it very difficult to separate the two.

Alison: Cognitive restructuring, separated...

Tony: In those two situations. Again it's this idea of altering the way people think, or offering, turning a negative to a positive, or offering advice for something that might not be right. So again I'm coming round to this idea that counselling is to do with problems.

Alison: Do we feel that we've erm, defined counselling skills? You went back to it before [Rachel]. Have you come to some sort of an agreement or do you feel that you've defined counselling skills?

Rachel: It's just all that old idea which we're all probably using as our basis for speaking.

Ruth: No.

Alison: I feel that you've said more on counselling and tried to define that than counselling skills.

[12 seconds of silence]

Ruth: I have a feeling that counselling skills are broader than the counselling skills I've already, there is more available than I currently use, and I guess my sort of feeling that maybe I'd like to do more counselling skills training is because it's, I feel there's something I could learn that would extend my tool kit as a sport psychologist. I'm not saying I don't already use it, I don't say I've not already picked up stuff, but I'm saying I have feeling there's a lot, a lot more out there that I could use.

Eddie: I think it doesn't matter what you call it. You know, we call interpersonal skills, skills for dealing with performers, it doesn't matter what we call it does it? There'll obviously be other things...

Ruth: Yes, yeah, yeah.

Eddie: different approaches that you can learn like your just talking about the different approaches to counselling.

Ruth: Mm.

Eddie: There's nothing to stop you using different approaches with different performers like Tony was talking about, being able to recognise someone listening to someone and being able to, if you like, change your style, use a different technique, you know? If the person's a bit dim I'll try [] motivation.

Ruth: Yeah but your whole approach can come from a totally different angle.

Rachel: Mm, true.

Ruth: This idea of maybe, not wanting to put jargon, but psychodynamic approaches which I very clearly don't use at all.

Eddie: Yeah.

Ruth: Now I may not want to use any of that but I think to have a bit more knowledge about that, and that's why perhaps erm, I'd be interested in developing counselling skills, I think it's important, but not necessarily in a sense of using it every day, does that make sense?

Rachel: So why hasn't that been a priority? You think it would be useful, why hasn't it been a priority?

Ruth: Because, well for starters, well I think, if we're going to be frank, that BASES accreditation has been usually about hoop-jumping. And hoops for counselling haven't been there to jump. I mean that's looking at it very cynically, but on the other hand, there were also, if you look at the whole situation of time demands that are on people, particularly people like us in higher education. Where is the time? If it's not actually in the programme there, is there a hoop to jump? Where do you find the time? It's sort of something that I think we need to address as we go on, but it just hasn't become, my lifestyle hasn't allowed me to do that so far. But it's something that I've identified as something I'd like to do.

Tony: But it's also something you can get along without.

Ruth: Yes.

Rachel: That's what I'm trying to work out yeah.

Tony: Because if you didn't think that you could offer a sympathetic ear to somebody without actually offering them advice and actually get through what we could loosely term a counselling session, you'd do something about it wouldn't you?

Ruth: Yeah, I agree with you, but I feel though that I also want to develop my skills, personally as a, you know, I feel...

Tony: Well-rounded.

Ruth: Yeah, I'd just like to know more about it and potentially have perhaps more tools available to me which would perhaps make me feel a bit better about the job that I do. I'm not saying I can't do the job, I'm saying I don't necessarily just want to be erm, a person that always uses the same typical tried and tested approach. I might actually like to expand and look at different ways of delivering things.

Rachel: Can I ask you a question, is that still with your normal performers, normal I hate that word, normal performers, or these problem solving, these problem cases should they come your way or...

Ruth: To be honest, I don't really know an awful, if I knew, if I could categorise it and knew enough about it then I'd be able to answer that.

Rachel: Yeah.

Ruth: I think it could have knock-on effects in terms of how I do performance enhancement work.

Alison: It nicely leads me onto the next one actually. How important do you think counselling skills are to applied sport psychology practice?

Debbie: I think Ruth's just summed it up nicely for you there!

Alison: Is that everybody's opinion?

Mary: I mean certainly her rationale there is why I'm taking my course, because I have felt a need to possibly be able to broaden my scope and to be able to have more tools in my box to be able to use. Because not every athlete that comes to you wants the same response and if I don't have the tools there then I can't meet that athlete's needs.

Debbie: And do you feel that you're achieving that through the course?

Mary: Yes, I know that my interactions, certainly with my students, is much different than it was in September/October [now June] when I started.

Rachel: Is that your perception or their perception? I mean have you actually asked them?

Mary: No I haven't to be honest, but my perception is that I personally view I feel more satisfaction put it that way. But I certainly haven't asked them. But then erm, that would be hard for the students to respond to, certainly for the first years, they wouldn't know anything different and they're the ones that I've probably had more contact with over the last year.

Debbie: So have to been able to apply it to performers?

Mary: Erm, no to be honest not this last year, so I don't know what difference that could make in a sport situation.

Debbie: And are you learning more things or is it just that it's making things more explicit?

Mary: Erm, no I am learning a broad set of tools that I could use.

Eddie: Is this what we've decided counselling skills are, things over and above the every day-to-day interpersonal stuff, communicating, listening?

Mary: I don't know they're over and above, they're in addition to.

Alison: I don't think *you* do, do you [Eddie]?

Eddie: No, I'm just trying to...

Ruth: Are we talking here about counselling skills as the "typical" defined it's an add-on, or are we talking about general counselling skills because I think we have to agree that before we can carry on.

Mary: Yeah, I'd like to have it as general rather than.

Debbie: So would you interpret that [question on flip chart] as how important is maybe taking like a counselling course to learn more about counselling rather to learn more about counselling skills?

Mary: How important is it to gain counselling training is basically what you asked there yeah?

Debbie: Yeah.

Mary: I think that erm, based on my perception of the last 12 months I would now say yes, I wouldn't necessarily have said yes this time last year.

Rachel: Yes that?

Mary: That counselling training is important to applied sport psychology practice.

Alison: Can I just be clear, are you talking about counselling training as you've just said, or counselling skills training? Is there a difference?

Tony: I've got a problem with this.

Eddie: This labels business.

Tony: Yeah, I was just trying to think, if you're training to be a grief counsellor you learn a lot about grief, and then you learn some counselling skills, which I would prefer to use interpersonal skills to help you with people. If you're going to be a relationship counsellor you're going to learn a lot about why relationships break up, the sort of emotions people vent when they go through broken relationships, etc., etc. So you're learning a subject matter and then using interpersonal skills to help you help people in those situations. If you're a sport psychologist, you know a lot about sport psychology and I think you use interpersonal skills to help you in that area as well.

Alison: How do you know that those people haven't been skilled, trained in counselling first as a general thing and then they've specialised?

Mary: Yeah.

Tony: That's what I don't...

Eddie: What do you mean by that?

Mary: O.k. so I would say the course...

Tony: Things like doing techniques.

Mary: ...I'm doing is teaching me counselling skills, general counselling skills.

Tony: Right.

Rachel: Can you tell us about these counselling skills?

Tony: Yeah, can you give us an example of a technique?

Debbie: I mean are they what we call interpersonal skills?

Mary: Well it depends; I mean we never actually said what came under interpersonal skills. So, I am learning er, techniques for challenging, for erm, reflecting, for listening, for erm, erm, my mind's gone blank now.

Tony: Memory?!

Mary: No that didn't come under it, it's a shame isn't it?!

Tony: That's o.k. because we've got a few to work on.

Rachel: Because I was thinking of what you were doing as probably approaches underpinning the use of interpersonal skills.

Tony: Yeah.

Rachel: But that isn't what you just said is it?

Mary: No.

Rachel: Those are the actual interpersonal skills themselves.

Eddie: I think we'd all see those as something that's fundamental to what we do, although, I might be right I might be wrong, I don't think any of us have had any specific training or gone on courses.

Alison: Do you just want to clear that up then, are you [Mary] the only person who's had counselling skills training, anybody else?

Ruth: I've been on a BOA day.

Rachel: I've been on a course as well. There was a BASES one as well wasn't there.

Alison: With Al Petitpas, that one?

Debbie: Oh yes, yeah.

Rachel: Yeah.

Alison: O.k. so a workshop, a day workshop?

Tony: Workshops, seminars where you discuss similar things here, counselling scenarios.

Alison: With any practical training?

Tony: Not what Mary's saying.

Rachel: But the sort of depth that you [Mary]? Yeah.

Eddie: I think erm, in terms of it's importance for applied sport psychology, I think a lot of people will, a lot of people that I meet erm, at conferences, involved with BASES, erm, are pretty good at using those skills anyway. A lot of people from higher education, I'm not saying they could be developing further, but I think, you know, I think the people who get through BASES accreditation, I don't think they get through, you know, if they can't develop a relationship with someone, they can't listen. So I think formal training might be a good idea, but er, so it is

obviously important in answering this question, but I don't know if they should be actually if there's a *need* to have the people, you know, formally trained in it for BASES accreditation.

Alison: Maybe the question should be 'How essential counselling skills are?'

Eddie: Of course they are.

Alison: They're essential?

Eddie: Yeah. If we're talking about being to listen and being able to reflect and communicate.

Rachel: You're sort of using interpersonal skills now as counselling skills, interchangeably?

Eddie: Yeah, I think that's what we were talking about weren't we?

Rachel: Yeah, o.k. we agree.

Alison: So, o.k. when we talk about counselling skills and counselling skills training we're talking about interpersonal skills?

Rachel: I think we are at the moment.

Alison: Right. Or are you going that one stage further and saying counselling skills, formal training. We need to be clear on that because we're going to take it a bit further.

Rachel: No, I think we're saying that counselling skills are interpersonal skills, we're making that connection.

Alison: Yeah.

Rachel: I don't think we've commented on whether we need to be formally trained in it yet or not if we're using the interpersonal skills thing.

Eddie: I have, I said, I just said I don't think there's a need for formal, for people to go on an outside formal course.

Ruth: Not necessarily to do the job.

Eddie: No.

Ruth: I don't think it's necessary, but if for your own personal development I think it's a separate issue.

Rachel: But as a group here we're sort of all assuming that we all have reasonably good interpersonal skills.

Debbie: I'm wondering...

Rachel: What happens about the person who's jumping through these hoops that we've described?

Debbie: Yeah.

Rachel: Who doesn't, I mean if we all reflected on our sort of supervised experience and that, could you, do we think that you could get through that without interpersonal skills?

Debbie: I think you could. I can think of somebody who'd going through it at the moment.

Rachel: I think you could get through that without interpersonal skills.

Mary: Yes, that's why I say that the quality of the supervisor...

Tony: Yeah I was going to say, not only the supervisors...

Mary: is so important.

Rachel: Could you get through it? I mean the question is could you get through it? We're not saying your supervisor, or your supervisor, we're saying could someone get through without having interpersonal skills?

Ruth: Yes.

Tony: Yeah.

Debbie: Yes.

Mary: Given the current set-up, yes you can.

Debbie: Mm, I think so.

Rachel: So that's the problem.

Mary: Yes, and that's why I feel that there maybe a need for formalised training in it so that we've got something there that indicates that someone actually understands how to apply these interpersonal/counselling skills.

Debbie: Well not just understanding it, actually being able to.

Tony: I think people who haven't got the interpersonal skills, it doesn't matter whether they go on a counselling course or not. If their personality and style is such that they're a complete cretin, then I don't think that level can be trained personally.

Debbie: Yeah, I actually think you're right.

Tony: People who really cannot communicate, we all know them, you can't hold conversations with these people, you avoid them like the plague. Do you reckon you can teach them? You might

be able to teach them challenging techniques and listening techniques, but I'd love to see them put it into practice.

Debbie: Yeah, I think you're right.

Rachel: So this becomes a problem because we reflect on, each of us reflects on ourselves and says "Do we need to go on a course?" and we come up with whatever conclusion and then say well "Do other people maybe need it?" If you think of the worst case scenario, do other people need to go on a course? Well yes they do, but now we're saying even if you put them on a course, it wouldn't enable them to do the job effectively. So what's the point of the course?!

[Laughter]

Mary: No, because presumably it has to be some sort of accredited course that they go on and therefore there has to be, or let's say there are certain recognised courses/qualifications that BASES will accept as an indication of competence.

Rachel: There's got to be some assessment which ensures that these people don't get that.

Tony: Mm.

Mary: Yes, that's right, but that they're able to apply these counselling skills effectively.

Rachel: Mm.

Mary: And so, they can't just go on the little, you know, round the corner shop do-dah bit and get a piece of paper that says they've done it, there has to be more to it than that. Which, of course, we're going to have to put in place if we want to become chartered. It's this sort of stuff that we're going to have to have.

Rachel: Can you teach someone interpersonal skills in 3 years?

Mary: No, but then they won't get accredited will they?

Rachel: No.

Mary: And maybe that's a really important issue that we have to address.

Tony: So you can only get accredited if you've got a reasonable personality then?

Mary: If you don't have interpersonal skills...

Tony: I'm specifically thinking about some individuals who I know who have no interpersonal skills, have no personality, I'm just thinking you can put them on any course in the world and they would still be a cretin at the end of it.

Mary: So therefore in terms of being an applied sport and exercise psychologist, maybe they shouldn't be accredited.

Tony: I'm not disagreeing with you, I think that would be a good thing!

Rachel: There has been, up until now, as far as I'm aware...

Tony: It's very difficult to...

Rachel: ... no mechanism by which...

Mary: That's right.

Rachel: There was certainly nothing that assessed me on my ability to use...

Ruth: No.

Mary: That's right.

Rachel: It's quite interesting we're all talking about interpersonal skills here now, not counselling skills.

Tony: Hey you like that don't you [Alison]?

Rachel: We don't like that word.

Alison: I'm hearing that you're using the terms interpersonal skills and counselling skills interchangeably.

Tony: Mm.

Alison: And I distinguished between them on the original, the very first sheet. Am I hearing it right that you don't distinguish between them then?

Tony: I don't think we're very happy distinguishing between them.

Rachel: We're not.

Tony: I'm not comfortable holding this counselling skills or counselling label when it's not what's really going into my mind, the interpersonal skills.

Rachel: Are we allowed to ask you [Alison] why you distinguish between them?

Alison: No.

Rachel: We're not allowed to ask you that o.k. fine.

Alison: I would be giving you my opinion. That would be my opinion.

Rachel: O.k. I'll ask you at the end.

Alison: Yeah, I'll tell you at the end. I have distinguished between them.

Rachel: But maybe we weren't when we responded to your form?

Alison: Yeah maybe.

Rachel: Did you ask that in the form I can't remember?

Alison: No.

Rachel: No you didn't. So maybe we referred to them in the same way.

Debbie: Probably.

Alison: So is that a consensus opinion that you're using the two interchangeably?

Ruth: Counselling skills and interpersonal skills?

Alison: Yeah.

Mary: I'm using them interchangeably, but because of the course I've been on counselling skills still is broader to me because of the skills that I'm currently learning and interpersonal skills. But there's a *lot* of overlap.

Rachel: But the ones you've described to us, we could all probably...

Tony: Yeah.

Eddie: Obviously there's different ways of reflecting and challenging people and all sorts of different techniques that you know.

Mary: Yes.

Tony: That have got labels to them.

Eddie: Yeah, the ones, you know, which would be good for us to use and as Ruth was saying, you know, to know about at least so you might, you know, you could use them if you wanted, make you even more aware, have more tools in the toolbox sort of thing.

Ruth: When I was talking earlier, I had assumed that kind of in your counselling course [Mary] you might have been doing more sort of theoretical stuff, coming from one approach and understanding the approach, but the practical side's kind of one aspect of it, but there's also this big theoretical aspect. Erm, I guess I see that as a bit of a mystery, you know.

Mary: I mean there is obviously a theory base there but the way the course is set up and organised is it's very interactional and very practical.

Rachel: I wonder if that's quite common though, I wonder if there's that huge variety between actual counselling courses that in some there's this huge theoretical underpinning.

Tony: Mm.

Debbie: Mm.

Rachel: Because I would see it as different approaches to the use of interpersonal skills.

Ruth: Yes, that's how I see it.

Tony: One approach is beneficial in certain situations.

Rachel: Yeah, in bereavement counselling you might use...

Tony: Yeah, exactly.

Rachel: ...and in aggravated bereavement you might use, there's this type of grief and that type of grief, and in those certain different situations you might use different approaches which underpin your interpersonal skills, but you haven't described it as that so now I'm quite happy with the two coming together.

Mary: Yeah, right. No, certain courses I know it's...

Ruth: Yeah, that's how I feel about it.

Mary: And I think maybe because it's the British Association of Counselling which has accredited this course as opposed to maybe BPS or someone, I don't know.

Rachel: Out of interest, did you, sorry if this is, but did you actually explore different counselling courses before you decided which one to do?

Mary: Erm, no, I went for this one because it's taught at our other campus and my line manager's paying for it.

Rachel: That would be quite interesting if you'd looked at a number of different theoretical content.

Mary: I did go over and I chatted quite a lot, quite extensively, to the department who teaches it. So I didn't just fill out the application form, so I did chat to them, and make sure I felt that it was going to give me something back by doing it.

Rachel: How is it assessed?

Mary: Erm, you do practical skills, you do written assignments, you do erm, videotapes and you do presentations.

Rachel: So they do assess your use of...

Mary: Definitely. In fact in our first semester, half our assessment went on practical skills.

Ruth: And you said your line manager at work's funding it?

Mary: Yeah.

Ruth: Is that because he could see that you're going to get some benefit in terms of putting into the students?

Mary: Yes definitely.

Ruth: O.k. Because I think that's a big issue in terms of formal training. For me certainly, my line manager, well if I could find out who it was, would say "That's not your job".

Rachel: Yeah.

Debbie: Yeah.

Mary: He sees it very much as a student counselling situation, he see the students really benefiting.

Rachel: Doesn't see it as dealing with problems then?

Mary: Not necessarily no. Well yes because the students may only come and see me if they've got a problem, if I'm doing one-on-one.

Alison: What are the implications then for training as sport psychologists? What kind of training as a sport psychologists do you need to use counselling skills effectively?

Eddie: It sounds as though, from what we were saying, erm, that in our opinion, talking about counselling skills as interpersonal skills, that, you know, it seems as though we think that it's not like that. That people can get through that training without developing sufficiently those skills.

Mary: I would say there needs to be much tighter control on the number of times a supervisor observes a supervisee, and gives feedback and there's written feedback that is presented as part of the accreditation.

Rachel: Then how do you ensure that the supervisor in the first place has the interpersonal skills because there's plenty of people out there and we all know them!

Tony: Yeah.

Rachel: So I'm going to supervise Tony, but I haven't got the interpersonal skills in the first place, so how am I going to know if he's got them or not?

Mary: Because supervisors, in a way, almost have to be appointed and paid.

Rachel: Right o.k.

Tony: So supervisors go through a peer review of some sort?

Rachel: Which will involve interpersonal skills of some sort?

Tony: Yep. So it's similar to what we're doing at the BOA which I think is a good idea is that people are going to have to be observed by other people in order to get on the register. We're sort of saying something similar to that. It'll be interesting for the people at the top of the tree.

Rachel: Yeah.

Tony: If they have absolutely no interpersonal skills.

Rachel: Good point, who'd said they'd got good interpersonal skills?

Tony: We know, WE KNOW!

[Laughter]

Tony: Are you listening to me, shut up! We know, we possibly know that certain people who might be at the top of the tree maybe don't have the interpersonal skills that we are talking about now. So how are we going to train them?

Rachel: But they're going to decide they've got them so it's irrelevant.

Tony: Electric-shock therapy is the only thing we can use!

Ruth: But this has always been the problem hasn't it?

Tony: It has.

Ruth: Someone's got to make a decision on what criteria to use to get through accreditation or to put in place for accreditation, and the decision's going to be made by a group of people, with some experience but not necessarily with the skills you're talking about.

Tony: What you could do actually, you could do something along the lines of how we evaluate a speaker at the BOA, and you could say "Right, well let's pick somebody on the steering group" and we get everybody there and we say "Has this person got good interpersonal skills?"

Yes or no?" and rate them, and they're even, and then everybody would, at least it's some sort of method of trying to. Have we gone off the track a tad there? .

Alison: No, because you're sticking to your interpersonal skills.

Mary: And also training.

Alison: And you are sticking to that. What I was trying to get at is as well is, in terms of formal training, is counselling skills training, the kind that Mary's gone on, is that the kind of thing that would be useful for a sport psychologist, and if so what are the implications in terms BASES accreditation?

Tony: I think if we knew more about it, we need to know more about it. I was just trying to think, I'm still having trouble with the people who have no interpersonal skills and that's a reflection of their disposition, or their makeup, or their personality, and I think it gets really difficult then when you say "Well you haven't got any interpersonal skills, we're going to train you up on them".

Mary: Yeah but how does, I mean what happens within, you know, BPS, or clinical psychology when they do this all the time? I mean how do they actually assess that aspect of it and determine whether or not you're fit to practice?

Tony: They watch them through like...

Mary: One-way mirrors.

Tony: One-way mirrors, glass similar to...

Mary: That's right and they continue on with erm, being supervised.

Tony: Ongoing supervision?

Mary: Ongoing supervision.

Eddie: There's a danger about saying that, yeah of course that sort of course would be useful erm, but whether you actually write something like that and say like you have to do that to get accreditation, there's a danger of moving the goalposts too far.

Rachel: I know.

Eddie: Oh, we're all there now, we'll just shift the goalposts so you lot can't get it. Erm, so I think there should be some, if we're saying that people can get through without developing interpersonal skills properly then that's one way of doing it is to get the observed er, a minimum number of times, erm but without actually writing something like that in and saying you've got to go on a counselling course, but if, on the other hand, to get chartered status we have to do that then, you know, it's a decision we have to make and, you know, if we have to write it in then, you have to write it in.

Alison: Are you prepared to do that if you had to?

Eddie: Well I don't know, it depends, if we're already accredited would we have to go through a course like that?

Rachel: I mean one of the questions I'd ask Mary is if Ruth and I, you know, we're accredited but we have really bad interpersonal skills, could we get through your course? Your counselling course that you're doing at the moment. We haven't got good interpersonal skills, could we get through your course?

Mary: Erm, I would say that based on the people that dropped out during the year, people have come to a personal decision that this is not something for them and they haven't stayed. So the people who are, having said that, there's a couple of them still who are, I think have really poor interpersonal skills, but they're improving because of the practical experience that you get.

Rachel: Could I get through the course though? Could I pass the course do you think?

Debbie: Do you think they'll pass the course?

Mary: Personally I think one of them would really struggle to pass the practical work.

Rachel: But the other one might?

Mary: Yeah.

Rachel: And even though, I mean improvement's great, I mean we all want improvement, but is that good enough to get me to a benchmark whereby you recognise me as having good interpersonal skills?

Mary: That's right.

Rachel: Will that person get through who's improving with still, what in your professional opinion, would be not good interpersonal skills? This is all confidential of course. It's only your opinion, but.

Mary: Erm, I think she may well do, but, you know, it's...

Eddie: But you're always going to get that though aren't you?

Mary: That's right. But I tell you the reason that I'm probably quite reticent is that she and I have clashed, there's a personality clash.

Rachel: Right o.k.

Mary: So it maybe that my judgement isn't actually...

Debbie: It's very clouded.

Mary: Yes.

Rachel: It's just if we're saying that it's important to get trained and it's important to do this and that would ensure that we, there's only a point, we don't want another hoop just to jump through as an exercise unless it is actually going to almost ensure, provide some sort of quality.

Mary: I think that what, say we said "O.k. everyone has to go and get a certificate in counselling, BAC approved certificate in counselling", it would, if you like, filter out a lot, I'd say a lot, it would filter out a percentage of people who currently may become accredited, er, but have a lack of interpersonal skills. And it would filter, er, a proportion of those out and those that continue on would develop sufficient interpersonal skills that, given ongoing supervision, because I think a mentorship, because I think this is an issue that we also need to consider for newly accredited people, that those interpersonal skills can continue to develop.

Eddie: You [Alison] asked me would I do a course like that to get chartered status. Yeah because otherwise to get chartered status I'd have to do GBR [Graduate Bases for Registration of the BPS] exams, or I'd have to go and do a couple of modules on a psychology degree anyway. So a route like that, if that got me chartered.

Debbie: If you're looking at everything that you have to go through to accredited, go through three years supervised experience, would that mean that you'd actually need longer, a longer period of supervised experience if you were starting from scratch and, you know, you had to get this counselling thing? Because it's just, you know, adding all things in, is it going to make it longer? Is it worthwhile?

Mary: It shouldn't do because I'm doing it part-time for two years and working and consulting at the same time, so I think it's.

Rachel: But that's on top of the other things.

Debbie: Yeah.

Rachel: I found supervision very tough in terms of time demands.

Debbie: Yeah.

Rachel: If you gave me a counselling course to do in two years well, blimey.

Mary: But it maybe that some of the other aspects maybe less time consuming if you're doing this counselling because you're getting a lot of practical experience within it. And there would have to be a built in er, accommodation, if you like, the fact that you're getting a lot of practical experience within this counselling course.

Tony: So in a way we're talking about quality control then?

Mary: Yes.

Tony: We don't monitor quality control in terms of some of the other prerequisites for sport psychology, so you've got to have an undergrad. degree in sport science, to be perfectly honest some of the sport psychology courses that I've looked at are abysmal, and we're not monitoring the quality of those. So, they may do a Masters degree and opt for exercise psych. instead of sport psych., but still slip through the net, they may have a research methods module that has no qualitative stuff on it at all and yet we're on about interviewing people in part of our daily lives.

Rachel: The other interesting issue is that we're actually moving further away from the sporting population.

Tony: Yeah, we are.

Rachel: To these generic skills. I mean I know number of people who've sort of come through the other route, the mainstream psych. route, they've got the mainstream psych. path rather than

the sport, and I think there's an issue there that argues, you know, that the sport aspect is critical.

Tony: Yeah.

Rachel: And so they've got all the counselling stuff...

Mary: Yeah.

Rachel: ...but they haven't got the understanding of sport sufficiently to actually, you know, what's the use of me being able to counsel if I can't relate to a population of people...

Mary: That's right.

Tony: Mm.

Rachel: ...who are quite different.

Mary: Yes, yeah, I mean I actually had an e-mail this morning that I read from a guy who's got first class psychology degree from Oxford is currently doing a Ph.D. in experimental psychology and he's sent for the stuff for accreditation through BASES, didn't quite understand it, could I answer all these questions for him, blah, blah, blah. Basically, "Could I just get accredited by doing erm, three years supervised experience, or is there other stuff that I need?" Erm, you know, and again his concept of getting accredited as a sport psychologist was he says he's an elite level performer erm, was "O.k. so I've got my psychology skills, I'm doing my Ph.D., I'm an elite performer, doesn't that almost entitle me to be an accredited sport psychologist?" That was the impression that I got reading his e-mail.

Alison: I appreciate all the other things that come on board with this, BASES accreditation, I mean we could be here for two weeks talking about it, I appreciate that it's only one aspect, but I'm trying to start somewhere. So that's why I'm looking at this particular bit.

So, finally then, because I'm aware of the time, could I get you to recall an experience or a time erm, when you used counselling skills, or if you prefer, if you're not comfortable with saying 'use counselling skills', used interpersonal skills with athletes effectively.

Could you think of an example to share with us when you've used them effectively?

[12 seconds of silence]

Eddie: Well I think we all do most of the time.

Debbie: I'm trying to think of one specific...

Tony: This would be a case where I would absolutely classify it that I didn't do anything performance based at all and all I did was try and help this individual.

Rachel: Aren't we using interpersonal skills as the thing anyway?

Alison: Yeah, you could use interpersonal skills, well the way you've been using, you know, you could use interpersonal skills there if you want.

Tony: Yeah. I don't know what my name is or what day it is now!

Alison: Do you not use interpersonal skills all the time?

Tony: Oh absolutely, well I hope so! I've still got this idea of counselling as something negative.

Alison: O.k. well stick with interpersonal skills if that makes you feel more comfortable, just tell us about a time when you thought "Yeah that was pretty good, I used my skills well there".

Tony: Every single session you do.

Alison: What was it specific that you thought "Yeah, that was pretty, I said the right thing there".

Tony: Showed a high degree of empathy, something like that.

Alison: Can you give us an example?

Tony: Homesickness I think is a good illustration. Desperately, desperately homesick, very, very upset, erm, and initially you start to try and get them to think about their performance, but they can't because they're, they're too homesick, and you just use interpersonal or counselling skills to try and use anecdotes, relate to your own experiences, trying to put things in perspective a little bit more, erm, try and offer them comfort and ultimately just get them drunk and tell them to forget about it! But no, those sort of, try and use some humour, you know.

Debbie: Your perception of...

Rachel: I'm not sure that that should have been taped that bit Tony!

Tony: No, just try and make them laugh a little bit more I suppose, make things seem not quite as bad as they are.

Alison: Yeah that's good.

Mary: I had a kid er, playing in er, [a] tournament last year who er, got red carded, and erm, was his first year as an under-18 and was obviously extremely upset because it was probably, it wasn't the end of the tournament so he was going to miss about two days play. So again, you know, it's you try and get them to look at it as, look at the experience as a whole, what is it that you've learnt from it and what can you take away, and make himself useful over the next two days and make himself feel [] in the squad.

Alison: And how did that make you feel?

Mary: Erm, I felt really bad for him erm, in that I'm not sure that the combination of the two actions he took should have resulted in two yellows, which meant he was off, personally. Erm, but erm, I think he did take it away as a learning experience and did utilise the time effectively in the next few days.

Eddie: I can think of a time where er, one of these situations where you just don't get that sort of relationship with a client, you think "This isn't going that well" and you're just persevering, and you try everything, you know, you're trying to be, you know, effective, and you're trying everything but you're just not getting there. Erm, you think you're coming up with answers, but the person keeps coming back to you and you just don't seem to be getting anywhere. I can think of an example like that, where I thought I was, if someone had been observing me or filming me I think they'd have said "Oh yeah, that was quite good, that was alright", but in terms of what came out of the situation, I really don't think the athlete got what they were looking for. Now that might not have been, but it's something that stands out as being in my mind as something I wish I could have solved, and perhaps I needed a different approach.

Alison: So that was a time when you felt you weren't...

Eddie: I think I wasn't effective, but I thought in terms, well I used my skills effectively, but it didn't work. So perhaps I need those skills, different skills.

Alison: Anybody else got an example of when they, first of all, you know, a time when you thought you used them effectively?

Ruth: I think for me, I can think of several occasions, and it's usually similar sort of issues, it's usually coach conflict or conflict between a performer and the coach. The coach may have said something and the performer's been very unhappy with whatever has happened or been said, erm, and it's usually been everything that's already been mentioned: the empathy er, but also looking at trying to get them to see perhaps the other side of the coin, in a sense, and explore where the coach perhaps is coming from. There's been an aspect that has been quite important, and also the other aspect I think that's very important is they often come to you wanting answers, and if it's a situation where there aren't answers, or there are possible answers but it wouldn't work if I, I can't provide that answer for them. So I always have to get the person to explore what they can do about the situation, and actually a lot of the time is spent on getting the person to turn around from wanting the answers from me straight away to actually seeing that there's something they can do, and getting it out of them rather than me providing it. I think that's been the critical, similar sort of thing with dealing with disappointment in different situations.

Alison: So that was a time when you used counselling skills effectively?

Ruth: I, I, yeah, erm.

Alison: In the sense that, you know, counselling skills. It sounds like you did.

Ruth: Erm, I think I do yeah. I think it's getting better. I think when you were talking about it, at the very beginning when you start out you, I think there's always an expectation working with performers, that you're going to give them everything....

Rachel: Yeah.

Debbie: Mm.

Ruth: ... so you have to work quite hard. I think you also have to develop your own personal confidence to feel that you don't have to do deliver.

Rachel: Mm.

Ruth: And sometimes you just have to sit and listen and not do anything but get the person to explore their situation. So for me it's probably taken me, it's been post-, I think post-supervised experience I've got more skilled with it.

Debbie: Mm.

Alison: Debbie?

Debbie: No, I agree, I think the biggest area is the coach, well the coach conflict scenario, the coach and the performer conflict, but the organisation I work for performer conflict and dealing with that.

Alison: Can you think of a time when you thought "Yeah, I used my skills well there"?

Debbie: Erm, yeah, yeah, I can think of a couple of times, I can think of a time that I thought worked, but the performer didn't think that I would actually stick to the confidentiality which was interesting. Erm, and I don't know whether, when I look back and think of the situation, I don't know whether it was because I was lacking any of these skills, because it's worked in other situations.

Alison: Anything specific example of, you know, using any specific skills to do with counselling or interpersonal skills?

Debbie: I think keeping things in perspective is probably the one in those couple of situations and trying to get them to see the other person's point of view, erm, because they just come at it like, you know, a bull in a china shop about it, and you think "Well hang on minute, maybe you should look at it from this point of view", and then they start to become a bit more comfortable with it and think "Oh well perhaps they were looking out for my best interests" rather than just saying "No, I can't do this, I can't do that".

Alison: Anything to share [Rachel]?

Rachel: I don't think so really, I mean I think the main things that I think of most recently that I've been doing have involved sort of trying to bring some sort of common sense approach to a lot of situations and erm, and trying to rationalise things, sometimes just give a different perspective on it, but of course, you use the interpersonal skills in doing that, just listening and providing, you know, another perspective.

Debbie: And as Ruth said, not just saying "Well I think this, this and this", it's trying to work round the situation so they think they've come up with ideas and they've got ownership over their ideas.

Rachel: I think it's asking the right questions isn't it?

Debbie: Yeah.

Rachel: I think that's probably one of the most critical things, which almost requires you to be listening, analysing, observing and that's, if you ask the right questions you almost get them thinking because they've got to address the question and in that process they start analysing and start looking at it from a different view and things like that.

Alison: Finally, Eddie actually mentioned one, was there ever a time when you felt you didn't have, you know, the training necessary to deal with the situation?

Debbie: I think it comes when it does become like a clinical issue when they're crossing that line and think "Mm, I haven't got the skills to be able to deal with this effectively", not in terms of actually dealing with the clinical issue, but just dealing with well, you know, what do I do now? I can't just stop and not talk to them, I've got to do something. Say "Mm, well, you'd better see somebody else now"!

Alison: What do you think would help you in that situation?

Debbie: I don't know whether counselling skills would. Again it comes down to not really knowing whether it would help or not, whether it is always going to be one of those very difficult areas, I don't know. I don't know whether from your course [Mary] you feel like you're more comfortable in that type of thing?

Mary: I mean within some situations I think I would be more confident about dealing with a broader set of issues now, but there'll still be quite a few of issues that no, I still wouldn't feel confident in and ethically correct for me to do that, I'd still have to refer them.

Rachel: But it's not because of your counselling skills, or is that just because of your experience? You're more confident in these.

Mary: I mean I certainly feel, no I think I've learnt how to approach situations erm, better now, and I don't necessarily think I would have come to the stage I'm at now without having done that counselling course or taking a lot longer let's put it that way.

Tony: I think you've got those situations where you feel, say it's not a clinical issue, say you've spent a long time away with the team and with certain individuals who are quite demanding of your time. You honestly feel like banging your head against a brick wall with them and you start to dislike them, and you start to avoid them, and the coaches are avoiding them as well,

their team-mates and roommates are avoiding and they become a leper. I think, irrespective of how your skills are there's only a certain, I'm not sure any of the counselling skills would allow me to effectively work with that person. You've reached the end of the road and what would make it better have somebody else come out, you know, get rid of them. Because that's what the coaches do to you isn't it? The coaches say "I can't deal with that performer any more, for God's sake can you do something?" "Yeah O.k.", and you spend some time with them and they're not so bad, and then again the next day, and the next day, and the next day, and like Eddie says, you don't feel as though you're offering them anything, even though your skills are quite good, but I think your skills deteriorate if it goes on over time. Your listening skills particularly, your patience, your empathy.

Rachel: What have you got there though? A situation where you, it's difficult to satisfy the performer's needs, or an incompatibility between you, your personality and the performer's personality?

Tony: I think it's both isn't it? I think it's developed into that. It's not there in the first place. The first time you ever do it you think "Right this is a bit of a challenge then", you know, this is a difficult situation, this is a erm, a very demanding performer, a lot of talent, want to help them, get into it. Good session, I did a really good session there.

Rachel: Soon you develop an aversion.

Tony: Oh, aversion's a good word, I like the word aversion.

Ruth: For me, it was a very clinical issue, erm, the problem was I knew information about the performer that it was a sexual abuse case, and I was brought in to work with a performer who was erm, was breaking down emotionally and physically in the [training area]. But, for me, the issue was I couldn't confront the performer with it. I knew this information, erm, but I couldn't raise the issue with the performer. I had to almost wait for something to come out, and as it happened it never did come out. So I had to work with it as a performance problem because I couldn't get at it any other way. I don't know whether I did the right thing or not. In the long term, the problem's blown over. The situation was that the erm, performer's father who had been the abuser, came out of prison and was turning up, and it brought it all back. But I just couldn't get in with it. The performer, as far as the performer's concerned [her sport] was her life and erm, it was almost like an escape in a way, she didn't have to confront that, and I didn't feel I was in a position to make her confront that.

Alison: Do you feel that some extra training could have helped you or not?

Ruth: Again if I knew a bit more about what was, I don't know, I think possibly, I'm not sure, I'm really not sure. I'm not sure if it's just one of those situations that we said that comes up and there are no answers to that situation and you just have to deal with it in the best way as you think, which I think maybe the case. I don't know, I don't know if Mary's had any experience with her counselling course that would perhaps prepare her for that kind of situation.

Mary: I think it perhaps gives you some additional skills, I can think of some other ways that, you know, that you might have been challenging the [athlete] er, a little bit more directly or whatever, that might have forced some of this to come out without you having to.

Ruth: I did try to broach the subject about the father coming onto the scene, and it just went nowhere, absolutely nowhere. It was blanked, it was just [arm coming down in front of body], "I'm not going to talk about that". The other thing was it was a very emotive situation and I didn't want to bring this upset, and I didn't feel I was in any way trained, you know, I didn't have the confidence to deal with it at all. So I have a feeling there maybe techniques I could have used that I didn't know about. But again it maybe some sort of very specialist subset and a very advanced level, I don't know that, you know. Maybe that you have to do counselling for about, I don't know, five years or something before you'd actually encounter, you know, a course or something, some form of training that would address that kind of thing, I don't know.

Rachel: The only time where I've felt completely inadequate and erm completely out of my depth was when I was actually going through supervised experience. An instance where a performer was just absolutely desperate and er, I'd never come across this sort of desperateness before, you know, where the performer was just, you know, "Sort it", and "Do I need to know now?" and, you know "I need a solution now" and the timing of it was pretty critical, it was like two weeks before an Olympic selection, Olympic trial. And I just sat there and I thought "Holy

shit, what do I do?" and I just, but I'm not sure that it was a case of, you know, if I'd had any additional interpersonal skills or if my interpersonal skills had been better, I'm not sure that I would have coped any better with it. Erm, I think it was just a bit of, I was thrown in at the deep end, you know, I didn't, wasn't expecting to find myself in that sort of situation. I think if I found myself in that sort of situation now I'd find it difficult, I mean I'd be able to cope much more effectively with it, but I think it's just a 'thrown in at the deep end situation', it was just massively unfortunate.

Alison: Eddie you gave us an example didn't you?

Eddie: Well there was that example, there's been other examples with issues, you know, there was alcohol, erm, and another one with problems at home family problems, you know, and I thought I was nowhere near to having the skills to deal with those?

Alison: Do you think that any sort of training could have helped you deal with them better?

Eddie: Probably yeah. You assume that there would be specific, as well as the general counselling skills that you pick up on these courses, you know, you get put in scenarios where you're dealing with situations like that. Although I imagine the scenarios wouldn't be, you know, sport specific. I mean that's the other side of it, you've always got this impact on performance which I imagine that you've got to cross over then.

Ruth: I don't know, that does bring out a really important issue because we, in terms of BASES, we're still looking at performance enhancement versus sort of personal er, development of the person. And we haven't, you know, people have different philosophies of what they're about as a sport psychologist, and I think it has an impact on this.

Alison: In what way?

Ruth: This sort of performance enhancement versus am I there for the person's well-being? And you might draw very heavily on counselling if you're into a well-being situation, but not so much on the other, but I would imagine there are some people who aren't comfortable with their counselling skills, you know, sort of in performance enhancement situations. Anyway, that's probably backtracked about God knows!

Alison: It's interesting what you say at the end really that you hadn't talked about people have different philosophies and some people see an athlete as a person and then an athlete.

Ruth: Yeah.

Alison: Or see them as a whole rather than performance enhancement, other issues, the whole things, that's how some people see it.

O.k. that's the end, I'm aware of the time, Zoe's going to give us some feedback, is everyone o.k. for time? I'll get Zoe to summarise in terms of themes, what you said and then get you to comment on was that an accurate of what you did actually say, was there anything you wanted to add or correct.

Zoe: It's group data. The first question was 'What do you understand by the term listening skills?', and I've wrote down that the aim was to understand things from the athlete's perspective, taking in verbal and non-verbal information from the athletes, to collect information and also to evaluate a situation, and that listening and observation skills were closely linked. Overall listening skills were used extensively not just in problem situations, but also in general interaction situations. There was general consensus that active listening differs from simply just listening and, in terms of developing that, it relates to time and experience. The group thought that it was generally a powerful tool and listening also includes the use of silence. When you're actually using active listening, generally it often leaves you feeling mentally exhausted, that's a good indicator that you've actually used that skill. Although never actually been taught to listen or concentrate effectively and a link was made between good concentration and good listening. In terms of being taught listening skills, it's dependent on training and a link was made between listening skills, counselling skills and training at this point. A crossover was identified between PST [psychological skills training] or performance enhancement training and support, and it was suggested that you can't do PST without listening skills, that was an individual point. Also a suggestion was made about encompassing listening and counselling skills and communication skills within sport science higher education programmes and general training within individual departments. Listening was felt to be an important skill, not just for the sport psychologist, but also for the coach, and it's identified as

a generic life skill. Alison posed the question about bad listening, 'Is there such a thing as bad listening?' and this was generally identified as when someone puts across their own interpretation or listening for what you want to hear. It could also be attributed to misinterpretation and that hearing doesn't necessarily require understanding.

In terms of interpersonal skills, the question was posed 'What do you understand by this term?' and it was suggested that it was a general manner as to how a session is conducted and that listening is one particular skill. Also, within interpersonal skills, was communication, dissemination and the fact that it was a multi-faceted skill and much wider than just actually listening. It's about interaction with other people, body language, behaviour and it was attributed to the ability to develop relationships between athletes' coaches. A discussion arose between whether you could have good interpersonal skills and poor listening and vice versa. The group then linked content and interpersonal skills and it was identified that interpersonal skills also used reflective responding, or relaying back to the athletes what had been said.

Rachel: Sorry can I stop you there? I didn't understand the bit on content and interpersonal skills.

Zoe: It wasn't just necessarily linked to actually listening it was the content of what was being said.

Rachel: O.k.

Zoe: So I think it was Tony made a point about getting to the athlete's level and being able to communicate from what I can gather using terminology related to that sport. Again interpersonal skills was linked to style, general manner and mode of delivery, and the ability to switch or to adapt to situations, adapt to different athletes and tailor your own particular delivery style to each individual.

The question was then posed 'What do you understand by the term counselling skills?'. Counselling skills are dealing with issues other than performance enhancement issues. Athletes generally see counselling, sport psychology, consultancy as within the same package. Interpersonal listening skills were part of counselling skills but it wasn't the be all and end all of it. It's part of the relationship of the sport psychologist with the athlete, and it's generally viewed as a positive sign of a developing relationship. It also indicates role recognition. The division of PST and counselling was suggested as being very difficult to separate and a discussion arose about no matter what athletes call it was generally, you know, a chat about things. It's when the emphasis moves from the performance situation it then becomes more of a counselling situation. Somebody suggested about not actually labelling counselling skills, that it was just something that a sport psychologist does.

The discussion then switched to counselling itself. Initially it was suggested that it was help and advice. It was then suggested that it was when the athlete actually solved the problem for themselves. It was linked to a code of conduct. There is no professional training at the moment relating to counselling in sport psychology. It was suggested it was a process of applying counselling skills in a particular situation. There are a number of approaches to counselling skills training which linked to mainstream psychology. It was a label that some of the group that they were not comfortable with and had negative connotations linked to the societal view of therapy, counselling, needing help. This wasn't the case within the United States where athletic counsellors and mental training consultants are terms that are used. Counsellors tend to use certain approaches in terms of dealing with problems. In terms of the definition, it was offered that it was an interruption in the way of working with an athlete.

In terms of use of counselling skills in their own particular work, certain counselling skills were identified as being used all the time whilst others were not. On training for counselling skills, it was identified that counselling skills training is incorporated in the supervised experience scheme now, but hasn't been in the past. 'Was explicit training needed?' was posed by Alison and this was suggested as being dependent on the supervisor, individual and also the definition of counselling skills. It was identified as generally a messy area and an example of cognitive restructuring and reframing in the work of a sport psychologist was offered to the group. Within BASES training, there was the opinion that if there'd been hoop-jumping in terms of counselling skills that had recently been introduced and if we need another hoop to jump through. Also another example was offered in terms of a line manager being supportive and offering funding to train sport psychologists, but again with an higher education role.

In terms of counselling skills being applied to sport psychology practice, a consensus was generally reached that it had been important, it expanded the tool kit. It was important in terms

of personal development and specifically the appreciation of other consultancy methods. It was offered that people in higher education have developed these skills informally through their own training in a lecturing role.

Debbie: Sorry can you just say that bit again?

Zoe: Yeah, people in higher education have informally developed these skills through their interaction with students within a higher education role.

Eddie: I said that.

Tony: That academic counselling role.

Debbie: Oh that bit yeah.

Zoe: It was suggested that formal training should emphasise the application of skills into the work context and perhaps an accredited course leading to qualifications which was assessed formally and linked to a competence level without passing you could not become accredited. Generally at this stage the group then became with the concepts posed in terms of interpersonal skills and counselling skills and discussion arose as to whether these terms were used interchangeably.

Finally, in terms of the actual training.

Rachel: Sorry can I stop you? Did we become uncomfortable with the conceptualisation or did we want to be clear on our conceptualisation?

Mary: I think we wanted to be clear on the conceptualisation because we're uncomfortable with the fact that...

Rachel: Potential ambiguity?

Mary: Yes.

Eddie: But that was right the way through wasn't it?

Ruth: Yeah, because it came out with counselling and counselling skills didn't it? I'm not sure that we, you're right.

Zoe: Yeah.

Ruth: It's just an issue I think that we're not comfortable, we're not sure about.

Rachel: Mm.

Zoe: I felt it came to a particular head at that point.

Rachel: Did it?

Zoe: The group didn't feel as though they could progress at that stage.

Rachel: Without a clear definition.

Ruth: Yeah, right.

Rachel: O.k.

Zoe: In terms of training, opinions were proposed that that procedures through BASES weren't tight enough. In terms of assessment, people on supervised experience and beyond could be assessed in terms of observations, perhaps with the supervisor, but again this would depend on supervisor training. Suggestions were made as to the BOA procedures that were already in place related to peer review. It was proposed that a decision would have to be made in terms of criteria for accreditation, perhaps in terms of a rating system that was suggested, again linked to the BOA. Suggestions were made that we all need to know more about it, and again, drawing on aspects of training through clinical psychology in terms of people developing their own competencies on an ongoing basis. As a result, through supervised experience training it may filter out those people with poor interpersonal skills and this is something that the group discussed. Perhaps there was a need for an extended process of accreditation, against this was discussed in terms of the tight criteria and constraints that are on the accreditation process at the moment. Finally the group discussed the issue of quality control and it was proposed that within sport psychology courses and higher education, there was no quality control in terms of the actual content that was delivered there, whereas we would be expected to quantify counselling skills within a particular context.

Alison: Well this is part of the member checking process, is there anything that you want to, you've clarified a couple of bits, is there anything you want to add or change?

Rachel: But that's going to inform that anyway isn't it?

Alison: Yeah. Is there anything that we've missed then in terms of counselling skills in sport psychology?

[Silence for 6 seconds]

Alison: Are there any questions that I might have asked but I didn't? Did you come with any preconceived idea of what I was going to ask?

Rachel: No.

Ruth: I came with a completely empty head!

FOCUS GROUP 4

Alison: I sent a questionnaire out to sport psychologists and trainee sport psychologists and athletes last year, some of you filled out the questionnaire, and it asked them various things. Amongst other things it asked what they thought various qualities of a sport psychologist were and it also asked the athletes what kind of support did they want from sport psychologists. So similar themes and terms were being used by the athletes and the sport psychologists, and I realised that people might have been using the same terms but in different ways. So what I want to start off doing is just going over four different terms, so I was wondering if I could just get your thoughts on these terms. The first one is listening skills. Now all I want you to do is tell me what do you understand by the term listening skills? Anyone can kick us off.

David: Well immediately what springs to mind when I see, listening skills is, well first of all it's listening to that person, trying to understand their perspective and their life, where they're coming from. That's what springs to my mind.

Niall: Yeah, I mean I think for me it's about having an empathy with the fact of whatever they're going through as well as the fact that they want to talk about it, so it's about listening rather than talking. It's giving them the opportunity to say what they wanted to say without sort of jumping in and prejudging and what have you.

Jane: Yeah, I mean I agree with some of that, I also think it's a time when you find out what the person's really saying. You know, are they saying the words that have come out, or are they trying to say something else? Really it's just, erm, some people come and talk to you and what they're saying is really not what they really want to say. So it gives you an opportunity to look for signs that something else is underneath all that. So you really have to listen, it's not just listening to the words they're making, you know, the sounds that are coming out, but where there's a hidden agenda. I mean often there isn't, but sometimes there is and it's knowing whether it's that or whether it's a sort of superficial level or there's something hidden underneath that needs to come out.

Alison: And would you say that's something that you try to get at, the underneath?

Jane: Erm, well you have to give them space, because eventually it will come out, so if we keep asking, prompting them the bits will come out, so then you can listen to the right things. Does that make sense?

Alison: Yeah that's sounds o.k.

Jane: It sounds a bit abstract.

Niall: Yeah, I mean I think I know what you're saying. It's a listening skill, but part of the listening skill is being able to tease out what it is that they really want to say, so, you know, it may involve some sort of interaction which isn't exclusive to listening.

Jane: Because often they come and talk about something completely different when there's something really they want, they're not quite sure how to go about it.

Niall: Yeah.

Jane: Or maybe not even know what it is that they're trying to tell you.

Niall: No, no, yeah they may not be able to put it across, they maybe aware that there's something going on perhaps, but they need you to, or want some reassurance from you as to what it is.

Jane: It can be a positive thing as well, because sometimes they just want to sort of make a lot of noise because they're excited about something. Some people quite happily sit there like a [], just take it all.

Niall: Sponge.

Jane: Sponge yeah.

Alison: What you've to be a sponge?

Jane: Yeah, yeah. So, you know, there are lots of different things in there.

Michael: I had two bits on my sheet: one was be here now, because I'm having a really hard time being here now because I have a pile of crap...

Jane: You're listening!

Michael: ...in my head of things that I have to do and erm, it's difficult to listen when there's things like that going on in your head. And the other one was it's a fairly, erm, sometimes a grey area between erm, your scenario about there maybe things that they're not actually saying, there maybe other things that they're not saying that you need to hear, and yeah I agree, that's very

true, but I know of circumstances where people have been prompted and probed to such an extent that they've divulged things that they didn't want to divulge...

Jane: Oh yeah, yeah.

Michael: ...and that isn't listening. That's interrogating.

Jane: Yeah, yeah.

Michael: And I suspect that sometimes people cross that line calling it listening and it isn't actually listening.

Alison: Do think people ever do that, they divulge things that they don't want to say?

Michael: Yeah.

Jane: They do when they're bottom.

Michael: Yeah.

Jane: You know if you've just had a disaster or something then you're quite emotionally fragile.

Alison: How do you know that they don't want to say it?

Michael: Er, well you don't, how do you know that they do want to say it? You're in a grey area. You can only judge it on the basis of what they say to you afterwards.

Jane: Or their behaviour afterwards.

Michael: Yeah. But I've had instances of erm, things where somebody's been prompted and probe by somebody else and has said something, and has then subsequently said to me that they didn't really want to say that but they sort of had it dragged out of them, as it were, and that isn't listening.

Jane: But I think listening's being quiet. I think you have to shut up unless they sort of look at you as if to say, you know, "Well say something to me".

Niall: Well I mean this is where the, sort of the empathetic approach comes in. It's when you start feeling that they're uncomfortable or perhaps crossing a threshold that you have to make a judgement that, you know, you interrupt or you say, you know, "O.k. that's fine, we've addressed that issue now, let's move onto something else". I mean I think if you've got a real empathy for the person then hopefully that happens less and less. It's only when you start getting more aggressive questioning I suppose.

Jane: I seem to spend most of my time when I'm away the team is just listening to people giving them space so they can come and talk, and then going away and thinking about it myself as well and then, if necessary, can make a space or offer an opportunity if that person wants to follow on, but I seem to spend a lot of my time thinking "Why am I here?" but in fact you're actually listening to a lot of things that are going on and are really responding I suppose, pick up all the rubbish from people.

Michael: Well just an insurance policy as well aren't you?

Jane: Yeah, let them let off steam.

Alison: By sponge, you use the word sponge as in 'takes things in'?

Jane: Yeah, or you're just listening to everything that's going on, you don't necessarily have to react immediately to that. In fact you probably might make quite a few mistakes.

Alison: So is that part of the skill?

Jane: Yeah I think so. Knowing when to, not walk away but just sit and not say anything, or I mean don't sit there like a dummy but not try and sort the issue immediately.

Alison: Can I just go back to what Niall said about aggressive questioning. What did you mean by that?

Niall: Erm, yeah, I thought that was probably an inappropriate word to use there! Erm, well, erm, I think that, and I'm not going from personal experience but I think I can imagine a situation where erm, more enthusiastic, or less empathic individuals, might erm, continue questioning without really sympathising with the predicament that the individual's in, you know, it's easy to do I think and, you know, especially when you are relatively inexperienced because you're trying to get lots of information in and you might just start sort of probing and, you know, perhaps eventually crossing this threshold.

Alison: Do you think you need to be trained in listening skills as an applied sport psychologist (which you all are)?

Michael: I think erm, I think you need to acquire listening skills, which isn't necessarily the same as be trained. I think erm, some people with all the training in the world wouldn't be very good at it. So I don't really think that training is necessarily the answer. Erm, I'm not a great one about

training erm, I think you need experiences to acquire skills and that's a much less goal-oriented process than training, much less rigid as well.

Alison: Are you saying, suggesting that it's either/or though? If you've got training would you necessarily not get experience?

Michael: No, you asked a question about training, I was only answering your question about training. No, I think that erm, and you also phrased the question er, you said "Do we think that it's necessary?" and so I was answering that question, my answer to that question is no I don't think it's necessary. It would be desirable sometimes.

David: I think I would maybe take a stronger stance than that and I'd say that I think it's impossible to train someone to listen. Erm, impossible's a bit strong, but some people are sensitive to other people and some people are not particularly to other people, and those people who are not particularly sensitive to others they'll find it very difficult to listen, to really listen at a deep level. And that means picking up the minutest of cues to help you, "What's going on here?", "Maybe I should make myself available". I mean I've had instances where, I view myself as particularly sensitive and erm, I have instants where I've been in a crowd of [athletes] and erm, they're all a bit laddish, and erm, one guy would say "Oh yeah, I was at this comp. and I had a bit of a mare" and I think "O.k. there might be something there he wants to talk about or he wants to know strategies for the future or he just want to talk about it". And so I just say to him "I'm here till Sunday at 4 o'clock" or something like that, and that I know, he'll pick up on that and then I make myself available on my own in the [training area] at times near him or, you know, sort of at a distance where I know he can just walk over and have a informal chat. And then that doesn't always happen, but at least I think you give them the opportunity, and let them go at their own pace, and I don't think you can aggressively, you've got to let them go at their own pace because their own pace is the one.

Jane: It's a sort of thorny issue sort of training for things that are developed probably a lot through experience and then sort of, probably not quite such a strong view as that, I think sometimes it's probably of benefit having training in it's broadest sense in the sense of sort of er, I don't know role play type things, so you get to know what other people are hearing. I mean I think that's important, because we could, all four of us, sit and listen to what somebody's saying and pick up different things from it. Erm, and I agree most of that comes with the experience, but it also comes with experience of the individual. So, you know, probably sort of generic things about listening skills about where you do it, how you do it, you know, how you behave, and so on. But the actual listening, I agree that you can't train somebody because the way that David talks and the way I listen to him is going to be very different from the way that I would talk and listen with Michael because they are very different people. So the things that you're trying to say would be couched in a very different sort of language, very different body behaviour. So there might be something about body behaviour, you know, body language and so on generic. But training to listen it's hmm, I'm not quite sure whether you could do that, I agree with David. There are things you could learn about what to look for perhaps, and that might be what you mean.

Michael: I think there's maybe a selection issue here as well, I mean if you look at clinical psychology for example, who have to refine their listening skills quite well, I'm sure they get some generic training and they get lots of experience and feedback. But the fact of the matter is that they select them pretty carefully at the start and erm, for example, in sport psychology we don't really have any selection criteria, anybody can start to become accredited as a sport psychologist.

Jane: But do they work effectively? I mean the selection processes from the other end? The team could actually say "Well none of us can work with this guy".

Michael: That's quite interesting because there's lots of accredited sport psychologists who don't get the work.

Jane: Yeah.

Michael: Presumably for a reason.

Jane: Well for a variety of reasons, but that might be one of them.

Michael: Yeah.

Jane: I mean what team's going to, I mean it's this thing about trust isn't it? If you're working the way that we do, it's about trust between people that you're working with. Well if they think "Oh there's no way I'm going to go and talk to..."

Michael: Yeah, but if you turn it all on it's head and er, view it from a user's point of view, from a user's point of view you might reasonably expect that a clinical psychologist would be capable of listening to clinical issues.

Jane: O.k. yeah.

Michael: Capable of assisting with them, and you might reasonably expect that a sport psychologists would be capable of listening to sport psychology issues, offering some help. But the way that the thing's set up, that isn't necessarily the case.

Jane: Mm, and I suppose if you only have one experience then you think "That's it".

Michael: Yeah quite likely.

Alison: In terms of selection of clinical psychologists, what do you mean by that, what kind of selection criteria?

Michael: Well it's extremely difficult to get on clinical training.

Alison: Right.

Michael: Extremely difficult.

Alison: So in the very first place?

Michael: Like 1 in 50 get on it, or 1 in 30, it's that sort of process. Er, where as to start, for example, BASES accreditation all you need is a piece of paper that says B.Sc. on it or B.A. on it and a supervisor who'll say "Yes". So I suppose what I'm saying is that the issue about training, you've got selection and training go hand-in-hand really.

Alison: That's interesting. Let me move onto the next one then.

Michael: See Niall was demonstrating his listening skills then by not saying anything!

Jane: Using silences!

Alison: Now the next term, which was a theme that was coming out from the athletes and the sport psychologists as important, is interpersonal skills, can you tell me what you understand by that term?

Niall: I think I'd have difficulty separating those [listening skills and interpersonal skills]. You know, if you have good listening skills then you have good interpersonal skills.

David: I can see why you say that but I don't think an athlete would see it that way. I think you could be a bit of a lad and a bit of, you know, very "Isn't everyone jolly?" and everything, but not a very good listener and you might be viewed as a great team member. I would personally view, I'd say I have very good listening skills, I don't think I'm very good at interpersonal skills.

Jane: You mean you're not being very good at being laddish or?!

David: I'm not very good in a group situation, I'm not as effective in a group situation, I'm more reserved. So in a group situation I'm quite easily overwhelmed and I find it difficult to make my own space, so that's not very good interpersonal skills. Although it's my own style, so I'd say that that's fine, but listening skills, I'm much better. But, I don't think, I think definitely they're separate.

Jane: It's a very erm, I don't know whether it's a misused term or not, I mean interpersonal skills, I mean what? I mean I think of interpersonal skills as being all of them together like listening, being able to talk to people, being able to empathise, you know, as a whole thing. But I guess the performers might think "Yeah, this person fits in" and erm, becomes part of the team. Mm, I don't know I would have trouble saying that, I think listening skills as part of, is an interpersonal skill.

Michael: Yeah, I think I'd agree.

Alison: There's no or wrong with these, I'm just getting your opinion on these.

Jane: Yeah, I know, it's just hard to separate them out. But I can see from a performer's point of view they might think of how this person fits, it might be their interpretation, I don't know, I guess.

Alison: So you said that you see listening within interpersonal?

Jane: Yeah, yeah.

Alison: O.k.

David: Yeah, I mean in interpersonal skills, there's also talking skills.

Jane: Yeah, yeah, there's lots of them tucked in there.

David: You can't just sit there...

Jane: I think that's the label for all things.

David: If you're in a group but never said a word, you were listening very carefully and very empathetically.

Jane: But there's a bit more isn't there?

David: You're not being very interpersonal.

Michael: You could hug your knees and rock!

Niall: The way we discussed listening skills, we said it wasn't just about listening, it was about interacting in an effective manner with this individual.

David: Mm.

Niall: And for me that's what interpersonal skills are, they're about interactions. So I think that's why I have difficulty separating them. But I agree, listening doesn't necessarily account for laddish behaviour in a group environment.

Jane: I don't think laddish behaviour is interpersonal skills.

Niall: It could be.

Jane: It could be, yeah I suppose because it helps you fit.

Alison: Were you just using that as an example?

David: Yeah.

Alison: So you were agreeing with what some of Niall and Jane were saying, have you changed your mind, or do you still see them as very distinct?

David: Oh I agree totally. Listening skills is part of interpersonal skills.

Alison: But you would distinguish them at some level, that you can be good at one and not necessarily good at the other?

David: Well absolutely, I mean interpersonal skills you've also got talking skills and that kind of thing, so you could be good at listening but not particularly good at conveying your own thoughts.

Michael: There are other things as well is about consistency and changeability and things like that. For example, if you're drinking whisky with [], you'd need to behave in a completely different way to if you were meeting one of the little girl's grandmothers at competition.

Jane: Mm.

David: Mm.

Michael: And so that sort of flexibility is part of interpersonal skills. But equally if you just a chameleon then you could argue that that's not really very skilled behaviour interpersonally. So presumably there has to be some sort of consistency. It's difficult to...

Jane: More purposeful.

Michael: Yeah, it's difficult to, they're not the sort of things you can just write down a list of and devise a training programme for. Pretty complex I think, interpersonal skills.

Jane: The thing is you don't always get it right.

Michael: No.

Jane: And perhaps one of the skills is recognising that you're not getting it right. "Oops, don't do that again!"

Michael: Doh!

Jane: Doh!

Michael: You could always drink beer though when you get it wrong, you just drink more beer don't you?

Jane: Erm, perhaps not!

David: You always end up being right after a few beers!

Niall: I mean I don't think if you're still in the environment with the performers I don't think you really switch off in terms of being a sport psychologist. You know, you do have a consistent approach because you are what you are and that is part of, you know, your role isn't just when you're actually in the training environment, your role is, you know, whenever you're interacting with those individuals. So, I think consistency is fine, but I don't think that happens by accident.

Michael: No no no, no no, I didn't mean it, it happened by accident. It's just I think some people, erm, by personality some people are very consistent, and if you want a different word for that say inflexible, and other people are very adaptable and if you want another word for that, let's

say chameleon-like. So I'm trying to say it so I don't think that being consistent is a good thing, or that being adaptable is a "good" thing, it's somewhere, if you're going to relate to different people you need to be able to change, but equally if you just change all the time then I think you only get a very superficial sort of relationship. So then I wouldn't say that's being very skilled.

Jane: Yeah because the consistency comes in the reliability so that they know...

Michael: Yeah, they know.

Jane: ...that you are going to going to give them this sort of erm, interaction, you know, whatever. Not that, "Well I'm not quite sure what's going to happen when I talk to this person". So there's that sort of consistency between...

Michael: Yep, that's right.

Jane: ...and not rigidity across, you know, so "I'm always going to behave like this whatever happens, hell or high water".

Michael: Yeah, that's right. Or the other way around.

Jane: Yep.

Michael: Floaters.

Jane: I mean you'd be exhausted, I mean working for a weekend, a week with a group it's knacker anyway, but if you were, you wouldn't know what the hell you were doing by the time you'd finished. You'd need a sport psychologist!

Niall: But if you're, say for example, you know, you're away with a group or a team whatever, for a contracted period of time and, you know, you have a social time out, you can go and enjoy yourself without compromising your position or, you know, the relationship that you have with those athletes at all. You know, so I mean it's, clearly you're not rigid, but you hope that you, you know, are effective enough at what you're doing to make sure that the athletes see you as, you know, a multifaceted individual, they don't see you just as, you know, the person you sort of may interact with and talk quietly to them.

Jane: They see them as a person don't they?

Niall: You know, it's gaining their belief in you as an all-round person as well. I think you can have a couple of beers and chat with them and still maintain, you know, your integrity...

Jane: Professional.

Niall: ...in terms of if they say something to you that's important that you can still, you know, treat that in a confidential and professional manner and then, if necessary, you deal with it, you know, when you've had time to think about it when you're in a more appropriate situation, or state.

Jane: Well sometimes a few beers can help the situation.

Niall: Yeah.

Jane: Sometimes. Sometimes.

Michael: It's where David does all his work, in the bar!

Alison: I'm certainly hearing a lot of references to alcohol in this group!

Michael: It is important!

Alison: So you're saying interpersonal's erm, socialising with athletes is also part of interpersonal skill?

Niall: Very much so

Alison: Part of being a sport psychologist, socialising?

Michael: If you erm...

Niall: Establishing relationship. I think sometimes you need to get...

David: No one has no interpersonal skills.

Michael: No one has no?

David: No, everyone has interpersonal skills, they're their own interpersonal skills.

Jane: Which maybe effective or ineffective.

David: Yeah, but there's always a degree of effectiveness, even then there's some interpersonal skills. I'd say of course it's part of being a sport psychologist.

Alison: Purely because you've got them as a person?

David: Well.

Jane: Yes, I know what you mean.

Michael: I know, I don't know whether I, I was thinking of something that I couldn't decide whether it right or not, erm, what I was thinking was if you haven't got an interest in people and you

don't feel reasonably comfortable being with people and working with people, erm, and having some sort of interpersonal connection with them, then there wouldn't be much point being a sport psychologist. But then I thought "Mm, maybe that's not right". Erm, if we're talking only about sport psychologists and that consultant sense then maybe that's right. But even then I sort of have some reservations, I'm not sure, erm, but then it leads you into all sorts of more difficult questions doesn't it? Like 'So why do you do it if you don't feel especially comfortable working and developing relationships with people?' 'Well because you're interested in sport and you want to, you have an interest in finding out how high level performance works'. You don't necessarily have to be interested in people, you don't necessarily have to want to develop relationships with them.

Alison: Do you think you can be effective as an applied sport psychologist working in that way?

Michael: I'm not sure. It might depend on what sort of sport you worked in, for example.

Jane: I would imagine there are some people who are out there working who are probably in that situation who are probably being seen as relatively effective.

Niall: And equally there maybe some athletes who much prefer that detached approach. This is, "Tell me something to do", you know, "We don't have to get on, I just want you to give me something to do". It's like the coaches who work when they have no relationship with that athlete.

Jane: Professionally can you do that?

Michael: That's why I say I wasn't sure.

Jane: I'm not sure, no.

Michael: I'm not sure that I'd actually say you definitely can't work unless you're like that.

Jane: No, that's why I'm asking the question.

Michael: I was trying to think of some specific examples, but something like, you know, I don't know, something pistol shooting, for example, and you said "O.k., I'll take a really, really strong psychophysiological approach and I'll have all these performers to develop strategies that enabled them to lower their heart rate down to ten, some ridiculous rate, slow their respiration down, fire in between beats"...

Jane: And let them get on with it.

Michael: ...you know, I could think of a thousand technical things that you could do with absolutely crap interpersonal skills, just hiding behind or working off data, feeding back data to them. So, I go "It could be quite good".

Alison: So you could be effective?

Michael: Maybe you would be, maybe you wouldn't. I'm not saying you would, I'm just saying I find it difficult to actually explicitly say you definitely could not work unless you had good interpersonal skills.

Niall: It'd be fairly difficult to work!

Michael: Yeah you'd be a bit restricted.

Niall: So you wouldn't be worried about it if you didn't have interpersonal skills.

Michael: Absolutely.

Alison: O.k. let me move it on then to the next term. Now obviously athletes didn't mention this, but the sport psychologists did make reference to it. What do you understand by counselling skills?

Jane: You mean in the way we work or the way we think?

Alison: What do you understand by the term first of all.

Michael: Er, important to differentiate between counselling skills with a capital 'C' and counselling skills with a small 'c'.

Alison: Can you expand on that?

Michael: Yeah, counselling skills with a capital 'C' are a collection of professional skills which counselling psychologists need to have in order to provide a clinical service. We are not involved in that at all. Counselling skills with a small 'c'.

Jane: A small 'c' is being...

Michael: Counselling skills with a small 'c' are things that everybody has and everybody uses in everyday life.

Alison: I've never come across that distinction before!

Michael: Because if you don't make *that* distinction then...

Jane: Then you're on really dodgy ground.

Michael: ...in my opinion you're on really, really dangerous ground. Because we're not trained as counsellors, we are not professionally qualified as counsellors, erm, and if we're going to engage in counselling with a capital 'C', then we probably should resign from BASES before they kick us out because we just breached our code of conduct, and the same if we're BPS chartered, we ought to get out of the BPS as well for the same reason.

Alison: I'm going to write the next term on [the flip chart] because you're already making the distinction then, counsell-ING.

Michael: O.k.

Alison: I don't know whether that's a small 'c' or a big 'C', I haven't personally made *that* distinction. What I want to know is what do you understand by counselling skills and what do you understand by counselling? Do you differentiate between the two? Would you differentiate between counselling skills then and counselling?

Michael: I don't mind what the words are that you use and you can differentiate between these two things how you like, but there's one thing that's about delivering a professional service aimed at helping people to solve problems, and erm, that's the thing that's we're not qualified to do, and there's another thing...

Jane: That we do all the time.

Michael: ...that when you engage in any erm, dialogue with somebody whether this is professionally or non-professionally and an issue arises that that person is talking to you about because they would like some help with it, then you are engaging in that other thing, and you can distinguish between them how you like and say one is you're using counselling skills and the other is you're doing counselling, or you can say this about counselling with a capital 'C' and this is about counselling with a small 'c', or you can say we won't use either of those words we'll come up with something completely different. But those two different sets of activities you have to differentiate between them.

Jane: Now I often just think of them as being like coping I suppose, counselling, in its broadest sense.

Michael: Whose coping? Yours or theirs?

Jane: Yeah, precisely, but who's counselling? It's just something that happens, you know, between two people.

Alison: What, counselling is?

Jane: No, no I'm not saying that, I'm just saying in response to Michael's comment about, you know, whose coping. Because if you think of it as counselling I mean what you're really doing is listening to somebody. Because the person who you are small 'c' counselling has to make their own decisions because they've got to live with the decision. So the bit that you're is being like a devil's advocate I suppose that you, you're just saying, "Well O.k., you know what do you think the consequences are of you doing this? What are the implications of that? What are the alternatives?" really they're sort of, in its broadest sense, problem solving, I mean what label do you put on it? You really are just somebody who can erm, be very subjective about, er, objective sorry about the issue. If somebody's involved in something that's upsetting them, which is why they would come and talk to you perhaps, erm, they have a very, erm, narrow view of the issue.

Michael: Well they may have.

Jane: They may have. They may not. They may say "Well we don't know what's going on here with this, this and this", but it's really a sounding board probably.

Michael: Have you looked these two phrases up in a dictionary?

Alison: Yeah.

Michael: I don't believe it'll distinguish between them.

Jane: Isn't counselling the delivery of those skills supposedly?

Michael: Yeah, or the use of them.

Jane: Or the use of them.

Michael: You see that's why I don't think that's a very good way of differentiating between those two things that we're talking about. Er, because if you had a dictionary definition of the word counselling.

Jane: With a capital 'C' or a small 'c'?

Michael: It's the same problem, you know. At least if you do it with a big 'C' or a little 'c' or inverted commas or out of inverted commas, you're making it clear that you are talking about something...

Michael & Jane: Different.

Niall: Yeah, I think maybe I've a fairly simplistic viewpoint in that I would definitely, if I was going to make a distinction, it would be with a little 'c'. Erm, you know, but for me erm, counselling with somebody, it is it's all about this listening and directing when appropriate, you know, and using the skills that you have as a listener, and the knowledge base and the referral system, using all those things in an effective way. So, for me counselling skills, as I view them (with a little 'c'), erm aren't in a formal sense about what I would require to be a qualified counsellor, but about my ability to listen and direct where appropriate.

Jane: By 'direct' you mean tell somebody what to do or give them, so that they make the choice?

Niall: Well, direction could be anything from a referral to giving them personal advice to, you know, identifying strategies that they might try. It could be anything, it doesn't have to be.

Michael: You see, I think if you look, have you got this dictionary definition in your hand?

Alison: No.

Michael: I think if you look in a dictionary you'll find that it uses, it does use the word 'advice'.

David: But counsel means advice.

Michael: Yeah, to give advice. But if you talk to, er, professional counsellors they would say that they would never give advice. They would only ask questions that enable the, I hate these sorts of words...

Jane: Counsellee?!

Michael: ...counsellee...

Jane: The other bit, the other person.

Michael: ...yeah (and coachee, God!) erm, the person who is also engaged in that counselling session, that enabled them to perhaps, erm...

Jane: Make informed decisions?

Michael: ...yeah, perhaps make informed decisions for themselves or perhaps see the problem in a slightly different way, or whatever, but they would only ask questions, *not* give advice. They see that as quite important.

Jane: Would they only ask questions?

Michael: I think so, you see it's quite important that they don't give advice.

Jane: I mean I would try not to give advice, I would like feel the person who has to make a decision is the person who's got to live with that decision. But it's difficult, I don't think you should be prescriptive. You should offer the, the, erm, an understanding of the consequences and implications of what they do, unless they really say "Well, knowing me in this situation, what do you?" you know.

Niall: I think that's what they do though, you know.

Jane: Well yeah.

Niall: You develop a relationship with them which will enable to, you know, give them advice which is based on the fact that you understand they have confidence in what you're saying, you understand them.

Michael: A counsellor with a large 'C' would erm, would say something like "So what do you think the consequences of that would be? And how would that make you feel?"

Jane: Mm, yeah, that's very abstract.

Michael: Absolutely.

Jane: Too abstract.

Michael: Well I'm not sure it is.

Jane: Well, it is because the person might not know what the consequences are.

Michael: No.

Jane: So it might be that you could say "Well if you do this, these sorts of things might happen. If you do that, those sort of things might happen. If you do this, then these sort of things might happen. Which do you think is going to be best for you?"

Michael: A counsellor would probably say, faced with that problem, a counsellor with a capital 'C', would probably say, erm, "So where do you think you could find out what the consequences of that might be?"

Jane: Yeah but in our situation, usually it's, erm, coping with something immediate, you know, this is life NOW.

Michael: Then in that situation you're not counselling.

Alison: You're not counsell-ing?

Michael: No.

Jane: With a small 'c'.

Michael: With a small 'c', no you're not.

Jane: O.k.

Michael: In that situation, the moment you offer advice you're no longer counselling. I'm not saying you should only be a counsellor.

Jane: Yeah, yeah.

Michael: I'm just saying the moment you offer advice, you are not a counsellor.

Jane: Because sometimes you can't say "Well, you know, go away and find out", you can't.

Michael: Well, you know, Fred's going up for his gold medal performance and he's going "I've got a little problem with this and I don't know what to do about it", "Oh well, and how would that make you feel?"

Jane: [Laughter]

Michael: And "What would the consequences be?" It doesn't sound quite right does it?

Jane: No, no, I agree, yeah.

Michael: Erm, so you wear a different hat.

Jane: Mm.

Alison: Are you saying there's almost like a time and a place to counsel?

Michael: Yeah absolutely. Or, with a small 'c'.

Jane: And after the finish when somebody's crashed and they're saying "I'm going to go and kill myself", it's not the time to counsel.

Michael: "How do you feel about that?"! [Laughter]. Well it might be actually, it might be a very good time to adopt a strategy like that. It's pretty high risk, it might be.

Jane: Yeah, oh well.

Michael: Because you could say "And what do you think the consequences of that would be?" and they'd say "Well there wouldn't be any consequences for me, I'd be dead" and you'd say "Mm yeah, that doesn't mean there won't be any consequences".

Jane: Mm.

Michael: "What about all the people who are left, what do you think the consequences would be for them?" and so you take it how you like.

Jane: I don't think I'll try that actually.

Alison: You know this distinction you're making between the big 'C' and the small 'c'? I'm just trying get this clear in my mind, you're saying that counselling with a big 'C' is counselling as a counsell-or?

Michael: Mm.

Jane: Professional.

Michael: Professional.

Alison: As a professional counsellor, with a big 'C'. But do sport psychologists counsel?

Michael: With a small 'c'.

Jane: Small 'c' yeah.

Alison: With a small 'c'?

Michael: All the time.

Alison: And yet the examples that you gave, when you say people are counselling, sport psychologists are counselling, are using counselling skills?

Michael: Yeah.

Alison: With a small 'c' or a big 'C' or you don't distinguish?

Michael: Well, the skills, it doesn't really matter whether you do it with a big 'C' or a small 'c' because it's the same activity you're engaged in.

Alison: But I think at the beginning, you said counselling skills with, you know, you distinguished between a big 'C' and a small 'c' with those as well?

Michael: No, I distinguished between counselling with a big 'C' and a small 'c'. I'm not, I don't think we're talking about a different set of skills, we're talking about the same skills.

Alison: Right.

Niall: I think you talked about counselling skills with a big 'C' as being a set or prerequisite skills that you require in order to be...

Michael: Professionally competent.

Niall: ...counselling with a big 'C'.

Michael: Yes, yeah.

Alison: In terms of sport psychology then, how much, er, how many counselling skills, I don't mean in terms of numbers...

Michael: Three.

Jane: Two and a half.

Alison: ...but how far down the track does a sport psychologist go then in having counselling skills?

Michael: With a small 'c'.

Alison: Yeah.

Michael: Well how far down the erm, being a human being track does a father go with his children? Because that's about the same distance I reckon. It depends how good you want to be at it doesn't it?

Alison: Is that how everybody feels?

Jane: Yeah, er, how long's a bit of string?

Michael: About as long as a father!

Jane: Yeah, I mean that seems impossible to answer. I mean you're asking something that's, it is one of those questions isn't it?

Michael: It, I mean, it's difficult, you can't say, you can't give a definite answer to the question, that's what the problem is isn't it?

Jane: Yeah, but the point, probably one of the things that you're trying to get at, is that you have to, I think you have to recognise when you can no longer be effective, or things that you might say, erm, aren't going to help this person in any way. And then you think "O.k., who can help this person?". And then it depends.

Michael: I want to jump out of this, to a different place because it might help you [Alison] in particular, because these understand me a lot better than you do O.k. You might misunderstand where I come from on it. Erm, behind questions like this I see, erm, er, somewhere in the distant, somebody will take this research and they'll say "So these are the things that people need to be a sport psychologist", and they'll devise a little list, and you'll have to tick them. Which is what BASES accreditation...

Jane: Is about.

Michael: ...to a greater or lesser or extent is about. It's about creating a checklist that you tick, and, erm, those same people ask a completely different set of questions to me. When it doesn't work, when you get people who can tick all the boxes and they're crap, they say "Ah, we must have the wrong things on the list, let's change the list", they don't realise that actually the whole idea of having a list is pretty much a waste of time because you can't provide definite answers. And where I come from on all of these issues is you could be very good as a sport psychologist, with an extraordinarily limited set of skills, provided you only worked in a certain way with certain people. You could be incredibly effective. You might be much more effective with a wider range of people if you had a wider range of skills, and in particular you might be much more effective if you had very good counselling skills, you might be much more effective in a wide range of situations. But, erm, defining those things and operationalising them in some way enable you to say "Oh yeah, you need this and that and that", I don't think you can do that, and that's why every question you ask I'll say some obscure thing like "How long's a piece of string?" because there isn't in my head a list of things that you need that much of that, this much of that, and that much of that.

Alison: What about other professions which are similar, clinical psychology, counselling psychology, they have very clear tick boxes?

Michael: Well I'm not sure they do you see.

Alison: Do they have bare minimum requirements then? Like, for example, in counselling, you know, you have to have these qualifications plus I think it's 400 hours of counselling time with clients.

Michael: Yeah but they also have much closer supervision, and, erm, because the, (oh another one of those) supervisee is paying. It's very expensive, clinical training, it's very expensive and it costs

a lot of money and so then they can staff it. But in sport psychology we don't have that professional set up, and in fact when you ask, erm, young trainee sport psychologists about, for example, at the BOA [British Olympic Association], erm, PAG [Psychology Advisory Group] day, we talked about mentoring and once you said "Well this is going to cost money and things"...

Jane: Everybody backs off.

Michael: Everybody backed off "Whoa", big time, "Don't want to pay any money, you should be doing it for nothing". Well how the hell is that going to work? And that's, you know, those are the sorts of problems. We liken ourselves to those sort of people, but we aren't like those people. If we likened ourselves to BPS (British Psychological Society) chartered psychologists, that would be a bit nearer the mark. Because they're the exact opposite, to be chartered psychologist all you have to do is have somebody sign the piece of paper and three years later they sign it again to say they've supervised you, and you have a code of conduct that says you won't do anything that you haven't got the expertise in which is incredibly loose. Now I'm not saying we should be that loose, but you can't reduce clinical training to a set of tick boxes. You can't reduce these things [terms on flip chart] to a set of 'So these are the listening skills you need and these are the interpersonal skills, these are the counselling skills'.

Jane: Certainly in counselling training the, erm, the counsellor, the student...

Michael: Impossible to avoid the words isn't it?

Jane: I know.

Alison: I think they use the word client in counselling.

Jane: Yeah, n-n-n no, what I'm saying is the trainee also becomes a client.

Michael: Yes.

Jane: It's part of the process, don't they? And they to undergo counselling themselves as part of their training process. But I don't think they quantify, I mean I think that's what you're getting at, how do you? You can't quantify like how far down the, you know, the father/son bit do you go? How long's a piece of string? You can't say that it's three, four or five, I mean that's impossible.

Michael: At the end of the day somebody makes a value judgement, that's the whole point.

Jane: But you can't.

Michael: The whole point about professional issues is that when you get to a serious point, like suppose somebody dies and then you have a negligence claim against somebody else. At the end of the day the way that the issue's resolved is somebody makes a value judgement, somebody says "We believe this person was negligent", or "We don't believe this person was negligent". And, erm, the fact of the matter is that that's the way it works, the way it works is we have to make value judgements, and in all those situations where you give people qualifications, and you avoid making the value judgement, in my opinion you'll get a huge number of people professionally qualified who are actually incompetent. Because you can't make those decisions without making a value judgement.

Jane: Hopefully it hasn't in sport psychology, yet.

Michael: Well, not that somebody's died, but there are people who can tick all the boxes who I have absolutely no doubt about will never, ever, ever be any good as sport psychologists. And when you reduce these things that's where you head I think and that's why I'm a bit obscure. I don't know what the answer is, I only know what the problem's.

Alison: Let me just stick to the actual terms at the moment, we're going to expand on these a little more later. David would you like to add anything? How *you* would define counselling skills and counselling.

[8 seconds of silence]

David: I'd find it very difficult to provide a definite, clear definition, I just believe it's a whole mix match of these things, you have to be a very good listener, you have to be very good at entering into people's realities, understanding where they're coming from, that kind of stuff.

Alison: Can you just tell me what you understand by that then? Maybe if you haven't got a clear...

David: That's what I understand by that.

Alison: Yeah, do you make any distinction then between counselling skills and counselling?

David: No, counselling skills are what you need to counsel.

Alison: With a small 'c'?

Jane: Let's just assume it's a small 'c'.

Michael: It's a [this institution] thing, small 'c', big 'C'!

Alison: Do you think, as a sport psychologist, do you use counselling skills, or do you counsel?

David: Most definitely, yeah.

Alison: With a small 'c'?

David: Yeah.

Jane: We'll just assume it's a small 'c'.

Michael: It's always a small 'c'.

Jane: That's saves it all the, er.

Alison: Going back to the small 'c', big 'C', there are counselling skills that you would get as, er, going down the big 'C' track, would you agree, as you would get going down a sport psychology track? Is there any overlap in the counselling skills that you might obtain down sport psychology or down counselling?

Niall: I'm sure if you went down the big 'C' route it would [] better on the little 'c' route.

Michael: [Laughter]

Niall: That was actually...

Michael: Surely the skills are the same?

Jane: Yeah.

Alison: Are they?

Michael: Well tell me one that's different. I mean I can't see any reason why they shouldn't be the same.

Jane: No, yeah I can't see any difference.

Alison: So the skills that you would get if you went down both tracks would be the same?

Jane: Erm.

Michael: The skills that you might want to...

Michael & Jane: use...

Jane: ...would be the same,...

Michael: If you went down both tracks.

Jane: Similar.

Michael: If you went down the sport psychology track there's no knowing that you'd get any skills.

Alison: In counselling?

Michael: Mm.

Alison: No skills?

Michael: Mm. If you go down the counselling track...

Jane: You'd get more.

Michael: ...presumably you ought to get at least some of them.

Niall: Or you'd get exposure to them wouldn't you?

Jane: Yeah.

Niall: Whether or not you'd actually get them.

Jane: Yeah, yeah.

Niall: I mean I find counselling impossible to define, pretty much like David.

Michael: I think his [David's] 'entering other people's realities' is pretty good.

Jane: Yeah.

Michael: Understanding other people's realities. Helping them, I suppose, helping them to move.

Jane: Whichever way.

Michael: Yeah.

Jane: Just helping them to get through.

Michael: To choose a direction to move in, to make some progress in that direction, but without ever advising them.

Alison: O.k.

Michael: You can't do that can you until you've understood their reality?

David: No.

Alison: Now you've got your definitions, how important do you think counselling skills are to applied sport psychology practice, you know, to being a sport psychologist out in the field?

Michael: They're one of a number of very important ('they are one' doesn't sound quite right), counselling skills are important, as are lots of other things.

Jane: Yeah, phew, I don't think you could put a weighting on it, I think it would depend on you and, you know, all the other hidden things that we've talked about: the interpersonal skills and listening. You may have them but you may not be very effective at using them, erm, you might spend a lot of time with a group and, as we talked about before, have very limited use of them. You might spend a lot of time, I suspect like David does and I probably do, probably using them quite a lot.

Niall: Very important.

Alison: Very important?

Niall: Yeah, I think in order to be, you know, there are exceptions where you can be effective, but I think, you know, to be an effective sport psychologist you need to be, erm, you need to get something out of it as well, you need to grow from the experience and I'm not convinced that Michael's example about just giving information...

Michael: Psychophysiology.

Niall: ...yeah, I'm not necessarily sure you'd grow from that particularly.

Michael: Oh, you'd learn all sorts of things from the psychophysiology of pistol shooting that would be really fascinating for you.

Niall: Yeah O.k. Erm...

Michael: Let's do a for instance, Dan Landers, there you are. Done loads of work with pistol and rifle shooters in America, probably learned lots about it from them, probably, because that's important...

Niall: He may have gained knowledge on pistol shooting, but has he grown as a psychologist?

Michael: I think he'd probably argue that he has yeah. Erm, yeah, I think counselling skills are very important to me as a sport psychologist...

Jane: Yeah, yeah.

Michael: ...not to sport psychologists per se.

Jane: Yeah, I wouldn't say they're more important than anything else. I would agree with you [Michael], they're part of your library of skills and it depends on you, the sport you're in, you know all the other hidden agenda.

Michael: I'm just so worried about how this stuff's going to get used. If [] gets hold of this, you'll have a list "These are the counselling skills. Till you've ticked the boxes, you don't become accredited".

Jane: You'd get four out of five.

Michael: Absolutely, and that's what worries me. They're important to *me* as a sport psychologist. If I was working with somebody as a supervisor I'd want them to get experience that enabled them to develop some of those things, but I wouldn't *ever* want, erm, it written somewhere that you can't be a sport psychologist unless you've got this and you do it that way, whether it was counselling skills or any other skills. So at that level I don't think they're necessary.

Jane: However, I think you have to have knowledge of them, you have to have an awareness of what they are, some experience of them. But I don't think they're...

Michael: Yeah, that'd be O.k., I can go with that.

Alison: You're happy with that?

Michael: Yeah.

Alison: Like some knowledge and experience.

Michael: So you make an informed decision about whether you use them.

Alison: So in some respects then you are happy with some sort of tick list?

Michael: No because the tick list implies you've got them.

Niall: You've either got them or not got them.

Michael: Yes, what I'm saying is you've been exposed to them.

Jane: You have an awareness of them.

Michael: You have an awareness of them, it's a bit different.

Alison: And is that a compulsory part do you think, having an awareness?

Michael: Nothing should ever be compulsory.

Jane: There's lots of things on the tick lists that people don't have a hundred percent in, on this old percentage thing, but I mean what's a hundred percent?

Michael: Exactly.

David: One hundred percent counselling skills!

Michael: One hundred percent counselling skills, exactly.

Jane: I mean it's just a crazy system in that sense.

Michael: Nothing should ever be...

Jane: Quantified...

Michael: ...required.

Jane: ...in that way. I think you should have experience or knowledge, or some basis, basis, BASES?

Michael: BASES!

Niall: You have to see yourself as having appropriate skills.

Jane: For what you do.

Niall: Yeah, exactly.

Michael: And operating within those limitations.

Niall: Yeah, as long as you can do that, you know, I mean it sounds almost as though anybody can become a sport psychologist if you think you've got those skills.

David: That's within your limits.

Niall: Yeah, well I mean that's almost better than the tick list to me but it does require you to be honest to yourself.

Jane: But you could stand that on its head you see, couldn't you? Well you could say the same about everything.

Niall: Yeah sure.

Michael: You see it's a matter of whether you want sport psychologists to be like accountants, solicitors, estate agents, and surveyors.

Niall: I'd like to earn a sort of similar amount.

Jane: The same sort of salary, yes.

Michael: They operate within a set of rules which they are tested on.

Jane: It's very strict.

Michael: Or whether you want them to be creative, who are helpful, who want to...

Jane: Effective in a crisis and all these sorts of things.

Michael: Yeah, yeah.

Jane: Cope with all the odd bits.

Michael: Absolutely.

Jane: Because most of it's unknown you see isn't it? I mean working in applied sport, you just, you can't predict, it's unpredictable.

Niall: Maybe it should be called humanistic sport psychologists.

Michael: It's very hard because, erm, I'm philosophically opposed to, erm, another agenda that isn't your [Alison's] agenda that is how what you're doing will get used, and, erm, because I've been an influence on these people [in the room] they're probably practically philosophically opposed to that as well, and, erm, at the other end I can see that if you just have some sort of completely nihilist system where anybody can do what the hell they like and call themselves anything they like, then you have no quality assurance. Erm, and so I can see that's probably not entirely desirable.

Jane: Hence my comment about you should have some, erm, experience of it.

Michael: Yeah.

Jane: I don't think you should be required to have a hundred percent because what's a hundred percent? My little bit of experience could be a hundred percent, or my enormous amount of experience and the fact that I've been on a capital 'C' counselling course may make me one hundred percent. However, to help you [Alison] I think it's important, but I wouldn't say it's THE most, I think it's just one of the skills that I as a practising sport psychologist should be aware of and have some experience of so that I can actually say "Well when I'm doing this, I'm actually counselling. When I'm doing that I'm doing something else".

David: I view them as very important to my work as a sport psychologist, because those are skills that I use a lot. If I had to use this psychophysiology, or whatever it is, psychobiology...

Michael: Psycho-babble, babble-ology!

David: ...in pistol shooting, then I would view that as very important. But I don't think that's important at all, I don't need to know that now. But I need to know, I need to, well these are important to me because I use them a lot, it's my style. It's important to my style.

Jane: that's probably a good...

Michael: And it's probably important to your style [Niall].

Niall: Mm.

Michael: I'd be prepared a different question more helpfully.

Alison: Are you going to give me that question?

Michael: I'll tell you the answer first, erm, because you'll guess the question, it's pretty easy. I would always recommend to people that I supervise that they try to acquire counselling skills. I think that they would help in their work.

Alison: Can I just get it clear then, in terms of counselling skills, do you mean in a formal way, formal training or through reading or through experience on the job? What do you mean by that?

Michael: All of those.

Alison: So some counselling skills training.

Michael: I think if you can get access to it, yeah. I mean if you can get access to something that's good I think that's very worthwhile.

Jane: Good quality workshop.

Michael: I mean I can't remember who it is, but I've just suggested to somebody that they go on one, Susan I think.

David: On the 14th of July one?

Michael: Er yeah, where's that?

Jane: Stafford.

Michael: That's right, yeah.

Jane: There's a paid one in Chester by a professional counsellor, that one would be probably better value I think for somebody's who's going to work like that, it's about 60 quid. I think it's a two day workshop. It's in Chester.

Michael: Yeah, yeah, I think that was the one I was thinking of.

Jane: Run by counsellors with big 'C's.

Niall: I mean in terms of what we're doing, it would be, as we've said, it would be good to have, erm, experience, you know, watching other people, you know, work to develop your own skills, you know see what they do. But the problem is, of course, is that unless you video, erm, which of course changes the dynamic of a relationship anyway, there's no other way you can observe and keep that relationship in a pure form, you know, because as soon as you go as an observer, you do change the dynamics of the relationship which means that, you know, say if I was going to observe Michael with a performer his interactions would be completely different, and in fact if it, I would imagine that if it got to an important, or it got to a stage when, erm, something non-trivial was going on then I'm sure Michael wouldn't want anybody else there anyway. So, you know, in terms of acquiring skills, erm, it is, you know, it's not simple in terms of, you know, just go out and observe somebody.

Jane: Perhaps that why the profession actually insists that their trainee counsellors actually are counselled.

Niall: Yeah.

Jane: Because that's one way...

Michael: Because then they've experienced it.

Jane: ...then they have the experience.

Niall: Yeah.

Michael: Yeah it think that's a good practice.

Jane: Yeah.

Michael: We had a PAG day years ago, it was run by Richard Butler and Sheila Rodgers, on counselling. It actually excellent for one reason, no it was excellent for several reasons, but one reason in particular it was excellent and that was that we did sessions in threes, where you had a counsellor, a counsellee and an observer, you see, and then we swapped around. And what was fascinating was that some of the people who had quite big reputations were absolutely crap! It was quite funny, and some of the people who were just like Fred had just started and never really done any of this, were actually great, and I thought that was good. It was interesting.

Alison: Does that worry you at all, that some of the people with the big reputations weren't very good at it?

Michael: Erm, no more than it worries me that they're not very good at lots of things.

Alison: Specifically counselling skills then?

Michael: No I won't be cornered on that, only to the same extent as they're not very good at other things. For example, I'd say that, er, some are very poor at, erm, promoting the, erm, client's growth and welfare beyond their own reputation and, erm, monetary gain. You know, I mean I know some people who have got very big reputations who are always looking for a way that they can use this work to promote themselves, to promote their image, and that's probably higher on their agenda than the client's growth, and that worries me, probably more than people are not very good at counselling skills.

Jane: And I suppose that's paralleled in coaching isn't it?

Michael: Yeah, everywhere, it's paralleled in everything.

Jane: Some coaches don't release, you know, don't let their, erm, coachee move on.

Michael: Yeah, 'coachee's' horrid.

Jane: Yeah. Erm, I wouldn't feel desperately bad if I thought that that person hasn't got super strong counselling skills, as long as they had something else. I mean we're not talking about NO counselling skills, I mean we talked about before it's almost impossible not to have a little titty, witsy bit of, you know. You can carry out a conversation without completely dominating it.

Alison: In terms of formal counselling skill training then would you be worried if they didn't have that?

Michael: Exposure.

Jane: Sorry?

Michael: Use your exposure phrase.

Jane: Oh yes, oh yes, sorry, I'm...

Michael: Yeah, yeah, being exposed to them.

Jane: ...what's going on that I'm missing here?

Alison: Can you be exposed without having gone on a course then, not having gone on formal training?

Jane: Erm, I think you can have workshops, seminars this sort of, erm, interaction, you know, where you role play and so on, part of BASES workshops and so on, I think you can have that. I think if you label it 'formal training' then people think "Yes I have to go and do this six months, you know, 3,000 quid job", I think that's going to an extreme.

Alison: Or would you call a BASES workshop formal training?

Jane: Er, beginnings. I think a series would be better.

Alison: What did you say?

Michael: Series.

Jane: Series. A series of workshops, I think one workshop is, I think you need to do something, go away and have a go at it and try it out and have another go at it, I mean that's.

Michael: Yeah, I think one of the problems with all the workshops...

Jane: Is access.

Michael: ...the PAG days, the BASES workshops is you have this feeling that we've done that one...

Jane: No, no I don't think that's sufficient.

Michael: ...we ought to do something different, whereas in fact we ought to probably just be, you know, trying make things more solid.

Jane: Because in fact you get better...

Michael: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jane: ...you get more, and then the quality within the workshop will change, the dynamics within the workshop will change. It's frustrating.

Michael: Yeah, the PSG [Psychology Steering Group of the BOA] we've been saying that, that we've got to try and make it...

Jane: It's frustrating.

Niall: You seem to say it at every meeting and it doesn't change the problem.

Jane: But wherever you go, it is frustrating to do a workshop and think "Yeah, I'm working like that, that's O.k.", which is reassuring at that level. But I think you need to go beyond the "Yeah I'm doing those sorts of things, erm, and it's nice to know that Joe Bloggs is actually made a mess of it", you know, in certain ways that's fine. But you need to move up perhaps and do a little bit more, or at least have the opportunity.

David: Well particularly for counselling.

Jane: Yeah, because it's a progressive thing.

David: That's part of, it replicates the process doesn't it? And when you're working with groups, and I think most sport psychologists work with groups over a period of time, so there is a development, there is change.

Jane: Yeah, and the dynamics of the way that you'd work that group of individuals change. I mean I have, I work with people of about, you know they're between 18 and 20, and some are like mid-30's, 40's, so they're quite different and, er, it does take them a while to, you know, the dynamics of what you do does change, yeah quite dramatically. You know, like a year later, when the individual reacts with you very, very differently, you know, the year before, so there's a level that you can counsel.

Alison: Are you happy with using the term counselling or do you have to always qualify it by saying big 'C', little 'c'?

Jane: Well I never think of it as counselling.

Niall: No.

David: They wouldn't understand what you're saying.

Jane: I'm just, I don't, I've never given it a label.

Niall: No, no. It's just working with an athlete!

Jane: Yes, that's part of my job, yeah I'm like you, I feel quite comfortable, I work like that.

Niall: Yeah, I don't concern myself that I need to define, you know...

Jane: Well, I've never thought about it.

Niall: ..what counselling is. You know, it's not an issue.

Alison: Have you ever been on a counselling training course yourself, counselling skills training course?

Jane: Er, I've been on a couple of workshop. But they weren't, I mean I wouldn't say...

Niall: Did you do the counselling module?

Michael: Bill whatisname?

Niall: Bill Bloggs.

Michael: Bill Bloggs that's right.

Jane: I mean I, one of the things I have tried to do and that's, erm, erm, go on workshops that complement what you're calling, or what I think you're thinking of as counselling skills. Things like, you know, erm, eating disorder things, sexual abuse, drug abuse, erm, suicide, you know, because they all complement, they complement so they give you background which makes the counselling process more informed perhaps.

Alison: Can I just ask you another one which is kind of er, moving on from this, is it, are counselling skills something that you use all the time, are they fundamental to what you do, or are they something that you would use in a certain situation?

Niall: I think, because I can't define them easily, I assume that I use them all the time, you know, if I'm interacting I use some counselling skills.

Michael: All the time.

Jane: Yeah I would have said that too. Even in, sort of, almost social things...

Michael: Yeah absolutely.

Jane: It's there isn't it? I wouldn't say "I'm counselling this person", but, you know, you're thinking about what you're saying and doing.

Niall: Well your skills are a product of your experiences aren't they? So, you know, you use your experiences whenever you interact with anybody.

David: There's almost a, erm, conscious connotation to the word skill isn't there? In that you to someone, you're applying that as a skill and you use. But I would say that, erm, counselling skills permeates my being.

Michael: Mm.

Jane: Part of your ethos?

David: Yeah, and these aren't skills I employ, it's me.

Michael: The active, erm, socially engaging with a person who you care about is, it's a necessary, er, it necessarily proceeds from that that I would operate in that way because that's what it's about.

Niall: But you wouldn't bother, you wouldn't possibly label...

Michael: Exactly.

Jane: Yeah, which is why I have a problem with the label.

Michael: I'd go no, no, this is about, you know, wanting somebody to personally grow, you wanting them to be happy, enjoy themselves, get the most out of life, you know, anything like that.

Jane: I mean I have a problem with the term counselling because, it may just be me, but I have always associated counselling per se as somebody who has a problem, and half the time some of these people haven't got a problem, but you're still using counselling skills when you're communicating with them through the sort of social support bit. So, yeah I have a problem with the term in the way that I work.

Alison: O.k. we've touched on the last bit that I'm going to put on the flip chart, we have mentioned - it quite a bit already, but in terms of training in counselling what kind of training do you think sport psychologists need to use counselling skills effectively?

Michael: None.

Alison: None.

Michael: Not when you say 'need', because that implies that if they don't have training they won't be able to do it, but some people only need exposure to situations to acquire the skills that will enable them to be effective.

Jane: It depends what you mean by training, the training bit, it's like the counselling to me, the word 'training' means you sit down and you are trained. It's the training bit.

Michael: Your bit's about training, my bit's needs.

Jane: Yeah, I think sport psychologists need, little 'n'!

Alison: Oh 'eck!

Jane: Sorry, I'm winding you up now! I think they do have to have exposure to it. But the training bit, I always think of training is sort of going into the army and things like that, it's sort of "We are now being trained in counselling", I don't think it works like that.

Alison: Well, you can go on formal training courses or, you know, the workshops or whatever you see as training really.

Jane: Yeah, it's just the word training, yeah.

Michael: The thing is that all the people who are involved in training, or who are...

Jane: Who would be involved in training.

Michael: ...all the people who are establishing the needs of sport psychologists who are saying "Sport psychologists *must* do this, sport psychologists *must* do that" didn't do it themselves. So, therefore does that mean that the people who are establishing the criteria are unqualified to establish the criteria, because if sport psychologists *need* those things then they are unqualified, and therefore we should definitely not listen to a word they say. If listening to them is worthwhile, then sport psychologists clearly don't need to have any of those things, because those people haven't done them. And it's the paradox of professionalising anything if you're not careful. What you do you just produce a cloning system, and then, er, and then you lose and those, all that fantastic individualisation that people who didn't do those things would bring to this.

Jane: Yeah, I mean I agree I mean this bit should be something like 'sport psychologists should have knowledge of' or 'understanding of where counselling skills fits in' or something like that, rather than training and need. It's the training bit that makes me feel a bit twitchy.

Alison: So where would you get that knowledge?

Jane: As we said before, from workshops, interactive sessions.

Michael: Experience.

Jane: Experience, erm, even, erm, you know, having groups like this, you sit down and you think "Well this sort of thing happened and I thought 'Oh'".

Michael: When was the first BASES workshop?

Jane: What, ever?

Michael: Mm, on sport psychology.

Jane: Oh, it was quite late on.

Michael: Absolutely.

Jane: It was very late on.

Michael: Mid-90's.

Jane: Yeah I think I'd already...

Michael: '94/'95? When was the first PAG day? Er, '90? O.k. So therefore we were all incompetent before that.

Jane: In theory.

Michael: Because there wasn't any training, so we must have been incompetent. But I don't believe that's true. So, I just think 'need's too strong a word, formalised training is not the answer. But people, er, people who, I'd say one thing in it, I'll accept one thing you need, the motivation to be good. If you've got that, then everything else you stand a chance of getting. If you haven't got the motivation to be good, and you're genuinely high class, then everything else is a waste of time. And then if you have that motivation...

Jane: It's not a game.

Michael: It's not a game.

Jane: It's a profession, you know.

Michael: Exactly, and if you have that motivation, then you will seek out experiences that enable you to acquire the skills that you think are important. You'll evaluate your performance in those experiences, you'll talk to other people, you'll ask somebody "Will you come and watch me do this?", you will control everything if you have that motivation.

Jane: Mm.

Michael: So, for me, that's what supervised experience ought to be about and that's what training ought to be about, it's not training, it ought to be about, erm, that when somebody has completed that, erm, they have a lifelong desire to be really good. And if they've got that, then, as a supervisor, you've probably succeeded, and if they haven't got that, then as a supervisor you've probably failed either in the selection process or in that experience time that they have with you. And probably most of that's in the selection process. If they don't come with the fire in their belly, it's very rare they're going to get it.

Alison: So selection process by?

Michael: By which you accept them. By which you say "Yeah, I'll supervise you".

Alison: So you as a supervisor make that selection?

Michael: Well at the moment yeah, that's how it is. And it's difficult to imagine how, so we'll have this panel, this BASES panel that'll sit there and candidates will be wheeled in and they'll say "O.k., show us the fire in your belly" and, erm, you need to know somebody to know whether they have that, and, erm so that brings about a whole pile of issues about selection rather than training really. Erm, for example, it means that you'd never agree to supervise somebody you didn't know, and which means that somebody who didn't know anybody would be rather disadvantaged, you'd have to get to know some people first.

Jane: But that also has implications for the people who are making decisions about, erm, "I'll take this person for supervised experience", but with the best will in the world not everybody would think that.

Michael: No, no, I know. Maybe it says that the question we ought to ask is not 'What training do sport psychologists need in order to use any particular skill effectively' but 'What criteria should we use to allow somebody to be a supervisor?'

Jane: But you could train, let's help her come on, this bit about training and sport psychologists' needs, because with the best will in the world you could train somebody until it's coming out of their ears but they may not use it effectively.

Michael: Mm.

Jane: So, by training, you're not going to get the goods, you can't guarantee the goods, the only way you're going to guarantee the goods is if you work sort of in an interactive workshop, "training" as it were.

Alison: Maybe that is training.

Jane: Yeah. I think it's exposure, exposure to, yeah I agree with exposure, yeah I'll live with the exposure, I stand by the exposure.

Michael: Exposure, that's a good word.

Jane: Because that's all you get for lots of things is some exposure.

Alison: Is that enough?

Jane: Er, I mean I only have a limited exposure to biomechanics, it's enough for what I want to do because I could say "Well that's not really my area, you should see this person. You should see the sport psychologist about that".

Michael: Yeah, erm, this isn't the right question. I think the right question is something like, erm, 'What sorts of experiences should we make available to sport psychologist so they might

acquire good counselling skills?' Now if you, if that were the question then I could sort of start to answer that question a bit more constructively than a question that says 'training' and 'need' in there.

Alison: How would you answer that question then?

Michael: Erm, I'd answer that question, erm, something like this: it would be helpful if there was some longitudinal, er, aspect to whatever exposure, so that there was a something, then a period of time for reflection, and then something else and a period of time for feedback, and things like that. So there's a longitudinal component to it. Erm, I'd say that, erm, there'd need to be some, er, guidance given about, some information given about what sorts of skills we're talking about in counselling, and what is counselling and what isn't counselling. Erm, and there'd need to be some set of exercises that people engaged in that enabled them to experiment without, er, any, er, pressure...

Jane: Yeah, yeah.

Michael: ...about "Have I passed or not?"

Jane: Allow them to make mistakes.

Michael: Yeah, allow them to make mistakes and allow them to ask questions about their mistakes, and seek help with their mistakes from other people in a completely non-threatening way. Erm, and that, and those experiences there'd need to be some choice in them so that they didn't feel that they have to do this, or "Oh shit, I've got to do that now, I really", not you know. So I'd say if you've had those sorts of components and probably spread over a time frame of something like a year, then I think probably that'd be quite a good set of experiences.

Alison: Couldn't that be classed as training?

Michael: Er, it couldn't be classed as training that is needed.

Alison: But it could be classed as training in the sense...

Jane: That's it's available.

Alison: Yeah, exposure to that, those experiences.

Jane: Mm. I think there's some merit in having a sort of...

Michael: In the broadest sense of the word 'training', yes, but not in the broadest sense of the word 'need'.

David: In that life is training really.

Michael: Yes, the whole of my life is training, is training to die!

Alison: We all have different interpretations of what training is don't we by the sounds of it?

Jane: Yeah, yeah.

David: Mm.

Jane: I mean I would, erm, I would feel comfortable if there was sort of some things that, had to be is probably too strong, you were strongly encouraged to do, like a sort of, you know, this is what counselling's about.

Michael: Mm, so if everybody got the exposure bit.

Jane: The exposure bit.

Michael: yeah, I wouldn't feel bad about that.

Jane: And then the level to which you want to further it and become more, I mean it maybe, that's maybe where you want, you know, to channel and you may then go into the big 'C' stuff, but...

Alison: What are the implications of that then for training as a sport psychologist, to becoming an accredited sport psychologist if you like?

Jane: I don't think there are any that are different from what we have now.

David: I think if you are good at, erm, counselling skills for want of a better term, then you might seek out to be a good sport psychologist, not the other way around. "Oh I think I'll be a sport psychologist, now let's go and see what I can do for counselling, so I can mention I've got that bit".

Jane: I think that's a sort of very, erm, negative way of looking at it.

Michael: But what did you say?

Jane: Where you say, you know, "I have to go and I've got to, I've got to do this, I have to do this to be a sport psychologist...

Michael: I want to be a sport psychologist, I have to take....

Jane: ...so if I go and do these things I'll go and be a sport psychologist". I think that's...

Alison: So the reverse is?

David: Well the reverse is "I'm good at these things, these are things I enjoy, these are things I'm willing to improve even more upon, what job could I do which needs these skills? Well sport psychology does, I could be quite good at that". That's how I go into it.

Michael: Yes.

Jane: Like you would go and be a maths lecturer or a doctor or something.

Niall: Yeah, I mean you grow into it as well, you know what I mean? You can have some exposure to the sort of things a sport psychologists does and become aware of it, and then, as you say [David], you match, you almost match what you have with that, and then you say "O.k., well how can I get better at these things that, you know, perhaps I'm not that good at the moment to make me a better sport psychologist, not to make me from nothing to a sport psychologist".

Jane: It's this motivation bit isn't it?

Niall: Yeah.

Jane: "I'm good at these things, I want to do this".

David: That's right.

Niall: I mean the difficulty is is that, erm, you know, you could argue that we need some quality control, but the implications of engaging, erm, squads, athletes in an attempt to develop is that sometimes if we fail the quality control we do a disservice to the athletes. You know what I mean? So it's quite difficult to get good training and training with people that, you know, you can have an impact on, erm, and exposure to the right sort of environment, but have no implications for failure, you know, no negative implications for failure, so I mean that's the problem with training.

Jane: Because even when you're practising you have failure.

Niall: Well exactly, and you should be given the opportunity to fail because, you know, often you learn better through that. But who do you fail on?

Jane: Well, I mean you do fail with the athletes sometimes. But, you know, I have occasionally.

Niall: But how do you, I mean I would have thought what we need to do is to minimise, you know..

Michael: I think what Niall's saying is it would be nice to have some situations where it's a bit lower risk.

Jane: Yes, yeah.

Niall: Yeah.

Michael: Where you can just sort of go "O.k. I can make a complete hash of this and it really doesn't matter".

Jane: Yes.

Niall: Yeah.

Michael: "Let's just try this from a complete left wing, left field approach and see what happens".

Jane: Yeah.

Niall: Yeah.

Alison: In terms of training, sport psychology and BASES and the current competency profile if you like, what would you feel comfortable with then having on that profile, just stick with counselling skills?

Niall: What's on it at the moment?

Alison: Well whether you agree with the system or you don't feel comfortable with, at the moment for counselling skills it says something like, er, 'Basic theories of counselling technique'. That's what it says, you know, on the list?

Niall: Mm. I'm just thinking, I can't remember!

Michael: [Laughter]

Niall: Basic theories of counselling technique. I mean, I couldn't, if somebody asked me to give them some theories, I'd go "I don't know any".

Michael: You needed Bill Bloggs' course.

Niall: Yeah, Exactly.

Michael: It's all about theories.

David: You've got a hundred percent counselling skills though?

Niall: Well maybe but I certainly don't remember the theories. But I mean, no matter, you know, for me, you know, I can be effective with working with athletes at a certain level, erm, but I couldn't refer to a counselling theory at all, you know. It's the same when you work, you know, when you work with athletes you don't think about the theories that underpin what you do

necessarily at the time. But, because of your experiences, your exposure to those theories and your knowledge base, you actually find that you do a basis in theory for what you've done.

Alison: What about everybody else? What would you feel comfortable with seeing on there? Because like you say, somebody's going to get hold of this research and what would you feel comfortable with them seeing at the end of this or adding to the profile or would you just prefer that it just stays as it is?

[9 seconds of silence]

Jane: Mm, that's a difficult one.

Niall: I was hoping that someone was going to disagree with what I've just said.

Michael: I find it extremely difficult to answer because, er, I'm philosophically opposed to GNVQs in sport psychology.

Alison: So are you suggesting that you wouldn't have any kind of list at all then?

Michael: I'm suggesting that, erm, I would prefer a rather different sort of approach to accreditation than that approach.

Alison: Than the list of individual competencies?

Michael: Mm.

Jane: Yeah I think it would, I mean the things that we've said already about this sort of, you know, workshop BASES stuff where it might be that you say "Well there are some sorts of workshops that you must attend".

Michael: So then people...

Jane: But I don't think...

Michael: ...will attend them and tick the box...

Jane: And tick the box.

Michael: And will they be any better? And the answer is there's no evidence whatsoever to suggest that they will.

Jane: Or that they won't.

Michael: Or that they won't be.

Alison: But do you think there should be a bare minimum? I mean you could argue that that's what the tick list is.

Jane: Mm.

Alison: You must have at *least* this?

Niall: You must have been exposed to these things.

Jane: Yeah, mm, I think that's probably fair, given that you have to be exposed to all the other things. The problem I have is lists. What's 80%, what's 50%, what's a 100%? It's a nonsense.

Michael: It's a 100% of what you need.

Jane: Yeah.

Alison: Well it says that you decide that between you and your supervisor.

Michael: Yeah, so how is it that the accreditation committee questions it?

Jane: Yeah, and changes it?

Michael: So clearly it isn't something that you decide between you and your supervisor, that's the whole problem. The whole problem is that when you have that sort of system, erm, people who make the decisions about accreditation make the decisions according to a set of criteria that are not published, because they don't even know what they are. All they know is when they see number sometimes they don't feel it's quite right, and as happens now, say "You're going to have to change that number because we don't think it's quite right" and that is making a value judgement. So I think that we should accept that we have to make value judgements and we should get the people who are best placed to make the value judgements. The person who's best placed is very clearly the supervisor, and therefore supervisors need rigorous training and rigorous selection, and it need to be a very small number of people who are good. And the of course, what'll happen is there'll need to get paid and then you'll have a situation where everybody says "This is jobs for the boys". So I find myself in very much a [].

Jane: It's a catch 22.

Michael: Yes it is because it doesn't matter what you do.

Jane: The BOA wants more and more accredited psychologists out there.

Michael: Well the BOA wants *good* people.

Jane: Yeah, O.k. but to have good people they've got go through supervised experience...

Michael: Absolutely.

Alison: Are you suggesting that BASES don't?

Michael: What?

Alison: Want good people?

Michael: Erm, well apparently not because they've implemented a system that doesn't produce good people, it produces people who tick tick boxes. There isn't anywhere in that procedure that means by which quality is assured. There is an attempt to control it, but there is no means by which you assure it. That's why I said "The key thing for me is about motivation". If you have the motivation to be very, very good, then I believe that you will seek out the experiences that are needed to progress towards that. But that isn't, where's the box for that? Who assesses that?

Alison: What did you think of the idea of the tick list being a bare minimum, you have at least these things?

David: I didn't view it like that, I viewed it as sufficient when I went through the accreditation process, you'd got that and you're fine.

Alison: What do you think of that idea then as the tick list being 'you must have at least this'?

David: I would have thought it's a hoop I've got to jump through so I'll jump through it.

Michael: Exactly, that's exactly. Every person I've supervised their view of it is "This is a set of hoops, how do we best jump through them?" Now every person that I've supervised, as it happens I've also supervised for a Ph.D., if ever they even remotely thought like that about their Ph.D. I'd just refuse to supervise them. I'd just say "I'm sorry, we're from different planets".

Alison: So what's the difference?

Michael: What's the difference? Well the difference is that they're fired up about their Ph.D. and they're fired up about being a sport psychologist, but they're not fired up about BASES accreditation. When they get their Ph.D. we open a bottle of champagne and celebrate, when they get their BASES accreditation we say "Thank Christ that's over with!". I think that's about right isn't it guys?

Jane: Yeah.

David: Yeah.

Niall: We all "Thank God that's all over with".

Michael: And how do you do it?

Jane: Because you keep having to do it.

Michael: How do you do it? Get Fred's second year accreditation goals and just go down them and pick the ones out that you want because that's the easiest way to jump through the hoop. Change it a bit, put down yours, the only thing that's different is the case study. The case studies are worth reading because the case studies are quite interesting and they tell you something. But all the rest of it doesn't really tell me anything, and even the case study. You've got the problem of course, it's in the written word whereas delivery is in the spoken word. And [] would say "So what you need to do is go and see them", you know, and observe them like you do on teaching practice, and so people will do exactly what they do on teaching practice: they prepare this lesson, they practice it sixty thousand times and then they do it for you. They put on a little show, and you go "Oh, tick the box". It isn't about any of those things, it's about the motivation to become better. It's about people going and working and trying something, like when David comes back from working with the [athletes], and going "Oh I tried this at the weekend, it was really quite interesting, it went like that", and I say "Oh what happened then?" and we both learn from that, or "I've got this problem and I don't really know how, what do you think the best way to approach this would be?" and then we explore something like that. And that's how you learn, that's how you get better at it. And really all that that's about is about the motivation to become better and having somebody you can trust that you go and talk to about it.

Jane: Mm, and that's what happens when you work with your athletes.

Michael: Absolutely, and that seems to me that isn't, so the most fundamental part *not* part of BASES accreditation. It's sort of more or less orthogonal. BASES accreditation is a set of criteria that has been put in place by a control freak who wants to control people and run the world, and that's what the problem is, they reflect that. And the whole of everything that I'm involved in in sport psychology is the exact opposite of that. It's about helping people to identify choices and do things that they want to do because they're fired up about it.

Jane: Mhm. And they've got to live with...

Michael: They live with the consequences absolutely.

Alison: Do you agree with some sort of accreditation?

Michael: I suppose I have to.

Jane: You have to.

Michael: I suppose I have to.

Alison: For quality assurance?

Michael: I suppose you have to.

Alison: So where does that leave us then in terms of, like I said, what would you feel comfortable with in terms of counselling skills regardless of what's there at the moment, in an ideal world what would you like to see?

Jane: Well I think, what I said right at the beginning, you have exposure, erm, and then maybe perhaps one or two workshops that you are required to do at some stage.

Alison: Compulsory? I don't mean specific ones, but some attendance? Is that what you mean?

Jane: Well then it becomes a tick thing doesn't it?

Alison: Yeah.

Jane: It's a catch 22 situation.

Michael: Maybe...

Jane: I would have thought most people would want to do, you know, I would need to know something about this and how it works.

Michael: A minimum attendance.

Jane: Yeah.

Michael: That's probably not unreasonable.

Jane: But there needs to be the option to be able to take that to higher levels.

Michael: Exactly, exactly, and the support.

Alison: That's what I said before, is there an 'at least'?

Jane: Which is why the 'at least' might be exposure to perhaps two or three workshops. I think going to one isn't, you know, not have one.

Michael: Well a process, engage in a process for a finite period.

Alison: So you would be comfortable with having something that said says 'at least going to certain workshops'? Not specific workshops.

Jane: Or the equivalents. The equivalents might be something else.

Niall: The problem is what we're suggesting is almost making the assumption that you are effectively supervised. So that, you know, you become aware of where your shortcomings are, so therefore it's not about "You have to go to this", it's about "Oh well I'll go to it because I need to go to it to develop anyway, I want to go to it to develop anyway", so it's difficult, you know. If we don't address the supervising issue then this minimum standard becomes, you know, a set of hoops "You jump through this, that and the other", you know "You have to go to these 10 courses because you're not getting the supervision that perhaps is ideal". So we need to have some quality control, the only quality control we have is getting you to go to these courses.

Jane: But at least, but at least going to a minimum gives you exposure to things.

Niall: Yeah, yes of course.

Alison: Are you more comfortable with that kind of terms?

Michael: Yeah, I think 'exposure to' and 'engaging in'.

Jane: Yeah, yeah. Positive engagement.

Michael: Yeah, positive engagement in a minimum thing I think would probably not be unreasonable, but I think to address anything about the competencies and requirements for accreditation without addressing the competencies and requirements for supervision is actually, erm, non-productive. Because that stuff is stuff that ought to be reinforced all the time by your contact with your supervisor.

Alison: Is there anything you want to, erm, add at this point? Anything that you feel that I've missed in terms of counselling skills for sport psychology?

Michael: What's the title of the paper that comes out of this?

Alison: Is that question you're asking me?

Michael: Well you've asked us to engage in something, and erm, expose ourselves, and, er, to give you ammunition that you can use and I want to know who it's going to be fired at?

Alison: Who it's going to be fired at?

Michael: Absolutely, because if the title of your paper that comes out of this, or chapter that comes out of this whatever it is, is something like 'The training that BASES accredited sport psychologists need and must have in the future' or anything along those sorts of lines?

Alison: No the paper will be about perceptions of sport psychologists on, first of all, the terms that are used and, second of all, how fundamental counselling skills are, your perceptions of how fundamental they are to what sport psychologists do. There might be implications from that that people can read in it, or the final conclusion might be suggestions from other people. But the main thrust of this final piece of research is what do you understand by the terms first of all, because the questionnaires that I got back people were using the terms, they were using the same terms and seem to be meaning different things, so this is the fourth group out of five, and I have come across people are, you know, not very sure what the terms mean and so we couldn't really go onto the next phase. That was one group and, er, another group very clear on distinctions as they saw it, erm, so that's the kind of information I'm getting back. So that's where the research is heading. People might read into it, as you say, in terms of "This is what you absolutely must have".

Michael: And your question to us just now in the summary was "Was there anything we'd like to add about counselling skills?"

Alison: Yeah.

Michael: Well I'd like to add something about the acquisition of them, and that is unless supervisors have good counselling skills, it doesn't matter what courses you put people on, they won't develop good counselling skills.

David: I'll tick that box!

Alison: Tick with a big 'T'!

David: Yeah, big 'T'.

Jane: Yeah I don't think it's anything you can acquire just by ticking a box and going on a course, or having a training.

Michael: But having the opportunity to...

Jane: Initiate, yeah I think so.

Michael: ...go on some longitudinal programme I think would be helpful.

Jane: Yeah to help you accelerate that process.

Alison: What do you understand by the term listening skills?

[6 seconds of silence]

Alison: Anybody, kick off.

George: The first thing I was going to suggest would be empathy, having empathy for the person that's, you're having a conversation with.

Rose: And actually, well, hearing what they're saying, not having predetermined agendas, or whatever.

George: What's that called? It's got a name.

Rose: Oh has it?

George: Has it?

Robert: Most things have! Most things that are things have a name! I suppose in the context of counselling, which is, I assume what you want us to...

Alison: I'm heading that way, but first of all just, er, listening skills did come up in the questionnaire totally separate, so I'm wondering just what you understand by that term on its own to start with?

Robert: Well I guess, in addition to what George said in terms of an empathic approach, the ability to sort of acknowledge the importance of another person's view in some way without judging necessarily against your own particular views.

Calum: And also to continue the conversation or the discussion that you're having based on what the person's just said rather than rambling on on what it is the focus that you've got, so actually being able to, for example, be able to chunk information that they've just given you and utilise that within your next question to show that you've had some input on that, as opposed to just barrelling on without, er, having paid any attention to the information that they've given you.

Ian: There's two parts to this: there's the sort of empathetic feel for the individual within a whole series of specific skills that, er, anyone can use, in terms of paraphrasing, and verification, following the route that they're going.

George: I think there's different approaches as well. I mean the idea is that someone looking at a person-centred would be very much more "Right...", you know, I might have a guide for the conversation, but in a sort of that existential, phenomenological approach.

Rose: Ooh!

Alison: Are you impressed there?

Rose: I'm outa here!

George: Er, but in those terms it's literally a case of letting that person say what they want to say, so rather than sort of guiding the conversation, they've guided the conversation. But in a more rational-emotive-behaviour therapy kind of way, it's more of a "Right, this is where we're going". The Sport Psychologist, Greg Dale paper.

Alison: Pardon?

George: The Sport Psychologist, paper by Greg Dale, existential phenomenology.

Alison: Oh right yeah.

George: I recommend you read it. And that's kind of it for listening skills.

Calum: That'll do me.

Alison: Rose?

Rose: I've said my bit.

George: You can say more than one!

Rose: I suppose, well it's not imposing what, I hate people that when they're supposed to be talking to you and they keep sort of going "Oh, funny you said that" and then they talk about themselves, so it's the opposite to that.

Calum: Anyway, back to us!

Rose: Yeah, I am a bird after all!

George: I think it depends on the person as well, the type of person that you're working with, particularly age. I think the control that you have on listening may vary.

Alison: In what way?

Rose: Yeah.

George: That's a good point. I don't know, I just think with a, with a , with an adult, when you, in the context of counselling you shouldn't just go in with this general thing "Oh right all I'm going to do is listen". If you're going to follow a specific model of counselling then the term listening skills may be different for each approach. What do you think Robert? Because you know more about counselling than me.

Robert: I would agree yeah.

George: You would agree?

Robert: Yeah.

Alison: Just focusing on listening skills for now, we're going to go a bit further into.

George: No, but I'm saying that listening skills are different depending upon the approach that you use.

Alison: O.k.

Robert: Yeah, in context maybe they are. Yeah, they are different because you have different goals, you know. If you just hang that label out, I'd said "Yeah", I mean it's part of communication, you know, as Ian says, it's a repertoire of skills, it's also a, almost an approach to the value [] and talking.

Alison: Have you got any examples to how it would differ in different contexts?

George: The nature of, the problem. Again, it's dependent upon your goal, you know, if somebody's just come to you for a bit of a whinge, the way in which you listen might be different to somebody coming to you for advice. So the way in which you would structure the conversation would be slightly different maybe.

Alison: Did you suggest before that it was slightly different for different ages?

George: Possibly, that's why I thought "Why should it be?" But it might just be that, and again this is sort of a generalisation, but an adult might be more informed than a child and therefore you might have to guide the conversation little bit more in a child than you would in an adult. But, I mean that is a generalisation I know.

Rose: I've tried that, like with some of the players I work with, sort of "What are your options?" and they don't know.

George: Yeah.

Rose: You know, you can't listen too much, you've got to help them through it because otherwise you just, saying "What are your options?" "Oh I don't know" and it's like you're going nowhere with it.

Alison: Do you find that there's a difference with the different age groups, or do you work with one?

Rose: I only work with like under-21s.

Alison: Right.

Rose: So, I mean obviously they don't, you know, they come to you and you need to go "Do this", and "Do that". Or to talk them, well to tell them what their options are if they can't generate that themselves.

Alison: Do you think that's part of listening skills?

Rose: Well yeah. [Laughter] Well yeah in the sense that, erm, if we're talking about listening skills and I was saying it annoys me or I don't like it when people give you advice and you don't particularly want it, but you have to adapt given whoever you're talking to they might actually want you to, so you've got to just suss out why they've actually approached you and try and accommodate them.

Robert: I think that's a part of the context.

Rose: Yep.

Robert: Listening skills maybe important in the quality of an exchange between individuals or groups in different ways. I mean working, er, working with relatively young male players in a team sport, you often find around sort of 13, 14, 15 year olds, they don't have, you know, it's difficult for them to talk to someone of my age because they don't on a routine basis, they don't sit down and talk to people of my age, and similarly I don't, so, you know, there's almost a sort of, er, almost a practice issue which is where the skills thing becomes important. There is a skill repertoire I suspect I don't know, but working with 8 year old gymnasts will be different from working with 13 year old volleyball players which will be different from 25 year old hockey players.

Ian: Some older athletes are more, erm, they have their own agenda and they may be, they may wish to use you as a conduit for a particular message, erm, so listening skills are actually recognising what's going on, read the subtext, erm, and you still maybe a conduit for that message but you need to understand what's going on.

George: So interpretation's part of listening skills?

Ian: Well it's part of what Calum was saying, you're chunking information, you're looking for the meaning not just the surface, below that, what's going on, what's there, what's the underlying message that's being transmitted here? Making sure you recognise what if there are, in some cases there may not be.

Calum: And if you find yourself in a situation where there is conflict that somebody is wanting to talk about, but they're not quite sure whether or not you are representing in any way the people that they have the conflict with in the way that you are listening to the message that they're trying to put across where they're trying to feel a little bit as to whether or not how much they should say to you. And to a certain extent what you're doing with your listening skills there is to realise that they're trying to put a message across which they're not actually verbalising and then to be able to get that, to be able to get them to come forward with that if you think it's appropriate. But you'll quite often find, especially with the younger performers, erm, that you will, that somebody will be wanting to put a message, and if you're not listening to what they're saying in terms of, sorry if you *are* listening to the words but not looking for underlying messages at all then you're going to miss it. So, there must be a skill in that.

Alison: O.k.? The next one's a theme which came up quite a lot and I just wanted your thoughts again on this one. What do you understand by interpersonal skills?

George: The communication between two or more people.

Alison: Mhm.

Ian: That sums it up.

George: It just about sums it up yeah!

Ian: Listening skills would be subsumed within interpersonal skills to some extent.

Alison: O.k.

Ian: Well to a specific subset.

Alison: Listening skills is a subset of interpersonal?

Ian: Yeah.

Alison: O.k.

George: And they consist of verbal and non-verbal.

Robert: But, in a sense there's a non-verbal component of listening skills.

George: Absolutely, oh yeah, yeah.

Robert: That's quite important.

George: That's why I think you've [Ian] made a right point about saying that it is a subset of interpersonal skills, listening skills.

Rose: And it's the ability to get on with people isn't it?

George: Does it necessarily, I don't know that it necessarily has to be er...

Calum: I don't think you have to get on with them.

George: ...get on, yeah.

Ian: You know, it's not a, erm, personality trait, it's a, you're talking about a set of skills there. Some of them are very, erm, someone who maybe fairly anti-social, doesn't get on with people can still have those set of skills available to them and can use them in a particular context and be reasonably effective.

Calum: It could be a way of not getting on with somebody but not letting that become too overt.

Rose: Yeah, when I said 'Get on with people' I meant the ability to sort of communicate and listen and play your part in the []. I didn't mean sort of going out for beers.

Robert: I mean that's a sort of interesting issue isn't it? When we talk about an ability almost a sort of disposition of a person. It's the stuff that suggests that sport psychology interventions when performed 'identically' by different individuals with similar sorts of sporting groups, they actually have different levels of efficacy which is suggested that, you know, some, the differences is often the nature of the person and the way that the person, that maybe a function of skills acquired and practised, but it may also be to do with this sort of more nebulous sort of chemistry of, that might well be to do with the nature of the person, than the skills they bring to

bear in this situation. You can probably all think of some sport psychologists who, you know, are different in a variety of manners and that may affect your climate.

George: I think it's just, erm, it's either the conscious or unconscious sort of recognition of what you're doing in a conversation. So like it might be an unconscious that you just do automatically, whether that's, you know, an ability or a skill, for example, you know, you sit down in a group like this and you think "Well hang on a minute, I'm a little bit too, you know, we're too close together", yet that's a conscious recognition of an interpersonal skill, you know, if you want your things to be personal [slapping Ian's thigh], then, you know, you get close, but some people might just do that automatically.

[Silence for 2 seconds]

Carry On!

Rose: I agree.

George: Thank you.

Rose: You see that was an interpersonal skill.

George: Exactly yeah.

Rose: You'd look quite stupid otherwise!

George: But you were nodding your head and doing this [folding arms across chest quite tightly and crossing legs] "Yeah I agree with you"! That conflict between non-verbal [arms folded tightly across chest and shaking of the head] and verbal behaviour "I agree with you".

Robert: Why did you separate them in your own mind? Or in your own theme? You said one was a term and one was a theme.

Alison: Listening skills was, er, actually mentioned by the athletes quite a lot, they thought that was important for the sport psychologists to have, and interpersonal seemed to be a theme which came up quite a lot as well as, erm, in a distinct way listening skills was very, you know, they actually said 'listening skills' and interpersonal was more of a theme that I've lumped a lot of different things together.

Robert: So what would be some of things that would not be the first [on flip chart, i.e. listening skills] in your categorical system that would be in the second [interpersonal skills]?

Alison: Well an example of interpersonal skills that was on the questionnaire was things like 'Being able to relate to coaches and athletes' that kind of thing.

Robert: O.k.

George: Pretty wide brief isn't it?

Ian: Those are pretty nebulous terms without seeing the whole picture, so it's quite difficult to pick out in isolation "Well yes this is an interpersonal skill" unless you actually consider the whole range of, erm, skills/abilities/characteristics that make up the profile.

Robert: It's interesting that the athletes said 'Listening skills', they didn't say 'Interpersonal skills' or something like that or fell into that?

Alison: No, no. Well they said things like "I want the sport psychologist to listen to me", you know, they specifically said 'Listen'.

Robert: Mm.

Alison: Anybody got anything to add? From what I'm hearing then, erm, do you distinguish between the two and yet say they're similar?

George: It's not necessarily a distinction, we're saying that listening are a subset of interpersonal skills. It's, er, listening skills are the, erm, almost the recipient of a conversation, but interpersonal skills is not only being a recipient in the dynamics, but also being a participant in the dynamics as it were. So, they're not different, it's just a subset of.

[Laughter]

George: Write that one down [Calum]!

Calum: I haven't got enough paper George!

George: I'm flying! You might have problems transcribing that, it's a big word!

Alison: Thank you for that! Right I'll put the next one on. Now athletes didn't mention this, but the sport psychologists and the trainees as well did bring this up, counselling skills. I just want you to tell me what you understand by the term first of all, we're going to explore the idea a bit further down the line. What do you understand when somebody says 'Counselling skills'?

Ian: I don't think you're, well for me, you're not talking about anything that's different to the first two, it depends if you're involved in the process of counselling, or if you're using skills that

would be appropriate in a communication situation. The skills themselves are listening skills, interpersonal skills.

Calum: The process is different though. The process would include things like: a needs analysis, and an understanding of the context, etc.. So the actual process would be different from the skills that would be required in order to undertake that process.

Ian: And the skills you would apply would depend also on the counselling model that you would be using. So the skills I would see as separate to the process.

Alison: Skills different to the process.

George: And there are certain skills that are dependent upon the process, so it depends on the process that you are using will depend on the types of skills that you require. So there's going to be certain interpersonal skills that you don't, that don't feature as heavily in a person-centred style approach, or a humanistic approach, whereas there's going to be other counselling skills that are more predominant in a rational-emotive, or a cognitive-behavioural approach.

Ian: Some are techniques rather than skills.

Alison: Counselling techniques?

Ian: Mm.

Calum: Listening, chunking, parroting those kind of things.

George: So in a way, sort of like, these things [on flip chart] have just got bigger and bigger. Listening skills are part of interpersonal skills, and interpersonal skills are part of counselling skills. Would you agree with that?

Ian: Well I would actually say counselling, if you're talking about counselling skills, what you're saying is "These are broadly human interaction skills, so let's apply them to a particular context, the context is counselling". So, which of these set of skills would be appropriate in a counselling situation?

George: But some people might term counselling skill as not necessarily, erm, going through a formal process of counselling, it's more of a conversation skill, like an interpersonal skill. It's just being able to communicate effectively with a person and deal with and problem-solve, that's what coaches do all the time. People could perceive that to be a counselling skill.

Robert: I mean I'd slightly disagree there in as much as I think when you put counselling skills in, you begin to identify a clearer role for the individual or individuals involved in the exchange. You know, by definition 'to counsel', erm, as a verb doesn't, there is not an analogy with interpersonal skills, there is either a suggestion, implicit or explicit, that in the counselling context that someone is being counselled or some people, a number of people are being counselled and someone is providing the counsel. So, that's different, for me, from interpersonal skills.

Alison: Is it different for everybody else?

George: In what way Robert?

Robert: I think, as I've just said, that, you know, there is an implicit assumption that there is a role of a counsellor in that context that is not present in interpersonal skills. Yes, there must be more than one person.

George: Would they not need those interpersonal skills to be able counsel?

Robert: Yeah, it's probably because I have difficulty with what interpersonal skills means, erm, in this context. You may well do, as you said [George]. You bring to bear a repertoire of techniques in a context as a counsellor working in a particular context that you may never use in conversation with your mates, or even with the athletes that you're coaching.

Calum: The difference for me would be that in counselling implies that someone is leading and somebody is, there's an element of somebody, you know, leading or being in charge of the situation, as opposed to interpersonal which is a random form of communications between two individuals or a number of individuals, where it doesn't necessarily mean that one individual is taking the lead in that interaction, whereas the counselling involves somebody having a specific role to play.

Alison: I'm just going back to what George was saying, do you need to be a counsellor to use counselling skills? Is that what you were suggesting before 'Are you necessarily counselling when you're using counselling skills'?

George: All I was saying is that counselling skills, I think Robert's point is basically if you said to them about counselling skills then you have to be a counsellor, you have to counsel somebody. I

think what I was saying is that counselling skills are inherent in all walks of life, it depends what you consider the aims of counselling are in the first place. I mean, you know, there's going to be real simple like problem-solving that I think we do day-in-day-out, and in effect that is, you know, that is, we're using counselling skills to overcome problems, to facilitate problem-solving. Erm, going back to what Calum just said there, it's like in counselling you're assuming that one person is, has a dominant role and in some approaches in counselling that's not the case. I mean in some, I mean the person-centred approach they try and steer clear completely of this dominant role of the counsellor to facilitate.

Robert: I don't think he said dominant, he said "A more explicit role". That is an important point though. I think if one reads for a counselling situation a power situation where someone is, the counsellor is the person with the power to resolve conflict or to guide lines of argument, that's very different depending on your approach. It comes back to the argument that counselling depends on the context in which you believe it's operating.

George: Yeah.

Calum: To answer you [Alison], to go back to your specific question, do you have to be a counsellor to counsel? No. If somebody's had a bereavement in the family, or somebody's upset about the fact they've just had a low mark, or, then there's an element of counselling that goes on there whilst you're communicating with those individuals.

Alison: Does everyone agree with that?

Robert: Yes, I would agree with that, and I would also agree that everybody counsels depending on how you define the term, I believe that in their normal exchange with other people there's an element of counselling. I do think, as we would probably define the term, there is an element of guiding and offering of advice or a suggestion of how, er, things may be resolved, because that's often the context in which you encounter them, there is a need.

Alison: In sport psychology?

Robert: Yeah. I should suspect that also in counselling. Someone comes to you with a need for counselling.

Alison: So, it is actually the next term which you have touched on anyway, a lot of you, what do you understand by counselling? Would you see counselling as, let me give you something, guidance and support?

George: Yeah.

Robert: Do you feel we've answered the third one [counselling skills] then, in terms of the skills? No I think what you were asking in the third one I think now you've put the fourth one up [counselling]. A series of skills that might be relevant to a counselling repertoire. I could more happily go back now and say "O.k., as we've probably already talked about the listening, validating, reflecting, paraphrasing, etc.". They'd all be part of.

Alison: And you don't, going back to what Calum said, do you necessarily need to be a counsellor then to use those counselling skills?

Robert: It depends on the context I think. I just think that the context of bereavement counselling would be an example, I mean we've raised the issue. Erm, I think, you know, maybe there are skills as a professional counsellor in a context like that which, er, you probably do have to have to, not necessarily to be fulfilling some aspect of the role of counsellor, but, erm, to do it effectively, to understand where you're going, what might be a consequence of choosing a particular path.

Rose: I think it's quite useful to have training in it, though I don't think you necessarily have to be a qualified counsellor. The course I went on I learnt loads from it, you know, I think you were sort of, some people are born or made a counsellor and you find it quite a beneficial interaction, and in others you wouldn't, and so it's a bit, some people naturally have those skills and some people don't, so it's quite good to be sort of be formally trained and the types of things you should be trained.

George: Yeah, I mean some people, like you say, some people do have those, er, listening skills, interpersonal skills that somebody feels that they can go and talk to them, get the stuff off their chests.

Rose: Yeah.

George: Erm, and they are counselling skills but they're not formally trained, it's just as luck would have it that that person has been, you know, socially learned to be like that.

Rose: Yeah.

George: But, yeah I agree there needs to be formal training.

Alison: Are you suggesting [Rose] that counselling skills can be innate?

George: Not necessarily innate, they can be socially learned.

Ian: But the skills you might use in counselling may be developed in a whole variety of situations and may be applied in particular situations when somebody says "Let's talk about this", "Why's that?" "What's going on?". So you may have a counselling session that lasts for 30 seconds with someone who just happens to be fed up about something.

George: Conversation in a pub.

Ian: Yeah. But it's a low, relatively superficial low level incident. If you're dealing with a major trauma then probably most of us don't have the sophisticated counselling skills that would be required to deal with that situation. In which case they would need someone who had much more in-depth training and experience. So it's not "This is counselling and skills, and this is not", there's a whole continuum, a whole depth and range.

Robert: And guess you're probably coming, as you go down to the fourth one on the board though, you say "Right well give me the scenario, give me the context and I could answer, well attempt to answer that question a bit better".

Alison: Do you think then there's a different type of counselling in sport psychology as opposed to counselling as a counsellor, for example?

Rose: I think so, because athletes come looking for answers. Well in my age group that I work with they do. I think they'd think I was mad if I sat there and said "Oh I'm not going to give you any advice". You know, whereas like the course I went on it was very much if you asked the counsellor "Well what would you do?" you know, they weren't allowed to respond, you know, "Go to this", or "What are your options?" sort of thing. It's definitely different. But, well you wouldn't get a very good rating at the end! And that's what it's all about!

Alison: But you said, is that counselling to you then in sport psychology? Is that what you said? I said is there a distinction between counselling and a counsellor and counselling that you're using in sport psychology?

Rose: Yeah, I think...

George: There's an assumption there that you're saying that, erm, to counsel means you have to be a counsellor, or to counsel, you don't necessarily have to be a counsellor.

Alison: What do you think?

Rose: Well I think an athlete would come to you with a problem and would want counselling and they'd be looking for you to suggest strategies to improve. So they're looking at you to come up with the answers, whereas my understanding of a sort of more counselling situation outside sport is that that person has the answers themselves and your job is to lead them on what's best for them.

Calum: In which case I would say sport psychology is exactly the same. My experience is that more often than not the athlete or the performer does have the answers...

George: Again I think...

Calum: It's a case of facilitating them in a way that enables them to be able to come up with those solutions.

Rose: But in terms of sport psychology, you are being more prescriptive in the strategies you're, well in my experience.

Calum: I wouldn't agree.

George: I wouldn't agree either. I think it's very much dependent upon your skill set, because, erm, and it depends on, you know, how formal your training's been, for example, if you are trained in a humanistic approach to counselling then they would, you know, like [], I don't know if someone like [] would totally disagree with that and say "Look", you know, "You have got the answers and I'll facilitate you to come with your own problem-solving and come up with the answer yourself". So I think it's very much dependent on the training that you've had and those abilities that you've been brought up with.

Ian: But then you're also dealing with players who are relatively immature and who may not have the answers.

Rose: Yeah.

Ian: So, in that situation you may have something you can offer them. With an adult athlete it may be completely different, and I don't think that's necessarily different to a non-athletic population, it's a different context. It's a specific set of problems that that person has at a particular time. I don't see any fundamental differences, it's just a different environment in which you're operating, and a sport psychologist, if they're any good, has some understanding of the environment.

George: I think it's context-specific, yeah, as you just, it's context-specific because in some circumstances you will be very prescriptive and in others you will be, erm, it is important to recognise the context that you're working in because, you know, some people consider counselling as behaviour change, er, that's what coaches do, you know, that's a form of counselling that's one aim of counselling, behaviour change, so.

Robert: Athletes do I suspect.

George: Well, yeah. But coaches facilitate behaviour change, but the way that differs with different coaching styles. The same as what we're talking about in counselling.

Robert: I think it's an interesting one in a sense that you are often, I mean it's not just sport psychologists, physiologists working in these contexts, biomechanists are often put in a counselling, broadly speaking a counselling role, and often the counselling role is one of 'They are an expert' in a subject area, or a thing that hinders performance, and often athletes will want to talk about that, you know, they're very, they are often, depending on the context, very performance focused and, you know, my experience of, one of the best access routes to getting where these guys live or where it matters really is to focus on an aspect of their performance which is a way of getting into other areas. Sometimes there is a sort of knowledge and skills guidance that they may not possess the necessary expertise, experience to resolve things, but often they do.

Calum: I think the reason that you quite often find that athletes will want prescriptions is because more often than not, in a coaching scenario, that's what they're given. They're told to do certain things, they are given practices and they are required to do whatever it is that the coaches say. So it becomes a central focus which is the coach and there is dissemination from that individual and there is a lot less movement of information or discussion in the other direction. So, the extension of that is quite often to go and speak to somebody and say, "This is what's happening, what do I do about this?" expecting that same central role to occur.

Ian: There's something of a dual role going on because in mainstream counselling, as Robert said, you would have a non-disciplinary expertise in counselling. So, to be sport counsellor, in theory you wouldn't be a sport psychologist. You may identify with the individual that they could do with some work with a sport psychologist and of course there's a fair amount of [] specific skill training.

Robert: Yeah, I mean the definition that, you know, often people refer to themselves as educational sport psychologists rather than sport psychologists. Implicit there is that you've got something to contribute to the process of education.

Alison: So counselling fits in where?

Robert: In what sense?

Alison: In what you do? If you were an educational sport psychologist, would you use counselling?

Ian: It depends if the athlete, or the coach, sought counselling.

George: And whether you're trained to deal with that type of scenario as well. When you set your stall out as a sport psychologist or, you know, whatever your title is, as a sport scientist, you know, you're almost, not putting up a barrier but it's what I'd say though "This is where my level of competency lies. I can help with this, this, this and this".

Alison: Do you feel that we've come to a definition of counselling?

[7 seconds of silence]

Robert: I think we're all sort of saying "It is context dependent, it is probably skills or technique dependent, and, erm, it's probably population dependent". And that's really what you can say!

Ian: Basically it depends!

Robert: And it depends how you're using the term, you know, if you're saying, as Ian said at the beginning, he wouldn't sign a document saying 'Sport psychologist' because he's not functioning in that context. Similarly, you know, it depends on what you mean by, a counsellor is not the same as counsell-ing which is not the same as giving counsel.

Alison: That's what I'm trying to get at, what do you understand, different people are seeing these terms very different, you know, in different ways and I'm wondering what you think as a group, well not with one voice...

George: Counselling?

Alison: Yeah, what do you understand by that term, because some people see it, you know, in very different ways?

George: I think first off, counselling doesn't necessarily mean that you are a counsellor, you know, you're not a trained counsellor. I think you can counsel without necessarily having any major formal training. I don't know if we're backtracking to counselling skills there, but in counselling it depends what the aims of counselling are because we come up with a few like problem-solving is a common one in sport. Erm, there's a whole host of things, and just self-awareness, things like that that don't necessarily require fancy formal training skills of a counsellor, you know.

Alison: So you're using the skills, but you're not necessarily trained...

George: To use them.

Alison: ...to use them when you're a sport psychologist?

George: So on a continuum, you know, you counsel based at your competency and based on the context that you're working in. So counselling doesn't necessarily mean that you have to be a counsellor, it's just saying that you are, you know, a member of support staff dealing with a specific context. You don't know what the aim is, the aim may be problem-solving, it may be self-awareness, it may be cognitive change, it might be behavioural change, you know.

Alison: What does everybody else think about that, you don't have to be a counsellor or to be trained in counselling to use counselling?

Robert: Yeah, I'd agree, I'd agree. I think it would depend on the extent to which you're familiar with, and have practice in, the skill set that you think are important. But I think it's fundamental to sort of human interaction that everyone would relate to, in some time in their life having provided counsel for friends, family, people close to them, whether that makes them counsellors is another issue. But, it's a bit like, you know, I want to go in and perform brain surgery, but I'm a competent first aider. I can do first aid on soft tissue injury, you know, but I wouldn't call myself a doctor.

Ian: It's worth remembering that!

Robert: It may be tied up with the sort of self-protective nature of the terms like 'counsellor' that we're all sort of steering, just like sport psychology.

Alison: Are you steering away from it? Are you happy with the term 'counselling'? Are you happy to say that you counsel, are you comfortable saying that you counsel athletes if you weren't trained in counselling?

George: Yeah. We're on that continuum of life from psychotherapy to, you know, just conversation. It varies dependent upon your skill set and...

Robert: I think it's like knowing your boundaries of competence and that often is, in this sense, defined by your ability to know that you're [].

Alison: Well I think it goes back really to what you define as counselling doesn't it?

[Pouring of drinks drowns out the conversation]

George: Have we done that one, counselling?

Rose: Yeah.

Alison: O.k., moving on then, in terms of counselling skills, how important do you think counselling skills are then to applied sport psychology practice?

[6 seconds of silence]

George: I'll throw one in there - It's variable.

Rose: It depends!

[Laughter]

George: I think they're pretty important. Being able to, you know, listen to people, be able to hold effective conversations, be able to deal with specific problems that people have, lifestyle changes those kind of things, I think it's fairly important.

Rose: Yeah, well we had, one of the sessions we had here, our in-house training, and we were sort of talking about organisational stress issues, and we were saying, you know, like knowing sort of

how to do imagery just gets so [] you can solve real problems, so you need to have counselling skills to deal with them.

George: It's something that the BOA's [British Olympic Association] been pushing as well, it's like we've gone with this very much, er, recipe of skills, like tools like imagery, goal setting and people go in and do sessions like that and forget about things like rapport, and, er, empathy and, you know, all the things that encompass counselling skills.

Rose: Like looking at the bigger picture isn't it?

George: Yeah, sort of there's very little self-reflection in some sport psychologists. That's not me criticising, that's a general perception.

Ian: Of course, having counselling skills and being identified as a counsellor, can also be a barrier to being a sport psychologist. If you're identified as a counsellor, you can end up just doing that, and doing nothing that's really sport psych.

George: But I think that's key to what we said before about counselling, you don't necessarily have to be a counsellor to do counselling. It's not you coming up and saying "Right, here's my list of competencies in counselling skills. I can communicate effectively with you", you know, I think in that circumstance what we're saying is that these skills are worth having but are not necessarily...

Ian: I also think there's a, you know, it's a bit in vogue at the moment, and it seems to be something of a hot topic, erm, it could be a little bit of a smokescreen.

Alison: What is?

Robert: Mixing your metaphors!

Alison: Are you specifically talking about counselling skills there?

Ian: Yeah.

Alison: O.k.

Ian: Erm...

Robert: I've got a feeling of what Ian's saying, I think it is, it's often it's all the other stuff that the sport psychologist...

Ian: Yeah.

Robert: ...you know, so much...

Ian: If I was spending all my time counselling as a sport psychologist then I'm not doing my job effectively because there's a big problem somewhere and I'm dealing with lots of symptoms, and really I ought to be going to the source of the problem and addressing that. It's likely to be the coach or the management or something like that that's going on, and consequently you're spending lots of time counselling. Now I've been in a situation like that and it was that there was a manager who was mad and causing all sorts of problems.

Alison: So, what you're saying is the counselling didn't address the underlying issues...

Ian: Not at all.

Alison: ...it dealt with the symptoms?

Ian: Crisis management.

Alison: Right.

Ian: And if you end up spending a lot of time doing that then I don't think you're being a particularly effective sport psychologist because you ought to be able to identify those issues and do something about it.

Alison: George you disagreed?

George: I think, erm, you know, chronologically in time I think yeah, people have this tool base approach to looking at sport psychology, but I think all those tools have to be laid on a real good solid bed of things like counselling skills.

Ian: I like the bed part!

George: Thank you, you like the bed thing, but the idea is that you'd never be able to identify that there was a problem without having the ability to listen to people's whinging.

Rose: But they are quite separate issues really you're talking about.

George: What?

Rose: That you're not saying [Ian] "You don't need the skills"...

Ian: Yeah.

Rose: ...you're just saying "Can't be all encompassing".

George: Yeah, you need the, I thought, that's the point of how important, I think you need those skills to identify the problems. How you deal with that problem could be done through counselling, it could be done through organisational management, conflict management-type issues. But I think if you haven't got those abilities, those skills to be able to, if you haven't got the skills where somebody can approach you and offload, disclose then, you know, you'd never know that there was a problem in that organisation.

Ian: But here's the dilemma: the longer you're with an organisation, the more difficult it is for you to challenge the organisational aspects of that. Erm, so your ability to do that exists pretty much in the first phase of contact where you can challenge because there's no vested interest in a long-term relationship with a squad, for example. Erm, but that maybe the point in time where individuals maybe least likely to confide in you because you're a strange face, however, it maybe because you're a strange face.

Calum: But that's with just a very small time window, where that is actually going to likely to reoccur because, as you say, in the first stages you're trying to build a rapport with people and in order to get them to talk to you, and in order to find out some more information, but as soon as they become that comfortable, and also they see you liasing with management, you're then in a situation where you become part of the management and therefore you're less likely, they're less likely to come to you if they have issues surrounding that. So there's only a small time phase in the middle there where you're likely to be able to get to some of the issues that Ian's talking about.

Ian: Yeah, but having a psychologist who has counselling skills actually allows the problem to persist for a longer period because the crisis point isn't reached within that group, because it doesn't come to head because the psychologist often is able to diffuse. So you may have a situation that bubbles away for a couple of years presuming the psychologist will stop it coming to a head.

George: So what you're saying is things like behavioural observation is as important as a fundamental, sort of as a foundation skill? Because in that organisation you, I mean you do triangulation of methods assessment, you do a whole host of things, some of which encompass counselling skills...

Ian: Absolutely.

George: ...some of which encompass, you know, psychometric testing, I mean I don't know, behavioural observation the whole lot. But this is an, I'm still saying that this is an important subset of the foundation skills.

Ian: Yeah, I'm not saying it's not...

Rose: I don't think anyone's saying it isn't are you?

Ian: ...but I don't think it's that much more important than other skills.

Robert: I think Ian's example is quite a good one where you can apply counselling skills to fire fight and keep, if you like, the mental health of the individual in better shape within a context that you know needs to be addressed, but as a counsellor you may choose not to go to the organisational level, you're working with the interests of the athlete paramount. A sport psychologist may adopt a very different perspective after having four or five people generally presenting with the same sort of concerns, er, you may well then choose to take the more difficult route and address it at the organisational level if that's the more difficult route. But you've got a crazy manager, or you've got a, you know, a team who are completely distant from the understanding of what the players are about when you've got a set of ladies who sit in the committee room and make all the decisions without reference to the well-being of the players. So a counsellor can keep fire fighting over and over again without necessarily moving, and still be an effective counsellor, but without necessarily addressing the problem as he or she sees it.

Ian: And may actually be part of the problem because they...

Robert: Become institutionalised.

George: But that's all about judgement isn't it?

Ian: It only informs at a micro-level, I mean the problem maybe be at the macro-level.

Alison: But you don't see that counselling skills could help you on the macro-level?

George: You then go to the organisation and say...

Robert: They're essential at the macro-level because you are dealing with people who are very entrenched views, not perceptive to hearing your message in any way at all so that's a much more difficult job.

Alison: So at the micro- and at the macro-level...

Ian: Well, I mean I would take my normal, I understand if counselling skills are used in a counselling setting where the, er, client approaches the counsellor. The counsellor doesn't necessarily, well, would rarely approach a client.

Robert: But ethically they would be...

[Several people talking at once]

Alison: Can I just get, counselling skills are used in that way, is that the only way that you see counselling skills being used?

Ian: Well no if you go back to the previous discussion, counselling skills include a whole range of other interpersonal skills that might or might not be used in a particular setting. This setting happens to be a counselling setting, so we apply these skills in this particular way, these techniques. So I might use some of those other skills in the pub.

Alison: So if it wasn't a counselling setting, you could still use counselling skills?

Ian: Absolutely. Yeah because counselling skills are not exclusively used for counselling.

Calum: That's right. Another way to look at it might be to say well what about the situation, I'm thinking about specifically the word applied here, just recently been in a situation where a performer coming back from a very severe injury, a *very* severe injury, erm, was put in a situation where the club that he played for paid for and, well suggested and paid for, that individual to go to a counsellor. Well that may be very well and good because they do have all of the counselling skills, but if that individual doesn't understand about the Bosman ruling, he doesn't understand about the difficulties of being able to get back into first team play, and doesn't understand what the potential ramifications are for future career, etc., then in that situation you can have all the counselling skills you like, but the ability to be able to deal in an applied sport psychology situation is minimal. And therefore, if you look at it from the other way, yes with the view of the discussion we've had that it maybe that *just* having counselling skills if not sufficient to be able to work in the applied setting.

George: I think that goes back to, I mean one of the fundamental skills of listening is empathy. A certain element of empathy is understanding the context that that person's constrained under.

Robert: I think it keeps coming back to context, that, you know, in some situations the knowledge and the context is so fundamental to the role, erm, that, you know, for a clinician or a clinically inclined counsellor the therapeutic target for an individual that Calum was describing, or targets maybe completely different from a sport psychologist because of their understanding of context.

Robert: So are we saying 'Very' here?

George: I think so.

Rose: Yeah.

Alison: One 'Very', two 'Very', it's going to be a consensus!

Ian: Well, is it absolute or is it relative?

Robert: Relatively 'Very'.

Ian: Compared to other skills or just...

George: I think it's important to have the tools for the job, but if you can't develop rapport and if you can't communicate effectively then it's going to compromise the quality.

Robert: It sort of ends on this doesn't it? That probably gives you the context in which you are practising and then it's probably very, you know.

Alison: Can I just throw a word in there then? How important are 'formal' counselling skills which you develop through formal counselling skills training to applied sport psychology practice?

Calum: Was that just one word?

Rose: Yeah which word?

George: Formal.

Alison: Formal is what I added in.

Calum: Well spotted big fella!

George: Thank you.

Robert: It all depends on this [the word 'practice' on flip chart.] I think most sport psychologists who have been through the sort of normal apprenticeship scheme, formal or otherwise, have

come to recognise that there are things that are fundamental to the job that definitely are outside of what you might call a toolbox approach, and they are often to do with interpersonal exchanges and your confidence and familiarity with being able to feel competent in those situations, in the same way as you may feel competent leading an imagery session, you know, it's a, it's quite a spooky thing, it can be to, you know, people who haven't been in those situations if they don't feel they have those skills. Well I think, you know, the reassurance of some professional, some formal, erm, familiarity with the aims and objectives of counselling is not a bad thing. You may actually end up thinking "Yeah I actually do quite well at this anyhow, but I've now given a framework in which to organise my practice. I may be able now to make decisions about what might be more appropriate in one situation than in another and, erm. You know, I'm a great believer in education and life-long learning and without doubt there are things to learn from understanding models of counselling and the applicability of different skills in those contexts or those models.

George: I think you're also in a position where, you know, each person in the room here has a good, almost label themselves as specialists in the area of sport psychology, yeah? So I know that I'm more competent at one thing than another. So you get people that work within sport psychology that have come from clinical psychology background that might have a very strong understanding of, you know, as good as psychotherapy. So the likelihood of them using formal counselling in sport psychology will be greater than if I did it, certainly I'm not trained to do that.

Calum: Another way you can look at it, when you say "How important are counselling or formal counselling skills to applied sport psychology practice?" if you didn't have *any* counselling skills could you still be an applied sport psychologist? And if the answer to that is "No" then the answer to that question [on flip chart] has to be "Well they are important".

Alison: Another question is: can you have counselling skills which haven't been developed formally though?

Rose: Yeah.

George: Definitely.

Alison: O.k.

Rose: It goes back to the debate about some people are naturally.

Alison: Yeah, take it that you can, but in terms of...

George: I think formal is, er, a different issue.

Rose: It's always better to understand why you're doing something isn't it? I mean that's why we say "Theory in sport psychology is so important" because a lot of people or coaches do something and it works, but they don't really know why, and it's, erm, counselling you know the theory or "Well if I do this, this should happen" and it makes you better, even though some people might naturally be good at them.

Calum: Can anybody hear water running?!

[Rose, Ian & Calum go for toilet break]

[Whilst they are out:

Robert: So, has it been your impression over the 8/9 groups that you've worked with...

Alison: 5.

Robert: ...5 groups, I beg your pardon, that a lot of the greyness comes as a function of semantics?

Alison: Yeah. And I'm just trying to get through the semantics so we can say "Well what do we mean by this?" "What do we mean as sport psychologists by this term?" "Are we clear what we mean when we say we counsel?"

George: Have you asked people in the groups whether they're actually qualified in specific areas of counselling?

Alison: At the end I'll ask you.

George: Because I think that's key because I mean I've spoken to clinical psychologists in, you know, the BOA and it's completely their approach to this kind of thing would be completely different saying that this form of counselling is a fundamental skill for, er, sport psychologists, but that's because they've got the skill, you know, I think biomechanics is a fundamental skill of a sport psychologists because I've used it a lot. So, you know?

Robert: And I guess the other issue is when you, you know, however, you know, be a human if we invest a lot of importance in a particular approach to our job, even though I'd be multi-faceted like a sport psychologist, if, I've done a fair amount in the area of hypnosis. There is a tendency because, you know, knowledge and schema shape and filter everything you deal with when you work with performers, you may say "Oh yeah, I think this person could benefit from a little bit of induction". You would tend to use that which you are familiar with and feel confident in, which was a point you made earlier, and if acquiring and developing and refining counselling skills are important parts, if the answer to that one is "Yes", then having developed that you may then view your kind of approach different. It's almost inevitable I think as you acquire and develop skills you reflect on the way that you do things, and they become then the filter for your judgements. If you're, you know, big into counselling, you're probably going to be inclined to address most of the issues you see from the perspective of a counsellor. Like Ian's example, a counsellor may well just keep fire fighting in that context rather than addressing, because he or she may believe that's what their role is and that's perfectly legitimate.]

Alison: Right are you ready to resume? There's one little bit that George actually mentioned in the break which I thought was, which was where I was going, you said "How fundamental, how fundamental are counselling skills to applied sport psychology practice?" You thought that was an important question.

Rose: How does fundamental differ from the word importance?

Calum: Thank you.

Robert: More letters and it begins with 'f'!

Rose: Lots of things do!

George: The point I was making was, erm, I can't remember now!

Alison: You were talking about clinical psychologists, 'I think they would argue that...

George: Oh yeah, a clinical psychologist working as a sport psychologists in, you know, in BASES, or the BOA, they would probably use more counselling than someone that hasn't got any formal training in it for a start. So I was sort of using the analogy that I'm, you know, I've got a lot of biomechanics skills but how many other sport psychologists have got biomechanics skills?

Robert: I guess the other point that we made there is that if you believe you have those skills then you tend to view the world through different perspectives.

Rose: Yeah, tacit knowledge.

George: That's what I was trying to get at!

Robert: George is very likely, on the basis of what he just said, to, you know, to interpret any presenting problem of an athlete biomechanically! And that's probably laudable that he should do.

Rose: So, back to my question, how does importance differ from fundamental? Because there's no point having a sort of exactly the same conversation again.

George: I suppose fundamental means...

Calum: Fundamental relates to what I asked right at the break I think a little doesn't it?

Rose: Yeah, if you don't have it.

Calum: If you don't have counselling skills can you be an applied sport psychologist?

George: And again, if you consider counselling skills, how many of those skills are fundamental and how many of those would you consider just, you know, that are fairly important skills? I mean there's going to be some skills that are pretty fundamental to the work that you're doing as a sport psychologist.

Rose: Core skills.

George: Yeah, nice way of putting it. You've got those core skills that, you know, people should have to be an applied sport psychologist. So I think the distinction between fundamental and important skills, you've got those fundamental skills that are like core, that, you know, form part of that repertoire of counselling skills.

Rose: Would you say 'fundamental' is sort of an end point on a continuum of importance?

George: Yeah.

Robert: Yeah, fundamental's probably an easier question to answer than important because important is so relative and so context dependent.

George: Because that's on a continuum, how important.

Robert: Fundamental places counselling skills within the orbit of applied sport psychology, and I think we're happy with that.

Alison: Going back to what you said then about core skills, do you see counselling skills as a core skill to being an applied sport psychologist?

George: I'm sorry to do this again, but it depends because we said that counselling skills isn't a skill, it's a number of skills. I think some of those skills are fundamental and core, and I think some of those skills are very important sort of add-ons.

Ian: There are some fundamental communication skills that are essential to all sport scientists. Many, er, most sport psychologists probably have them, most. Erm, from my experience many other sport science discipline, erm, professionals don't necessarily have them.

Rose: Like biomechanists?

George: Absolutely.

Robert: There's an element of self-selection here isn't there?

Rose: Yeah.

Calum: Yeah but if you actually look at the other sport sciences' requirements for accreditation, for example, there is no requirement for biomechanists to have done anything from a counselling point of view. They haven't necessarily understood what needs analysis is about.

Ian: I think that's a fair point, but that's, I mean when you package up you can't say it's, counselling skills incorporates, includes a whole series of other skills which are not [] skills, communication skills which maybe used for counselling, maybe used in a counselling situation. So I just have a problem with the term counselling skills because I think you're packaging something together that isn't necessarily creating a whole.

Alison: Maybe I'm not packaging them though.

Ian: Oh.

Robert: And I think a lot of people would argue that they're equally important to sport physiologists, sport biomechanists, so as much a part of interpersonal exchanges, people working with people, but...

Ian: So the communication skills that a physiologist needs would be core skills, but they don't necessarily have any formal training. But because we happen to work in psychology, and that happens to be to do with, erm, solving psychological problems then there's an almost an implicit link to counselling as another area. It doesn't necessarily follow.

George: I think you're distinguishing between two forms of counselling skills there aren't you? You're talking about those skills that are important, are integral in terms of communication and listening, and you've got those skills that are processes of a specific fundamental model of counselling. So, if you were going to follow a cognitive-behavioural model of counselling to deal with a specific, you know, problem as a counsellor then you would follow that process, there isn't necessarily a requisite for biomechanists.

Ian: Some of the humanistic techniques are not ones that you would use in any other situation at all.

George: Unless you were following that approach.

Alison: O.k. it's really interesting that you say [Robert] that fundamental would have been easier to answer, because that's what I originally had and people had real difficulties with it.

Robert: Yeah, I mean maybe a second order thing, I'm just understanding what you're asking.

Alison: That's interesting.

Calum: Fundamental would be more easy to come up with a more definitive answer but it's more easy to discuss the word importance because it's a broader...

Robert: Yeah. But you're not going to get, it'd be unlikely that you're going to get a consensus because people approach it from all different perspectives.

Calum: Fundamental tends to be a bit more focused, so it is harder to discuss it.

Robert: Or essential.

Calum: Yeah.

Robert: Or the essence of sport psychology, is counselling skills the essence in sport psychology?

Alison: Do you think you've answered that one?

Robert: I'll go with fundamental!

Alison: O.k. we've talked a little bit about it, but, erm, to focus on it specifically, what kind of training do you think an applied sport psychologist, or somebody who has an interest in sport psychology, would need to use counselling skills effectively?

George: So you're asking the question what type of training do they need to develop those counselling skills, to develop effective counselling skills?

Alison: Yeah.

Robert: Knowledge of the skills, knowledge of the context, practice in the context and some way of evaluating efficacy.

Rose: Thanks Robert. Are we off!?

George: Yeah, I think you need some form of...

Ian: I don't think it's a particularly complicated question, it's fairly straight forward, do need some formal training?

Alison: That's an issue that you might want to tackle first, do you need formal training? Because people have different ideas of what training is.

George: Yeah, I do, because you either haven't got the skill at all, and therefore you're learning a new skill for the first time, or you're giving a label to something that you do because you've been brought, you know, you're socially learned to do that. So I do think you need formal training. You know, whatever the category, you know, whether you're learning first time, or whether you're just giving a fancy label to something that you, like existential phenomenology. It's just labels isn't it? It sounds great.

Alison: I got some nods when George was talking.

Rose: Can you just say those things you said again Robert because you said them that quick, please?

Robert: Erm, ooh it's difficult to go back, er, to use skills effectively implies that, you know, that they are efficient and that they're meeting the contextual requirements right? So I guess you need knowledge of what those skills are, practising at context, along with, basic learning principles, along with some feedback about efficacy and, to me, the difficult one would be effectively.

Rose: How to evaluate.

Robert: And I wouldn't have 'training', I'd have 'education' there. I draw the distinction between, you know, sex education is completely different from sex training.

George: But there does need to be some form of train-ING doesn't there to develop those skills? Because it's the practice is probably as important as the initial education, because, you know...

Robert: Education and practice, yeah.

George: ...we could quite easily talk about specific, you know, counselling skills exactly when it should be used, why, you know, all those things, you can then...

Robert: It's education and training I guess.

George: Yeah.

Robert: Rather than just training. Because training tends to encourage people into, a bit like NVQ approach to, you know, it's a context-specific cookbook approach to the problem, if you want to call it. It's this, I do that.

Calum: As opposed to understanding the concepts and being able to apply them in a variety of contexts.

Alison: What do you think the implications are then for BASES accreditation? Would it change what's there?

George: The problem with BASES accreditation is that each supervisor will prioritise the competencies in a different way. So, I mean we're talking specifically about counselling skills, you know, erm, a supervisor might just watch you as an apprentice, I mean working with an athlete, communicating with an athlete. I think well, as far as I'm concerned I think they've got the competencies to communicate effectively with the person therefore I think they're going to, they're going to score quite highly in supervised experience on counselling skills. Other people, like we said about clinical psychologists, think "Well, counselling in my eyes means that they've got to have rational-emotive behaviour therapy qualification, they've got to, you know, they've got to go through the rigmarole of full-on training in a counsellor-style of training". So I think it's going to vary with individuals and also dependent upon the type of people that you're working with.

Rose: Well, its already on the list of competencies isn't it?

Alison: It says at the moment 'Basic theories of counselling techniques'.

Rose: Does it? Oh.

Alison: That's what it says. What do you think of that?

Rose: Yeah, I mean it's the trouble with all the competencies it's very difficult to, they're not exactly prescriptive are they of how, what you need to do to get 100% in that box.

Alison: Oh yeah.

Rose: It's very dependent on your supervisor.

George: I think what they're talking about there though is actual understanding of the different approaches to counselling, like person-centred, like, you know cognitive-behavioural. I don't think they're referring to counselling skills as we've defined them. You know like communication skill, interpersonal skills and listening skills. So a supervisor's interpretation of that.

Ian: Well certainly the education programme includes a number of, er, counselling skills-type...

Rose: Yeah, there's one at Stafford isn't there? That said 'Counselling and interpersonal skills'.

Ian: Yeah.

Alison: So would you change what is there now, or would you, are you happy with, in an ideal world if you were writing the document or whatever, you know, are you comfortable with it as it is?

George: You did didn't you [Calum]?

Ian: As with all of it, it needs just to be refined and developed over a period, it's a new process.

Alison: That's what I'm trying to get at, you know, this is the stage of refining now, doing this research is hopefully going to say something about what do sport psychologists perceive the terms to mean? What are the implications? So this is your opportunity to say, you know, what you think. I know it's only one tiny aspect of the profile.

Calum: To a certain extent it's irrelevant isn't it? Because whatever you have within that box, if you want to use that terminology, that is all you can use anyway. Because if you're attempting to use something outside of that then you're going outside of your code of conduct anyway. So, whatever you put in there is appropriate, if you consider it to be appropriate for you as an individual, that's fine. If you work outside of that then you're working outside your code of conduct.

Rose: But your [Alison] question is: How big should the box be? Or should there be more prescription?

Calum: There is no prescription for how big, there is no box there.

Rose: I know, well, then the question is should there be?

Alison: I'm saying what do you feel comfortable with? Should the box be bigger if you like?

Ian: I think Robert's list of criteria would actually fit the bill as far as I was concerned. You would show evidence to demonstrate that you had...

Robert: I think where the, thank you for that Ian, erm, where I think the current descriptions, loose as they are, become problematic to translate into what are benchmark competencies is that they're not expressed in those terms. You're encouraged to think about them in those terms, but they don't, like knowledge of relevant theoretical counselling approaches is a very nebulous thing. If maybe BASES took a, you know, almost took a leaf out of University validation books, you know, where you have to make explicit in knowledge or skills terms the outcomes that need to be achieved in order to, I mean we've already talked about core or key aspects and more peripheral skills. You know, what is it, "How would I recognise it?" would be my question to you if you were a trainee sport psychologist, "How would I know you got there?". So you could talk about those in behavioural terms and you could also talk about them in knowledge terms. Maybe, you know, an improvement might be to translate those loose descriptions into knowledge and skills outcomes which are demonstrable.

George: I think that's, based on your point before about the difference between education and training, what I infer from that counselling skills, the theories of counselling skills and the competencies list, is, erm, just being aware of what they are. It doesn't make you a better applied sport psychologist, it just makes you aware of what they are. There's no training associated with that, that competency. If, you know, if you read it at face value it's just saying, "Having a", you know, you're almost just getting an awareness of what they are, it's like "Oh very good", you know. There's no training and no implementation into your practice as an applied sport psychologist which is key.

Alison: Which is key you said. Would you add that on then if you were in charge, if you were writing it now?

George: I don't see any point in just increasing a person's knowledge of a subject without actually saying "Well, let's practice this and use it". You see what I mean? What's the point in saying "Well just develop awareness of the different counselling skills". All you need to do is "Well I now know what this means, I know what that means", and you've fulfilled that competency to a certain degree haven't you? But how that has impacted on your performance as a, or competence as a sport psychologist is not assessed.

Alison: So what do you think the implications are then?

George: There needs to be some, whether it's formal training, or record of, erm...

Ian: A certain criterion needs to be identified clearly, [] knowledge of subject area and evidence of training practice. Some assessment would be on effectiveness. I simply, I think that needs to be added to the, erm, the list and you would then, you would have a number of ways of demonstrating that you could tick those boxes. It may be a part of the [education?] programme, or maybe BASES workshop, you could do maybe a counselling course, erm, case studies.

George: Yep, I agree, I concur.

Alison: Calum?

Calum: I've said my piece, I don't think there should be boxes. I'm sorry, I don't think they are meant to be boxes and I think that you can put in there as much or as little as you want providing you don't work outside of that. So if you have a supervisor and you go through supervised experience who believes that it's appropriate and you believe that you want to be able to pick up more of those, then fair enough. I do agree with Ian, but it's, er, having completed supervised experience doesn't mean that you will be accredited. You can go through and have done all of the supervised experience, you can have done three years, you can have had suitable reports at the end, but it doesn't mean to say that you're going to get accredited. In which it maybe possible, it maybe possible that you haven't done enough in that particular area, or demonstrated that you have. It was never meant as a prescription, it was never meant to be a prescription of what you should do. So you could have 0% in some of the areas and still get accredited.

George: But I think what we've talked about today is like, we got on at the end to talk about the fundamental, you know, certain counselling skills are fundamental to applied sport psychology practice and if accreditation is there to give you the rubber stamp to say that "This person is now accredited to be an applied sport psychologist", and we're saying that certain counselling skills are fundamental to that practice then that needs to be shown in the list of competencies doesn't it? That that person not only is aware of, but can actually implement those counselling skills in specific situations, contextual situations. And it's just the wording of the way it's put down on the competencies list is, well, I can understand supervisors misconstruing it and just basically saying "Read that book and there you go, there's your minimum standard". What does everyone else think?

Alison: I've got a nod [from Robert].

George: Because you were nodding there yeah.

Alison: I got a nod and a shake [from Robert & Calum respectively]. Do you want to expand on your...

Rose: On your shake?!

Alison: Yeah.

Robert: I think I would agree that there are, it is problematic for the trainee sport psychologists to, or the sport psychologists to meet the requirements of the code of conduct, I beg your pardon, of the profile of supervised experience as it stands, because it's not particularly well articulated. If that's the question, which probably it's not, but, erm, I can share the concerns, but there are historical and understandable reasons for that situation, not least amongst them is that the organisation is an amateur organisation, erm, you know, that only put the amount of time that was possible to put into develop what was an essential part of the process. Meanwhile everybody's ultimately involved with that, but it is a reality.

Alison: So the future then, regardless of how it happened, what the reason for it, in an ideal world do you agree with George?

Robert: In what sense? Sorry George I was thinking--

- George: I was saying that the wording of the competency of counselling skills is just basically to have an awareness of, and what I'm saying is there needs to be some assessment or some training to implement that into your sport psychology practice.
- Robert: Yeah, that would be a good advance on a badly worded whatever it is. It's not a competency, it's a some measure of consciousness I would say, having an awareness of. You know, it would just be a badly, it would be something, the reason why it's difficult to meet the criterion because you don't know what it is, it moves, and just when you think you've got hold of it. And you can achieve it various ways which is obviously difficult perceptually. If I gained "An awareness of counselling"- by reading two chapters in a counselling book, and you do it by six months internship in a, you know, mental institution, and then you can't really argue, well it's difficult...
- George: It's difficult. I mean, in a way that's the beauty of the supervised experience is that you don't necessarily have to become, you know, the D.B.s at each thing, at each competency. You, er, you've just got to really make a sort of a minimum understanding.
- Rose: I'm not sure I'd call it the beauty.
- George: Well you can call it a problem, or, you know, the fact that there has to be an element of flexibility because of, I mean everything we've talked about today is contextual isn't it? It depends, it depends, it depends. I think the way that you would fulfil one of the competencies and the way that I might fulfil that competency might be completely different, but would still fulfil that competency.
- Ian: And recognise that some people will far exceed that competency and will therefore be able to practice, erm within a much greater range of consulting situations than others maybe.
- Alison: Calum you shook your head again.
- Calum: People are just using terms that you can't find anywhere in the accreditation process. There is nothing within the accreditation process that talks about competencies or minimum standards, you won't find those phrases because it wasn't written like that.
- George: But in the supervised experience it was, it was called competencies.
- Calum: It was called, in the original documentation it was only BASES that imposed that as opposed to the people within an inch of the, er, well specifically obviously within psych. It was never written like that and somebody wanted a label to put on it, but it was never designed to be a competency, it was designed to be, it was designed to provide opportunities for people to say "Well this is my area of strength", "This is my area of strength". We've talked all the way along about the fact that you might come in with a clinical psych. Background as opposed to a biomechanical background like yourself. Erm, and therefore why does everybody need to have the same?
- Alison: But going back to what...
- Rose: Yeah but...
- Alison: Should there be a minimum standard?
- George: Mm.
- Calum: How could you ever police it?
- George: That's not, I wasn't saying that we have to have a minimum standard, what I was saying was that throughout the conversation we've had we've turned around and said that there's certain counselling skills that are fundamental to applied sport psychology practice. If they're fundamental that means we need them. The current supervised experience or accreditation doesn't require you to have those skills. That's what I'm trying to get at, that's what I'm saying.
- Calum: So if you don't have those skills, then you can't do the job?
- Ian: Some of those skills are actually, erm, identified in other areas.
- Rose: Yeah.
- Ian: There are things like 'Communication skills in a one-to-one basis or a group situation', I mean I still a problem with this idea of packaging things together, counselling skills, because it's a nebulous term. There are some specific counselling skills which you don't necessarily have to have to be a sport psychologist.
- Robert: But you probably do need to be an effective sport scientist.
- Alison: So there are some counselling skills that you have to have to be an effective sport scientist?

Robert: Depending on context yeah. I can't imagine a context of a sport scientist or exercise scientist working in a round not having to have some reasonably well developed skills of counsel. And that's made explicit I think in those, BASES literature.

Alison: Rose you were going to say something?

Rose: No I was going off in a massive tangent.

Alison: Was it about training?

Rose: Yeah, well it's quite hard to discuss this without discussing whole sort of supervised experience, accreditation process.

Alison: What do you think would be, what is your opinion on that question then? What training do sport psychologists need to use counselling skills effectively?

Rose: Well personally, I need to go on a course because I'm not a particularly natural counsellor, but then that's if it's me, and I'm really pleased I did that. But then my whole sort of, you know, you were saying about that you can't have minimum standards and stuff, I think that then leads to, and I agree why, I can understand what you're saying [Calum] about policing it and everything, but it then leads you to, well how do you know? You've got the skills which is a different way of looking at it rather than you saying "If you haven't got them you don't implement them, or you don't, obviously you don't go outside", but it's then knowing well what is the standard you should be hitting? Or what competencies should I have? Which is fine if you get on very well with your supervisor and you can see him or her lots, but if you don't then it's very hard to know what you should know. But you [Robert] were saying like you should have certain competencies and you should practice them and then you should evaluate. But it's very hard to know exactly what those competencies that you should have in an ideal world to be the most effective psychologists that you can be.

Calum: But how would you ever write the standards of practice for that?

Rose: I know, I'm not saying, yeah, I know it's very, well probably impossible, problematic, well, I don't know because there must be good practice, like if you said...

Alison: What do you think, if it helps, what do you think they do in counselling, for example?

George: All I think that there's elements on that supervised experience and accreditation that say if you consider it as, erm, education, training and assessment, there's a lot of that, a lot of education, a little bit of that and you've basically got to provide evidence to fulfil those things. What we've said today is that certain counselling skills are fundamental to practice. What are those counselling skills that are fundamental? We need to educate them and train them before we can make them an effective sport psychologist. What they are, I wouldn't like to say.

Alison: Do you agree [Calum]?

Calum: Yeah that's the whole point of supervised experience. I don't think there's anything to disagree with there. But how you actually put that into practice, how you police it, how you write the standards required? So yeah, I don't think you can disagree if you believe supervised experience is appropriate then I don't think you can disagree with those statements but there's nothing else.

Alison: What do you think about, you know, if somebody's gone through different types of training like clinical or counselling, you know, they have certain criteria that they go through.

Calum: What do I think about it?

Alison: Yeah, I mean in terms of how it relates to the kind of training that sport psychologists get, or the supervised experience, does it help to think about it in that way, what other people go through in different professions?

George: It's so difficult with something like sport psychology because it is such a flexible sort of job. I mean regardless of the population that you're working with which is massively flexible, the way that I would operate with a group of people would be massively different to a clinical psychologist working with the same people, you know, and to say that that clinical psychologist is doing as good a job as I am is a difficult question because they're using a completely different set of skills that might be doing an effective job and might be dealing with the specific need of that performer. Whereas I might be coming in and doing a completely different job and dealing with a different specific need of that performer.

Calum: And the difference is that, you, a couple of times now, I think wanted us to maybe to discuss the relative training that a counsellor someone from clinical psychology goes through, there can never be any comparison as far as I'm concerned because they will go through courses which

are, there is an assessment involved, and they will go through all, they will go through a degree, or whatever. They're very, very different so I don't think there's any comparison.

Alison: So it doesn't help to think about that then?

Calum: No.

George: I think that's what Robert said before was that you just T.P.A. you've got to teach, practice and assess and go through a typical sort of university validation system. But we wouldn't have any applied, accredited applied sport psychologists if we had to, you know, go through that and deal with every single skill required to be a good applied sport psychologist, it would be a bit of a nightmare.

Robert: I think it's a bit or a sort of a rod for our own back in a sense that I think our view, sport psychologists'/ exercise psychologists' view of what it is to be one of those things is a bit like Frankenstein's monster, it's sort of been pieced together from parent disciplines and things which begin "Yeah that should be important, so we'll have some of that", and it's been put together over the years and it's maybe worthwhile taking time to step back to say "Is it possible for anyone to do all these things?". Yes it probably is important but there's, this, this, this, this and this, but, you know, bearing in mind if through the context of accreditation you're saying "What are your thresholds?" and "You must have...", I believe you must have some notion of what it is when you see it, you can't just say it was, you know, "I'll recognise it when I see it". No you have to be a transparent system to give anyone within the system a fair chance of attaining what they set out. But I do think it's grown, hence my point about the historical context, erm, it's grown into a real Frankenstein's monster, and it must be very difficult to aspire to those. I mean you've got, are we saying you have to be counsellors? Are we saying you have to be skilled in hypnotic induction techniques? Are you saying you have to do, resolve conflict? Are you saying you have to know the ins and outs of neuropsychology? Must you be stress management trained? Must you be organisation..., you know, it's those sorts of things which are, which we encounter, but you're never going to be all things to all people. You know, it's fitness of purpose, and if you, on the basis of your practice you can provide evidence that demonstrates efficacy, however you want to define that, then you're competent.

Ian: I think one of the things that possibly we don't do enough is to refer to colleagues with specific expertise. Erm, it's not even in the model of, erm, the world class performance plans, if you have a psychologist who works with this group regardless of their range of competencies there isn't, it's certainly as far as I know it's not normal practice for the ones to actually say "Well actually no, Calum he does a lot of work with injured athletes, maybe we should have him to do some work with some of the injured athletes, for example.

Alison: O.k. I'm aware of the time, erm, what I'd like us to finish on is there have been a few examples that you've given out already, does anybody have any examples of, erm, which might help make some of your points, was there ever a time when you felt you didn't have the counselling skills to meet the situation?

George: Loads.

Alison: Yeah? Can you give us an example?

George: Erm, there was a situation where an athlete came up to me and said "I'm being abused by a guy that lives next door". And I was like I'm completely out of my depth, and I knew I wasn't competent to deal with it so I referred it. So, that was an easy one.

Alison: O.k.

George: Anywhere after that depth I refer because that's outside my competencies.

Calum: Referral from a biophysiotherapist to a coach, I had a 20 minute conversation with the coach about an individual who was a trampolines who was experience lost move syndrome which I'd done some work with some gymnasts on previously, the athlete was pre-selected for the World championships, erm, which were going to be in something like 2½ months, er, no, erm, history of this particular issue blah blah, blah blah; blah, o.k. well one of the things I'd like to do is go and watch a training session without anybody knowing who I am. So, you know, "How would I recognise the person?" "Oh this individual's got long hair and it's always in a French plait, blah blah blah" "O.k. thank you very much, is there anything else I should know?" "Yes she's nine years old". So straight away, after having imagined you're going to be working with an adult performer, erm, you're working with something suddenly in a very different context and things all the complications of home issues and working with parental consent and all the rest of it.

Now that's a very different situation from you'd envisaged when you first started the conversation.

Alison: And you felt you didn't have the skills?

Calum: I felt immediately that changed completely the approach that I might, the approach that I would have to take, erm, and it does make you start to question whether or not you have the skills to be able to work in that context.

Alison: Anybody else got examples?

Robert: I've got a similar experience working with people from different racial backgrounds, er, that is, I mean I'm quite an apprehensive person interpersonally anyhow and I think bearing in mind the expectation of the counselling context is one of conflict, change, possibly is often the case. Erm, so I think that's personally from myself I feel that's good because it shapes how I approach that situation so I don't, I like to think I don't go in thinking "Oh this is what I'm going to do", but in, you know, sometimes you get into subcultures which are different from anything that you know in which you'd apply counselling skills. Er, Afro-Caribbean adolescent girls, erm, this was a particular context in this, they, very different, and I'm not quite sure what prepares you for that apart from that you learn from it, and you think "Mm", you know, "How would I do it differently?" you know, and some of these things are almost impenetrable, even though someone who tries to think "How might best?" then look at white coaches' subculture of Afro-Caribbean adolescents, very much, you know "Go and work with them". That's the sort of scenario! "They're a problem, you go and work with them". But yeah, I'm sure there are many situations where, as sport psychologists, you go in apprehensive, possibly frightened not quite knowing what it's going to shake out.

Ian: Certainly I had similar issue experiences, erm, but not just in terms of counselling skills in terms of "There is a competence, what does this person really want from me? Can I deliver this?" Erm, and sometimes "Yes" sometimes "No" and sometimes, you know, "Go and ask a colleague". We're quite lucky here because we've got a whole range of people who have different expertise. It's quite complementary, so it's quite a good environment to work in. So, my own consulting would be challenging.

Calum: There are times when it's more black and white though. There are times when you find yourself perhaps having been involved with the situation for a period of time, erm, where you're not quite, as the thing is ongoing you suddenly might actually find yourself within a situation where you don't realise. I mean having worked with an [athlete] for four year within the G.B. squad, erm, for that individual to get an illness, give up [the sport], and 8 months later be World champion [in another sport] after, you know, done only three months training after a six month illness. Working with him for another two years after that, so you're effectively worked with him for six or seven years and then to find out that that individual, erm, has developed an eating disorder which they are only prepared to talk to you about, not prepared to sort of talk to their husband, not prepared blah blah, blah blah, blah. You suddenly find yourself in a situation where you've been working with somebody for seven years and you're saying, and you know that this is, and that's the end of it, it is totally black and white you are not going to work with this individual. It's not as black and white for the athlete because the performer is looking at you and saying "Well hold on a minute", you know, "I've known you for seven years, there's been some", you know, "fairly intimate discussion and communication go on about things performance related" and all of a sudden you're getting out of that". But it is black and white, whereas you may have been working with a team for a period of time where people see you in a particular situation where you're going down the line and you discuss things with people and it almost becomes banter in the bar as much as anything, and then you suddenly find yourself in a situation where you have information which suddenly it's almost guilty knowledge-type scenario. And it isn't a black and white situation there because it may still be perhaps semi-performance related and something which you feel you've got enough information to, but it may not be that you have the skills to deal with it, or it's outside your code of conduct where it's very grey.

Robert: And, you know, the other side if you're working with elite sport performers that you are working on the fringes of obsessive-compulsive behaviours. It's almost a pre-requisite of being there and therefore you're going to get your quota of difficult situations. And, you know, they may well, you know, the boundary lines do blur no doubt.

George: I typical sort of, er, for an eating disorder, the typical sort of behaviours that you see are very similar to athletes aren't they? Like you say obsessive-compulsive.

Robert: But I mean what I'm saying is that often, you know, not necessarily in a performance context, but in an exercise that might be one of the things that attracts people with that type of general disposition. But I'm saying in a sport performance context often there are physiological and anthropometric requirements do push performers quite close, and they are reinforced by the coaches and the subcultures within which they operate, and one assumes that they are normally distributed in a population, and you're going to get some, you're going to get some.

Calum: I mean working in something like the grey area that I was talking about, working with a team sport and being asked by coaching staff to work with a player who'd started to develop quite an aggressive approach to all situations, social and performance related and working quite well with that individual in terms of altering behaviour on pitch and off pitch. You get though probably 4-5 months work with that individual where there have been significant changes in that person's behaviour for the better, to realise that the aggression was brought on by a significant intake of illegal drugs, both social drugs and performance enhancing. Now you find yourself in a situation where, having done a reasonable job with that, do you carry on because you're able to do something in controlling the behaviour which is coming, or once you know that that person is in a drug-taking situation you've got to get out of there? That's a grey, well it probably isn't, it's probably very black and white. But before you know about it, it's grey at the time.

Ian: Also one of the other sort of developing situations is almost the flip side to Robert's one where you're dealing with young African-Caribbean girls is when I first started with them I was relatively young compared to the management staff so the stuff that I was having to do with the players was easy, they would chat to me because they knew me, er, and I wasn't distant from them. But trying to transmit some of the messages that were important for the coaches and managers to hear was very difficult.

Rose: Yeah, I have that.

George: This goes back to your point before about maybe working not as just a psychologist with a squad. My experience of working with [my supervisor and the athletes he worked with] worked brilliantly because we've got somebody that's the same age as the coaches and one who's the same age as the athletes, our roles were very distinct and very, you know, it worked really well. So, along those lines.

Alison: O.k.

Rose: I was just going to say age is something I struggle with, I don't like working with older people or I find it a barrier to your credibility so I much prefer working with juniors. I just find that really intimidating.

Alison: Is that something that you perceive or has anybody actually said?

Rose: No, no one's said anything. I mean just the sport I'm in because I play [my sport] with a lot of the senior players, so I haven't got much credibility there! So then it would be quite difficult to sort of be known, you know, because they'd transfer it all across wouldn't they? So it's much easier working with juniors.

Alison: Right I shall close it there, it's five past twelve, thanks very much for everybody's time.

- *No one had anything to add at the end when asked (after the summary).*

APPENDIX D

REFLECTIONS FROM STUDY 3

It has been argued that reflexivity is a useful component of qualitative research (e.g., Smith, 1996; Salter, 1997; Rose and Webb, 1998; Barry et al., 1999; Sword, 1999). Smith (1996) states that the reflexive process can be utilised by the participants, the researcher or both, and reading a reflexive account “emphasises an awareness of the researcher’s own presence in the research project” (p.195). The result of this ‘presence’ in the research has led to questions about the mode of discourse which is appropriate to relay the gleaned information (e.g., Geertz, 1988; Van Maanen, 1988; Sparkes, 1997).

The following section on reflection of the participants and the researcher is written in the first-person in order to mirror the sense of authorial voice. There are elements of both realist tales and confessional tales (Van Maanen, 1988) which are highly personalised, autobiographical type accounts that talk about the research as it ‘actually’ happened. Van Maanen (1988) states that the two types are complementary to each other. The voice of the author is ‘heard’ through both types of ‘tale’ (the realist tales also include the author’s position (Sparkes, 1997)). Without including a first-person authorial style it is argued that the reflective content of the following section would not fit the interpretive paradigm.

Also included below are excerpts from the participants’ reflections of their experiences of using counselling skills in their sport psychology practice (where they had the opportunity to say so).

GROUP 1

Reasons why the participants had attended the focus group

- ♦ “Because you asked me to do so.” (Andrew)
- ♦ “Other than that you asked me, just to see how things operate. I mean I’ve read about focus groups so I have a small understanding of it, but just to see how it...operates...and basically your style I’m looking at. I’m looking how you run the group as well...I know it’s not easy to do.” (Ben)
- ♦ “I’m very interested in the focus group idea in general, and looking at the process that we all have to go through to become an accredited sport psychologist and the pros and cons of that. Specifically for today, counselling interests me, and I’m interested in other people’s experiences and views about the importance of counselling to us.” (Peter)
- ♦ “I came here today firstly because you asked me, I was being polite, and secondly because it’s something new to come and look at and learn about that I’ve not experienced before” (Helen)

- ◆ “I came here today firstly because you asked me, I was being polite, and secondly because it’s something new to come and look at and learn about that I’ve not experienced before” (Helen)
- ◆ “I came just because you asked me and it’ll be good to hear other people’s views on stuff that we’re learning about and trying to put into our applied work” (Laura)

Researcher's Comments: Although most participants stated that they had attended the focus group because I had asked them, their motivations also include wanting to learn about the process of a focus group and about others’ perceptions of counselling.

Reflections of the participants - Immediately after the focus group

After the focus group this group listened to a verbal summary given by one of the observers and were then asked on their feedback. These included:

- ◆ They suggested using other participants from different institutions with different experiences and views.
- ◆ The shape of group (in terms of seating arrangements) allowed the participants to focus more on the moderator than each other.
- ◆ May want to facilitate the discussion more rather than just letting it run.
- ◆ Don’t be frightened of silence, it often brings other things out eventually.
- ◆ There was a lot of overlap in the questions, maybe miss some out.
- ◆ The questions were very helpful.
- ◆ Get the group to speak about a particular case history where they’ve had to use particular counselling skills. Especially get them talking about errors they’ve made.

Researcher's comments: Each of these pieces of feedback were taken into consideration as this pilot study was a great help in facilitating the next groups. The seating arrangements were changed so that I was no longer the focus of attention, i.e. not seated next to the flip chart, I attempted to facilitate discussions more rather than letting them run on, there were several long silences in the next focus groups which I let continue until someone else spoke, the questions were reduced and made simpler for the next groups and in all but group 4 (due to time constraints) the participants were asked to give examples of using counselling skills in their sport psychology practice. It was originally intended to allow this to happen in group 1 but time constraints did not allow for this.

Reflections of the researcher: immediately after the focus group

- ◆ "I feel very tired after the experience. It went on for longer than planned (2¼ hours instead of 2 hours), but they did not seem to mind (I'd asked them about having to leave and all said they were o.k. about time). It took far longer to set up the room than I had originally intended. Setting up the equipment and sorting out the refreshments and flip chart, etc. actually caused me tension because the whole room had to be cleared first as an exam had previously been in that room.
- ◆ Early on I noticed that the participants were looking to me when they discussed issues and I consciously tried to stop this by not looking at the person who was speaking, but at the other participants.
- ◆ Everyone seemed to enjoy the biscuits and drinks!
- ◆ I just hope they weren't intimidated by the observers but did try to say at the beginning that they were there only to watch me, there'll only be one assistant next time.
- ◆ Being able to sit and discuss the process of the focus group with the 'observer' team was very useful and they pointed out strength and weaknesses in my approach.
- ◆ No one mentioned the video or tape recorders, I don't think it affected them once they had got used to them.
- ◆ Although I'm drained I felt it went well, but I'll need to make a lot of changes for the next one. It was too long and they looked at me too much. I must also change where I sit."

Reflections of the participants (those who replied) after they had had the opportunity to read the transcripts and summary notes and reflect further on the process and experience of being in the focus group

- ◆ "A very useful setting because it facilitated an exchange of ideas with peers. It was good to have a group which comprised of different backgrounds and experience, but whether those with limited experience or not knowledgeable to contribute, I don't know. It's difficult to say what minimum requirements would be for the formation of the group."
(Peter)
- ◆ "I found it a valuable experience and felt it proved both informative and challenging. It gave an opportunity for someone who has less or limited experience to listen to the views and opinions of those who are more experienced. The only comment is that those in the group who have less experience (myself and Laura) may feel inhibited in

challenging the opinion or debating an issue with those who are vastly more experience. A suggestion could be to give those who are in a similar position and idea as to what topics may be discussed. This would give those, like Laura and myself, an opportunity to do some background reading. It might help facilitate discussion.” (Helen)

- ◆ “Process: Trust in group to exchange ideas a little stilted. Seemed to be pressure for some members to demonstrate their knowledge and opinions. Little challenging of ideas by group members. Questions were relevant, well directed and gave a focus. However the group was on the questions rather than an exchange of views.” Also felt that any strong knowledge-based opinions tended to prevent further views from group members.

I enjoyed the process. Not sure what to expect as I did not know other members. There were a variety of perspectives and I found this refreshing and insightful. Not sure what the ‘observers’ were doing. Had a continual reference in my head to an “outside image” of correctness in my opinions. Thought your leadership was very good and helpful.

I appreciated the summary. I also thought it very difficult to get a consensus from the discussion. Wondered whether a second session would have made us a more effective group at addressing issues you raised.

Looking at the transcripts I am horrified by the amount I said in the discussion and frequently not making myself clear. many of my views didn’t really reflect an answer to a particular point that was being discussed. has made me think about how I should present and improve my contribution with group discussions (I see this as a positive outcome).

Have nothing but admiration for the amount of work you have done translating the discussion - what a task”. (Andrew)

Researcher’s comments: Each participant who replied had commented on those members of the group who had limited experience in sport psychology. Trainees with such limited experience were not used again in any of the subsequent focus groups.

Reflections of the participants’ practice of using counselling skills

Not completed in this group due to time constraints

Reflections of the researcher: thoughts on the group whilst transcribing

- ♦ “As I’m listening to this again I realise how much people said (and how long this is going to take!).
- ♦ I did feel that although Andrew was probably conscious of not being dominant (he often spoke last in a discussion (which could also mean that he was giving himself time to think) and sometimes needed prompting by me to join in with the discussion). No one disagreed with him. However, as the focus group moved on the others became more comfortable and started to question him on his opinions, not in any confrontational way, but almost to “tap” him of knowledge. I definitely will not use a group who is so varied in applied experience again. The trainees’ answers were very informed though and often highlighted aspects that the more experienced ones (including Andrew) had not considered.
- ♦ I feel that the group’s data is worthy of inclusion in the analysis as the trainees were able to discuss the issues and their perspectives were as enlightening as the others”.

GROUP 2

Reasons why the participants had attended the focus group

- ♦ “Well a) because you asked me to be here...b) because I suppose talking about counselling skills is the sort of thing which I find interesting to do, not because I’m necessarily a qualified counsellor, because probably I use it within sport psychology most of the time, probably in different ways and to talk about, you know, things that I do without giving any name to it is...interesting” (Henry)
- ♦ “I’m coming to this particular meeting from the point of view as a mainstream qualified counselling psychologist with more than, I have a very strong interest to work in sport psychology way, and I’m here as part of experience from a sport psychology vantage but also to see what, from the mainstream, I can offer and learn to do with sport psychology” (Adam)
- ♦ “Why I’m here? You asked me, that’s the main reason. Secondary reason would be, similar to what I’ve already heard that I think that there’s a lack of appreciation of the need for counselling skills. Educational psychologists often suggest what they do is not counselling, I disagree, and I think there’s a great need for counselling skills as part of any sport psychologist’s repertoire...an awareness of the issues, perhaps more so than the theories associated with counselling, basic listening skills, basic interviewing skills, that’s important to me. And providing research support for you is my main reason.” (Kevin)

- ♦ “The reason I’m here is because I think similar to what’s come out, I think there’s an increasing debate in sport psych. about levels of counselling skills and when and where it’s used, and playing a role in supervision of people and acknowledgement of my own degree of counselling training or whatever, then I think it’s an area that needs to be pursued. Like Kevin said, if I can help out in research on it then that’s fruitful.” (Bill).

Researcher's Comments: Their comments reveal how they view counselling in sport and what they do without being influenced by the discussion to follow. Each seemed to have arrived at the meeting with an interest in counselling in sport psychology from some perspective. Henry perceived that it was something he does or uses most of the time, but was unsure about formalising it, Adam had a slightly different perspective from the others by being qualified in counselling but less experienced in sport psychology, whilst both Kevin and Bill seem to acknowledge the need for debate on this issue.

Reflections of the participants - Immediately after the focus group

This group did not receive a verbal summary because the assistant moderator could not attend the meeting due to unforeseen circumstances. They received their summary in written form later. However, after the focus group had finished they were asked for their feedback on the process of the group. Two participants commented:

- ♦ “I’ve certainly learned a lot from the process. I think it was interesting the debate about, again, the counselling process and counselling skills because you could have probably chosen a different word than counselling skills if the actual skills weren’t going to be used for the ‘counselling’ process, in the sense that you could have called them ‘rapport and relationship skills’.” (Henry)
- ♦ They didn’t appear to come with any preconceived ideas of what I was going to ask, Adam stated that “I took it at face value”.

Reflections of the researcher: immediately after the focus group

- ♦ I found this group to be very warm and friendly and eager to discuss the issues with each other. They were all very keen to talk and none of them minded when the time ran over the allocated two hours. Each person had travelled to the meeting apart from Bill.
- ♦ The older participants, Adam and Kevin seemed the most knowledgeable on this topic.
- ♦ All the way though Henry sought clarification of the terms from the perspective of the others. He seemed the least sure on the terms, although he had a lot to offer the group in

terms of practical examples from his applied sport psychology experiences. It is clear he uses counselling skills to some extent, he just didn't realise it or didn't feel comfortable calling them that. Despite him being less clear on some of the terms he was not at all embarrassed by this and was very forthcoming in admitting that he had not formalised his thinking on this issue.

- ◆ After Adam spoke at length there were long pauses, this could have been due to the others 'recovering' from his lengthy explanations or contemplating what he had said.
- ◆ I had not wanted Adam to speak first on the terminology as I thought he may have had very 'text book' answers but I didn't get the chance to speak to him beforehand. Although he did talk for long periods at a time, he did not completely dominate the conversations and the others seemed keen to hear his opinion on each issue.
- ◆ Although the room was small it was fine for five people. I changed the seating plan from the last group and I sat more 'amongst' the group with one of the participants turning the flip chart over when necessary.
- ◆ The group did not mention being affected by the tape or video equipment.

Reflections of the participants (those who replied) after they had had the opportunity to read the transcripts and summary notes and reflect further on the process and experience of being in the focus group

- ◆ Bill was the only participant to reply with comments for this section:
"Firstly, may I begin by saying that I thought the organisation was excellent. The environment you created in terms of the physical location of chairs, tables and the audio-visual equipment was excellent for making people feel at ease. The care and attention with refreshments was also well received. I must admit I was a little unsure what would be expected of me during the group meeting, however these feelings quickly dissipated once the meeting began.

I also think that the process of the focus group meeting was well managed. The introductions at the start broke the ice well and set the tone for the management of views. The questions you posed were clear and concise and enabled prompt discussion. I personally felt very much at ease in discussing my experiences and views on counselling and it was interesting to hear the other members of the group share their ideas. I also think you managed your interjections well when clarifications and prompts were needed. I think we all felt pretty comfortable and found the meeting a rewarding experience. The

fact that the meeting lasted longer than we had anticipated and no-one seemed to be in a rush to leave seems to suggest that we all had become very engaged in the issue.

Lastly, the transcription were clear and gave an accurate account of what was said in the group.” (Bill)

Researcher's comments: The experience certainly seemed to be a positive one for Bill.

Bill's comments reflect the feeling that I got about it being a relaxed atmosphere in the group who felt able to talk about issues which could have been sensitive.

Reflections of the participants' practice of using counselling skills effectively

- ◆ Bill felt that he had evidence of using good listening skills when he didn't need to write anything down or take notes.
- ◆ Adam recalled that he felt he used his counselling skills well during a sport psychology consultation when he had an awareness of an overall life situation other than just a sport-specific issue. To accept the view of the athlete, but not necessarily agree with it and interpret it differently to them. He found this experience very rewarding.
- ◆ Bill stated that one important counselling skill was to be aware of what you are doing “to be in a position to actually take on board some of the things we've talked over, some of the skills work, you know, the advice part of it enables them to be at the stage to want to start using them” (page 23).
- ◆ Henry used a 'short-term' example of when he said he used counselling skills. Here he took notes to help him (which he stated he didn't normally do), he said “The beauty of taking notes with the athlete in that particular period of time, we sort of rebuilt the history of what happened to him...and tried to change his perspective on what happened to him, you know, you've tried it and allow him to enter with glass psychologically full rather than empty...The notes allowed me to try and list down almost like...self-talk statements and positive cue words which he actually turned to, for example, in the period building up, in the actual event itself.” (page 23).
- ◆ A longer term example was also given by Henry:
Henry: But the longer term example again probably comes back to down to the more broader definition of counselling...in the sense of a young [athlete] who had very, very poor mistake management and very, very bad emotional control in competition,...to a point where, in an event, where I was with the [athlete] two years ago. It's an event

where you sit with the [athlete] in breaks, you give them advice during the breaks as a way of helping to establish [] in breaks, and...to a point where there was a picture in the coach's magazine of this girl chucking her [equipment] and it flying over my head! And then it goes "The sport psychologist [at competition]"!

Kevin: Oh great!

Henry: And everyone had a chuckle at that! It was at that point when I started working with her on a one-to-one basis saying "OK I've made my psychological assessment of you now!"

Adam: The non-verbal behaviour!

Henry: I have three stitches in my head now! But...going through the process of basically using the thought-stopping, countering, and reframing techniques because she was having typically very negative self-talk,...a very negative outcome orientated young girl, quite a high degree of pressure from home, you know, which was again part of the package, part of the actual intervention that I took with her. But then a lot of homework-based sort of activities where she was able to take away the negative statement that she'd actually expressed and reframing positive statements and then practise them [in training] which would be with myself. So we try and role play and we create [competitive] situations where she was able to try and practice self-talk and just make the dead time live between points in a positive way rather than in a negative way. That was just done over a rigorous basis, every session that I did with her, also every session that the individual coach did with her as well. So it was built on a much more continuous programme. The way that I suppose being, I suppose labelled as effective was we've now developed a charting sheet, we look at body language and self-talk between points, it gets like a mental behaviour checklist. We'll look at the kind of reactions that she's developed that she used to have but the routine she now goes through, and myself and the coach, every time we go [training], rates how effective she is between points in terms of showing normal body language, very neutral, very, very positive, but then she's also got the category of is this 'tough stuff', 'OK stuff', 'duff stuff', 'very duff stuff', and that's the categories that she's labelled. And to actually chart between points allows us to come up with a percentage of the amount of time, percentage of points she's actually being behaving positively, behaving negatively gives her status in terms of how positive, you know, she has become and the upward curve goes on and on. Over a two year period that's been the most satisfying thing for her and myself. Now whether you define that as counselling, I would certainly define it as helping the person to control her

emotions in a performance situation, you know, by a fairly structured training programme. (page 23)

Both of Henry's examples illustrate working in a typical structured manner to developing a psychological skills training (PST) programme. Ahead of his second example he stated that it came from the 'broader definition of counselling', which infers that he viewed his first example from a more "tight" definition or (as Adam would describe), "pure" counselling.

- ◆ Kevin's example: "I know...that I'm effective is when after I come away from a session with an athlete and I've learned something I can use for myself when I play golf! "Hey I can use that". I must have done something right to generate that kind of response from the person...Maybe because I'm taking too much credit for that, you know, it was the athlete's thought process that generated it anyway but I'm hoping that my question, my counselling skills, facilitated it to some degree, now I can use it!" (page 24)

Reflections of the participants' on being in a situation when they felt they did not have the counselling to meet the demands of the situation

- ◆ Kevin: ...my first experience was my [training]...and my supervisors never watched me, never observed me, occasionally I would meet them to discuss what I was doing it. And...so I was really operating in a context where I was not competent. And they were working with the women's basketball team...and going with them on road trips. A lot of things happened that worked really well, but a lot of things, and I think most of it came down to...not having had the experience, not having had any kind of role playing experience, training in anticipating the experiences, anticipating what people want. And in that team of, what was it, 12 women, there were probably eight of them that I was able to get along with well and four that would have nothing to do with me. And I think now, looking upon that I could have probably done something with those four, but I didn't know how to do it then. I blame my supervisors to a certain extent, because they didn't really get involved in that supervision. It makes me want to be a better supervisor." (page 24).

This example highlights that Kevin views training and the role of the supervisor as important aspects of being effective.

- ◆ Bill's example was: "I don't know if it's specifically counselling skills, but almost at first, when I was first training if I had a one-to-one I'd have prompts. So I would have something that was in sight so that I could refer back to if I was losing, if I felt uncomfortable. It was almost, I felt I wanted it to be very structured in the meeting, what things we were going to discuss and I think, as you become better at maybe at the counselling and the listening skills, you don't need to have prompts of what you need to discuss in a meeting, you can be far more unstructured and go with the flow of what they say." (page 25).

- ◆ Henry's answer reflected when he thought counselling was used:

Henry: "I don't think I've had any, enough encounters with athletes who've had real problems, like if you're talking about counselling in that sense..., and in a situation where I've thought "Ooh, I can't handle this, I haven't got the knowledge, etc.". There's been one athlete who ..., within the peer group situation but she never actually owned up to me who, for example, who I believe and people believe to have anorexia or bulimia, ..., but never approached me with the issue so I never approached the issue. ..., whether she had done that, if she had done that, you know, faced with that then obviously that's an issue for referral as far as I'm concerned. But I've never had that problem to deal with...But in terms of actual knowledge of problems of drug disorder, etc., things like that, levels of knowledge, I haven't been faced with that problem as yet." (page 28)

It seemed that to Henry counselling is used when there is a 'real' problem, for example, when clinical assistance is needed.

- ◆ Adam could not think of situations where he had had difficulties because of lack of counselling skills due to his background in counselling psychology.

GROUP 3

Reasons why the participants had attended the focus group

- ◆ "Why did I agree to take part today? ...as a matter of professional courtesy". (Eddie)
- ◆ "I came today, firstly for professional courtesy because I know what it's like when you're collecting data, and secondly because I'm interested in the technique you're going to use!" (Tony)

- ♦ “I came out of interest, so I’d like a good argument!” (Mary)
- ♦ “Similarly out of professional courtesy and interested in the technique and also just interested in the topic really”. (Debbie)
- ♦ “Professional courtesy, know what it’s like, need help of other people in order to collect the information you need”. (Rachel)
- ♦ “All of the above!” (Ruth).

Reflections of the participants - Immediately after the focus group

- ♦ This group did receive a verbal summary from the assistant moderator. The group clarified several issues that arose from the assistant moderator’s summary as it was relayed to the participants. For example, Rachel interrupted the verbal summary and sought clarification on what the summariser meant on a section about content and interpersonal skills.
- ♦ When the assistant moderator stated that the group seemed to become uncomfortable with the concepts posed, in terms of interpersonal and counselling skills and whether the terms were used interchangeably, the following discussion arose in the group:

Rachel: Sorry can I stop you? Did we become uncomfortable with the conceptualisation or did we want to be clear on our conceptualisation?

Mary: I think we wanted to be clear on the conceptualisation because we’re uncomfortable with the fact that...

Rachel: Potential ambiguity?

Mary: Yes.

Eddie: But that was right the way through wasn’t it?

Ruth: Yeah, because it came out with counselling and counselling skills didn’t it?

I’m not sure that we, you’re right.

Assistant: Yeah.

Ruth: It’s just an issue I think that we’re not comfortable, we’re not sure about.

Rachel: Mm.

Assistant: I felt it came to a particular head at that point.

Rachel: Did it?

Assistant: The group didn’t feel as though they could progress at that stage.

Rachel: Without a clear definition.

Ruth: Yeah, right.

They appeared to agree that the terms 'counselling' and 'counselling skills' were something that they were uncomfortable with and they wanted to be clear on what they meant to them.

- ◆ When asked if they had any preconceived idea of what was going to be asked in the group, they answered "No" and "I came with a completely empty head!"

Researcher's comments: The participants' comments above reflect a theme which arose throughout the focus group, i.e. one of being uncomfortable with the terms 'counselling' and 'counselling skills'. It was only Mary who was not uncomfortable with the term which was probably a reflection of her ongoing training in this area. They had the opportunity to clarify issues from the summary and did so. This was part of the member checking process and adds to the 'trustworthiness' of the data.

Reflections of the researcher: immediately after the focus group

- ◆ "I felt that the session went well in terms of getting through the questions. Time-keeping was good, I kept them 'focused', the best yet for that aspect.
- ◆ It produced a lot of interesting dialogue about their perceptions and understanding of the terms.
- ◆ They seemed unsure of some of the terms, they certainly seemed uncomfortable at times. They said so and so did Zoe in her summary.
- ◆ As with the other two sessions, the refreshments went down well!
- ◆ Hard work again setting up beforehand because of it being in an exam room. Luckily the assistant moderator helped on this aspect.
- ◆ I think the group found it difficult to concentrate during the verbal summary. I don't think it's the best way to summarise the group from both the participants and summariser's point of view, unless the focus group is shorter, maybe one hour instead of two."

Reflections of the participants (those who replied) after they had had the opportunity to read the transcripts and summary notes and reflect further on the process and experience of being in the focus group

- ◆ Rachel had read the transcript and the summary (the same as the verbal summary given at the end of the group) and queried nine different sections of the summary that she said she hadn't picked up from the transcript from one reading.

Rachel also queried the use of the word 'linked' in the summary stating that "linked can have a number of meanings, some of which would not be an appropriate interpretation of meaning. I think this has to be considered carefully if the summaries are being used for anything"

Rachel also gave more feedback in a separate letter:

"It's difficult for me to reflect on the process of the focus group as I'm not familiar with this approach - other than what I experienced with you. I found the process, perhaps a little less satisfying than I thought I would because haven't not been able to reflect upon any of the issues prior to the group meeting I didn't feel my contribution (or that of others) was what it could have been had I been able to give more thought to them. I suppose it's inevitable that you feel it's all a little false and the direction is a little more forced than I thought it might be. Having said this clearly the most important thing is that you got from it what you wanted to (and it's obviously impossible for me to comment on that).

During the session the process of [the assistant moderator] summarising at the end was difficult. Difficult I suppose because I think we all found it hard to take in and I suspect held back a little. On the issues that arose, again it's not easy to comment because we clearly went in the direction that either you led us or we thought you wanted us to go. As a result possible omissions can only be considered if they are contextualised, perhaps if I can clarify - I can only consider what was omitted if I know what you wanted included.

I should say it was an interesting experience for someone like me, unfamiliar with the approach."

Researcher's comments: On Rachel's query of nine of the sections of the summary, each one was checked by myself and an independent analyst. We confirmed that each section queried did exist in the transcripts.

On Rachel's query of the word 'linked' this was used by the assistant moderator to suggest that there was some connection between one comment and another, it was not meant to illustrate any causal relationship. On discussing this with the assistant moderator she suggested that other words such as 'discussed' and 'highlighted' may have been more appropriate some of the time. The assistant moderator also mentioned that she was more comfortable giving written rather than verbal feedback once she had time to digest the information and re-read her notes.

On Rachel's other comments about feeling dissatisfied with the process and her suggestion that it would have been better to prepare for the meeting, I purposely did not want them to prepare for the meeting because I wanted to know what they understood felt about the terminology and how they used these skills (if at all) in their practices. I did not want them to give me answers which had been derived from a textbook on 'what counselling is'. I wanted their perceptions, not a researched answer.

On Rachel's comments about 'leading the group', I feel that I kept the group 'focused' but did try not to lead them in their answers. An independent analyst with expertise in focus group research confirmed this view. Another participant viewed the focus group and the summary very differently:

- ◆ "I have read the narrative carefully and feel that it is a fair reflection of the content of the discussions which took place.

The process of the focus group from my perspective

I think that the actual process of the session was excellent to debate and discuss the topics under investigation. Specifically, although I feel that very rich data can be gleaned from interviewing, the manner in which the group was conducted really helped the process of 'thinking through' the topic. Having others with similar or related ideas' experiences was extremely useful in that respect.

Being in the focus group from my perspective

Enjoyable and challenging but also very tiring. In the last 30 minutes or so I found it difficult to concentrate. however, this would probably have been the case for a one-on-one interview of that time duration.

Summary notes

Accurate and useful to see how an observer viewed the main issues of the session."
(Tony)

- ◆ Mary simply stated: "I can't believe we said all that! Nothing jumped out at me as being glaringly wrong, so I am happy to accept to as a true record of what went on!!"

Researcher's comments: Tony appears to perceive the running focus group was done in such a way as to aid 'thinking through' the topic and the process was excellent. He made no reference to any inaccuracies in the summary notes. It seems that giving the participants an opportunity to comment on transcripts and summaries illustrates the subjective nature of member checking.

Reflections of the participants' practice of using counselling skills effectively

- ♦ Tony used an example of homesickness to illustrate a time when he used 'interpersonal/counselling' skills effectively: "Homesickness I think is a good illustration. Desperately, desperately homesick, very, very upset...and initially you start to try and get them to think about their performance, but they can't because they're, they're too homesick, and you just use interpersonal or counselling skills to try and use anecdotes, relate to your own experiences, trying to put things in perspective a little bit more...try and offer them comfort and...try and use some humour, you know,...try and make them laugh a little bit more I suppose, make things seem not quite as bad as they are." (page 20)

This example shows Tony suggesting that talking to athletes cannot always be about performance, other issues can get in the way of talking about performance. The way he talked about interpersonal or counselling skills suggests elements of verbal persuasion.

- ♦ Mary's example was: "I had a kid...playing in...[a] tournament last year who...got red carded, and...was his first year as an under-18 and was obviously extremely upset because it was probably, it wasn't the end of the tournament so he was going to miss about two days play. So again, you know, it's you try and get them to look at it as, look at the experience as a whole, what is it that you've learnt from it and what can you take away, and make himself useful over the next two days and make himself feel [] in the squad." (page 20)

This example shows Mary using reflection in the sense of looking back on events and learning from it.

- ♦ Ruth: I think for me, I can think of several occasions, and it's usually similar sort of issues, it's usually coach conflict or conflict between a performer and the coach. The coach may have said something and the performer's been very unhappy with whatever has happened or been said...and it's usually been everything that's already been mentioned: the empathy ..., but also looking at trying to get them to see perhaps the other side of the coin, in a sense, and explore where the coach perhaps is coming from. There's been an aspect that has been quite important, and also the other aspect I think that's very important is they often come to you wanting answers, and if it's a situation where there aren't answers, or there are possible answers but it wouldn't work if I, I can't provide that answer for them. So I always have to get the person to explore what they can do about the situation, and actually a lot of the time is spent on getting the person to turn around from wanting the answers from me straight away to actually seeing that there's something they can do, and getting it out of them rather than me providing it. I think that's been the critical, similar sort of thing with dealing with disappointment in different situations." (page 20)

This example highlights Ruth's ability to explore people's thoughts and feelings. As her formal counselling skills were limited, it can be argued that this shows her craft knowledge developed intuitively. Debbie's and Rachel's examples also reflect their craft knowledge and include putting things into perspective:

- ♦ Debbie: "I think keeping things in perspective is probably the one in those couple of situations and trying to get them to see the other person's point of view, ..., because they just come at it like, you know, a bull in a china shop about it, and you think "Well hang on minute, maybe you should look at it from this point of view", and then they start to become a bit more comfortable with it and think "Oh well perhaps they were looking out for my best interests" rather than just saying "No, I can't do this, I can't do that"." (page 21)
- ♦ Rachel: "...I think the main things that I think of most recently that I've been doing have involved sort of trying to bring some sort of common sense approach to a lot of situations and ..., and trying to rationalise things, sometimes just give a different perspective on it, but of course, you use the interpersonal skills in doing that, just listening and providing, you know, another perspective." (page 21)

Reflections of the participants' on being in a situation when they felt they did not have the counselling to meet the demands of the situation

- ♦ Eddie: I can think of a time where...you think "This isn't going that well" and you're just persevering, and you try everything, you know, you're trying to be, you know, effective, and you're trying everything but you're just not getting there...you think you're coming up with answers, but the person keeps coming back to you and you just don't seem to be getting anywhere. I can think of an example like that, where I thought I was, if someone had been observing me or filming me I think they'd have said "Oh yeah, that was quite good, that was alright", but in terms of what came out of the situation, I really don't think the athlete got what they were looking for. Now that might not have been, but it's something that stands out as being in my mind as something I wish I could have solved, and perhaps I needed a different approach...I think I wasn't effective, but I thought in terms, well I used my skills effectively, but it didn't work. So perhaps I need those skills [on flip chart - listening, interpersonal, counselling skills] different skills.

This example highlights that Eddie used an approach to 'come up with all the answers' which did not work. Eddie appears to recognise that a different approach using other skills may have helped. Other participants reflected on issues which may be clinical in nature and need referral:

- ♦ Debbie: I think it comes when it does become like a clinical issue when they're crossing that line and think "Mm, I haven't got the skills to be able to deal with this effectively", not in terms of actually dealing with the clinical issue, but just dealing with well, you know, what do I do now? I can't just stop and not talk to them, I've got to do something. Say "Mm, well, you'd better see somebody else now"!

Alison: What do you think would help you in that situation?

Debbie: I don't know whether counselling skills would. Again it comes down to not really knowing whether it would help or not, whether it is always going to be one of those very difficult areas, I don't know. I don't know whether from your course [Mary] you feel like you're more comfortable in that type of thing?

Mary: I mean within some situations I think I would be more confident about dealing with a broader set of issues now, but there'll still be quite a few of issues that no, I

still wouldn't feel confident in and ethically correct for me to do that, I'd still have to refer them.

Rachel: But it's not because of your counselling skills, or is that just because of your experience? You're more confident in these.

Mary: I mean I certainly feel, no I think I've learnt how to approach situations...better now, and I don't necessarily think I would have come to the stage I'm at now without having done that counselling course or taking a lot longer let's put it that way.

(page 21)

Rachel queried whether Mary's skills were due to taking her counselling course (professional knowledge) or experience (craft knowledge), Mary seemed confident that her counselling course had 'fast tracked' her skills and understanding.

- ◆ Ruth: For me, it was a very clinical issue, ..., the problem was I knew information about the performer that it was a sexual abuse case, and I was brought in to work with a performer who was ..., was breaking down emotionally and physically in the [training area]. But, for me, the issue was I couldn't confront the performer with it...So I had to work with it as a performance problem because I couldn't get at it any other way. I don't know whether I did the right thing or not.

Alison: Do you feel that some extra training could have helped you or not?

Ruth: Again if I knew a bit more about what was, I don't know, I think possibly, I'm not sure, I'm really not sure. I'm not sure if it's just one of those situations that we said that comes up and there are no answers to that situation and you just have to deal with it in the best way as you think, which I think maybe the case. I don't know, I don't know if Mary's had any experience with her counselling course that would perhaps prepare her for that kind of situation.

Mary: I think it perhaps gives you some additional skills, I can think of some other ways that, you know, that you might have been challenging the [athlete]...a little bit more directly or whatever, that might have forced some of this to come out without you having to.

Ruth: ...I have a feeling there maybe techniques I could have used that I didn't know about. But again it maybe some sort of very specialist subset and a very advanced level, I don't know that, you know. Maybe that you have to do counselling for about, I don't know, five years or something before you'd actually encounter, you know, a

course or something, some form of training that would address that kind of thing, I don't know.

This example highlights Ruth's uncertainty of what training could offer.

- ◆ Tony talked about counselling skills not being useful when working with some athletes:
Tony:...say you've spent a long time away with the team and with certain individuals who are quite demanding of your time. You honestly feel like banging your head against a brick wall with them and you start to dislike them, and you start to avoid them, and the coaches are avoiding them as well, their team-mates and roommates are avoiding and they become a leper...I'm not sure any of the counselling skills would allow me to effectively work with that person. You've reached the end of the road and what would make it better have somebody else come out, you know, get rid of them. Because that's what the coaches do to you isn't it? The coaches say "I can't deal with that performer any more, for God's sake can you do something?" "Yeah O.k.", and you spend some time with them and they're not so bad, and then again the next day, and the next day, and the next day, and...you don't feel as though you're offering them anything, even though your skills are quite good, but I think your skills deteriorate if it goes on over time. Your listening skills particularly, your patience, your empathy." (page 22)

Tony appears to suggest that some situations are too tough to deal with if there are, for example, personality clashes. It is unclear whether counselling skills would help in this situation.

- ◆ Rachel: The only time where I've felt completely inadequate and...completely out of my depth was when I was actually going through supervised experience. An instance where a performer was just absolutely desperate and...I'd never come across this sort of desperateness before, you know, where the performer was just, you know, "Sort it", and "Do I need to know now?" and, you know "I need a solution now" and the timing of it was pretty critical, it was like two weeks before an Olympic selection, Olympic trial. And I just sat there and I thought "Holy shit, what do I do?" and I just, but I'm not sure that it was a case of, you know, if I'd had any additional

interpersonal skills or if my interpersonal skills had been better, I'm not sure that I would have coped any better with it. ..., I think it was just a bit of, I was thrown in at the deep end, you know, I didn't, wasn't expecting to find myself in that sort of situation. I think if I found myself in that sort of situation now I'd find it difficult, I mean I'd be able to cope much more effectively with it, but I think it's just a 'thrown in at the deep end situation', it was just massively unfortunate. (page 22)

In this example Rachel felt out of her depth and suggests that with her developed craft knowledge she would now cope better in the same situation. She is unclear as to how training in additional skills (interpersonal/counselling skills) would benefit her if in this scenario again.

Reflections of the researcher: thoughts on the group whilst transcribing

These thoughts were no different to the ones reported immediately after the focus group.

GROUP 4

Reasons why the participants had attended the focus group

- ◆ "Because I like to help my colleagues...and I thought it would be an interesting discussion." (David)
- ◆ "Quite interesting to get other people's points of view to see whether the way I feel is the way other people feel about using counselling skills." (Jane)
- ◆ "Probably out of a sense of guilt because you asked so many times and...I kept sort of putting it off, normally I wouldn't make this sort of space for somebody from outside of the department." (Michael)
- ◆ "Because David kept on reminding me! But also I think for me sort of the counselling skills aspect of it, despite the fact that I've been on a couple of courses and what have you, I still think that I'm pretty weak in that area and I don't really understand a lot of the stuff...I perhaps do use them, but not in the formal sense at all." (Niall)

Researcher's Comments: Both David and Jane thought it would be an interesting discussion. Niall perceived that he does probably does use counselling skills but not formally and admitted that his knowledge was not extensive (this is a similar position to Henry in group 2).

Reflections of the participants - Immediately after the focus group

- ◆ This group did not receive a verbal summary from the assistant moderator due to time constraints because some participants arrived late, they did, however, receive a written version approximately two weeks later.
- ◆ After the focus group ended Michael questioned the moderator on what the research was about, what the title was going to be and who the research was going to 'be fired at'.

Reflections of the researcher: immediately after the focus group

- ◆ Even though we (assistant moderator and I) had arrived early and set up the room, the session started late due to the participants' late arrival. This cut time a little short and meant that there was no time at the end for them to talk about their practical experiences or for a verbal summary.
- ◆ I felt that some of them were uncomfortable with some of the terms and Michael was particularly uncomfortable with where the research questions were going, i.e., he didn't want it to be 'this is what sport psychologists must have in order to be good'.
- ◆ At times Michael got agitated with the questions, he was very specific about the wording and even suggested at one point that I had asked the wrong question.
- ◆ Michael turned out to be quite a dominant speaker and much of the dialogue was from himself and Jane. It emerged that Michael had supervised all the others in the group for supervised experience and research.
- ◆ There was one member who was very quiet and did not discuss as much as the others (David).

Reflections of the participants (those who replied) after they had had the opportunity to read the transcripts and summary notes and reflect further on the process and experience of being in the focus group

- ◆ Both Michael and David asked that the names of certain sports and people be changed or deleted.
- ◆ No one commented on the process or the experience of being in the focus group
- ◆ Michael was critical of some of the points in the written summary document. He did not believe that some of them were accurate and, where appropriate, gave his version of a more accurate summary statement.

Researcher's comments: Michael comments were very helpful in addressing the benefits of a summary (verbal or non-verbal). The summary notes were taken during the focus group and these were sent to the participants (along with the transcript) in a similar format that they would have been presented to the group if given verbally. After re-visiting each summary point it was clear that some of them were vague because they focused on certain individual's points at the expense of others or were not expressed clearly. Each individual comment was not inaccurate per se, but they did not reflect an accurate summary of the group as a whole. However, Michael was not wholly accurate himself in each of his criticisms as he appeared to read the summary with his own statements or perceptions in mind.

With such criticism in mind, however, it is recommended that using such a summary is in danger of being inaccurate for focus groups which last for two hours. The summariser will (by necessity, unless a short hand user) be selective and possibly inaccurate if unable to review the transcript. It is recommended that written (rather than verbal) summaries are used. This allows the participants to reflect on the discussion and gives the summariser the chance to summarise from the transcripts and tapes under less time pressures.

The feedback from this group caused a rethink in the analysis process (see method, chapter 4). The new analysis focused initially on raw data points rather than themes which examined individual points made by participants (within the context of interactions or individual comments) without leaving out points made by others on the same issue.

Reflections of the participants' on practice

Unable to cover this in the focus group due to time constraints because of late arrival of some participants.

Reflections of the researcher: thoughts on the group whilst transcribing

- ♦ There is one dominant member (Michael) who 'bounces off' ideas with Jane. There are many instances where the two of them talk for what takes a page or more of transcription without the other two participants talking at all.
- ♦ This group seems to have little respect for the current BASES accreditation system viewing it a series of 'hoops' to jump through. They find the idea of the percentage system bizarre and they don't celebrate when accreditation is achieved, instead they say "Thank Christ that's over with!".

- ♦ They didn't like certain terms such as 'training' and 'need' (for training), they preferred words such as 'exposure', 'gaining experience' having 'knowledge of' and 'understanding of'.

GROUP 5

Reasons why the participants had attended the focus group

Participants

Their reasons for participating in the focus group were not established due to a complication at the start of the focus group (see 'Reflections of the researcher: Immediately after focus group' below).

Reflections of the participants - Immediately after the focus group

- ♦ This group did receive a verbal summary from an assistant moderator (a different person from the assistant who helped with the other groups).
- ♦ No one had anything to add at the end of the verbal summary (this may have been due to time constraints).

Reflections of the researcher: Immediately after the focus group

- ♦ The group started slightly later than planned as one member could not attend at the last minute.
- ♦ The session started badly (after I had given my introduction) with the completion of the consent form being an issue for two of the individuals who were not accredited. They did not wish to be known as 'sport psychologists' as they were not happy with the term and said that they would be acting out of their code of conduct if they signed the consent form as a 'sport psychologist'. I knew that they weren't accredited but also knew that they had many years of applied experience working with athletes. I did not expect them to not want to be known as 'sport psychologists' as there are not the same restrictions on title in this country as in America. Calum was happy to change the title of the project on the consent form to: 'An investigation into the perceptions of individuals involved with sport psychology [rather than 'sport psychologists'] on counselling skills in sport psychology' and Ian crossed out the words 'sport psychologists' on his form. This was not a great start! The person who helped organise this particular group apologised at the end for the mix-up.

- ◆ The discussion went o.k. after that, but there was a lot of greyness in their discussion because they said “it depends” to a lot of the questions raised.
- ◆ At the end the summary was very long and people were getting uncomfortable.
- ◆ They were keen to go and it was apparent that they did not wish to stay any longer and give feedback, we had already run over time.

Reflections of the participants (those who replied) after they had had the opportunity to read the transcripts and summary notes and reflect further on the process and experience of being in the focus group

- ◆ Only Robert replied with feedback and this was merely thanking me for the opportunity to review the transcripts and summaries and he corrected some errors in the transcript.

Reflections of the participants' on being in a situation when they felt they did not have the counselling skills to meet the demands of the situation

- ◆ George gave an example where he said “it was easy” to know what to do, he simply referred it on:

George: ...there was a situation where an athlete came up to me and said “I’m being abused by a guy that lives next door”. And I was like “I’m completely out of my depth”, and I knew I wasn’t competent to deal with it so I referred it. So, that was an easy one...Anywhere after that depth I refer because that’s outside my competencies.

- ◆ Calum referred to a situation he found himself in where he questioned his skills:

Calum: Referral from a biophysiotherapist to a coach, I had a 20 minute conversation with the coach about an individual who was a trampolinist who was experiencing lost move syndrome which I’d done some work with some gymnasts on previously, the athlete was pre-selected for the World championships...which were going to be in something like 2½ months...no...history of this particular issue blah blah, blah blah, blah, o.k. well one of the things I’d like to do is go and watch a training session without anybody knowing who I am. So, you know, “How would I recognise the person?” “Oh this individual’s got long hair and it’s always in a French plait, blah blah blah” “O.k. thank you very much, is there anything else I should know?” “Yes she’s nine years old”. So straight away, after having imagined you’re going to be working with an adult performer...you’re working with something suddenly in a very different context and

things all the complications of home issues and working with parental consent and all the rest of it. Now that's a very different situation from what you'd envisaged when you first started the conversation.

Alison: And you felt you didn't have the skills?

Calum: I felt immediately that changed completely the approach that I might, the approach that I would have to take, erm, and it does make you start to question whether or not you have the skills to be able to work in that context.

- ◆ Robert: I've got a similar experience working with people from different racial backgrounds, er, that is, I mean I'm quite an apprehensive person interpersonally anyhow and I think bearing in mind the expectation of the counselling context is one of conflict, change, possibly is often the case. Erm, so I think that's personally from myself I feel that's good because it shapes how I approach that situation so I don't, I like to think I don't go in thinking "Oh this is what I'm going to do", but in, you know, sometimes you get into subcultures which are different from anything that you know in which you'd apply counselling skills. Er, Afro-Caribbean adolescent girls, erm, this was a particular context in this, they, very different, and I'm not quite sure what prepares you for that apart from that you learn from it, and you think "Mm", you know, "How would I do it differently?" you know, and some of these things are almost impenetrable, even though someone who tries to think "How might best?" then look at white coaches' subculture of Afro-Caribbean adolescents, very much, you know "Go and work with them". That's the sort of scenario! "They're a problem, you go and work with them". But yeah, I'm sure there are many situations where, as sport psychologists, you go in apprehensive, possibly frightened not quite knowing what it's going to shake out.
- ◆ Ian: Certainly I had similar issue experiences, erm, but not just in terms of counselling skills in terms of "There is a competence, what does this person really want from me? Can I deliver this?" Erm, and sometimes "Yes" sometimes "No" and sometimes, you know, "Go and ask a colleague". We're quite lucky here because we've got a whole range of people who have different expertise. It's quite complementary, so its' quite a good environment to work in. So, my own consulting would be challenging.
- ◆ Calum: There are times when it's more black and white though. There are times when you find yourself perhaps having been involved with the situation for a period of time,

erm, where you're not quite, as the thing is ongoing you suddenly might actually find yourself within a situation where you don't realise. I mean having worked with an [athlete] for four year within the G.B. squad, erm, for that individual to get an illness, give up [the sport], and 8 months later be World champion [in another sport] after, you know, done only three months training after a six month illness. Working with him for another two years after that, so you're effectively worked with him for six or seven years and then to find out that that individual, erm, has developed an eating disorder which they are only prepared to talk to you about, not prepared to sort of talk to their husband, not prepared blah blah, blah blah, blah. You suddenly find yourself in a situation where you've been working with somebody for seven years and you're saying, and you know that this is, and that's the end of it, it is totally black and white you are not going to work with this individual. It's not as black and white for the athlete because the performer is looking at you and saying "Well hold on a minute", you know, "I've known you for seven years, there's been some", you know, "fairly intimate discussion and communication go on about things performance related" and all of a sudden you're getting out of that". But it is black and white, whereas you may have been working with a team for a period of time where people see you in a particular situation where you're going down the line and you discuss things with people and it almost becomes banter in the bar as much as anything, and then you suddenly find yourself in a situation where you have information which suddenly it's almost guilty knowledge-type scenario. And it isn't a black and white situation there because it may still be perhaps semi-performance related and something which you feel you've got enough information to, but it may not be that you have the skills to deal with it, or it's outside your code of conduct where it's very grey.

Robert: And, you know, the other side if you're working with elite sport performers that you are working on the fringes of obsessive-compulsive behaviours. It's almost a pre-requisite of being there and therefore you're going to get your quota of difficult situations. And, you know, they may well, you know, the boundary lines do blur no doubt.

- ♦ Rose: I was just going to say age is something I struggle with, I don't like working with older people or I find it a barrier to your credibility so I much prefer working with juniors. I just find that really intimidating.

Alison: Is that something that you perceive or has anybody actually said?

Rose: No, no one's said anything. I mean just the sport I'm in because I play [my sport] with a lot of the senior players, so I haven't got much credibility there! So then it would be quite difficult to sort of be known, you know, because they'd transfer it all across wouldn't they? So it's much easier working with juniors.

Reflections of the researcher: thoughts on the group whilst transcribing

- ♦ I must have been flustered by the fact that two people said they weren't sport psychologists and would be breaking their code of conduct by signing the consent form, because I didn't do the jaw breaker, i.e., where I ask them to tell me one thing they like doing and why did they come to the group.
- ♦ The group were very familiar with each other. They would make fun of each other (in a friendly way).

Reflections of the researcher: Further thoughts

The following covers my remaining reflections which have not been included in the method section of chapter 4 or above.

“Although my role in this study was as a researcher, it is also necessary for me to reflect on the fact that I am also a BASES accredited and BOA registered sport psychologist who has been working with athletes for six years. This is a similar position to most of the participants in the current study. By being aware of this enabled me to reflect on any conflict between my two roles. Although at times I felt frustration in wanting to give my opinion or agree with comments, the fact that I was aware of the possible tensions helped me to deal with this issue. I always aimed to be impartial yet challenged them on various issues.

As most of the participants already knew me I wondered how they would perceive me in this role. I tried to present myself in a professional, yet relaxed and informal manner in the way I dressed and conducted myself. The use of humour was an essential component in this presentation. From the reflections of some of the participants (those who replied) it appears that this atmosphere of informality and, yet professional in the way the sessions were conducted, was achieved.

I think that being a member of the professional group that some of these participants belonged to enabled me to understand their language and frames of reference better than if I hadn't been a sport psychologist.

My reflections after the pilot study enabled me to contemplate how I felt using certain aspects of the process. The feedback from the participants and observers helped in this process. There were changes made to the format and running of the subsequent groups (especially after group 1) due to this ongoing, cyclical process that occurred during and after each group session (see method in chapter 4).

Throughout each focus group I felt aware of trying to get the balance between letting the participants discuss the issues whilst keeping them focused on the topic. At times I played almost a 'devil's advocate' role in trying to present another side to their argument and to make sure they were clear on what they were saying.

It was never the aim of the focus groups to try to be 'objective' in getting participants to answer any questions in exactly the same order as other groups had done with exactly the same questions from me. To do this would have been equivalent to using group interviews. The focus group scenario allowed the dialogue to 'flow' where appropriate and I interjected where I deemed it necessary.

The only sense of structure imposed on the groups were the words or terms written on the flip chart, this was in order to help focus the participants during their discussions, and the time limit of two hours for each group (this was sometimes cut short if participants arrived late). Time was the greatest pressure for me.

Although I had received some basic training in counselling skills I did not perceive myself to be, in any way, an expert in this area and perceived the whole process as one in which I would learn from the participants about their thoughts, feelings and experiences. During the focus groups, however, I found myself using my own basic counselling skills in moderating the groups. Skills such as facilitating, reflecting, paraphrasing, clarifying and active listening were skills that I recognise (on reflection) I was using. This was not a conscious undertaking but an interesting development nevertheless.

As I transcribed each group's dialogue, I realised that there was less of 'me' in the text. This seems to suggest that I was using my skills of moderating more successfully each time, i.e., not feeling the urge to jump in with questions or comments during times of silence and allowing discussion to flow more between participants. This highlights development of my skills as a moderator and researcher during focus group research.

As I transcribed I realised how much data I had collected and often felt overwhelmed during this period and during analysis and interpretation (as reported by Ely et al., 1991). What helped during this process was regular meetings with the co-analysts and supervisory team. Each time I went back to the data (at whichever stage it was at) I felt that

I was going into the work and becoming immersed in the process and the data at a higher level.