

A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF NCAA  
DIVISION IA COACHES ABOUT THE FIELD OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

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by  
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## ABSTRACT

A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF NCAA  
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Doctor of Philosophy

Temple University, January 2010

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This study was conducted using qualitative measures to determine how head coaches at NCAA Division IA schools perceive the field of sport psychology. Specifically, the following areas were addressed: (a) How do collegiate coaches perceive of the merit of the various titles used by professionals working in the area of sport and exercise psychology, (b) How do coaches perceive the field of sport psychology as a whole (i.e., the potential benefits of employing an sport psychology consultant (SPC)), and (c) What potential barriers must be overcome in order to make sport psychology more appealing and available to coaches and how might those barriers be overcome?

A descriptive qualitative design was used to examine the coaches' perceptions. Fourteen coaches participated in semi-structured interviews to gain insight into how the coaching community perceives the field of sport psychology. All interviews were conducted over the phone, and the time

required for the interviews ranged from 22-51 minutes (M = 34.5 minutes). Coaches' ages ranged from 38-64 years (M = 48 years) with the number of years as head coach at their respective schools ranging from 3-25 years (M = 12.29 years). Once completed, all interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed through an inductive open coding process to allow themes to emerge from the data.

Four major themes emerged from the data (i.e., perceptions, desires, barriers, and hierarchy), with 10 associated subthemes that described the overall perceptions and impressions of the participants. The coaches generally had a positive view of sport psychology and the services that SPCs are able to offer. However, they often expressed the fact that, despite their own personal opinions, they felt confined by a number of barriers that prevented them from hiring an SPC. Unfortunately, sport psychology is still viewed largely as too costly of a service and, as such, falls rather low on the list of needs that coaches must consider in the execution of their duties.

In an attempt to provide a better understanding of the needs of collegiate coaches, a theoretical model for understanding where sport psychology ranks with regards to other support personnel was developed.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Patience (noun): (1) The quality of being patient, as the bearing of provocation, annoyance, misfortune, or pain, without complaint, loss of temper, irritation, or the like; (2) An ability or willingness to suppress restlessness or annoyance when confronted with delay (e.g., to have patience with a slow learner); (3) quiet, steady perseverance; even-tempered care; diligence (e.g., to work with patience).*  
(Dictionary.com, 2009)

The work contained within is one of which I am extremely proud. However, it could not have been completed without the patience of a number of people, whom I would like to take this opportunity to now thank.

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The answer lies within.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
CHAPTER	
1. THE PROBLEM .....	1
Introduction .....	1
Statement of the Problem and Research Questions .....	7
Limitations .....	9
Delimitations .....	9
Definition of Terms .....	10
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	13
Public Perceptions About the Field of Psychology as a Whole .....	13
Perceptions of Those Who Consult with a Sport Psychologist .....	18
Perceptions of Sport Psychology by Professionals in the Field .....	23
Athletes' Perceptions of Sport Psychology .....	33
Coaches' Perceptions of Sport Psychology .....	38
Overall Review .....	45
3. METHODOLOGY .....	48
Research Design .....	48
Participants .....	49
Procedures .....	53
Pre-selection of Participants .....	53
Contact .....	54
Interviews .....	55
Confidentiality .....	56
Instrumentation .....	57
Trustworthiness and Validity .....	58
Bias Statement and Personal Context .....	59
External Audits .....	64

Research Memos .....	64
Member Checks .....	65
Data Analysis .....	66
4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION .....	70
Demographics .....	71
Themes and Subthemes .....	72
Theme #1: Perceptions .....	75
General Perceptions and Knowledge .....	75
Titles .....	79
Effectiveness .....	82
Theme #2: Desires .....	84
Familiarity .....	84
Fit .....	86
Expectations .....	88
Theme #3: Barriers .....	90
Finances .....	90
Time .....	92
Availability and Visibility .....	94
Perceived Worth .....	98
Theme #4: Hierarchy .....	103
Discussion of Research Questions .....	106
General Discussion .....	118
Recommendations for Research .....	126
Recommendations for Practitioners .....	128
5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH, AND CLOSING REMARKS .....	138
Summary .....	139
Conclusions .....	142
Recommendations for Future Research .....	144
Closing Remarks .....	146
REFERENCES.....	148
APPENDICES.....	153
A. CONTACT EMAIL SENT TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS .....	154
B. INTERVIEW GUIDE .....	156
C. WRITTEN CONSENT FORM .....	158
D. PERMISSION TO AUDIO TAPE .....	160
E. NON-WRITTEN CONSENT STATEMENT .....	162
F. CODING KEY .....	164

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Coach Demographics .....	73
2. List of Themes and Subthemes .....	74

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. The Hierarchy of Needs of Athletic Teams, and Resultant Requirements for Support Staff .....	119

## CHAPTER 1

### THE PROBLEM

#### Introduction

As a discipline, sport psychology has existed in the United States for over 60 years, with the first research in the field dating back as early as the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Wiggins, 1984). Originally a sub-discipline of motor learning and kinesiology, sport psychology has evolved to encompass aspects of the field of psychology (including counseling). Currently, the field deals with the psychological aspects of human performance as they relate to athletics, from both a performance enhancement/psycho-educational perspective, as well as a remedial, pathology-based perspective (Wiggins).

Most sources agree that the "father" of sport psychology was a researcher at the University of Illinois during the 1920's and 30's by the name of Coleman Roberts Griffith, whose work focused primarily on the motor learning aspects of sport (Silva, 2002; Wiggins, 1984; Williams & Straub, 2001). Contemporary sport psychology owes a lot to Griffith's work, but is now almost exclusively concerned with the psychological bases for performance. Topics addressed within the field today include: arousal and stress

management, team dynamics and cohesion, attentional control, motivation and confidence, and imagery. These topics are used by professionals in a variety of ways, to work with athletes, coaches, and parents alike.

Within the field of sport psychology, there are a variety of practitioners working in a variety of fields, from a variety of orientations. For the most part, professionals in the field either come from an educational background that emphasizes psychological training, kinesiology, or both. Additionally, practitioners can focus on applied sport psychology (i.e., using sport psychology techniques to work with and help athletes improve performance), on exercise psychology (i.e., helping individuals design, maintain, and/or adhere to exercise programs), or on research endeavors (i.e., conducting research to broaden and enrich our understanding within the field) (Williams & Straub, 2001).

Much like any other field of study, practitioners in the field of sport psychology have been interested in expanding the public's interest in the field, in addition to broadening the influence of the field for quite some time, due to the obvious merit they see in it.

Twenty years ago, Alderman (1984) believed that the field would become much more applied by 2004. At the time of

his writing, Alderman was of the opinion that sport psychology was still a relatively new field which needed to confront a variety of issues if it was to move forward successfully into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At that time, he characterized much of the research in the field as being mostly "low-level, often superficial research" (Alderman, p. 47) which was mostly "technique stimulated activity, rather than theoretical" (p. 47). He attributed this state of affairs to the fact that, at the time of his writing, sport psychology was just producing its 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of researchers and practitioners. Being a relatively young discipline, he believed that this state of affairs was not surprising, since those working in the field were so new, and the field as a whole was rather inexperienced, compared to other, more well established areas of study.

From an applied perspective, Alderman (1984) stated that demand for applied consultants started to increase in the 1970's. He stated that while sport psychologists had primarily worked with coaches up until that time, there was a trend starting to emerge in which coaches were starting to see the potential benefits of having a sport psychologist work directly with athletes to help improve their performance. In a way, Alderman saw this increased demand as a type of breakthrough for the field as a whole, as it moved

away from a therapeutic model and into an educational/developmental framework.

Looking to the future, Alderman (1984) made a variety of predictions about the direction he saw the field of sport psychology moving. Most notably, Alderman believed that over the next 20 years, the field would become much more applied, and that demand for practitioners who offered sport psychology consulting and counseling services would "increase dramatically" (p. 53). Further, he expected that sport psychology consultants would "become formally involved with representative, national, and professional teams. Sport psychologists will become accepted as permanent experts working with teams on a daily basis" (p. 54).

From reading Alderman (1984), one gets the sense that the field as a whole had an "any minute now" feel to it in the mid 1980's. The groundwork appeared to be laid for an explosion of interest in sport psychology within both the collegiate and professional sports worlds. All that was left was but to make professionals in the field available, and the field would take off on its own. However, one need only ask a professional working in the field today about whether this acceptance has happened to realize that we are still waiting for that "dramatic increase" in demand to occur. Twenty four years later, "sport psychologists who are

accepted as permanent experts working with teams on a daily basis" (Alderman, p. 54) are still the exception, not the rule.

By most accounts, the field of sport psychology has come a long way since the days of Coleman Roberts Griffith. The number of schools offering coursework in the field continues to grow, and the public's awareness of the field's existence has started to increase as popular athletes start to attribute part of their success to psychological aspects of their performance, rather than simply physical attributes (Johnson, 2006). However, while the field has achieved a higher profile in the public eye, many studies in the field still find that there are significant misconceptions about what the public thinks a sport psychologist actually does. Also, professional teams and colleges that have sport psychologists on staff in a full-time, exclusive capacity to work from an applied setting are the exception, rather than the rule, so clearly, more must be done to raise the profile of the field of sport psychology, in addition to correcting the misconceptions about what professionals in the field actually do.

From comparing the predictions of Alderman (1984) to the current state of the field of sport psychology, clearly we have not achieved all of what was thought possible in the

last 20 years. Indeed, even those achievements that professionals and students in the field believed would be accomplished in the last 10 years have yet to be realized (Johnson, 2006). Johnson noted that while some of the predictions about the field have started to be realized in the recent past, such as the availability of sport psychology and sport psychologists to broader groups in society, many others have not. This then begs the question - why not? What is it that is holding the field back? Does the lack of advancement of the field (e.g., widespread employment of sport psychologists, despite increased availability) have something to do with how professionals are managing the field, or is it related to how we are perceived by athletes and/or coaches? The focus of the present study will be on the latter.

In an attempt to explore what attitudes and perceptions exist in the collegiate community about sport psychology, the ways in which head coaches at NCAA Division IA universities perceive the field of sport psychology were examined in this study. Coaches were selected as the population of interest because they often act as gatekeepers that can either hinder or help an applied sport psychologist's access to athletes. For the most part, coaches are the decision makers (especially in a collegiate

setting) who determine which individuals may work with their teams, and ultimately play a large part in determining the type and amount of contact that those individuals may have with the athletes. As noted by Zakrajsek and Zizzi (2007):

When exploring how to increase the use of sport psychology, past literature has primarily focused on athletes as the consumers of sport psychology (SP) services. Although athletes are primary consumers, coaches often employ a sport psychology consultant (SPC) and decide if work is initiated, continued or terminated. Coaches hold a central and critical position within the athletic environment and SPCs cannot ignore how the coach-athlete relationship may influence athletes' goals, beliefs, values, and expectations. (p. 1)

#### Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of NCAA Division IA collegiate coaches about sport psychology. Specifically, the following research questions were addressed:

- 1) How do collegiate coaches perceive the merit of the various titles used by professionals working in the area of sport and exercise psychology?
  - a. What other titles for these types of professionals, other than "sport psychologist," are coaches aware of?
  - b. What are the coaches' impressions of those titles (i.e., are those titles interpreted as making one more/less qualified?)

- 2) How do coaches perceive the field of sport psychology as a whole (i.e., the potential benefits of employing an applied sport psychologist)?
- a. To what do coaches perceive that the term "sport psychology" refers?
  - b. Do coaches believe that the field of sport psychology has merit?
  - c. Do coaches believe that sport psychology can benefit their respective teams? What experiences have coaches had working with sport psychologists?
  - d. What do coaches perceive to be the roles and responsibilities of a sport psychologist?
  - e. What kind of interactions with sport psychologists are coaches interested in?
- 3) What potential barriers must be overcome in order to make sport psychology more appealing and available to coaches (in their role as potential clients), and how might those barriers be overcome from the coaches point of view?
- a. What potential barriers exist that may prevent coaches from employing the services of a sport psychology professional?
  - b. What do coaches think would help to overcome the barriers mentioned above?

### Limitations

The limitations of the study were as follows:

1. Due to the fact that the researcher is a member of the sport psychology community, there was a potential for the participants to have given socially desirable answers. This could have been due to the participants being unwilling to be openly critical of the field of sport psychology when discussing the matter with a professional in the field.

2. Participants may not have been completely honest about their perceptions.

3. Because all of the interviews were conducted over the phone, there was more potential for the participants to be distracted during the course of the interview. As such, some of the participants' responses may not have been as complete as if the interviews had taken place in person.

4. Not all of the teams/sports that were originally proposed for inclusion in the study were able to be contacted and/or agreed to participate in the study.

### Delimitations

The delimitations of the study were as follows:

1. All interviews were conducted over the telephone by the researcher.

2. The participants were head coaches of athletic teams at NCAA Division IA schools.

3. The participants possessed at least 5 years coaching experience, with at least 1 year as a head coach, and at least 1 year of experience at their respective institutions.

4. The participants were currently working with a team of the same gender (i.e., male coaches with male teams, female coaches with female teams).

5. Only coaches who were not currently working with, or employing the services of, a sport psychologist with their respective teams were solicited for participation in this study.

6. Only coaches who had not employed the services of a sport psychologist to work with their team during the previous academic year were included in the main data set of this study.

#### Definition of Terms

*Barriers.* Any factor that inhibits an individual from engaging in a particular activity. They may be psychosocial (e.g., negative perceptions, social stigma), physical (e.g., distance from a resource), financial (e.g., lack of funds to engage in an activity), or institutional (e.g., prohibitions by a governing body against engaging in an activity).

*Coach.* An individual responsible for training, instructing, directing, and/or supervising a team, usually

in sports. Coaches can be involved in a hierarchy of importance and/or control over a team (e.g., head coaches and assistant coaches), in addition to the inclusion of sub-disciplines (e.g., strength coach).

*Division IA.* As defined by the NCAA, Division IA schools meet the following criteria:

Division I member institutions have to sponsor at least seven sports for men and seven for women (or six for men and eight for women) with two team sports for each gender. Each playing season has to be represented by each gender as well. There are contest and participant minimums for each sport, as well as scheduling criteria. For sports other than football and basketball, Division I schools must play 100 percent of the minimum number of contests against Division I opponents - anything over the minimum number of games has to be 50 percent Division I. Men's and women's basketball teams have to play all but two games against Division I teams; for men, they must play one-third of all their contests in the home arena. Schools that have football are classified as Football Bowl Subdivision (formerly Division I-A) or NCAA Football Championship Subdivision (formerly Division I-AA). Football Bowl Subdivision schools are usually fairly elaborate programs. Football Bowl Subdivision teams have to meet minimum attendance requirements (average 15,000 people in actual or paid attendance per home game), which must be met once in a rolling two-year period. NCAA Football Championship Subdivision teams do not need to meet minimum attendance requirements. Division I schools must meet minimum financial aid awards for their athletics program, and there are maximum financial aid awards for each sport that a Division I school cannot exceed. (NCAA, 2007)

*NCAA.* Acronym for the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the main governing body for collegiate athletics in the United States.

*Perceptions.* Attitudes, ideas, or opinions about a particular topic that may or may not lead to certain behaviors related to that topic (e.g., a positive perception of fitness may lead to engaging in fitness activities more often).

*Sport Psychologist.* A person who works in the field of sport psychology. There are many synonyms for sport psychologists, including (but not limited to): mental skills trainer, mental skills consultant, sport performance coach, performance enhancement consultant.

*Sport Psychology.* Also known as Applied Sport Psychology. An area of study and professional practice which is concerned with the psychological aspects of sport and elite human performance. This often involves the education of athletes, coaches, parents, fitness/rehabilitation professionals, and athletic trainers, with the main goal of facilitating peak performance and the achievement of one's potential. Depending on professional training and the needs of the client, the applied practice of Sport Psychology involves both individual and group consultation and/or counseling (Silva, 2002; Williams & Straub, 2001).

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the literature that relates to the perceptions that exist regarding the field of sport psychology. This review involves reviewing research with the intent of identifying and informing the research questions for the study. The chapter will be divided into the following areas: (a) how the field of psychology is viewed as a whole by the general public, (b) how those who consult with a sport psychologist are perceived, (c) sport psychologists' perceptions of sport psychology, (d) athletes' perceptions of sport psychology, and (e) coaches' perceptions of sport psychology.

#### Public Perceptions About the Field of Psychology as a Whole

Before attempting to examine how sport psychologists might be perceived by their clients, it is first useful to understand how the field of psychology as a whole is viewed by the general public. Research in this area extends back some time, and there have been a variety of studies examining how psychologists, and the field of psychology, are viewed by the public (Benjamin, 1986; Hartwig & Delin

1983; McGuire & Borowy, 1979; Murstein & Fontaine, 1993; Nunnally & Kittross, 1958; Webb, 1989; Webb & Spear, 1986; Wood, Jones, & Benjamin, 1986).

One of the earlier forays into this area of inquiry comes from Nunnally and Kittross (1958), in which the attitudes of the general public towards mental health professionals were examined. A variety of terms were examined, including: Doctor, psychiatrist, mental patient, and the like. Overall, Nunnally and Kittross found that the public's perception was generally positive towards those people working in mental health professions. Psychiatrists, psychologists, doctors, and nurses were all ranked in favorable ways. However, the public's perception of mental patients was decidedly negative, indicating a certain stigma towards those labeled with that term. These findings seem to suggest that to be a psychologist of any kind is seen as a positive, esteemed profession by society. However, to be the client or patient of a psychologist may erode one's esteem very quickly.

McGuire and Borowy (1979) made a similar inquiry into the perceptions of various roles associated with medicine and health (including mental health). As compared to doctors, nurses, and other role identities, McGuire and Borowy found that professionals with psychological

designations were rated lower (i.e., less favorably) than others. That said, there was a hierarchy of liking that emerged within role identities signified with a "psych-" prefix, such that certain psychological professions were rated more favorably than others (e.g., "counseling psychologist" was rated more favorably than "psychoanalyst") (McGuire & Borowy, 1979).

More recently, a number of studies have been conducted to further examine how the public views psychology as a whole. Hartwig and Delin (1983) examined the relative popularity of psychologists in Australia. Many of the participants in that study indicated that they were unwilling to consult a psychologist for a personal concern and, as a profession, psychologists were rated as the least needed profession, as compared to nurses, doctors, teachers, lawyers, and psychiatrists (Hartwig & Delin). Wood, Jones, and Benjamin (1986) made a similar finding, also noting that, despite a generally favorable perception of psychology, many people were:

. . . only marginally sophisticated in their understanding of the field. Specifically, . . . the public is somewhat aware of both the scientific and clinical endeavors of psychologists. However, the public has virtually no understanding of the impact of psychology on their lives (p. 947)

Taking more of a historical perspective of the field of psychology, Benjamin (1986) attempted to explore the question "why don't [the public] understand [psychologists]?" After a lengthy historical review of the evolution of psychology and the public's perception of it, Benjamin notes:

From the beginning, public confusion was a problem, as psychology sought to establish itself as an experimental discipline, independent of philosophy. Adding to this problem of the lack of public understanding were the debates among psychologists regarding the applicability of their science. Further, psychologists and persons who posed as psychologists promised more than they could deliver, a situation that fueled public distrust when accompanied by the economic woes of the Depression. (p. 945)

Benjamin (1983) points out that the public's perception of psychology has been significantly affected by serious shortcomings in the public's understanding of what psychology is, and what exactly it is that psychologists do. As a result, misconceptions about the field were, and it may be assumed still are, common. While there was a feeling amongst the psychological community of his time that the public's understandings and perceptions might have been improving, Benjamin noted that "contemporary psychologists are concerned that the current image is far from acceptable and that the science and profession of psychology continues to suffer because of that image" (p. 945).

Overall this research serves to inform our understanding of the topic at hand with regards to two major points. First, it appears that to be a psychologist is an acceptable profession that is viewed in a largely positive, if slightly misunderstood, way. However, the literature also indicates that to be a client or patient of a psychologist is quite another thing. To be seen as a "mental patient" appears to carry with it a significant social stigma that may prevent individuals who could potentially benefit from the services of a psychologist from actually seeking out those services.

Second, the literature indicates that there is a large amount of misunderstanding amongst the general population about the field of psychology. Clients may not know what psychology specifically refers to, and what a psychologist might actually do. As such, this misunderstanding may lead to further reluctance on the part of potential clients to seek out psychological services.

That being said, an investigation into specifically how sport psychologists and their clients are viewed is essential in informing our understanding of the present study.

Perceptions About Those Who Consult  
with a Sport Psychologist

In a study that echoes the findings of Nunnally and Kittross (1958) in their findings that clients of psychologists are seen in a negative light, Linder, Brewer, Van Raalte, and De Lange (1991) examined what they referred to as the "negative HALO" for athletes who consult a sport psychologist. That is, the tendency for athletes to be derogated by society for seeking the services of a sport psychologist as opposed to a coach. Polling a selection of undergraduate students, Linder et al. (1991) asked the participants to indicate the strength of the recommendation they would give to draft a college baseball, basketball, or football player who had worked with a coach, sport psychologist, and psychotherapist. Linder et al. found that male participants gave athletes who consulted sport psychologists or psychotherapists significantly lower draft ratings than athletes who consulted their coaches, indicating a negative perception of those athletes.

One of the reasons they cite for this negative perception is the fact that many of their participants reported that they viewed sport psychologists and psychotherapists as functioning along a mental, non-sporting dimension with athletes, as opposed to coaches, who were

reportedly viewed as operating along a mental, sport dimension (Linder et al., 1991).

One of the most interesting parts of Linder et al.'s (1991) paper is in their discussion of the gender difference in derogating behavior. Linder et al. hypothesize that since men derogated athletes as a function of consultant and women did not, it is possible that men "have a more well-defined set of role expectations for male athletes than do women, especially for those athletes who play...football, basketball, and baseball" (p. 143). That is, men (who presumably are not athletes) expect athletes to consult with individuals in the sporting context for sporting problems (i.e., coaches), not outsiders. As such, Linder et al. believe that an athlete who consults a sport psychologist or a psychotherapist could potentially be seen as a deviant by males. Conversely, females may perceive such consultations as within "a less sharply defined set of expectations" (p. 143).

In the context of the present study, it is important to start to examine if the same kinds of derogating behaviors hold true across the sexes for coaches looking at the attractiveness of athletes based on prior consultations. Is there a difference between how sport "outsiders" (i.e., fans) view this type of consultation versus sport "insiders"

(i.e., athletes and coaches)? One often hears anecdotal data within the field of sport psychology - that female teams are easier to work with, both from the buy-in of athletes and the perceptions of coaches. Could this perceived easy-working relationship with females be due to the differences between males and females in the role expectations of athletes?

A study that partly answers this question was performed by Van Raalte, Brewer, Brewer, and Linder (1992), in which the perceptions of NCAA division II football players about athletes who consulted with a sport psychologist were examined. Additionally, participants were asked to rank order their preference for working with coaches, sport psychologists, and psychotherapists. The participants were recruited from two different schools, one of which had a sport psychologist on staff, and one which did not.

Interestingly, Van Raalte et al. (1992) found that the participants did differ in their perceptions of an athlete, based on whether he was working with a coach, sport psychologist, or psychotherapist. That being said, the participants' ratings of the athlete did not operate as a function of the participants own exposure to athletic counseling/sport psychology services.

When the results were collapsed across schools, Van Raalte et al. (1992) made a significant finding - athletes did not give lower ratings or derogate an athlete who consulted a sport psychologist, as compared to an athlete who consulted his coaches, whereas they did derogate an athlete who consulted a psychotherapist, as compared to an athlete who consulted his coaches. In contrast to Linder et al. (1991), these results indicate that athletes may have a different set of behavioral expectations for fellow athletes than non-athletes, in addition to different perceptions of athletes who consult sport psychologists, as compared to males in the general population (Van Raalte et al., 1992).

Additionally, when asked to rank order various professionals in terms of their importance along 3 different dimensions (i.e., sport, physical, mental), the sport psychologist was ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 11 in importance for the sport dimension, behind only coaches (1<sup>st</sup>) and strength coaches (2<sup>nd</sup>). Furthermore, sport psychologists were ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the physical dimension, indicating that they also are perceived to possess a certain amount of expertise in this field as well. Interestingly, for the physical dimension the coach was ranked 5<sup>th</sup>, only one higher than the sport psychologist (Van Raalte et al., 1992). As such, Van Raalte et al. believe that consulting with a sport psychologist

would not be seen as a deviation from expected behavior for athletes, due to the perceived expertise of the sport psychologist.

Conversely, the psychotherapist does not enjoy the same esteem of the athletes questioned by Van Raalte et al. (1992). Psychotherapists were ranked 10<sup>th</sup> on the sport expertise dimension and 8<sup>th</sup> on the physical expertise dimension, but were ranked 1<sup>st</sup> on the mental expertise dimension. As such, there is the potential for an athlete who consults with a psychotherapist to be seen as violating the expected norms for athletic culture. In a way, an athlete

. . . who seeks out a psychotherapist may be viewed as deviating from acceptable behavior and may also be stigmatized as a mental patient. . . Interpreted from a stigma model: Derogation occurs only when the athlete consults a psychotherapist, who is perceived as not expert on sport issues, but as the leading expert on mental issues. (p. 280)

The results indicating that sport psychologists are viewed as being important in a sport setting by athletes, in addition to the fact that little stigma exists in the athletic community about consulting with a sport psychologist, are enlightening, and somewhat encouraging. However, this research falls somewhat short, in that those potentially positive behavioral expectations towards seeking sport psychology consultation are not defined, and the

origins of how those expectations are developed in athletic populations are not explored. Only from a qualitative perspective may these questions start to be answered in a more descriptive, in depth way.

### Perceptions of Sport Psychology

by Professionals in the Field

The ways in which sport psychologists are viewed is a topic that extends back to the late 1980's, which were the early days of the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP)(now known as the Association for Applied Sport Psychology - AASP). One of the earlier pieces of literature relating how professionals in the field of sport psychology viewed the field comes from an editorial piece by Silva (1992). In this article, he notes that the field of sport psychology saw significant growth through the 1980's, but that there were still some lingering obstacles that needed to be overcome in order for the field to continue growing at that point. Silva cited a need for a variety of actions to take place, including: a need for accreditation of qualified individuals, the dissemination of information to potential clients and groups thereof, a need for more interorganizational cooperation, and a clarification of who qualifies for, and may ultimately use the title "sport psychologist."

Of particular importance is the concept of disseminating information to potential clients and groups of clients. Silva (1992) comments that "there is a very large void of information about the field in the very agencies that can and do utilize the services of applied sport psychologists" (p. 6) and that educating and informing such agencies should be a high priority for sport psychology professionals if they intend for the field to continue to grow. The question that arises from this though is: what have we done in this regard? To the researchers knowledge, no "massive educational and informational program [to] target professional teams, collegiate athletic directors, college coaches, National Governing Bodies of Olympic programs, and other organizations, with sport psychology special interest groups" (Silva, 1992, p. 6) has ever been undertaken.

Only a year later, Williams (1995) would make similar comments in her presidential address at the 8<sup>th</sup> annual AAASP conference (which took place in 1993). In a discussion of the goals, issues and challenges facing the field of sport psychology, Williams noted a variety of goals that she suggested be adopted by the AAASP membership and the field of sport psychology. Among those, two in particular are of note. First, Williams advocated marketing the field of sport

psychology, with efforts being directly aimed at coaches and the NCAA. She noted that there had already been efforts at that time to develop a brochure for distribution to the NCAA and other such organizations.

Second, she encouraged researchers in the field to ground sport psychology interventions in science, and to document the effectiveness of such interventions. Williams (1995) noted that a critical evaluation of the interventions and techniques used by sport psychologists would bolster the credibility, and ultimately the effectiveness, of professionals working in the field. Overall, Williams' suggestions provide a positive, proactive stance towards advancing the field of sport psychology, promoting its use within the athletic community, and fostering a greater education and understanding amongst clients about the field of sport psychology.

Another study that informs our understanding in this area comes from Johnson (2006), in which he examined how those studying in the field of sport psychology view the field themselves. Examining different groups of students at two intervals (once in 1995, and once in 2005), Johnson attempted to examine how students perceived the current and future development of professionals about to enter the work force. Additionally, he wanted to see what, if any, progress

has been made, and how, if at all, those perceptions have changed between 1995 and 2005.

Johnson (2006) talks about how, in the future, much of the research in the field (and the responses of his participants) expected that sport psychology will be integrated easily into team sport settings and that group dynamics theories will be more easily accessed by competitors. To bolster his argument, he cites research dating back over 15 years that claims the same thing (Hanin, 2004; Isberg, 1989). Other research made such claims more than 20 years ago (Alderman, 1984), and yet, as a profession, we are still waiting for the proverbial shoe to drop. However, what is preventing this from actually happening *now*? It is all well and good to claim that such a utopic integration of theory and accessibility of services will take place in the future, but if it is not yet happening, one must step back and start to look at the reasons why. While some steps have been made towards this goal - sport psychology is apparently a well received and accepted subject in Swedish high schools (Johnson, 2006) - there is still much to be done to increase the appeal and understanding of the field.

One area in which Johnson (2006) raises some especially valid points comes in his discussion of the future risks

associated with the development of sport psychology. One theme that emerged both in 1995 and in 2005 is the perceived risk of "charlatanism or commercialization of sport psychology" (p. 12). While these two themes may not be complementary, there is a perceived link between the two. Indeed, one of the questions continually raised in the field is how to appropriately run a sport psychology business practice, while still remaining ethical? (Alderman, 1984)

As professionals we need to start examining how we are viewed by our clients, and how we can improve on that. Additionally, we need to reconcile the fact that as a profession that provides a service, we need to market ourselves to promote and expand our field while maintaining a professional and ethical standard for ourselves. Without first examining how we are viewed by our clients, though, there is little we can do to move forward in such issues.

Additionally, Johnson (2006) notes that an issue raised by the 2005 group of participants is that of employment opportunities and appropriate economic compensation. Going into the future, Johnson's participants perceived this to be a major barrier to the field, and it is hard to argue against that belief. But, once again, despite the fact that there had been a perception of growth and expansion to the mainstream within the field of sport psychology since the

1980's, there was still a lingering fear of insufficient employment and compensation for sport psychology professionals in 2005. Clearly, the field has not progressed as much as some had thought it would 20 years ago. Once again, we are brought back to the question of why this has not happened.

Johnson (2006) hints at a potential reason for why these issues still exist. In a similar vein to Silva (1992), he cites the issue that, as a profession, sport psychology needs to do a better job of defining and explaining major (often complex) concepts to the lay market, so as to make the knowledge that sport psychologists possess more accessible to their clientele, and society as a whole. It could be that we are not communicating effectively with our clients. Since we may not be making the concepts easy enough to understand, it may be difficult for more of the general population to be able to conceptualize and buy in to the work in which we engage.

One potential explanation for what is holding the field back is provided in an insightful article by Zaichkowsky (2006). Much like the research related to the public's perception of the field of psychology as a whole (Benjamin, 1983; Wood et al., 1986) Zaichkowsky cites the major problem with sport psychology as being the fact that the majority of

the general population - and, more importantly, the sporting population - misunderstand what sport psychology is, and what professionals in the field actually do. He mentions the fact that, for the majority of lay people who could potentially be clients, references to the term "psychology" are generally interpreted negatively, a trend which has been difficult to overcome (Zaichkowsky, 2006).

In a departure from other articles reviewed so far, Zaichkowsky (2006) actually begins to suggest ways to remedy some of the potential barriers that the field of sport psychology faces in trying to expand the understanding and appeal of the services offered by professionals in the field. Specifically, he believes that, as a profession, we must clarify what our knowledge base is, and how best to communicate that knowledge with current and prospective clients.

Currently, the ways in which information about sport psychology is transferred between the professional and the layman is in need of review and change (Zaichkowsky, 2006). He states that the approaches currently being used have not been successful for a number of reasons. First, courses and degree offerings in universities serve too small a part of the population, many of whom are training to join the field themselves. Second, many professional publications target

their audience too narrowly (i.e., only their respective memberships). Third, information on the internet can (and often does) contain erroneous information that can only be detected by informed consumers, leaving uninformed and/or novice consumers with incorrect information (Zaichkowsky). Finally, and perhaps most pertinent to the discussion at hand, is the fact that "publications targeted for coaches, in general, fail to adequately inform the membership about sport psychology" (Zaichkowsky, p. 4). From this, we may only assume that the hopes of Silva (1992) and Williams (1995) that the field of sport psychology might market itself more effectively through the 1990's and into the 2000's have not been achieved.

Compounding these problems is the fact that while the media will sometimes feature the work of sport psychologists, those segments are generally limited to major sporting events and, at times, it can be a risky proposition to try and educate the public through this medium (Zaichkowsky, 2006). He cites the fact that the media often has the tendency to blur the limits of confidentiality, and journalists can have a tendency to oscillate between sensationalizing results and belittling the work of sport psychology consultants as nothing more than head shrinking (Zaichkowsky, 2006).

While Zaichkowsky (2006) himself has participated in the production of a variety of educational programs aimed at promoting sport psychology and believes that more programs would be beneficial to the profile of the field, he notes that the effectiveness of such programs was difficult to ascertain. Above all, he states that as practitioners in the field, we must be constantly ensuring that the information we distribute is empirically and ecologically valid, is up to date and, most importantly, is easily understood by the public.

Zaichkowsky (2006) also hints at a few factors that may be affecting the perceptions of sport psychologists in a number of ways. Primarily he points to the developments of parallel fields (such as executive coaching and positive psychology), in which many of the same skills and tools are being used in a variety of ways. At times, this can serve to confuse the consumer as far as determining who would best serve his/her needs. Zaichkowsky states that "consumers, including sport administrators, coaches, and athletes themselves want to know if specific sport psychology interventions work, and under what conditions" (p. 7). The onus lies with professionals in the field to educate the consumer about such issues, and answer these questions to the best of their abilities.

As far as how this translates to the perceptions of those clients in the domain of elite sport, Zaichkowsky (2006) believes that many professional sport organizations favor experience over training. He believes that while many gatekeepers and decision makers are not aware of the differences between clinically trained psychologists and sport science trained practitioners - a fact reinforced by other research (Sullivan & Hodge, 1991) - a terminal degree is usually not relevant to the decision making process. In Zaichkowsky's view, most professional organizations want an individual who can make a positive impact. Of the skills necessary to do this, he believes that individuals working in the field of sport psychology must possess training in both the fields of sport science and counseling, in addition to being effective communicators, both verbal and in print, in order to elevate one's profile.

While Zaichkowsky's (2006) article is insightful and starts to hint at what can be done to promote the field, the major flaw is that it is an editorial opinion, rather than an empirical study. What Zaichkowsky fails to do is back up his opinions with data, either in the form of quantitative measures, or qualitative interviews. That being said, he provides a good base from which to start formulating research questions.

Regardless of what professionals in the field of sport psychology think about the practice of sport psychology, probably one of the most important populations to be concerned with are the actual clients with whom we work and provide services. The following is a discussion of some of the research that has been done, both with athletes and coaches, to examine how the field of sport psychology is viewed by clients.

#### Athletes' Perceptions of Sport Psychology

Sullivan and Hodge (1991) explored the perceptions of athletes and coaches in New Zealand about sport psychology. Using self-report questionnaires, Sullivan and Hodge examined how coaches and athletes in New Zealand defined sport psychology, how they viewed the status of the field in their country, and how those populations actually used the services of sport psychology professionals.

When the athletes were asked to define a personal meaning of sport psychology, they used many of the same terms to describe the field as the coaches used, including: attitude, confidence/positivity, motivation, visualization/dreaming/imagery, mental preparation, goal setting, mind associations, and control. When rating the importance of sport psychology in their training (with a score of 10 being the highest rating of importance),

athletes gave a high rating of 8.0 for training, and rated the importance of psychological skills for success as 7.93 (Sullivan & Hodge, 1991).

Not surprisingly, the athletes' knowledge of sport psychology was reported as being somewhat less extensive than the levels reported by the coaches, with a mere 16% reporting that they were aware of the difference between clinical and educational sport psychology. Three quarters of the athletes questioned reported that they did not feel they had adequate sport psychology knowledge, and just over a third of those questioned reported ever having attended an organized clinic about, or containing, sport psychology (Sullivan & Hodge, 1991).

Of all the athletes questioned, two thirds reported using sport psychology as a part of their training, and 87% of all the athletes reported that their use of sport psychology was self-instructed (an interesting finding since 75% of the athletes did not feel as though they had a sufficient understanding of the field). Over 70% of the athletes questioned in this study reported that they were open to working with a sport psychologist, and only 33% felt as though their psychological needs were being appropriately met. Conversely, 66% of the responding athletes believed that they would perform better if they had a sport

psychologist working with their coach (Sullivan & Hodge, 1991). From examining this study, one can clearly see that a disparity exists between the perceived benefits of sport psychology and the actual hiring of sport psychologists. Obviously more must be done to examine the factors involved in the process of hiring and/or consulting with a sport psychologist. There must be some other factors not yet explored that can explain this contradiction.

Another study that examined how athletes and coaches perceive sport psychology consultation was performed by Gentner, Fisher, and Wrisberg (2004). Using the Consultant Evaluation Form, developed by Partington and Orlick (1987), 106 collegiate athletes and 12 collegiate coaches were asked to describe their perceptions of their consultations with graduate students training to become sport psychologists along a variety of factors (e.g., useful knowledge, trustworthiness, fitting in with the team, etc.). Overall, Gentner et al. found that the participants' perceptions of the graduate students were universally high, and matched closely to the ratings in other research in which professional sport psychologists were rated.

Unfortunately, Gentner et al. (2004) collapsed the results from both athletes and coaches into the same data set, so it is not readily apparent from this study what, if

any, differences exist in the perceptions of athletes versus those of coaches about sport psychology. Given that coaches more often than not are the final gatekeepers responsible for allowing or blocking access to a team, this is a major oversight.

Van Raalte, Brewer, Matheson, and Brewer (1996) examined how British athletes perceived sport and mental health practitioners. Much in the same fashion as previous research, sport psychologists were found to be perceived as both beneficial (Sullivan & Hodge, 1991; Van Raalte et al., 1992), and occupying a professional space or role that falls between coaches and mental health professionals (Van Raalte et al., 1992). Van Raalte et al. (1996) attribute these perceptions to one of two potential explanations. First, they say that the perceptions may indicate a uniform international understanding that sport psychology has clear benefits associated with it, and that mental health professionals are increasingly held in higher esteem. On the other hand, Van Raalte et al. go on to say that these perceptions may indicate a certain amount of confusion or misunderstanding about the field as a whole. Much like confusion exists in the public about the education, training, and expertise of clinical psychologists (Benjamin, 1986; Nunnally and Kittross 1958; Wollersheim & Walsh, as

cited by Van Raalte et al., 1996), the same could be taking place with regards to the field of sport psychology, regardless of the high esteem in which the field is held.

Without being able to go further than what the hard data suggest, though, it is impossible to determine which of the two hypotheses is more correct. Even a potential combination of the two explanations is impossible to determine without first going back to the clients and asking them, specifically, about their thoughts on the field.

In an attempt to examine how one's perceptions about sport psychology may be affected, Donohue et al. (2004) examined how different interview techniques might affect (and potentially improve) athletes' perspectives on sport psychology consultation. Using two different interview techniques, participants were given a questionnaire about their attitudes towards seeking sport psychology consultation both before and after the intervention. One interview format focused on discussing the athletes' experiences in sports, while the other outlined sport psychology and its potential benefits.

Donohue et al. (2004) found that the latter interview format (i.e., outlining sport psychology) was more effective at enhancing the perception of the athletes' need for sport psychology than simply discussing one's experiences in

sports. That being said, neither interview format enhanced the athletes' perceptions of openness to discuss personal issues with a sport psychologist, nor the athletes' tolerance of the stigma associated with seeking sport psychology consultation. Furthermore, the participants who received the discussion of sports interview reported an actual decrease in openness from pre- to post-intervention.

#### Coaches' Perceptions of Sport Psychology

At the same time and in much the same fashion as the topic was explored with athletes, Sullivan and Hodge (1991) examined how coaches perceive the field of sport psychology. When asked about their personal interpretation of the term "sport psychology," the coaches listed a variety of labels, including: attitude, confidence/positivity, control and coping, mental preparation, motivation, goal setting, focus/visualization/imagery, and relaxation (Sullivan & Hodge, 1991). On a scale rating the importance of sport psychology, Sullivan and Hodge found that the coaches' average rating was 8.37, with a similarly high rating that related the use of psychological skills to elite sporting success (8.64).

Interestingly, while the coaches revealed such high ratings and perceptions of the usefulness of sport psychology, only 45% claimed to understand the difference

between clinical and educational sport psychology. Of those, many of the coaches were found to possess an erroneous understanding of the difference between the two disciplines. Sullivan and Hodge (1991) also reported that the coaches' main source for information about sport psychology was from textbooks.

Perhaps the most interesting finding was that over 95% of the coaches who participated in this study were both interested in working with a sport psychologist and thought that such work would have a direct benefit on the performance of their athletes. However, only 37% reported that they felt they were meeting the psychological needs of the athletes, and a mere 6.5% reported actually working with a sport psychologist (Sullivan & Hodge, 1991). One is left asking the question then - if the coaches have such high ratings of sport psychology and such an overwhelming view of the potential benefits offered, what is it that is holding them back from actually hiring someone, on either a full or part time basis? This comes down to the center of the question being examined in this paper. By examining these questions from a qualitative perspective, the hope is that we will gain clarity and insight into where the disconnect is taking place between the perceived benefits of sport psychology in the face of relatively low employment.

Another study by Ottley (2000) examined the knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of a group of coaches and athletes from Trinidad and Tobago regarding sport psychology consultation. In this study, Ottley found that while coaches are somewhat more educated about sport psychology than athletes are, both groups have an insufficient knowledge of sport psychology. Further, both coaches and athletes reportedly had an interest in receiving sport psychology services. A closely related study by Alleyne (2004) with a group of cricketers from Barbados revealed very similar results. That is, that coaches, while they may have a positive view of sport psychology, were somewhat undereducated about what sport psychology is, and what a sport psychologist does. Much like the questions raised by Sullivan and Hodge (1991), one is left wondering why sport psychologists are not in higher demand.

Zakrajsek and Zizzi (2008) examined the attitudes and readiness of coaches to use sport psychology, in addition to the impact of an educational workshop on coaches' attitudes and usage of sport psychology. With mostly high school coaches as participants, a total of 53 coaches completed all of the stages of the study (pre-workshop, post-workshop, 4 week follow up). While Zakrajsek and Zizzi found some evidence that the sport psychology workshop intervention

used in their study had an impact on the behaviors of the coaches, the results were mixed. After the 4 week follow up, 13% of the coaches' attitudes changed from not thinking of using the services of a sport psychologist to starting to think about using a sport psychologist. However, while the coaches' reports of personal openness and intentions to use a sport psychologist improved after the workshop, those factors returned to close to baseline at the 4 week follow up. Also, there was no change found in behaviors related to using a sport psychologist, such as contacting a sport psychologist, or seeking out more information about sport psychology (Zakrajsek & Zizzi).

Zakrajsek and Zizzi (2008) suggest that a sport psychology workshop can impact a coach's readiness in the direction of seeking out the services of a sport psychologist but, in general, this will only be true for a small percentage of coaches (13-16%). Furthermore, the positive impact of such a workshop is difficult to sustain over time.

While insightful, the results of Zakrajsek and Zizzi (2008) are not exactly encouraging to those individuals attempting to promote the field of sport psychology. Clearly, more must be done to examine what factors would promote coaches' use of sport psychology services.

Pain and Harwood (2004) examined how the field of sport psychology is viewed within the English soccer community. According to Pain and Harwood, there has been an increased interest in the field that has occurred in the past few years in England as part of an initiative by England's national governing body for soccer (The Football Association, or FA) to promote the awareness and use of sport psychology across a variety of sport settings, from youth to professional soccer. Part of a strategy by the FA to improve the development of better coaches and players through educational and service-oriented enterprises, this has been mainly comprised of courses aimed at different populations (i.e., coaches, players and support staff) to raise awareness of sport psychology and make the field (and professionals working therein) more accessible (Pain & Harwood, 2004; TheFA.com, 2004).

In part to attempt to examine how this initiative by the FA has been received so far, Pain and Harwood (2004) used a mixed methods design that employed both quantitative questionnaires to determine what perceptions individuals had about sport psychology, as well as qualitative interviews to examine what potential barriers might exist with relation to a sport psychologist gaining entry to a team. The

participants for this study consisted of a mix of coaches and athletic directors of youth soccer academies.

Much of the results from the quantitative data replicate previous findings showing that there is a great deal of misconceptions about the field of sport psychology (Pain & Harwood, 2004). For example, the majority of the participants reported a moderate knowledge of basic performance topics within sport psychology (e.g., goal setting, motivation), and a poor understanding of non-performance topics (e.g., lifestyle counseling, communication training).

However, probably the most interesting (and arguably most important) aspects of this paper are the investigation, ranking, and discussion of the barriers that currently exist with respect to individuals seeking out and employing the services of a sport psychologist. Pain and Harwood (2004) revealed six underlying dimensions of the barriers facing sport psychologists as they seek to gain entry to sports teams. Those barriers included: negative perceptions of psychology, lack of knowledge about sport psychology, appropriate integration with players and coaches, role and service clarity, practical constraints (e.g., financing), and perceived value of sport psychology. Of those six, practical constraints (and financing in particular) was

identified as the most prominent barrier (Pain & Harwood, 2004).

When put in the context of each other, the quantitative and qualitative data collected by Pain and Harwood (2004) provide a somewhat complete picture of how sport psychology is perceived, how those perceptions came about, and what barriers exist. The results from the questionnaires seem to suggest that the general lack of knowledge about sport psychology underlies many of the barriers uncovered during the interviews (Pain & Harwood, 2004).

Pain and Harwood (2004) go on to suggest that, in order to try and overcome some of these barriers, the concepts and language of sport psychology must be made more accessible to potential clients. Furthermore, gaining the approval and acceptance of the coach is integral to overcoming the barriers that exist.

That being said, there remains much to be explored. For example, Pain and Harwood's (2004) article is limited to individuals in the English soccer community. More research in other cultural and athletic backgrounds is key to determine if there are any other barriers that exist, and what, if any, universal strategies may be employed to break those barriers down.

The most recent literature with regards to how the field of sport psychology is viewed by coaches has been produced by Wrisberg, Simpson, Loberg, and Withycombe (2008). In an examination of coaches (in addition to athletes and athletic administrators), Wrisberg et al. found that over 80% of the coaches with a sport psychologist available to them were willing to seek that person's services, either for themselves or their athletes. Furthermore, only 0.04% of the coaches who participated in their study claimed to be opposed to employing a sport psychologist.

In addition to the data about how coaches perceive the field of sport psychology, Wrisberg et al. (2008) also revealed what may be a potential barrier in hiring or gaining access to a sport psychologist - funding. In their collection of open-ended comments from both coaches and athletic administrators, a lack of financial resources was cited as a barrier to employing a sport psychologist.

#### Overall review

The literature discussed above seems to indicate that sport psychologists are generally viewed in a positive, helpful light by both athletes and coaches alike, but there are a number of issues that must still be addressed. First and foremost, we must examine more closely the fact that

while the field is viewed as beneficial, there are a variety of misconceptions that still exist about the field, and the majority of potential clients are not employing a trained professional to take advantage of the potential benefits.

Secondary to that is an examination of what potential barriers might exist in trying to gain access to a sport psychologist. Wrisberg et al. (2008) provide some examples, but more data must be collected in order to fully understand the perceptions of coaches.

While much of the literature published so far on this topic is informative from the standpoint of what athletes' and coaches' perceptions are, there is very little in the way of describing why those perceptions exist, and what, if anything, can be done to improve those perceptions. Pain and Harwood (2004) provide a good start in this respect, but much more must be done to further examine these questions.

Much of this may be attributed to the fact that few people have looked at this subject from a qualitative perspective. Much of the research done to this point has been quantitative in nature and, as such, has not been able to directly look at where certain perceptions may arise from, how they may be changed and, if necessary, improved. There is a variety of research that looks at what perceptions exist, but until we start to look at where those

perceptions come from, the field of sport psychology will not be able to effectively advance and promote itself to clients.

Another gap in the literature to date is the fact that very little research has been conducted in the United States. Much has been done to gain perspectives from other nations (e.g., Sweden, New Zealand, and England), but little has been done to study how sport psychology is viewed in arguably the largest market for sport in the entire world.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of NCAA Division IA coaches about the field of applied sport psychology. This chapter is presented in the following sections: (a) research design, (b) participants, (c) procedures, (d) instrumentation, and (e) data analysis.

#### Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, consisting of semi-structured interviews. The questions were designed to probe how collegiate coaches perceive the field of sport psychology. A qualitative design was used because it was believed that this would be the best means of obtaining meaningful data from the target population. Additionally, a qualitative design was employed so that practitioners in the field of applied sport psychology might be able to gain a deeper, richer understanding of what factors exist among coaches, who are often seen as a group of potential clients for the services of sport psychologists. Many of the studies conducted on this topic to this point have relied primarily upon quantitative measures to obtain data regarding how potential clients

(including, but not limited to, coaches) view the field of sport psychology and the potential benefits it may provide to them. By investigating the topic from a qualitative perspective, it was hoped that a "behind the numbers" view might be obtained, to determine exactly how sport psychologists are perceived by coaches, expressed in their own words. As Glesne and Peshkin (1992) state, "the openness of qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to approach the inherent complexity of social interaction, and do justice to that complexity" (p. 7).

#### Participants

For the purposes of this study, head coaches working at NCAA Division IA schools were asked to participate. This population was chosen for a variety of reasons. Collegiate coaches have been chosen over other populations of coaches (e.g., high school, professional) due to the fact that much of the previous research in this area has focused on collegiate coaches. Coaches from NCAA Division IA have been specifically selected since Division IA represents the pinnacle of collegiate athletics. The athletic teams that represent Division IA schools are those that are most visible in the media (both audio-visual and print), and receive the most attention from the public. Even though the vast majority of Division IA athletic departments do not

turn a profit (NCAA, 2006), the budgets supporting those athletic programs are typically large enough to attract and employ more experienced and knowledgeable coaches. This is primarily due to the fact that Division IA represents the highest level of collegiate competition within the NCAA. Furthermore, the sample was limited to coaches whose teams had attended the previous year's championships in their respective sports. This decision was made for two reasons. First was to try and limit the population to be sampled so as not to be overwhelming. Second, this decision was made in an attempt to further sample those teams at the higher levels of competition. The assumption was that if teams had gone to the previous year's championships, then they had achieved a certain degree of success in the past. As a result of this delimitation, the population from which the participants were sampled was limited to 64 teams for all but one of the sports sampled. The exception to this was men's volleyball, in which, due to a differing competitive structure, only four teams are invited to the national championships each year.

A sample of 14 coaches participated in this study, with an equal split between male and female coaches. Male coaches currently working with male teams and female coaches currently working with female teams were recruited to

participate in this study. This decision was made to attempt to control for any gender interference effects that might have been present.

Additionally, the field of sport psychology seeks to provide services to both male and female clients alike, so it was hoped that a mix of coaches from both genders would allow for a broader level of input and perspectives about the subject in question. While the results of a qualitative study cannot be generalized, they do allow for a pluralist and complex description of the research topic (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). As such, the rationale behind this decision was aimed at getting a broad cross-section of opinions among coaches.

The sample was limited to head coaches with a minimum of 5 years coaching experience at the Division IA level. Furthermore, it was required that each coach have at least 1 year's experience as a head coach. At such a high level of competition, it was important to make sure that coaches had a minimum of experience upon which to comment for this study. In addition, the sample was limited to coaches with at least 1 year of experience at the institution where they were currently employed when contacted to participate. This was important so that transitional factors (i.e., adjusting

to a new city, school, and team) would not influence the feedback given by the participants.

It was originally intended that only coaches who were not currently employing, and had not employed, the services of a sport psychologist to work with their team during the last academic year would be asked to participate in this study. The assumption behind this decision was that, presumably, coaches currently employing a sport psychologist had a positive perception of sport psychology, and barriers that may exist to accessing the services of a sport psychologist had been overcome. Unfortunately, due to a miscommunication during the pre-screenings of two participants, two of the 14 coaches interviewed were in fact, employing a sport psychologist at the time of the interview. The interviews were completed at the discretion of the researcher, since it was believed that these interviews provided additional insight into the questions presented in the study. That said, the data from these two interviews were not included in the main data set used to generate the codes and themes discussed in Chapter 4. Rather they were used to inform the discussion of the data, and provide insight into the directions that future research might take.

Coaches from the following sports participated in the study: basketball (male only), baseball (male), softball (two female), soccer (male and female), swimming (male and female), volleyball (male and female), golf (male and two female), and tennis (male only). The sports in which two coaches are listed as having been interviewed are those in which one of the coaches was currently employing a sport psychologist. While the selection of each specific sport was predominantly an arbitrary decision, there was an intentional 60-40 split between team and individual sports, once again to gain a broad perspective about how coaches from all types of sports perceive the field of sport psychology.

#### Procedures

Upon obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) ethics approval to conduct the present study, the following procedures took place in order to make contact with prospective participants, and collect data. The steps involved were: (a) the pre-selection of eligible participants, (b) making contact with individuals who had been identified as eligible for participation, (c) conducting the actual interviews, and (d) ensuring the anonymity of all the participants.

#### *Pre-selection of Participants*

Prior to contacting potential participants, the researcher pre-selected potential participants in the following manner. For each sport, a list of the Division IA schools that attended the previous year's championships (i.e., 2007/2008 academic year) in that sport were compiled by researching the NCAA website for descriptive information about the athletic programs at schools across the United States. From this list of qualifying schools, one male and one female coach were randomly selected for each sport to be contacted first.

#### *Contact*

In total, the researcher attempted to make contact with 59 coaches. Potential participants were first contacted by email on a Tuesday, which briefly outlined the study and the requirements for inclusion as a participant (as outlined above)(a copy of the contact email may be found in Appendix A). The email asked the potential participants if they qualified to participate in the study based on the delimitations of the study, and to reply whether or not they were interested in participating in the study. If no reply was received by the following Tuesday morning, the coaches were sent a second email, in the same manner and of the same format as the first. If the participants still had not replied by the second Tuesday after the initial email was

sent out (i.e., 2 weeks after initial contact), they were contacted by phone twice to follow up, once on the second Tuesday, and once on the Thursday immediately following. If contact could not be made by phone in this manner, the participant was removed from the list of prospective participants, and an alternate participant was randomly selected from the previously compiled list. This alternate was then contacted in the same manner as was attempted for the previous participant. This process continued until, at the discretion of the researcher and having received a consensus from the dissertation committee, saturation had been reached in the data. In total, 14 coaches agreed to participate.

Once contact was established either by phone or email, a time was set up to speak on the phone to briefly discuss the study in more detail and answer any questions that the participants may have had. If possible, the interview and phone contact were to take place during the same call. If the participant was not available and he/she fit the criteria and agreed to participate, a time was set up to conduct the interview at a later date.

### *Interviews*

Once each participant had been screened for suitability and agreed to participate in the study, a time was arranged

to conduct a telephone interview. All of the interviews took place over the phone, and calls were made by the researcher to each participant from an office at Temple University. Prior to the commencement of each interview, each participant was read a non-written consent statement that detailed the objectives of the study, how the interview would be conducted, and informed the participants that participation in the study constituted their consent for the researcher to record the interview (see Appendix E).

Interviews used a semi-structured interview format, and lasted between 30-45 minutes. Each interview was conducted in a single session. With the participant's consent, the interviews were audio recorded using a Sony ICD-MX20 digital voice recorder manufactured in China, and a NexxTech phone recording controller, Model #4308998, also manufactured in China, to allow the recording of the telephone interviews.

Once all interviews were completed, the audio recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher for the purposes of data analysis. Currently all recordings and transcript materials are stored in a locked file in the researcher's home office. All materials will be destroyed five years after the completion of this study.

*Confidentiality*

In order to ensure anonymity, each participant was assigned a pseudonym at the start of transcribing his/her interview. While the transcripts themselves were largely left unedited, any materials that would personally identify participants were deleted from any copies of the transcripts supplied to external auditors for the purpose of data analysis, in addition to the final manuscript.

#### Instrumentation

With the present study employing qualitative methods, a "researcher as instrument" model was used (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). An interview guide was established based on the literature available on the current topic (see Appendix B), in addition to insights gained from a pilot interview. The pilot interview took place with an assistant coach of a varsity team at Temple University who had done work with the researcher in an applied sport psychology setting before. The pilot interview lasted approximately 26 minutes, and was conducted in person at Temple University and recorded using a Sony ICD-MX20 digital voice recorder. The pilot interview helped to streamline and finalize the interview guide that was used in this study. In addition to the questions contained in the interview guide, probing techniques were also used by the researcher to elicit more detailed answers from all the participants. These probing techniques included

statements such as "can you tell me more" in addition to follow-up questions about specific statements made by the participants during each interview.

### *Trustworthiness and Validity*

Research of any kind requires one to ensure that the data, and ultimately the conclusions, that one produces are both trustworthy and valid. Research that is qualitative in nature requires some unique exercises in order to ensure that both of these areas are satisfied in a rigorous fashion. Bracketing is one such exercise by which a researcher attempts to remove "conceptual biases that may serve to distort one's interpretive vision" (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997, p. 47). That being said, complete bracketing (i.e., the complete removal of one's biases from the interpretive process) is impossible (Pollio et al., 1997). As such, researchers tend to favor a positive application of bracketing, in which one attempts to identify and correct instances in which the interpretive process has been skewed (Pollio et al.). That is, one acknowledges the presence of one's biases within the research, yet at the same time shows that as long as they do not interfere with objective conclusions, it allows them to remain within the data.

For the purposes of this study, the two main ways in which bracketing was accomplished were: a bias statement and the partial interpretation of data in a group setting.

*Bias statement and personal context.* A bias statement is an exercise whereby the researcher writes down a personal statement in which he/she reflects upon his/her history and current concerns with the phenomenon. The idea is that an intense introspective exercise allows the researcher to become attuned to his/her presuppositions about the nature and meaning of the topic in question (Pollio et al., 1997). With this increased awareness of presuppositions and biases, a conscious effort may be taken to control for them in the interpretive process. The following is a first person account of my experiences.

I am a 29 year old white male of European heritage, and I was born and raised in the city of Toronto, Canada. I am currently completing the 5<sup>th</sup> year of my doctoral studies in Kinesiology at Temple University, with an emphasis on Sport and Exercise Psychology. From the Fall of 2005 until the Spring of 2009, I was employed at Temple University as a teaching assistant, a position in which I was responsible for teaching classes in the Kinesiology department. I was able to do this teaching somewhat autonomously, and my teaching assignments consisted of a variety of courses,

including: beginning tennis, beginning golf, and a motor behavior class. Additionally, from the Fall of 2005 until the Spring of 2009, I volunteered my services as a sport psychology consultant for the women's fencing team at Temple University. This work involved both group consultation with the team at large in which I provided psycho-educational services about mental skills conditioning and team dynamics, as well as individual consultation with specific athletes on a case by case basis. Ultimately, my career goals are to establish a private practice in sport psychology in which I am able to support myself and my future family.

I first became interested in sport psychology by accident. Having been a competitive sailor since the age of 14, I had dealt with many issues within sport, but had never heard anyone speak of sport psychology as a distinct discipline before I was in my 3<sup>rd</sup> year of university at the University of Western Ontario in London, Canada, at the age of 20. At that time I was exploring different areas of study in which to focus my upcoming honors thesis (a requirement for completing my B.A. in Psychology), which I would be completing during my 4<sup>th</sup> and final year of university. While originally interested in forensic psychology, when a professor who was familiar with my sailing background suggested sport psychology, I was intrigued. I was lucky

enough to be able to talk to a professor who was working on research in the field of imagery and self-talk and, after a brief discussion, he agreed to advise me during the coming year.

My senior year of university was one which opened my eyes to the field, and really built my interest to the point where I decided that a career in sport psychology was very attractive. However, knowing that graduate work was a requirement to pursue such a career, I began the process of researching various schools at which I might want to study. For the most part I knew that I did not want to be doing research on a full time basis, but rather was more interested in the applied aspects of the field (i.e., working with athletes). To that end, I applied, and was accepted by, Argosy University, in Phoenix, AZ, where I spent two years earning my M.A. in sport and exercise psychology. This was a great experience for me, because the program at Argosy was almost entirely applied in nature and, as such, I spent a great deal of time working with a baseball team at one of the local junior colleges in Phoenix. This experience only served to deepen my interest in the field, and ultimately led me to search out doctoral programs in the field. Once again, after an extensive research process into different schools and what each

offered, I ended up applying, and being accepted to Temple University, my first choice as it turned out. While here I have been fortunate enough to have a variety of experiences working in the field of applied sport psychology. I have attended a variety of conferences, and increased my knowledge of, and passion for, the field of study.

That being said, one of the things that has been a constant source of concern for me was what seemed to be a rather nebulous perception regarding the popularity of sport psychology. Almost since my first introduction to the field, I had been aware that there existed a perception within the sport psychology community that the popularity of the field was just about to explode onto the public's awareness, and within a few years, sport psychology consultants would be in demand in every sphere of sport, from youth to professional leagues. As my education progressed, though, I started to see more and more that this might not be the case. In fact, individuals in the sport psychology community had been making claims such as this for the last 20 years, and yet, the field had not expanded to the degree that people had expected. Gains had been made, but not nearly as many or as quickly as one might have been led to believe.

Based on that fact, I started to get the idea that there must be something going on, either within the sport

psychology community, or among our potential clients that is keeping the field from expanding as much as practitioners might hope. Alternatively, the expectations of sport psychology consultants may simply be too ambitious. Either way, as one who plans on making his living practicing sport psychology, the topic is of great interest to me.

From my review of previous research, I had only one major expectation going into this study - that the major barrier holding coaches back from hiring sport psychologists was almost purely financial. I have had the opportunity to work with a number of athletes and teams in my short career in the field of sport psychology so far, but the majority of those experiences were on a volunteer basis. Looking back, I doubt I would have had the opportunity to work in many, if any, of those settings had my services not been free.

To a lesser extent was also my perception that there were still many coaches who were not sold on the idea that sport psychology held merit and could benefit athletes. While my experiences with coaches have mostly been positive, I have in the past had experiences in which I had to confront some negative perceptions about sport psychology, and worked to dispel what I believed to be a widespread belief among coaches that sport psychology does not offer much benefit in the way of actual, on field results.

Entering this research, these two beliefs were my largest sources of bias and preconception. As such, I took great care to ensure that I tested my results and emergent understandings against the understandings of others familiar with qualitative research. This was accomplished through external audits.

*External audits.* Once the data were collected, the data were also interpreted, at least partially, with the help of two individuals not connected to the present study. Pollio et al. (1997) advocate this approach to validate one's findings for two reasons. First, this approach was beneficial because the auditors, through a critical evaluation of the data, were in an ideal position to notice interpretations that were not supported in the data. Second, this approach allowed the auditors to evaluate alternative perspectives more readily. Once the data were collected, two individuals not related to this research study were selected to help partially analyze the data. These individuals were both recent graduates of the Kinesiology department at Temple University, with a Sport and Exercise Psychology concentration and a familiarity with qualitative research. Discussions with these individuals helped to refine the conclusions drawn from the research, in addition to helping to control for any biases on my part.

*Research memos.* Owing to the fact that qualitative research is very much an iterative process (i.e., "an upward moving spiral toward creating meaning" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 262)), one of the ways in which I stayed connected with my data over the course of this study was through periodically writing research memos.

There were a variety of purposes for these memos. First, they allowed me to stay connected to my data throughout the process of data collection and analysis. Second, they allowed me to organize my thoughts about the data and aided the inductive process that is the cornerstone of qualitative research (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). By periodically writing research memos I was able to track how I came to certain conclusions, and analyze my decision making process for potential sources of bias. Finally, while an open-coding procedure acquainted me with the minutia of the data on a line-by-line basis, the memos provided me with more of a "big picture" perspective for my data. This combination of looking at the data from both a micro and macro scale allowed me a more complete perspective of the data I had collected.

*Member checks.* The final method of attempting to ensure the results of this study were both valid and trustworthy came in the form of member checking. Once all of the

interviews had been transcribed, each of the participants' respective interview transcripts was supplied to them. This was done so that they might have an opportunity to provide feedback about the final transcripts. The participants were emailed their respective transcripts, and asked to verify that the comments contained therein were accurate reflections of their thoughts and feelings. Unfortunately, none of the coaches responded to the researcher's requests for member checks.

#### Data Analysis

According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006), there are three main steps to analyzing qualitative research data which work in an interactive, iterative fashion: data preparation, data exploration, and data reduction. The data preparation phase consisted of transcribing all of the interviews verbatim into a series of written documents, to allow for easier analysis in the later stages. Transcription took place as soon as possible after each interview was completed. As such, this phase of data analysis largely overlapped with the data collection process.

The data exploration and reduction phases also overlapped somewhat, and consisted of the process by which I started to think about and organize the data. The data

exploration phase consisted mostly of reflexive memos in which I wrote down my thoughts about the data.

After completing each interview, I replayed and listened to each recording. During that time, I wrote a memo documenting my thoughts about each interview, detailing my thoughts about the interview and what I felt the data from that interview contributed to the overall project. Further, I wrote a more detailed memo after every four interviews to document what I thought the direction was that the data were taking me up until that point.

The data reduction phase was somewhat more of an in-depth process by which I started to examine the interviews and began to extract codes from the data using an open coding procedure. Through this process I was able to organize the interviews together according to codes. From these codes, the ultimate themes and subthemes of the data emerged (a discussion of these themes can be found in Chapter 4).

According to Marshall and Rossman (1999) coding is the "formal representation of analytic thinking" (p. 155). Ultimately, this coding served to generate categories and themes from which to further analyze the data and understand the topic and/or setting in question. Through my analysis of

the data, I was able to generate 8 primary codes from the data, with a corresponding 41 sub-codes (see Appendix F).

Codes were generated while reviewing each transcript on a line by line basis. Each response given was assigned a code, based on my interpretation of the meaning behind each statement made. Codes were assigned a tag, which were inserted into the transcript itself. The coding key was revised periodically as a result of the evolution of understanding that took place during data exploration and reduction phases. Each revision of the coding key consisted of reviewing, updating, and grouping codes together until all of the data were analyzed.

Another aspect of the data exploration and reduction phases that Marshall and Rossman (1999) make note of are the processes of testing emergent understandings and searching for alternative explanations. When one tests emergent understandings, typically one attempts to evaluate a number of factors. First, developing understandings are tested for plausibility, a process that can involve a search for contradictory evidence or alternative explanations for any conclusions that the researcher may have found, after which the data provide a greater base of understanding. Second, the researcher should seek to evaluate the data from a pragmatic angle. That is, the usefulness of the data is

tested to see how well the data shed light onto the research question at hand (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

The process of testing emergent understandings and searching for alternate explanations were tested through discussions with the external auditors. After providing the auditors with several raw transcripts to review, the researcher discussed his impressions of the data with the auditors over the phone. Each auditor was spoken to at a different time, so as to prevent any transference of bias between auditors, or from the researcher to both auditors. Both the researcher's and auditors' impressions about the data were shared during these conversations, and these discussions helped to refine and deepen the conclusions ultimately made about the data.

All of the previously mentioned phases of data analysis are oriented within the grounded theory approach to qualitative research. That is, the perspective of analysis begins by connecting with the data, and ends with a theory that is generated by, and grounded within, the data (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

## CHAPTER 4

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of NCAA Division IA collegiate coaches about sport psychology. Specifically, the following three research questions were addressed:

1) How do collegiate coaches perceive of the merit of the various titles used by professionals working in the area of sport and exercise psychology?

a. What other titles for these types of professionals, other than "sport psychologist," are coaches aware of?

b. What are the coaches' impressions of those titles (i.e., are those titles interpreted as making one more/less qualified?)

2) How do coaches perceive the field of sport psychology as a whole (i.e., the potential benefits of employing an applied sport psychologist)?

a. To what do coaches perceive that the term "sport psychology" refers?

b. Do coaches believe that the field of sport psychology has merit?

c. Do coaches believe that sport psychology can benefit their respective teams? What experiences have coaches had working with sport psychologists?

d. What do coaches perceive to be the roles and responsibilities of a sport psychologist?

e. What kind of interactions with sport psychologists are coaches interested in?

3) What potential barriers must be overcome in order to make sport psychology more appealing and available to coaches in their role as potential clients, and how might those barriers be overcome from the coaches point of view?

a. What potential barriers exist that may prevent coaches from employing the services of a sport psychology professional?

b. What do coaches think would help to overcome the barriers mentioned above?

This chapter is presented in the following sections: (a) Demographics, (b) Themes and Subthemes, (c) Discussion of Research Questions, (d) General Discussion, and (e) Recommendations for Practitioners.

#### Demographics

Fourteen NCAA DI coaches were interviewed for this study. Twelve of the coaches met the eligibility requirements as set out in Chapter 3, while two of the

coaches, due to a miscommunication during prescreening, did not. The reason that these two coaches did not meet the requirements is that they were currently working with an SPC at the time of the interview. In both cases, this fact came up during the interview itself. At the discretion of the researcher, the interviews were completed as scheduled, but the data were not included in the data set from which the codes, and ultimate themes described below were generated. Data collection began on January 26, 2009 and finished on June 18, 2009. All of the interviews were conducted over the phone, and the time required for the interviews ranged from 22-51 minutes ( $M = 34.5$  minutes). Seven female coaches and seven male coaches were interviewed. All but one of the coaches were Caucasians, with the exception being an Asian. The coaches' ages ranged from 38-64 years ( $M = 48$  years) with the number of years as the head coach at their respective schools ranging from 3-25 years ( $M = 12.29$  years). A complete list of coach demographics may be found in Table 1.

#### Themes and Subthemes

This section consists of an in depth discussion of the four main themes and 10 associated subthemes that emerged through an analysis of the data. The order that the themes have been organized and presented is such that a better

Table 1.

*Coach Demographics*

	Sport	Pseudonym <sup>a</sup>	Years as a head coach	Age
<b>Women</b>				
	Volleyball	Lucy	6	53
	Golf	Natalie	14	50
	Swimming	Valerie	5	31
	Soccer	Stacy	7	48
	Softball	Paula	17	52
	<i>Golf<sup>b</sup></i>	<i>Rebecca</i>	12	38
	<i>Softball<sup>b</sup></i>	<i>Linda</i>	3	38
<b>Men</b>				
	Golf	Phil	25	61
	Swimming	Steve	20	64
	Volleyball	Dave	15	49
	Baseball	Ryan	5	44
	Basketball	Joe	15	55
	Soccer	Mark	19	52
	Tennis	Andy	11	37
	<i>Average</i>		<i>12.43</i>	<i>48</i>

<sup>a</sup>All coach names have been changed to assigned pseudonyms to maintain anonymity.

<sup>b</sup>Coaches from whom data were collected, but whose data were not used to generate themes since they did not meet the delimitations of the study.

understanding of the overall impressions of coaches about the field of sport psychology may be gained. That is, by first understanding the general perceptions that a coach may have, the barriers that they perceive to hiring or employing an SPC, and the hierarchy of support staff may be better understood. All coach names have been substituted by pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. A list of all themes and associated subthemes may be found in Table 2.

Table 2.

*Themes and Subthemes*

Theme	Subtheme(s)
Perceptions	General Perceptions and Knowledge
	Titles
	Effectiveness
Desires	Familiarity
	Fit
	Expectations
Barriers	Finances
	Time
	Availability and Visibility
	Perceived Worth
<b>Hierarchy</b>	

*Theme #1: Perceptions - how do coaches generally view SPCs?*

The first theme that emerged - perceptions - revolved mostly around how the coaches viewed the field of sport psychology. The coaches' responses with regards to this theme could be subdivided in a further three subthemes: (a) the coaches' general perceptions and knowledge about the field of sport psychology, (b) the coaches' impressions of the various titles used by professionals in the field, and (c) the coaches' impressions about what makes an SPC effective.

*General perceptions and knowledge.* The majority of the participants in this study expressed positive perceptions of the field of sport psychology. When talking about the field of sport psychology, all of the coaches displayed an accurate knowledge of what kind of work professionals in the field do. In describing their perceptions about what sport psychology is, and what SPCs do in general, many of the coaches also included a variety of traditional mental skills topics in their definitions. Mark, a soccer coach, summed things up as a general approach to competition, and his sport in general, when asked what the term "sport psychology" referred to:

Mark: Just the mental aspect of athletics, what an individual has to do mentally to prepare himself to play at his best.

Q: Okay, now in your understanding or in your opinion, what types of things does that cover as far as the mental preparation for the sport?

Mark: Just being mentally focused in the game, not letting outside stimuli affect your performance. Controlling the controllables, controlling the things you can control and letting the things that you can't control such as weather, fans comments, the referee, have an impact on your performance.

Steve, a swimming and diving coach, echoed those comments with his own statement about his perception of sport psychology:

Steve: I think sport psychology refers to mainly performance; maximizing performance in competition.

Q: Okay. Now is it just in competition or is there anything else related to it?

Steve: Well, as I said, mainly I think that it refers to maximizing performance in competition but I think to extend it further, there is... there are I think some performance parameters that can be improved, in practice that sport psychology could help with. Yes.

Q: Right. Okay, now you said there could be some performance factors that could be improved. What would . . . what might those be?

Steve: Well, I think a couple things. That, you know, being able to concentrate on the task at hand, visualization of your performance, of anxiety with competition within the practice, and you know I think again, just staying on task and being able to concentrate during practice.

Stacy, another soccer coach, put things in terms of actual mental skills required to compete: "I would say the mental tools . . . skills and challenges that are a part of a competitive environment . . . I would say, dealing with success and failure . . . Confidence. Mental preparation I guess I would call it."

Connected to their impressions about what exactly sport psychology is, all of the coaches also expressed feelings that they thought the field of sport psychology directly related to their respective sports, and played a crucial role in the performance of their athletes. During the latter part of Mark's interview, he summed things up as such:

. . . I really feel that in our sport . . . 70% of the game at the Division-I level, is mental. The difference between, the difference between sixth and number eighty in the top eighty teams in the country is, I feel all mental. About five teams just have plain talent. But when you get . . . . You know the eightieth team and the sixth team, and I am just using that as an example, talent-wise it might not be any different and in all honesty, there might be more talent on the number eighty team, but they are not mentally strong and not mentally focused enough to be at the number six spot. And so that is where, I mean I think it is certainly in our game, a big part of how a team performs . . .

Stacy said that she enjoyed working with SPCs for a variety of reasons. When asked what she liked the most:

. . . I guess the ability for the players to express and learn ways to deal with their own psychological challenges. And again it is their ability to get those answers from someone other than the person who determines their playing time. It is a little easier to admit "I struggle with my confidence" to someone who is not going to have to put you on the field later.

While the coaches seemed to express mostly positive perceptions about sport psychology, in some instances, there were examples of coaches having somewhat negative perceptions about the field. Lucy, a volleyball coach, started by discussing her impressions of what sport

psychology is to her, and her disappointment at some of the shortcomings that she perceived within the field:

What I want it to refer to is peak performance . . . Many, many years ago, when I started buying sport psychology books, I was very disappointed because it was basically social psychology . . . and, so now I think we are getting to the point where it was a little bit more toward the individual and performance as opposed to social psych. If you ask me specifically, you know, based on the historical perspective, it has been social psychology.

Later, she would expand on this idea, expressing an opinion that to her, the performance enhancement aspects of sport psychology (or the widespread knowledge of them in the coaching community) are somewhat lacking:

There have been some things that have dealt with performance to things like mental practice and stuff like that; which is great. But there have not specifically been things for which I am searching and that is, you know, peak performance, how to deal with . . . How sleep has affected people. How scheduling has affected people. You know, what is the best schedule to have for practice. You know, is it two hours? Two and a half hours? Five hours off, and then another two and a half hours? Is it better to just go three hours and then have another twenty-one hours of rest? You know, learning schedules. How fatigue affects learning. How to measure fatigue other than being invasive and taking blood tests, and having to go through all that scientific stuff. If there is an easier way of measuring fatigue. So, all of those things are things that as a coach, you know I would hope that sport Psychology would be able to help me with... and I am a Psychology major, you know so there is... I am totally aware of all the different aspects of the field. And like I said in the past, I've been disappointed with it only being very limited . . . . It seems to be out of psychology, I mean out of sociology, sociological psych and education . . . . As opposed to some of the cognitive and learning psych.

*Titles - a rose by any other name?* This subtheme consisted of two main elements. That is, what alternate titles for an SPC were coaches aware of, and the coaches' specific impressions of a select list of alternate titles presented by the researcher. For the most part, many of the individual coaches had not heard of many different titles for sport psychologist, and individually were only able to contribute one or two suggestions in this regard. That being said, as a group, the participants did generate a list of 12 alternate titles that they were aware of, including: mental coach, mental skills coach, mental performance enhancer, mental trainer, life skills coach, performance consultant, performance coach, peak performance coach, mind coach, sport therapist, mental guru, sport vision specialist, and, somewhat in jest, one coach used the term brain doctor. Four of the coaches stated that they had not heard of any alternate titles for SPCs.

With regards to the coaches' reactions to the list of alternate titles presented by the researcher, the reactions were varied, and mostly reflected personal tastes. For example, a number of coaches indicated that they liked, or at the very worst were ambivalent to, the title "mental skills coach." Ryan, a baseball coach, indicated that an SPC's title was somewhat irrelevant to him, so long as there

was an understanding of what the underlying work entailed "I am aware of what sport psychology is and they can call it whatever they want but I mean... that would not sway me one way or the other."

On the other hand, Joe, a basketball coach, when asked his opinion of the title and whether he would have any interest of hiring someone who used the title "mental skills consultant" said:

Joe: No interest at all on my part. I think it is too sterile . . . Yeah, I think it is . . . too much formality there.

Q: Okay. So, what about it makes it feel just a little bit too sterile for you. Is there anything specific?

Joe: I think that we are in a world today to be honest with you that is semantic driven, and I think it is just a way of playing a game of semantics with young kids and/or young coaches, and I don't deem that as necessary. If you are a Trash Collector, then you are a Trash Collector . . . not a "Waste Management Consultant."

Andy reacted more specifically to the word

"consultant":

Well, I mean, a "consultant?" I mean, I don't know, it just . . . To me, you hear that. I don't know. If I heard someone with a title like that, I would... I would think . . . I don't know, I understand what the title is and I know that they could help, but I don't . . . My thought is that it would raise questions, let's just put it that way.

That being said, the majority of the coaches indicated that they preferred and favored titles that indicated an expert's field of specialty. For example, many of the

coaches interviewed stated that they preferred the term "mental skills consultant" over "performance consultant" or "performance coach" due to the fact that the former actually focused on the individual's specialty, while the latter two titles were somewhat vague. Phil said the following " . . . even though it is an enhancement to performance, I think more performance is physical and mental is mental, and again, that is just my way of looking at words."

Steve, when asked about his impressions about the terms "performance consultant" and "sport consultant" said:

Steve: Well, I think that can encompass a lot of things which would include mental skills and sport psychology but also could include a lot of other things.

Q: Okay. So it sounds like it is a little bit too broad for your taste?

Steve: Right.

Q: Okay. The next one is a "sport consultant."

Steve: Again, I think I would make the same statement as I did on the previous one, it is too broad to be associated with sport psychology although you would expect that, that might be part of it. Now a sport consultant almost sounds more like on the business end of things than on the performance end.

Pete, a tennis coach reacted in a similar way:

Well, I mean, "sport consultant?" I don't know, that could raise questions. What are you? Do you sell equipment or do you . . . . I don't know, I mean that is a pretty vague title. I don't know if that is somebody . . . I just look at that as just being vague.

Stacy summed her impressions of the alternate titles to "sport psychologist" as a general wariness about one's credentials or effectiveness:

I think . . . just personally, I would probably be a little more cautious when those titles are used and do a little more research into their, the effectiveness of the things that they do. I think there have been some effective people that define themselves in that field but I also think that there are some who may not have all of the tools necessary to teach someone in those areas.

Overall it appeared that despite their impressions of any alternate titles, the coaches preferred the term "sport psychologist" for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, it is the title most readily used to refer to professionals working in the field of sport psychology and, as such, the title that the coaches seemed to be most familiar with. As such, they indicated that this familiarity promoted a greater sense of ease, in that they did not require any further clarification about what services that person offered.

*Effectiveness.* While not accessed through a direct inquiry on the question guide, the effectiveness of SPCs (and what specific factors contributed to an SPCs effectiveness) was also a key perception that was shared by a number of coaches. Stacy related her opinions about what makes an SPC effective during a follow up question:

Q: How would you define a sport psychologist who is effective?

Stacy: Two ways: I think they are able to communicate the importance of the mental side of things and . . . and get players to buy into that, the importance of that, and that it is a skill that is learned and not

just something that happens . . . I think the really good ones are able to really get the student happy just to buy into that in the same way a strength coach would get them to buy into a strength program. They get them to buy into something that is going to help them and so they come out of that motivated to put in the time and effort it takes to get better at something. Obviously, the mental side of things. I think the really good ones too are also able to really relate and figure out what it is that a team or an individual needs to work on and address, so they are able to identify the issues and the problems and give them some concrete steps to solve that.

Phil, a golf coach, expressed his opinion about what would make an SPC, or any instructor for that matter, effective:

. . . And the best teachers I have ever met and the best mental coaches I have ever met are the ones that get you enough information and teach you enough about yourself that you can understand when you are out there by yourself, you can't call on your mental coach when you are coming down the stretch on the field . . . from that standpoint, I love the fact that the best coaches on both sides, teach you how to be self-sufficient.

Lucy related a story that spoke more towards what made one of her previous encounters with an SPC somewhat ineffective:

Q: Okay. Now you said a couple of years ago, you used [an SPC] for some visualization training. What was, how was that experience for you?

Lucy: It, it was okay. I am not sure that it was an ideal situation. I think that visualization training as a group, at least with girls or at least with our group, doesn't seem to be very productive, especially in the middle of the afternoon.

*Theme 2: Desires - What do coaches want?*

The second major theme that emerged from the data - desires - related mostly to the wants and expectations that coaches had with regards to any relationships they might have with SPCs. For the most part, this theme revolved around three main subthemes: (a) the coaches desire for an SPC to be familiar with the sport and specific team/athletes with whom they work, (b) the coaches' desire for feeling a level of "fit" (i.e., a shared philosophy, trust, and rapport) with any potential SPC they might work with, and (c) the expectations that the coach had for the working relationship with an SPC.

*Familiarity with the team and sport.* Virtually every coach interviewed expressed a desire for a minimum level of familiarity on the part of a potential SPC with both their sport in general, and their team and athletes in particular. They indicated that a minimum level of familiarity with both areas was essential for a variety of reasons. Stacy related the following with regards to her impressions of how familiarity played a role in how effective the previous work she had done with SPCs had been:

The great thing about bringing someone in when you are in a program like mine is it . . . . There is an outside voice, outside the coaching staff, that is helpful in developing those skills in the same way you know a strengthening and conditioning coach can bring

something to a table in a different voice . . . and without having that on a consistent basis, I don't think it makes it as effective. I still think they have been effective. They have been able to open the players eyes or reinforce, or introduce something that has been helpful sometimes to the whole group, sometimes to specific individuals within the group, but I don't think it is as effective as if we could have someone on a consistent basis.

Later she would add:

You know, and again I think it is, you know the effectiveness of the person, and you know what I mean, I think this has a huge piece of it because I think their . . . . Their ability to relate and interact with the players is a huge piece of this and . . . . You know, those are the ones who have been the most effective, you know have the most long-lasting effect I guess I would say.

Ryan expressed an explicit desire for anyone he might work with to also have sport specific knowledge and background:

You know, they have to be a knowledgeable person about the team. They just can't be a clinical psychologist so to speak . . . . You know, they have to have some kind of sports background at some point . . . . You know, and understanding what is involved with the sport. I think that is important.

Dave stated that without a minimum level of familiarity with the athletes and the team, any work with an SPC would be difficult:

Q: Okay. So it sounds like you want a very, very close interaction with that individual.

Dave: I think that is the only way sport psychology can truly be implemented because I think the guys have to buy into it. And to buy into it, they have to buy into the sport psychologist that is attempting to help them. I see it with our academic advisor. He has been with me

since 1995. And [name omitted] is in our gym on a regular basis. He is not behind a desk. He is talking with the guys on nonacademic stuff, you know just hanging out with them at times, and I think when he says to them, "Hey this is what we gotta do right now", they have no doubt. His credibility is at an all time high. And I kind of view a sport psychologist as that too, because you can never really truly see huge advancements as you are working through a sports psychologist. You can't, like for instance, a strength and conditioning guy you can go back to the bench press a month later and say, "Oh, my God. I have dropped 30 more pounds than I ever have before". A sport psychologist, you can't really say, "I have been tougher than I am before". And, but I think you have gotta have that belief and faith in who is doing what for you. So, you know, that is why I really, really believe somebody worth their weight has gotta make a commitment to a team.

*Fit with the team and the sport culture.* Connected with familiarity, was the idea of having a "fit" with whomever the coaches decided to work with. In many ways the concept of fit related to a shared philosophy or approach towards the work being done, and how that often fostered a relationship based on trust and rapport. Many of the coaches interviewed expressed feelings that a basic level of trust and rapport was essential for them in order for any working relationship they might have with an SPC to be both meaningful and productive.

For example, Natalie, a golf coach, reported that her school's athletic department was currently employing the services of an SPC who was also a faculty member in the psychology department at her institution at the time of her

interview. However, she reported that she did not employ his services with the team, though she was aware, and approved, of some of her athletes going to see him for personal issues. Rather than a negative perception of sport psychology or SPCs in general, Natalie said that she did employ his services because his area of specialty did not match her perceived needs for the team.

Q: Okay. So he doesn't do any group talks or anything for the team as well?

Natalie: No. I don't. No. We don't use him like that, we don't.

Q: Okay. Would you consider using him like that in the future or it is something you are not interested in?

Natalie: Not him, but absolutely I would use someone. In fact, I have a couple of kids that are on the [country name omitted] National Team and there is a woman named [name omitted] . . . . She is fantastic. If I had someone like that . . . I would use it a lot more because she is very good at what she does. But, I think for me it is a trust issue. Like, I want to make sure I know that person and what they are doing, and so I know . . . . I am no control freak at all, in fact I am pretty known for being very exclusionary in trying to get as many great people around my athletes as I can but for sport psychology, I want to make sure that I know that this person is very good and knows what they are doing.

Lucy related a similar tale. Apparently her school also has two individuals on faculty in the counseling psychology department who also do some work in the athletic department.

When asked why she was not using their services she said:

In terms of using them, it, right now, I think that all of the teams that are currently using them, are using them because of a problem as opposed to a . . . peak performance kind of thing . . . . And, you know

although I understand that the college athlete may have problems, like any problem any other person would be dealing with in college, I mean I totally understand that but that I don't consider sport psychology. What I want my performance coach or peak performance coach to do is help them beyond that. I want them to help get rid of mental barriers. I want them to help with focus . . . getting in, helping them learn how to get in flow. And quite frankly, nothing against the two people, [names omitted], I am not sure that they know how to help our athletes do that . . . . but that's . . . that is what I need.

Ryan also related his need for a personal fit, and how it was necessary for his players to feel comfortable and get the most out of the consultation:

. . . obviously you would want to establish a rapport, you know a trust level, with the players . . . So they are consistently being able to use the techniques that they are giving you. I would say obviously you would have to be around enough.

*Expectations for the consulting relationship.* Overall, the coaches had some minimum requirements for an SPC in order to consider working with one. Stacy noted that she required a minimum time commitment from an SPC to consider working with one, since, in her opinion, the timing of when an SPC comes to meet with her team played a large role in the effectiveness of the person:

You know, it doesn't do any good to have someone come in, in preseason, and talk about you know, confidence and what-not when all of a sudden in the middle of the season, you have lost four games in a row. Now what?

Lucy also added that, personally, she wanted an SPC who shared her philosophy about achieving peak performance, and

who could help her athletes understand the rigors of achieving that:

I think that they absolutely need to be able to help our players with understanding what it takes to become better . . . How much work and effort it . . . They need to put in, you know, from going from good to great. And, I think that most collegiate athletes coming in don't understand how much energy it takes to make a quantum LEAP. And that is where the psychologist needs to be able to come and say, "No, you know, what your coach is asking is totally unreasonable, absolutely and every . . . every single person who makes that jump is what we call great. Do you want to be great or don't you want to be great?" To have a psychologist to say that to a kid, "Yeah, you are right; totally unreasonable . . . So what do you want?" You know, to make them understand that look: average is average and that is all you are going to be, if you want to accept that as being totally unreasonable. You know, I think sometimes every psychologist has that perspective of what average is and the sport psychologist needs to be the psychologist of the unreasonable.

Overall, many of the coaches expressed a desire for a cooperative relationship with an SPC, in which it was understood that they were an expert, but that a certain amount of interaction and collaboration with the coaching staff was required. Dave stated his opinion as such:

Given my management style, it really boils down to: you hire good people and get the hell out of their way. I think what I would do is like we do with the strength and conditioning guy and we do with our academic advisor and our nutritionist, "Hey, I'd love you to work with our team, take a look, you tell me what you need from me. Let's sit down and map something out, week-to-week, month-to-month, however you want to do it". But I look at it as more of a cooperative effort than a here's what we need. No, I am not going to tell you what we need from a sport psychology viewpoint

because it would be the same as you telling me what we need from a volleyball technical skills standpoint.

*Theme 3: Barriers - what's holding coaches back and how to move forward?*

The third theme - barriers - encompassed two main concepts. The first concept revolved mostly around those things that hold coaches back from hiring or seeking out an SPC. The second concept related to what coaches thought might help alleviate, or overcome those barriers. There were four main subthemes to barriers that were identified: (a) finances, (b) time, (c) availability and visibility, and (d) perceived worth.

*Finances.* Consistent with previous research, finances were by far the barrier most often mentioned by coaches as being a reason for them not hiring an SPC. Tight budgets and the current economic downturn were all pointed to as reasons why they had not sought out the services of an SPC. Paula stated things the most plainly when discussing how her budget would not allow for any additional expenses: "well [finances] is definitely the big one. We have zero money so we wouldn't even be in a position to do it if I wanted to."

Despite any positive perceptions that the coaches might have had, there was a prevalent attitude among the majority of the coaches that were interviewed that sport psychology

was a luxury service and, as such, was viewed as being largely unattainable for many of them. Said Ryan:

I think it would be a vital, I don't know I guess a cog to the wheel or a spoke, do you know what I mean? It would an important part, if you could get it in there. Do you know what I am saying? I just think it would be important. If you could do it, it would be a great luxury . . . . You could probably, I mean we could probably fund it where one guy could come in and do one session . . . . You know, but it becomes a lot more expensive that way if you do one, and how long is that going to last? You know, you need the repetition.

Other coaches put it much more simply than that. Andy, a tennis coach, discussed the barrier of gaining financing for an SPC very plainly:

Well, I mean I think as far as hiring somebody and you're going to pay somebody, I mean I think what I would have to first do is see how much money of my budget I could allot for it. It isn't like our budgets are bottomless, you know. We, these non-revenue sports have gotta adhere to strict budgets so that would be the first thing.

In terms of how to overcome financial barriers, the coaches seemed to have little input to provide. Valerie expressed the opinion that as a coach there is little she can do to overcome the financial barriers to hiring an SPC. According to her, any of the factors that would alleviate the financial barrier are more societal:

Q: As a coach, how do you think those barriers might be overcome?

Valerie: Well, obviously if the economy turns around. (Laughter). You know, if the finances are a little bit better, people are a little more willing to support, to give money to the AT Fund, or you know whatever you

want to say, more specifically, "Here I am giving \$500,000 but \$200,000 I am going to need to go to Swimming, okay, and I want them to use it for these purposes." So obviously if the economy turns around. You know, if coaches around are using, you know obviously there would be a little more, I don't know if they are open about it or not. That is tough for me to answer because I have never even asked. So, I guess the biggest thing would kind of be the economy turnaround and make it a part of something we can afford to do.

*Time.* Another barrier to hiring an SPC that was raised quite often was that of time. Many of the coaches related the idea that, especially in the world of NCAA DI athletics, the amount of time that they have available to work with their respective teams each week is rather limited (the NCAA mandates that coaches are only allowed 20 hours per week of actual practice time) (NCAA, 2009). As such, many of the coaches stated that, at times, they found it difficult to justify sacrificing even an hour of their time to spend with an SPC. Paula put things in terms of having to prioritize the limited amount of time she is allowed by the NCAA to work with her team per week.

. . . I think that even I battle with, after having had some good experiences in the field, is how much time do I want to allocate to that portion of it? You know, because I do think the physical piece - it is like, we never get enough time to do what we need to do physically with restraints on the time we are working with our student athletes which are . . . you know there is time that is mandated by the NCAA Rules and Regulations. Those things, and time is really just at a premium so how do you divide those things and break those things down? Because from what I, how I see the picture is that sport psychology time does count

against our time with student athletes, in the four hours a day or 20 hours a week, you know that we are working with at the Division I level, so how do you slice that pie?

Dave put things a different way:

Q: All right, now more on the other side of the coin, what would you say you liked least about the experience of having a sport psychologist work with your team?

Dave: That is a good question. I don't know if there is anything that I disliked about it. I just, I think I am pretty much down the road. I think it is the same question as what do I like least about having a strength and conditioning guy work with our team. I don't think I dislike it. You know, I think there is a time and a place for everything and if you really need an answer, it just might be the idea of working with our team in a very structured situation which takes time away. You know, you only have those 20 hours a week, and I also want my guys to be college students, too. So, it is just another, you've gotta make time for it. But you have, you have to make time for strength and conditioning, you have to make time for the nutritionist, too.

While the coaches provided very few suggestions about how to overcome the barrier of time, there was the sense that they might be more willing to sacrifice their time if they perceived more of a return on their investment of time. For Steve, a lot of this issue came down to the feedback he received from his athletes, in addition to his perception of the benefit that the work was providing:

. . . I think it, I guess it would be based on my perception and feedback that I got from the athletes as to whether they saw it as a positive experience or not. . . . I guess you know, if it was someone I trusted and I thought that the experience was moving us in the right direction, I would be willing to spend quite a bit of time, but if not, then I guess I wouldn't.

*Availability and visibility of SPCs.* This subtheme actually surprised the researcher when it emerged from the data, as it was not one that had been mentioned in previous research, nor expected based on the casual impressions of the researcher when beginning this study. It was (naively it appears) assumed that SPCs were readily available and visible in most every athletic community.

With regards to some of the problems associated with not being able to hire a full time SPC (either for reasons related to budgetary or availability shortcomings), Stacy related her impressions of the problems those types of situations posed for her as a coach:

Like, anytime I guess we had a consultant, there was maybe an introduction of skills or ideas, or thoughts but the responsibility just sort of continued to weave that into . . . . your player's development still fell on someone who maybe doesn't have training in that area, i.e., myself or other members of the coaching staff, or part of our staff so it is . . . it is sort of one-hit wonders in the sense that you have someone come in, people get excited about some of those things but it isn't as effective in terms of being able to maintain that. Because there is not someone [there]...

Ryan described, somewhat lightheartedly, the problem that availability and visibility presented as far as employing the services of an SPC, simply from the standpoint of his knowledge base as a coach, and his ability to evaluate an SPC's services and rates:

Q: As a coach, what suggestions might you make to a sport psychologist to try and make their services a little bit more accessible?

Ryan: Well, I think it . . . One: We need to find out you know what is available . . . you know, it is not like I have, you know, I have people trying to sell me all kinds of stuff. I don't have sport psychologists knocking my door down. But, if I had, if I had one person say, "Yeah, I want to do it", and well then how much is it going to cost me? What is it? And what is the program like? What is involved and how much? Or, I mean, it is hard to compare apples to apples when you don't even have an apple.

Probably the most poignant comments made with regards to the availability and visibility of SPCs were made by Phil. Despite the existence of the Association for Applied Sport Psychology's (AASP) directory of certified consultants (AASP, 2009), Phil stated the following:

There could be people in our community, right now, that might have the capabilities of doing this but I don't know about it. And I don't know, don't know what levels of accessibility we might have. There is no college directory for sport psychologists that we can get. We have any number of great teaching professionals that are listed in the PGA Manual. I've got it sitting on my desk over here and that thing is two inches thick. And if I need to get a special coach for one of my players, well, I've got phone numbers and addresses, and everything else. But, I don't know of anything like that for sport psychologists.

Valerie made a comment that closely matched those of Phil:

You know, I will be honest with you right now, I wouldn't know who to approach or who to be comfortable with in terms of access to any of them. I would have to ask the coaches around here and I haven't done that. But, some teams definitely might be using them but who

to approach around here in [city name omitted], might, I wouldn't know of anybody offhand if that makes sense.

Andy also added to the idea that the visibility of SPCs presented a barrier for him as a coach:

Q: So, in your opinion, what types of barriers exist in trying to hire or gain access to a sport psychologist?

Andy: Probably just lack of knowledge of ones that are available. I mean, I just think, you just don't know who these, who they are, and I don't know how well they promote themselves. I just think with something like this, I think the only way you are going to really take it seriously in hiring somebody is that they promote themselves. You know, if they like send out an email and then make a contact by phone, "Hey, this is who I am, this is what I do. I am interested in learning about your team and maybe helping your team. Hey, give me a call." I just think that's just the main barrier. I just don't know if they promote themselves as well.

Q: Okay. So . . . it sounds like you wouldn't even know where to start looking for someone let alone who they are, that type of thing.

Andy: Correct.

In order to overcome the barrier of availability and visibility, many coaches suggested generic information emails of mailers about the field of sport psychology. Also, many indicated a need for a directory listing SPCs in their area, and what their specialties might be. Ironically, such a directory exists. As far as how this barrier of visibility might be overcome, Andy seemed to think that it largely came down to a minimum level of publicity or advertising.

Q: Okay. So, how do you think that barrier might be overcome? What types of things would you suggest to a sport psychologist that would be effective in reaching you as a coach?

Andy: Well, just the, just to make themselves more visible. I mean, I have got to think there is several out there. That if they just, kind of, and I don't know what their, what the career is like but you know, if they just kind of do the campus tour. I mean, there are several universities within a 200 mile radius that they could probably drum up enough business to keep themselves busy and earn a nice living. So, yeah, I just don't, I mean I just look for my own coaching and it is kind of one of those things that it is the furthest thing from my mind as I am going through my season but once I would maybe sit down with somebody, I would probably say, "Man that is a heck of an idea and I would love to be able to work out something where we could use you for this fee". That is just kind of how I look at it as I battle budgets, recruiting, NCAA compliance, all that goes with coaching and then, oh yeah! Coaching; practices, matches, and you know. . . . I would just think, just to answer your question, that if they would promote themselves more, there could be a greater increase in a sport psychologist working with teams at the collegiate level.

Valerie noted that a greater degree of visibility of professionals in her area would go a long way towards overcoming the barrier of visibility. Additionally, she expressed a desire to know about any potential SPCs areas of specialty:

Q: Well, I am interested in one thing you said specifically as far as you "wouldn't even know who to talk to" as far as that goes. So, are there any things that you would like to see from the field of sport psychology that would make it a little bit more accessible or easier to find for you as a coach?

Valerie: I guess, if there is a sport psychologist that is specific to swimming out there, just like you got a hold of me and you know, maybe sending a blast out to all the Division-I coaches, and especially if you are in a particular area like in [city name omitted], sending out an email to all the Swimming coaches at [different schools in my area] "I'm available." You know, something like that. "As a sport psychologist

specific to swimming", and then I would inform a swimmer, or something like that. That might be an option.

Q: So a little bit more visibility would probably be good?

Valerie: Yes.

*Perceived worth.* The subtheme of perceived worth related to the value that coaches perceived in using the services of an SPC. This appeared to be the most complex subtheme that emerged from the data, as there were many factors that went into determining how coaches perceived the worth of individual SPCs, regardless of the coaches' opinions of the field as a whole. Some of the factors that were found to contribute to perceived worth have already been mentioned above (i.e., personal fit and familiarity).

In many cases, if it was not possible to hire an SPC who could become familiar with their team, coaches saw that lack of familiarity was connected to their perceived worth of that person's services. Paula indicated that some of this stigma might simply be associated with a lack of exposure to SPCs in the past "I think in general, I think coaches tend to, if they haven't had any experience with it, don't want any. I think they are intimidated by the involvement, you know what they are going to do, where is it going?"

Stacy made a similar comment. When discussing things that she disliked about working with an SPC in the past related the following:

I think it is the frustration that you are bringing someone in who doesn't necessarily know your team and you are asking them to do things that really require a bit of knowledge about the people you are working with. And that, you know the, it forces them to sort of be generic because they don't know the specifics of the group when really they are most effective when it is applicable to the people in the group. . . . So it is that generic, canned presentation or that canned exercise or that canned thing sometimes that I think is . . . . You know, when it has been that sort of environment, it hasn't been as effective and it is not as, as beneficial.

Natalie described the barrier of perceived worth in terms of finding someone who fits with her team, and the productivity of the work that can be done with the individual on staff at her school:

Q: So it seems as though you haven't quite established this relationship with this individual at your school yet so you are not ready to let them work with the team.

Natalie: Yes. And I guess the more, even more so, I think I have established a relationship with him and I know what level I would like to work with him, does that make sense? Where I think I really trust him and think he is really beneficial in some one-on-one stuff with some of my players like maybe even a couple of my Freshmen that are struggling maybe with the handle of things, almost more just some talk therapy with them, just talk about what is going on. That kind of stuff . . . . But I don't know if he has the skill set actually to make a huge difference in the specific golf stuff and if I had someone that had already been . . . . Specific performance things . . . . If I had someone accessible that I really felt was talented at that, I

would . . . Oh. I mean, honestly, I think especially with college kids that 50% of the battle is won.

In addition, certain negative perceptions were also an influential factor related to the perceived worth of SPCs. Stacy related her impressions of the barrier of perceived worth in terms of the personal fit and suitability of specific SPCs:

I mean for me I think it is . . . it is as much to sort of sift through the people that are out there and find . . . . You know, I think the effective ones. . . . My concern is that I think if you are going to have someone who has that much impact on your team and I think a sport psychologist has a huge impact, it has to be a good one. And I think the concern or the hurdle is to really find that good one and you know, find someone that has the right personality, the right demeanor, the right skill set, the right education, to be, you know, effective in that, and you know, I think the same challenge exists let's say in the strengthening and conditioning world, when I feel very fortunate that we have a really good one right now. But in the sport Psychology world, an average one can do as much damage, because I think they have such a huge influence. You know, an average one can do as much damage as a good one can do benefit, so I think you know, for me I think that is a big hurdle.

While none of the coaches admitted to harboring explicitly negative perceptions about the worth they perceived in using the services of an SPC, they did indicate that there may be a stigma or negative perception in the coaching community as a whole. Steve related his opinion about this barrier in the following way:

Well, I think . . . you know, maybe with some people, it is just that they would be uncomfortable working

with a "psychologist" and you know, I think there is a . . . you know, like, "Why are you working with a psychologist. Is there something wrong with your team"? . . . . So, you know, you know, I would see that as being a barrier. I mean, it is just in general not specifically for us, but in general I would see that as being.. as a barrier. I think that coaches would be uncomfortable: (A) Because of the kind of like stigma but also like, well if you know, "If you need to use a sport psychologist, what is wrong with you, your entire team"? That kind of thing.

Valerie added to this idea, mentioning that she perceived a certain level of skepticism and a lack of buy-in on the part of her athletes as being a barrier to hiring an SPC:

And the other barrier would probably be, probably more so for our men's team than our women's team, or our combined program. But getting the men to really "buy into it." A lot of them are pretty skeptical of certain things, you can tell by when we make certain changes. They are like, "What? Why are you doing that?" And here specifically at [my school], they are bringing for the most part, things a certain way. And so when change happens, they want to know why. So, I think skepticism might be a bit of a concern although I can't guarantee that, because I have never done it with this team. So, you know, that would just be a thought that could be an obstacle.

Another one of the more prominent and telling issues that came up with regards to the perceived worth of sport psychology services was that of results. According to Steve, a lot of what determined how coaches perceived the value of the services they were receiving revolved around the results they were able to attribute to such services:

You know, if people are having success with using a sport psychologist, you know with the teams and people see that, then they are going to want to do it . . . . Then they are going to be willing to you know . . . . I don't think that coaches are necessarily reluctant to using [SPCs] or to spend money using them, but they want to see results.

Later he would add:

I think, you know I mean, sport psychology is a concept that has been around for a long time but I guess as a working coach, I haven't seen enough evidence that in general, that a sport psychologist is doing a lot to improve the overall performance of the team. I see in specific cases where they help but in general cases, no. And, I am just telling you what the evidence is; I am not saying, I am not saying that they can't; I am just saying that there is no perception out there that, "We've gotta have a sport psychologist or you know, the other team is going to kick our ass."

Dave, a volleyball coach, related the results he saw with the amount of practice time he was willing to sacrifice:

Q: Okay. Now what was that experience like?

Dave: Um . . . . It was okay. It was more . . . . mostly for relaxation and really, I look at it and say I don't know if it was something that I saw significant results. At that point, that particular team enjoyed it, but I never had anybody come back to me and say we have really gotta do this again.

Q: Okay. So, it was more, there was a decent response but it was only about lukewarm and you didn't really feel like you were seeing any positive or positive gains based on the time you were spending in practice.

Dave: A significant part, right. The trade-off of the time spent in practice with that versus what we could be getting done, training the team to play volleyball, just didn't seem to really justify the time spent.

Later, Steve related the idea that one of the things that may stimulate coaches or athletic directors into hiring

SPCs on a more widespread basis could be directly related to the results perceived by other coaches:

You know, I think it is going to be one of those things that you know, a couple of schools are going to hire sport psychologists and coaches are going to perceive that there has been an improvement in the team's performance based on that and then you know, everyone will want one. You know it is just like anything else . . . It is really going to come down to, if teams are winning because they are using a sport psychologist, then other teams are going to want it, to want to do the same thing or you know . . . Athletic coaches are copy-cats.

*Theme #4: Hierarchy - where does sport psychology fall in the grand scheme?*

The fourth and final theme - hierarchy - while a more focused theme, also provided some key insights into how the field of sport psychology is perceived by the coaching community. This theme mostly revolved around how the field of sport psychology ranks with regards to other type of support staff that the coaches might use. Mark provided some insight into a more obvious aspect of where sport psychology ranks with regards to other considerations that must be made, either by a coach, or in some cases, the larger administration:

Mark: . . . it is certainly not a new field, but it is certainly, it is an added bonus field and so if you have the extra funds to be able to do it, then this is certainly something that you would think that most departments would want to do. But obviously when extra funds are not there, then it is, it could be one of the

areas that would be not hired versus grounds guy who has to mow the fields.

Q: Right. So sport psychologists at the moment, sounds like they are still viewed as a bit of a luxury.

Mark: Yes.

Q: So, you need grounds-keepers, you need athletic trainers, whereas a sport psychologist is more, "Well, if we can afford it - cool but otherwise this is something that we might have to cut the corner on".

Mark: And now that you have more artificial surface fields then maybe they can cut back on the groundskeepers and hire more sport psychologists.

Stacy also added to the understanding of where sport psychology ranks with regards to other support staff:

. . . I think that, and again, I think the priorities have been in other areas with respect to the physical conditioning and the nutrition side of things, so I just think the priorities have probably been you know along that line. . . .

Later she would also add to her comments, relating the perceived lack of need for SPCs and the hierarchy of the support staff she uses as a function of what she feels comfortable doing, or in some cases is expected to be able to do by her administrators:

. . . And I do think there is a perception that, that is an arena that we as coaches should be able to provide. That this is a part of our skill set. Um, and I do think it is as I have you know been educating myself as a coach, that is an arena that I have sought to get education or to get more knowledgeable about because it is something I think that is involved in coaching on a day-to-day basis. I mean, you don't go out and coach any day that you are not addressing some of the psychological needs of your team and I think from an administrative standpoint, I think a lot of administrators think that this is a skill set that the coach should be trying to incorporate into their skill set.

Steve noted that the current hierarchy may be due to the fact that many coaches view sport psychology as a remedial type of activity that is only beneficial when something is going wrong:

. . . I mean, I was, I think like, a lot of coaches use them to like, see if you can get inside the kids heads. But I think that you know, we spend most of our time training their bodies and we only concern ourselves with their minds when there seems to be a problem.

As far as the specifics of the hierarchy, Stacy made the following comments, indicating how far down the list of needs an SPC might fall:

. . . I think we probably prioritized in terms of support staff. We just recently hired a nutritionist which I think was probably, I think when we took the, you know decided, I think there was some discussion about a sport psychologist or nutritionist in terms of trying to get someone on staff and you know we, we got the nutritionist on staff first. But I think it is something that has been discussed but I don't think, I don't think the push has been great enough, or been loud enough I guess for, and I think different teams have different needs and uses, and have brought in different types of people. So I think the consensus of what we would want probably isn't there either . . . . I don't think the, I don't think the intensity of the need has gotten to that point yet.

Q: Okay. Now what is it that you think is holding back the intensity of that need?

Stacy: . . . I think that, and again, I think the priorities have been in other areas with respect to the physical conditioning and the nutrition side of things, so I just think the priorities have probably been you know along that line.

While explicit comments about the existence of a hierarchy of needs were somewhat scarce, many of the coaches

made comments that suggested that they had a hierarchy of priorities that they needed to meet to effectively lead their respective teams. By and large, sport psychology was perceived by the coaches as being towards the bottom of that hierarchy, while the physical needs (strength and conditioning, nutrition) were areas that the coaches more heavily favored and chose to focus on.

#### Discussion of Research Questions

When originally proposed, the research questions of this study were intended to provide a focus of inquiry that would allow a deep, rich understanding of the various perceptions of NCAA Division IA coaches about the field of sport psychology. In this section, the research questions are discussed, especially with how the data shed light and insight upon them. Some research questions that were considered more relevant as well as other findings are discussed in the general discussion.

1. How do collegiate coaches perceive of the merit of the various titles used by professionals working in the area of sport and exercise psychology? Specifically, what other titles for these types of professionals, other than "sport psychologist," were coaches aware of and what were the coaches' impressions of those titles?

This question was informed primarily through the theme *perceptions*, and specifically through the subtheme, *titles*. Overall, the coaches expressed a multitude of opinions with regards to the titles used by professionals working in the field of sport psychology. For the most part, they indicated that the term they were most comfortable with was "sport psychologist" though many also expressed the fact that they would be willing to work with a professional who used an alternate title. As mentioned in the previous section, the coaches generated a rather lengthy list of titles of which they were aware. That said, many of the coaches expressed a desire that such an alternate title needed to include some term or phrase that indicated to them what that person does. Similar to the findings of Van Raalte et al. (1992), SPCs appear to be viewed by coaches as operating within athletic dimension, and as such, they are seen as appropriate individuals to consult with. There was no consensus reached as far as one title that stood above the rest as being the most preferred alternate title (with the exception of "sport psychologist"). The interpretation was that each coach has a personal preference for what titles he/she prefers, and how he/she might interpret the work of someone who uses such a title.

The coaches indicated that a professional's title did not necessarily indicate to them anything about someone's qualifications or worth per se, but were more generally interpreted at times as being vague or misleading with regards to what a person might do. For example, many of the coaches expressed the opinion that a "sport consultant" could encompass a variety of professions, such as an SPC, or even a strength coach. As such, the majority of coaches said that they preferred those titles that explicitly stated one's specialty. Much like the findings of Van Raalte et al. (1992), the title that an SPC uses should indicate that they are focused on athletics, and the mental performance of athletes, rather than any other area.

2. How do coaches perceive the field of sport psychology as a whole (i.e., the potential benefits of employing an applied sport psychologist)? Specifically, (a) to what did coaches perceive that the term "sport psychology" referred? (b) did coaches believe that the field of sport psychology had merit (c) did coaches believe that sport psychology could benefit their respective teams (d) what experiences had coaches had working with sport psychologists (e) what did coaches perceive to be the roles and responsibilities of a sport psychologist and (f) what

kind of interactions with sport psychologists were coaches interested in?

This question was informed primarily through a number of themes, including: *perceptions* and *desires*. Similar to the findings of Sullivan and Hodge (1991), the coaches in the present study held sport psychology in a fairly high regard. Virtually every coach indicated that they saw some merit in the field of sport psychology, and that it tied into the successful performance of their sport. In describing their impressions about what they thought the term "sport psychology" referred to, all of the coaches appeared to have an accurate understanding of the field, and what it encompassed. As noted in previous literature (Pain & Harwood, 2004; Sullivan & Hodge, 1991) for the most part the coaches who participated in this study indicated that they believed the field of sport psychology had merit, and could potentially increase not only the performance of their athletes, but also their own performance as coaches.

Many of the coaches reported having worked with an SPC in the past, while two of the coaches interviewed reported that they were currently employing an SPC to work with their teams. Overall, they related their past experiences as positive, but the coaches did note a few drawbacks to the experience. One of the drawbacks mentioned was that it was

difficult to balance the amount of time they wanted to use an SPC with the amount of time they wanted to spend working on physical skills with their team, especially in light of the NCAA's limitation that the coaches could spend no more than 20 hours per week practicing (NCAA, 2009). Another drawback noted was that, in certain situations, there were exercises or techniques employed by SPCs that either were not effective, or were not embraced by the athletes for whom they were intended, which ultimately reduced the effectiveness of the work the SPC was trying to do.

As far as the type of interaction that coaches were interested in, were they to hire an SPC in the future, the majority reported that they expected a cooperative relationship. They expressed a desire for an SPC who was both willing to put in the time and effort to become familiar with the team and all of its members, in addition to one who "fit" with the coaches personality and philosophy. Time and again, the coaches noted that this feeling of fit with whomever they worked was a key ingredient in allowing a productive and meaningful working relationship. This is hardly a novel finding though. The need for rapport with clients extends back some time in the literature (Anshel, 1990). The fact that coaches themselves realize this makes the point all the more important though.

3. What potential barriers must be overcome in order to make sport psychology more appealing and available to coaches (in their role as potential clients), and how might those barriers be overcome from the coaches point of view? Specifically, (a) what potential barriers exist that may prevent coaches from employing the services of a sport psychology professional, and (b) what do coaches think would help to overcome the barriers mentioned above?

This question was informed primarily through the theme of *barriers* and all of the associated subthemes (i.e., *finance, time, availability and visibility, and perceived worth*). The barriers noted by the coaches very closely follow the subthemes that emerged from the data, and closely match barriers cited in previous literature (Pain & Harwood, 2004; Wrisberg et al., 2008). Consistent with previous research, finances were by far the barrier most often mentioned by coaches as keeping them from hiring or seeking out the services of an SPC. The current economic downturn, in addition to budgetary restrictions confined the coaches in many ways from seeking out services that they might have otherwise been interested in. Additionally, many of the coaches reported that due to the fact that they had limited budgetary resources, they had to prioritize those things on which they were going to spend money. Many of the coaches

expressed an opinion that, to them, sport psychology was very much a luxury service. As such, it was often the last thing they considered investing in with their limited resources.

Time was also mentioned as a barrier, in that (as previously noted), the coaches were restricted in the amount of time they had available to practice with their teams every week. Due to these time restrictions, many of the coaches reported that they found it hard to find enough time to implement a meaningful sport psychology regimen into their current team structure.

The third barrier mentioned by the coaches - the lack of availability and visibility of SPCs - actually came somewhat as a surprise to the researcher, as it was not an expected response. Perhaps it should have been, based on comments made by Silva (1992) in which he stated that "there is a very large void of information about [sport psychology] in the very agencies that can and do utilize the services of applied sport psychologists" (p. 6). Many of the coaches mentioned that SPCs were not very visible or easy to find in their area, and those that were known were often very busy and difficult to schedule to meet with a team. None of the coaches interviewed were aware of the existence of the registry of certified consultants on the AASP website (AASP,

2009), which came as a very large shock to the researcher. What is the point of such a registry and resource, if it is not being made known to the very people for whom it is designed to help?

The final barrier was related to the perceived worth that the coaches saw in the services of an SPC. Within the subtheme of perceived worth are a variety of factors that were found to contribute to a coach's perception of sport psychology. Many of these factors reflected earlier findings such as those made by Pain and Harwood (2004) including: a lack of familiarity and fit between a potential SPC and the coach/team, skepticism about how effective an SPC would be at getting players to buy in to the process, negative perceptions/stigma towards the field of sport psychology, what kind of results the coaches had seen or expect to see, the coaches' perceptions about what services their peers are using, and the hierarchy of needs within the team. Each coach weighed these factors differently, but all of these factors were raised almost universally by all of the coaches with regards to the perceived worth of sport psychology services.

The role of fit and familiarity tied closely in with comments the coaches had previously made about their perceptions about the field as a whole. A large number of

coaches also expressed a concern about how well their teams might buy-in to working with a sport psychologist. Many of the coaches connected this directly with how familiar an SPC was with the individuals and needs of a particular team, as well as how well the SPC's personality and consulting style fit with the team.

Negative perceptions and stigma also came to light in this area. While this was a relatively minor factor in how coaches determined the perceived worth of sport psychology services, the negative perceptions of coaches and stigma mostly related to the various titles that SPCs might use. Several of the coaches noted that they believed that there are still some lingering perceptions around various terms and titles that SPCs might use. That being said, this was one of the most personal factors, and opinions varied widely from coach to coach.

The findings of the current study potentially present an extension to the work of Nunnally and Kittross (1958), in that the negative perceptions and stigma associated with being seen as a "mental patient" may extend to the world of athletics. Furthermore, the comments made by the coaches seem to indicate that the findings of Linder et al. (1991) that a negative halo exists with regards to how athletes who consult with a sport psychologist may be seen as deviating

from accepted norms by society, and yet accepted within the athletic community are accurate and still present in the world of athletics. All of the coaches interviewed seemed to attribute these beliefs to others, rather than claiming ownership of those feelings or perceptions themselves. In fact, many of the coaches expressed the opinion that if one of their athletes needed or wanted to consult with an SPC, they were perfectly comfortable with that. This may have been due to one of a variety of factors. The coaches may have simply been giving socially acceptable answers. Alternatively, their perceptions about others' feelings were accurate. Finally, it may be that this "negative HALO" that Linder et al. discussed did exist in the past, but has since dissipated, and the coaches were merely commenting on things from a historical perspective.

By and large, coaches expressed a large desire to see results, both tangible and intangible. Several reported that they had worked with SPCs in the past, but that they were no longer working with one due to the fact that they did not see tangible results that they were getting a good return on the investment of time and money required to work with an SPC. Others reported that they saw value in the work, despite a lack of quantitative data that might have supported the work. These findings are consistent with

previous literature in the field such as Zaichkowsky (2006) when he stated that "consumers, including sport administrators, coaches, and athletes themselves want to know if specific sport psychology interventions work, and under what conditions" (p. 7). As noted in Chapter 2, in Zaichkowsky's view, most professional organizations want an individual who can make a positive impact. The present findings support this claim, in that the coaches expressed a desire to see results, either through some form of documentation, or some perception on the part of the coaches that what an SPC might be doing with his/her team is having a positive effect.

A few of the coaches noted that they had very little motivation to seek out or employ SPCs, based simply on the fact that their peers were not employing an SPC. Some of those coaches also suggested that one of the things that might help increase the visibility of the field would be as simple as seeing other coaches employing such services - especially if there were noticeable positive results. These results are similar to the findings of Hartwig and Delin (1983) in which peoples' willingness to consult a psychologist were examined. With regards to their study, Hartwig and Delin found that:

. . . respondents who considered psychologists to be needed also tended to have a more favorable overall opinion of the profession. However, only "need" scores were significant in predicting respondents' willingness to seek psychological help, with results indicating that the more people thought psychologists were needed, the more willing they were to consult them. (p. 71)

The same appears to hold true for coaches and their view of hiring an SPC. If a coach perceives a large enough need, then this may be the largest determining factor that contributes to whether a coach actually attempts to employ the services of an SPC. It would appear that this perception of "need" has not reached a point where SPC's are being hired with great frequency though.

At its base, a lot of what was related by the coaches with regards to perceived worth came down to a hierarchy of needs that they, as the leaders of their various teams, needed to satisfy. At the moment, sport psychology is still viewed as a luxury item, rather than a necessity. As mentioned before, due to this perception, the coaches were not as willing to use their limited resources for a luxury item until all of their basic needs had been met to their satisfaction. Based upon comments made by the participants of this study, these basic needs were seen as including, but not limited to: maintaining sufficient facilities and equipment to allow the team to practice and compete, an adequate coaching staff to supervise and train the team, an

adequate staff of both physical and athletic trainers to help rehabilitate any injured athletes, in addition to implementing injury prevention programs (often including strength and conditioning training).

#### General Discussion

While the previous section was a discussion and interpretation of the data with regards to the original research questions, the following is a general interpretation of the data. Based on the researcher's impressions of the data, as well as some discussions with a peer-reviewer, the following model was developed in an attempt to explain how sport psychology fits into the world of collegiate athletics, as told through the words of coaches. Inspired by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (as cited by Petri, 1996), and based upon comments of the participants that directly related to the existence of a hierarchy of needs that must be considered to effectively coach a team, the researcher developed a preliminary theoretical model - the hierarchy of needs of athletic teams, and resultant requirements for support staff. A visual depiction of the model may be found in Figure 1.

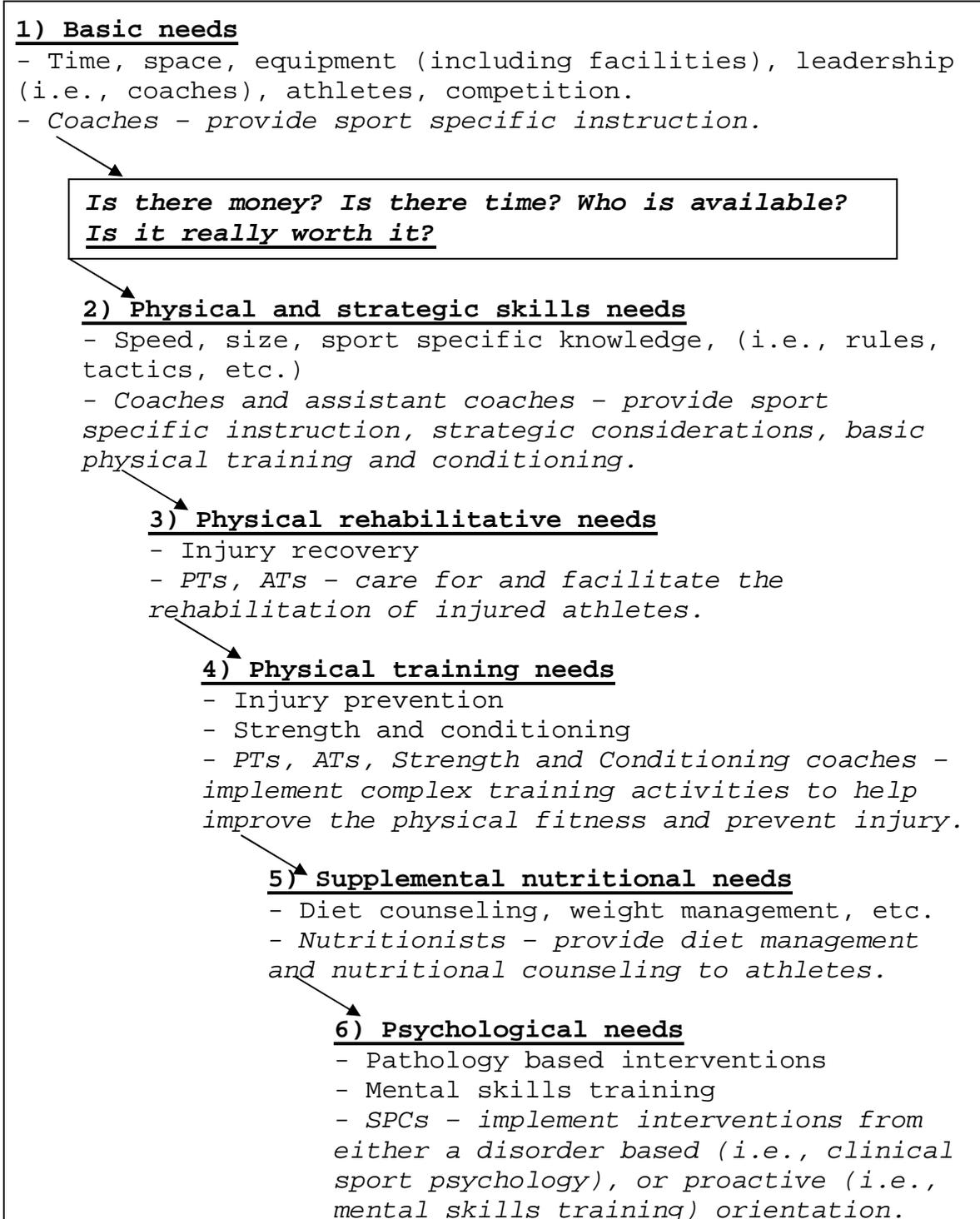


Figure 1. The hierarchy of needs of athletic teams, and resultant requirements for support staff.

To explain the model further, based on the responses made by the participants and the impressions of the researcher, at its base, every team has a series of needs in order to function at a certain level. For example, in order to function at a most basic level, the needs are simple: athletes, leadership (i.e., coaches), facilities for both practice and competition, and a group against whom they might compete. Until these most basic needs have been met, any other needs within this hierarchy are suppressed in terms of the perceived need that a coach might have. For example, without appropriate facilities, the need for an athletic trainer is pushed into the background until such a time as the more basic needs have been satisfied.

Once the basic requirements of a team have been met, one starts to see the emergence of a hierarchy with regards to the use of various types of support staff as the environment that the team exists in advances to a more complex level, or as the needs of the team evolve and require such personnel. These support staff can include: strength and conditioning coaches, athletic trainers (ATs), physical therapists (PTs), nutritionists, and SPCs. Each of the different types of support staff is seen as operating on ever more complex levels of need, and once each of those levels of need and the associated barriers is met and

overcome, a coach might start to consider further advanced levels of support staff to bring in as adjuncts to his/her team.

The second level of needs that a team has is for physical and strategic skills. For the most part, the support staff that are needed at this level largely overlap with the first level of basic needs. At this level, assistant coaches may be added to the staff in order to assist the head coach with his/her duties, in addition to providing specific instruction based on the assistant's specific area(s) of specialty, or based on the needs of different positions within the sport (e.g., goalie coaches in hockey, pitching coaches in baseball).

The third level of needs that exists within sports teams is for physical rehabilitation. Athletes are often getting injured and dealing with an assortment of ailments, ranging from aches and pains, to major trauma (including season and career ending injuries). As such, teams start to develop a need for a support staff that includes PTs and ATs that can directly care for, and facilitate the rehabilitation of, injured athletes.

The fourth level of needs that is thought to exist is for the physical training of athletes. Once the rehabilitative needs of a team are met, one starts to see

the employment of support staff who may better prepare athletes for the rigors of competition and, in many cases, try to prevent injuries before they even occur. In addition to PTs and ATs who may sometimes perform these types of duties, more specialized individuals such as strength and conditioning coaches may be added to the support staff to provide specific instruction to athletes about how best to promote the fitness of the athletes.

The fifth and sixth levels of need within the model are seen as the most peripheral levels of need, based on comments made by the coaches who participated in the current study. The fifth level of needs seeks to provide athletes with supplemental nutritional counseling and advice. Nutritionists or dietitians are the support staff most often employed at this level due to their specialized knowledge in this regard.

The sixth and final level of need covers the psychological needs of the athletes. This can include two main areas: 1) pathology based interventions that may occur when a coach perceives that there is a "problem" with his/her team, and 2) proactive interventions, such as mental skills training, which are often implemented as a means of enhancing a team's performance. SPCs are the support staff required at this level, though finding an individual who can

appropriately address the specific needs of the coach and/or team is essential.

For every escalating level of the model (and the associated escalation of support staff that is needed), four main barriers are seen to exist in hiring a necessary professional capable of focusing on that specific area. Before the next level may be considered, a coach must ultimately address the barriers of: finances, time, availability/visibility, and perceived worth. Each barrier must be overcome before the hiring of a professional or any support staff at the next stage may occur. While finances were the barrier most often mentioned, upon closer examination it appears that the most important of those barriers is perceived worth, as this often (but not always) can provide motivation for a coach to overcome the previous three barriers in the hiring process. That is, a coach may be more motivated to try and overcome any financial or time barriers, or to make an extra effort to seek out an available professional, if the perceived worth of a certain professional exceeds a certain threshold. Without that perceived worth, however, finances and time are less likely to be sacrificed, and a coach may be less motivated or inclined to take the time and effort to seek out such a professional.

As mentioned in the discussion of themes that emerged from the data, the issues related to perceived worth are: coaches' previous experiences with such professionals, their perceptions of what other coaches may be doing, what the perceived benefits of such services might be (especially in terms of results) and the level of fit, or rapport, that a coach may have with a certain professional. As noted in the results sections, many of the coaches mentioned this notion of having a good "fit" with their support staff as being instrumental in their hiring of one individual over another.

Additionally, the placement and perceived needs for support staff are dynamic, in that the support staff that a coach may perceive a need for at any particular level may shift up or down within the model, depending on the ever changing environment that a coach may find him/herself in and the effect that may have on his/her perceptions. For example, if a coach believes that there is a significant, psychologically based problem with an individual athlete or the team at large, he/she may seek out the services of an SPC more aggressively than before, potentially even making sacrifices within his/her budget to allow for the consultation to take place.

While not included in the main data set used in this study, the responses given by the two coaches who currently

were employing an SPC provide some insight into this model and how some of the barriers might be overcome. For example, in order to try and overcome the barrier of finances, Rebecca, a golf coach, indicated that she saw a great value in using an SPC. As such, for her the best way to overcome the barrier of finances was to make a needs based proposal:

Well, I think you would have to prove to your administration or whatnot that it is important. And you know for golf, it is easy. I think you would look . . . I mean look at all the great golf psychologists who are out there, and you know really talk to your administration and put it in front of them on how important this is.

Linda, a softball coach, indicated that despite a lack of funding from her own school, the value that she perceived was added to her team by using an SPC caused her to seek outside funding through such activities as fundraising:

So I think it is a great . . . I think it is a very valuable experience and timing is important for us to bring a sport psychologist in at the right time, when the team is either . . . either needs to be talked to by someone else or is open to talking to someone else. So, it is . . . And it is a large part on my ability to kind of figure out when I want the sport psychologist to come in to meet with the team. . . . It is something that I am not budgeted for, it is something that I fund raise. . . . It is not something that I have unlimited access but since I do fund raise for it, it is basically in my control . . .

Later, she would add that this ultimately leads to a balance for her as a coach, between the value she feels she

is adding by using an SPC, and the time it takes her to raise the necessary funds:

The more I fundraise, the more I can get and it is on me ultimately. And that in itself is a barrier to you know, my job is in, I don't focus 100% well not 100, but I don't focus the majority of my time on fundraising. . . . So, I think with that being said, you know I do as much as I can and then see what I can do knowing that it is not a constant. And then from there, I am able to prioritize of how much I can actually access a sport psychologist for the year.

Based on these comments, in addition to the comments made by the coaches who were not currently employing an SPC, one starts to see how perceived worth can have a very large impact upon whether or not a coach decides to hire an SPC. That said, the responses of only two individuals are difficult to validate or allow for conclusions. It is hoped that additional research will further illuminate this area of interest, and expand upon and refine the model discussed above.

#### Recommendations for Research

The present study provides key insights into how NCAA Division IA head coaches perceive the field of sport psychology. However, there are some aspects of the research itself which must be addressed. From a positive standpoint, the present study allowed the researcher to achieve a variety of ends. Coaches from a variety of sports,

backgrounds, and schools were contacted. This broad cross section of participants allowed for a deep, rich understanding of the research questions at hand. Also, many of the coaches appeared to be rather candid in their responses, and the researcher had the impression that the data collected were an accurate reflection of the coaches' thoughts and feelings.

That being said, there were two main aspects of the research that presented certain issues. Simply contacting the coaches was an exercise that was fraught with challenges. In many cases when phone contact was attempted, the phone numbers that were obtained for the various coaches were monitored by assistants who screened the coaches' calls. It was often necessary to go through these intermediaries in order to get a coach on the phone. Many times there was a great degree of uncertainty about whether or not the messages left were actually reaching the coaches.

In those cases where the coach had his/her own line, every attempt was made to contact him/her. Voicemails were often left in cases where the phone was not immediately answered. Unfortunately, very few of the voicemails were returned by the coaches, for reasons unknown to the researcher. Once coaches were on the phone, though, very

often they agreed to participate. Only two coaches declined to participate once contacted on the phone.

Due to budgetary and time restrictions, all of the interviews were conducted over the phone, which in itself presented some challenges. First and foremost, it was impossible for the researcher to read the body language of the participants during the interviews, which made exploring certain answers more difficult. Second, and most troublesome, was that certain coaches were obviously pre-occupied during some of the interviews. One coach was driving to a tournament when the interview was conducted, and another admitted to cleaning her office while the interview was in progress. As such, the researcher did not have each participant's full attention during all of the interviews. That is not to say that the responses provided were any less valid, but perhaps incomplete at times. Ideally each interview would have been conducted face to face with few or no distractions, but since data had to be collected while many of the coaches were in season, and at a distance from the researcher, concessions had to be made.

#### Recommendations for Practitioners

The majority of the recommendations for practitioners that have arisen from this study relate directly to the proposed theoretical model. Based on this model then, the

main question that arises for practitioners, and the field of sport psychology as a whole is this - how can we go about improving the perceived worth of the services we offer? Connected to that, how can we elevate the visibility of the field such that coaches are more aware of who we are and what we do, while at the same time remaining within the ethical standards we have set for ourselves as a profession? These are not easy questions to answer, but the following are a few suggestions based on the researchers impressions from talking to the participants.

1. SPCs need to be more visible. Many coaches said that if they were to want to hire an SPC, they wouldn't know where to look, and none of the coaches seemed to know about the AASP Directory of Certified Consultants (AASP, 2009). In the opinion of the researcher, this is a massive shortfall on the part of the profession, especially in terms of trying to advance the field. More must be done to publicize the existence of this list, and make its use more accessible to coaches, Athletic Directors, and other potential clients.

One way to remedy this may be to change the format of the AASP directory. Much like the directory of PGA professionals that Phil mentioned as having on his desk, perhaps an annually updated "hardcopy" of the directory might be more useful than simply having the directory

online, where it may easily be lost in cyberspace. Having such a directory, publicizing its existence, and distributing it to different organizations may be a useful step in elevating the visibility of the field. Rather than trusting that the directory will be found online by willing individuals, the distribution of a hardcopy may make the field not only more accessible, but also more visible.

Another method by which the visibility of the AASP directory (2009) might be elevated might simply be through a cooperative agreement with organizations like the NCAA and United States Olympic Committee (USOC). By opening a dialogue with these athletic organizations (and others like them) perhaps it would be possible to have a link posted on each organization's respective website. This would be a relatively easy and inexpensive way to promote the directory, and make it more visible to the people for whom it was designed to help.

2. Related to that, more must be done to publicize and raise the visibility of AASP, division 47 of the APA, and other professional associations related to the organization and certification of SPCs. If coaches are more aware of the governing bodies of sport psychology, they may become more educated consumers of sport psychology services. This might be done through a variety of means. Informational brochures

could be distributed to different organizations to elevate the profile of sport psychology. Additionally, general presentations about sport psychology could be given at conferences for coaching organizations or as special presentations to the athletic departments of various colleges and universities. These presentations might elevate the visibility of the field as a whole, and educate those individuals who may still have misconceptions about the field of sport psychology. As noted by Benjamin (1986) about the field of psychology as a whole ". . . without some significant campaign, psychologists should expect to continue to encounter the problems that are created by the public's current level of information" (p. 6).

3. As unsavory as some in the field of sport psychology might find the discussion of fees, such discussions and the dissemination of this type of information is necessary in order to appropriately educate potential clients about the cost of services offered by SPCs, and ultimately attempt to overcome the barrier that finances inevitably pose. More must be done to educate the public about what services SPCs offer but, more importantly, how much one might expect to pay for those services. How much should one expect to pay for an hour of individual consultation? How much for group consultation? Does group size matter? Despite their

knowledge of what the field of sport psychology is, and what SPCs do, this is an area about which the coaches were largely ignorant. In the words of Ryan:

If you told me that we were going to have a sport psychologist in our program and he was going to be there once a week for ten weeks, what is it going to cost me? I have no idea, you know? You tell me. Because I can go out and build a house, and I could pretty much get an estimate pretty quick.

If SPCs hope for coaches to sacrifice their limited budgets in order to pay for services, coaches must be able to quickly and easily obtain an accurate estimate about how much of their budget is going to be needed to pay for those services. If individual SPCs are unwilling to have this discussion or make their individual rates known, perhaps a more generic approach to discovering the cost point for SPCs could be undertaken by AASP. This could be achieved in a variety of ways.

Perhaps the easiest and least controversial method would be for AASP to collect anonymous information from its membership about what types of services they offer, and how much they charge for those services. From this information, a master list might be compiled listing both the range, and average cost, of what one might expect to pay for the services of an SPC. This information, combined with the already existing directory of certified consultants made

available by AASP (2009), would provide an invaluable resource for coaches. While this would be far from an exact quote, it would provide valuable information to coaches and potential clients about how much they might expect to pay for the services in which they might be interested, in addition to providing SPCs in the field with an idea of how appropriate the fees that they charge are.

4. Sport psychology as a whole must start to work more diligently to produce more evidence based research with regards to practical interventions. Through this type of research we will be able to show potential clients direct evidence that the interventions we plan on implementing have a proven track record and have a very real potential to improve the performance of athletes and teams alike. Ogilvie (1989) stated the situation as such:

The problem of obtaining sufficient professional status in order to gain the attention of those one was seeking to serve was a problem of enormous proportions. I [sic] came to the conclusion that the potential contribution of sport psychology had to be sold through an educational process as any other new consumer product. We needed to educate coaches and sports administrators by providing them with the documentation that the systematic application of established psychology theories and principles have a place in athletics. The dearth of empirical support upon which to base any claim that principles taken from more traditional areas of psychology could be applied in sport produced a wall of resistance that has eroded very slowly. (p. 5)

While this suggestion is somewhat dated, it appears that the need to prove our worth that Ogilvie (1989) spoke of continues to this day. There is little doubt in the researcher's mind that more evidence based research has been produced in the last 20 years, but according to more recent literature, the need for such research still exists (Moore, 2007). Until such time as coaches and sports administrators can be convinced that the application of sport psychology interventions has a place in athletics, the growth and visibility of the field will continue to be impeded.

5. SPCs, and the field at large, must spend more time and energy defining, or in some cases redefining, what "success" is, and what "results" are with regards to the work that we do with athletes and coaches. Ultimately, we need to be able to definitively, directly, and ethically answer the inevitable question that all coaches will ask if they are going to sacrifice their financial and temporal resources - "what can you do for me?" We must be able to answer that question with definitive statements. More specifically, we need concrete, empirically validated measurements that can be implemented in order to show coaches the potential benefits that various interventions might offer. Especially in the athletic world, so much of what is done is judged solely on how it can help an athletic

team achieve success. As such, we need to be accountable for providing results, based on a set of guidelines or criteria that extend beyond, and in many cases are exclusive of, wins and losses.

For example, we need to educate coaches that the work done with an SPC, while it *may help improve* a win/loss record, is by no means a guarantee, just as working with a strength and conditioning coach is not a guarantee of success. Do we, as SPCs, believe that mental preparation and training can improve one's chances of success? Absolutely. But the ultimate judgment of success should be based on how well a team or individual athlete progressed with, and is ultimately able to use, a particular mental skill, rather than how the win loss percentage of a team may have fluctuated before and after an intervention was implemented. Until such a time as coaches and clients understand this on a widespread level, SPCs will be hindered in their ability to make advancements and gain more widespread acceptance of the field of sport psychology. Silva (1992) made a similar comment when he stated that:

. . . informing these organizations of the specialized training existent in the field of sport psychology and of the certification now in place for consultants will benefit these organizations in making educated selections of applied sport psychology consultants and will provide greater opportunities for certified consultants. . . . The major goal of this information

dissemination should be to increase the probability of quality intervention . . . AAASP should be committed to an informational program that will provide tangible returns to consumers as well as future and current members of the Association (p. 6).

6. While SPCs, in order to become either licensed as psychologists or to become certified consultants through AASP, must complete extensive coursework in how to provide psychological services, very few complete any kind of coursework in the field of business or marketing during the course of their training. As a group of for-profit practitioners, this is a serious shortcoming in the knowledge base of the field. How are we to effectively promote, market, and advance the field of sport psychology, if we have no training or effective experience at doing so?

If the profile of sport psychology is to be raised, and if SPCs are to promote themselves more effectively in the future, more programs that offer training in sport psychology should be offering courses designed to remedy this problem. By learning effective marketing techniques, SPCs may be able to more easily and more effectively reach out to potential groups of clients, and in the process increase the visibility of the field at large.

Sadly, many of the recommendations above are far from new. Comments and suggestions such as these extend back as much as 20 years. It appears that these suggestions are not

novel ideas to the field of sport psychology. Rather it appears that more must be done to actually *follow through* on these ideas, in an effort to continue the advancement and acceptance of the field of sport psychology.

## CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR  
FUTURE RESEARCH, AND CLOSING REMARKS

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of NCAA Division IA collegiate coaches about sport psychology. Specifically, the following three research questions were addressed:

1. How do collegiate coaches perceive of the merit of the various titles used by professionals working in the area of sport and exercise psychology?

a. What other titles for these types of professionals, other than "sport psychologist," are coaches aware of?

b. What are the coaches' impressions of those titles (i.e., are those titles interpreted as making one more/less qualified?)

2. How do coaches perceive the field of sport psychology as a whole (i.e., the potential benefits of employing an applied sport psychologist)?

a. To what do coaches perceive that the term "sport psychology" refers?

b. Do coaches believe that the field of sport psychology has merit?

c. Do coaches believe that sport psychology can benefit their respective teams? What experiences have coaches had working with sport psychologists?

d. What do coaches perceive to be the roles and responsibilities of a sport psychologist?

e. What kind of interactions with sport psychologists are coaches interested in?

3. What potential barriers must be overcome in order to make sport psychology more appealing and available to coaches (in their role as potential clients), and how might those barriers be overcome from the coaches' point of view?

a. What potential barriers exist that may prevent coaches from employing the services of a sport psychology professional?

b. What do coaches think would help to overcome the barriers mentioned above?

This chapter is presented in the following sections:

(a) Summary, (b) Conclusions, (c) Recommendations for Future Research, and (d) Closing Remarks.

#### Summary

Fourteen coaches of NCAA Division IA teams participated in semi-structured interviews designed to gain an insight into how the coaching community perceives the field of sport

psychology. All of the interviews were conducted over the phone.

From the inductive analysis of the interviews after they had been transcribed, four main themes emerged, with 10 associated subthemes that described the overall perceptions and impressions of the participants about the field of sport psychology. The first theme was *perceptions*, and dealt with how coaches viewed the field of sport psychology in a global fashion, and had the associated subthemes of: (a) *general perceptions and knowledge* - the coaches general perceptions and knowledge about the field of sport psychology, (b) *titles* - the coaches impressions of the various titles used by professionals in the field, and (c) *effectiveness* - the coaches impressions about what makes an SPC effective.

The second theme was *desires* and dealt with the wants and expectations that coaches had with regards to any relationships they might have with SPCs. The three associated subthemes were: (a) *familiarity* - the coaches desire for an SPC to be familiar with the sport and specific team/athletes with whom they work, (b) *fit* - the coaches' desire for feeling a level of "fit" (i.e., a shared philosophy, trust, and rapport) with any potential SPC they might work with, and (c) *expectations* - the expectations that the coach had for the working relationship with an SPC.

The third theme was *barriers* and, as the name suggests, revolved mostly around those things that hold coaches back from hiring or seeking out an SPC, and what coaches thought might help alleviate, or overcome those barriers. The four associated subthemes were: (a) *finances*, (b) *time*, (c) *availability and visibility*, and (d) *perceived worth*. The fourth and final theme was *hierarchy*, and related mostly to how SPCs were viewed in the context of other support staff that a coach might consider hiring to work with his/her team.

Overall, the coaches generally had a positive view of sport psychology and the services that SPCs are able to offer. However, they often expressed the fact that, despite their own personal opinions, they felt confined by a number of barriers that prevented them from hiring an SPC. Finances, time, a lack of availability or visibility of SPCs and, most importantly, the perceived worth of the services they might receive were all factors that in many cases held a coach back from seeking out or hiring an SPC.

Based upon the responses of the participants, a theoretical model for understanding where sport psychology ranks with regards to the hierarchy of needs that coaches need to consider in order to properly execute their duties was developed. It is believed that this model provides a

better understanding of the needs that a collegiate coach must consider in order to properly execute his/her duties. Unfortunately, sport psychology is still viewed largely as a luxury item and, as such, falls rather low on the list of needs.

While not the first study to examine how coaches perceive the field of sport psychology, this study is the only known study to examine this population from a qualitative perspective. The findings contained herein provide a valuable addition to the quantitative studies produced thus far by others.

#### Conclusions

Based on the data provided by the participants, a number of conclusions may be drawn from the analysis and discussion of the data presented in this study.

1. Overall, NCAA Division IA head coaches perceive the field of sport psychology in a positive way. They feel that the aspects and specific mental skills encompassed within the domain of sport psychology can be applied to their respective sports, and athletics in general. Furthermore, the coaches' knowledge of what sport psychology is, and what SPCs do, is complex and accurate.

2. Coaches have a specific set of requirements when choosing a particular SPC, in order to feel as though they

are getting a good return on their investment. Such needs are related to the SPC taking time to become familiar with the team and its athletes, the SPC having a personal fit with the coach and the philosophy they bring to the team, and the coaches feeling as though the services rendered by the SPC are yielding worthwhile results.

3. There are a number of barriers that exist for the coaches in trying to hire, or gain access to, an SPC, namely: finances, time, the availability and visibility of SPCs, and the perceived worth of those services. The ways in which these barriers operate is more easily understood through an examination of the theoretical model proposed in this study.

4. There are a number of ways that the sport psychology community may attempt to overcome such barriers and make their services more accessible to coaches. Specifically, there are two main barriers that sport psychology can help coaches to overcome through direct action. First and foremost is to promote the field more effectively while still remaining within the ethical bounds of both the APA and AASP. By raising the visibility of the field through such means as advertising the existence of the AASP registry of certified consultants (AASP, 2009), coaches seeking to employ an SPC will more easily be able to identify an

individual who meets their needs. Second, more must be done to improve the worth that coaches perceive they might receive by employing an SPC. This may be achieved through the development of evidence based interventions, in addition to a re-education, or in some cases a simple education, of coaches about what kinds of results an SPC might be able to provide.

5. There is widespread knowledge within the coaching community about what sport psychology is. However, sport psychology still ranks low in a needs assessment against such support staff as strength and conditioning coaches, athletic trainers, physical therapists, and nutritionists. At the moment, sport psychology is viewed largely as a luxury service, while the previously mentioned professionals are seen more or less as essential. Until such a time as the ranking of sport psychology can be improved against these other professions, and it can be shown to be more of an essential service and less of a luxury service, little progress or advancement of the field will take place.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

The current study has taken a strong first step towards clarifying the perceptions that potential clients may have about sport psychology, in addition to identifying the barriers that exist, both for SPCs and for coaches, in

trying to create more opportunities for collaborative work between the two. That said, there are a number of directions that future research can, and should take in order to further elucidate this area.

1. A replication of the study with a different question guide more focused on the themes outlined above would provide a greater understanding of the hierarchy of needs that coaches must consider.

2. A much larger cross section of participants would be very beneficial to provide more insight into how the field of sport psychology is viewed, not just by coaches, but by the athletic community at large (and in some cases our current society). More coaches must be approached in order to broaden the scope and applicability of the study. This may include, but not be limited to: replicating the study with coaches from different levels of competition (i.e., high school, Olympic, professional). This would serve two aims. It would illuminate any differences in the needs, perceptions, or barriers that exist based upon the level of competition, and it would help to refine and clarify the proposed theoretical model more fully.

3. Alternate populations of professionals and potential groups of clients within the athletic world would be beneficial to interview to examine the perceptions of sport

psychology within the athletic community at large. For example, athletic directors, coordinators, and human resource personnel would be beneficial to talk to since they are often responsible for making decisions about budgetary concerns and hiring practices for larger institutions.

4. The investigation of coaches that are currently working with SPCs would be beneficial in that they may provide insight into different ways that SPCs might overcome the barriers mentioned above. Presumably coaches that are already working with SPCs have found ways to overcome the barriers mentioned, or have a different hierarchy of needs. A study of these factors would serve to (a) shed more light on how to overcome the obstacles coaches face in trying to hire SPCs, and (b) further expand on the theoretical model proposed.

#### Closing Remarks

In Chapter 1 the question was asked - What is it that is holding the field of sport psychology back? The researcher wondered whether the lack of advancement of the field was related to how professionals are currently managing the field, or if it was more due to how sport psychologists are perceived by athletes and/or coaches? The focus of the present study was on the latter question, but in the process, there was a certain amount of light shed on

the former. Many of the comments made by the coaches, and the ultimate conclusions made by the researcher about those comments, trace back to how the field is being promoted, rather than how SPCs are perceived by their clients. In the end, it is the professionals working in the field of sport psychology who must take up the torch to two main ends.

First, they must take ownership of the process of educating coaches, athletes, administrators, and other key personnel in the athletic world about the field, in order to promote better understanding of what sport psychologists do, how much the services offered might cost, and how effective the services might be.

Second, more must be done to market, publicize, and generally raise awareness about the field of sport psychology. This can include a variety of measures. Most important would be to publicize the existence of the registry of certified consultants that is available on the AASP website (AASP, 2009). Related to that is the sport psychology registry made available through the USOC.

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APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

## CONTACT EMAIL SENT TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Dear Coach,

My name is Rolf Wagschal, and I am a PhD Candidate at Temple University in Philadelphia. Currently, I am completing my dissertation to find out how coaches at NCAA Division 1 schools perceive the field of Sport Psychology. As a coach, you are in a position to provide key insights into a variety of factors related to my research. By participating in this study you will be helping those in the field of sport psychology develop a better understanding of the coaching community and be better able to assist coaches and athletes.

Participation in this study will place a minimal demand on your time. Data collection will consist of a single interview, during which you will be asked a series of questions about your perceptions and experiences with the field of Sport Psychology. I expect that the interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. With your permission, this interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcript will be returned to you for your verification that the statements are accurate reflections of your thoughts and experiences.

The data you provide will be recorded anonymously. Any identifying material in interview transcripts will be deleted, and any information gained from this interview will be used in an anonymous fashion in any publications or presentations that may result from this study.

If you would like to participate in this study, please contact me either by email or with the contact info provided below and I will explain my research further. If you are not interested in participating, please let me know and I will not contact you again.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Rolf Wagschal, M.A.  
PhD Candidate, Dept. of Kinesiology  
Temple University  
WAGSCHAL@TEMPLE.EDU  
Office - 215-204-8707  
Mobile - 267-334-3011

Advisor:  
Dr. Michael Sachs  
Professor, Dept. Of Kinesiology  
Temple University  
MSACHS@TEMPLE.EDU  
Office - 215-204-8718

P.S. Any questions about this study and your potential participation may be directed either to myself, or to my advisor, Dr. Michael Sachs. Our contact information may be found above. Additionally, any questions about your rights as a research subject may be directed to Mr. Richard Throm, Office of the Vice President for Research, Institutional Review Board, Temple University, 3400 N. Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19140, (215) 707-8757

## APPENDIX B

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. In your opinion, what does the term "sport psychology" refer to?
  - a. Have you ever heard any other titles for these types of professionals, other than "sport psychologist"? Mental skills training etc.
  - b. What was your impression of those titles - did those people seem more/less qualified?
2. The following are some terms for professionals working in the field of sport psychology. Respond to each title with your thoughts about your impression of the title, and whether or not you would be willing to work with someone who used this title...
  - a. Mental Skills consultant
  - b. Performance consultant
  - c. Sport consultant
  - d. Performance coach
3. Have you ever hired a Sport Psychologist to work with you/your team?
  - a. If so, what was your experience?
    - i. If not, why not?
  - b. How much time did you (would you) allow for your sport psychologist to work with your team per week? Why?
  - c. What types of topics do you see as being most important for a sport psychologist to be knowledgeable on? Why?
  - d. What did you like most and least about the experience?

- e. If you have worked with a Sport Psychologist in the past, what type of consultation model were they employed under (fulltime onsite, part time onsite, retainer and used as requested, contracted for a set number of hours per week/month)?
  - f. If you were to hire on in the future, what type of consultation model would they be employed under (fulltime onsite, part time onsite, retainer and used as requested, contracted for a set number of hours per week/month)?
4. In your opinion, if you were to hire a sport psychologist to work with your team, what should or would the roles and responsibilities of the person be?
- a. What kind of interaction with them would you want?
  - b. Would you want to work closely with them, or simply give them carte blanche to work with your team?
5. To your knowledge, does your school currently have any sport psychologists on staff, either as faculty or as part of the athletic department?
6. Would you prefer to hire a sport psychologist that you yourself chose from outside your academic institution, or would you rather have someone on staff in the athletic department? Why?
7. Have you ever requested that a sport psychologist be hired in your athletic department?
- a. If so, what was the result of the request?
8. What types of barriers do you think exist in trying to hire or gain access to the services a Sport Psychologist?
- a. How do you think those barriers might be overcome?

## APPENDIX C

## WRITTEN CONSENT FORM

On Temple Letterhead

A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF NCAA  
DIVISION IA COACHES ABOUT THE FIELD OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

Written Consent Form

Page 1 of 2

Title: "A qualitative investigation of the perceptions of NCAA Division IA coaches about the field of Sport Psychology."

Principal Investigator: Michael Sachs, PhD

Student Investigator: Rolf Wagschal, M.A. (PhD Candidate)

Temple University, Department of Kinesiology

Telephone: 215-204-1940

We are currently engaged in a study of how NCAA Division IA coaches perceive the field of Sport Psychology. To help us gain further insights into this area, you have been asked to participate in a qualitative interview. In this interview, you will be asked a series of questions about your perceptions about and experiences with the field of Sport Psychology. It is expected that the interview will last between 60-90 minutes. There are no known risks associated with participation in this study.

The data you will provide will be recorded anonymously and your participation and anything you say during the session will be held in the strictest confidence. Any identifying material in interview transcripts will be deleted, and any information gained from this interview will be used in an anonymous fashion in any publications or presentations that may result from this study.

We welcome questions about the study at any time. Your participation in this study is on a voluntary basis, and you may refuse to participate at any time without consequence or prejudice.

A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF NCAA  
DIVISION IA COACHES ABOUT THE FIELD OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

Written Consent Form

Page 1 of 2

Questions about your rights as a research subject may be directed to Mr. Richard Throm, Office of the Vice President for Research, Institutional Review Board, Temple University, 3400 N. Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19140, (215) 707-8757.

Singing your name below indicates that you have read and understand the contents of this Consent Form and that you agree to take part in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's name (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Investigator's Signature  
Rolf Wagschal

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX D

## PERMISSION TO AUDIO TAPE

A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF NCAA  
 DIVISION IA COACHES ABOUT THE FIELD OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGY  
 Permission to Audiotape  
 Page 1 of 2

Rolf Wagschal, M.A.  
Dept. of Kinesiology  
A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF NCAA  
DIVISION IA COACHES ABOUT THE FIELD OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:  
 Log #:

I give Rolf Wagschal, M.A. permission to audiotape me. This audiotape will be used only for the following purpose:

RESEARCH: This audiotape will be used as a part of a research project at Temple University. I have already given written/verbal consent for my participation in this research project. At no time will my name be used.

WHEN WILL I BE AUDIOTAPED?

I agree to be audio taped during the time period:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

HOW LONG WILL THE TAPES BE USED?

I give my permission for these tapes to be used from:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

**NOTE:** Data will be stored for three (3) years after completion of the study, after which time it will be destroyed.

WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND?

I understand that I can withdraw my permission at any time. Upon my request, the audiotape(s) will no longer be used. This will not affect my care or relationship with Rolf Wagschal in any way.

OTHER

I understand that I will not be paid for being audio taped or for the use of the audiotapes.

A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF NCAA  
DIVISION IA COACHES ABOUT THE FIELD OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

Permission to Audiotape

Page 2 of 2

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If I want more information about the audiotape(s), or  
if I have questions or concerns at any time, I can contact:

Rolf Wagschal, M.A.

Dept. Of Kinesiology

Temple University

1800 N. Broad St., Pearson Hall, Rm. 133

Philadelphia, PA, 19130

215-204 1940

This form will be placed in my records and a copy will be  
kept by the person(s) named above. A copy will be given to  
me.

Please print

Subject's Name:

Date:

Address:

Phone:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Investigator's Signature  
Rolf Wagschal

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX E

## NON-WRITTEN CONSENT STATEMENT

Statement to be read to participants at the beginning of phone interviews:

The field of sport psychology (also known as mental skills training) is a relatively new and rapidly expanding discipline that is attracting widespread attention from clients from a variety of backgrounds. However, there still exists a gap between the perceived utility and potential for growth within the field, and what is actually taking place in the market. As an individual who may at some point be interested in purchasing or using the services of a sport psychologist in the future, you are in a position to provide key insights into a variety of factors related to this issue. Your impressions about the utility of such services and what may be preventing you from using such services are vital for sport psychologists to be aware of, so that they may better serve the clients for whom they work. As such, this study is being conducted to find out about how coaches at NCAA Division IA schools perceive the field of Sport Psychology.

I am interested in finding out what specific impressions the collegiate coaching community may have about sport psychology, and to determine what specific barriers exist that may prevent one from enlisting the services of a sport psychologist. By participating in this study, you will be helping those in the field of sport psychology develop a better understanding of the coaching community.

You will be asked approximately 25 questions during the course of the interview, which will last between 60 and 90 minutes. With your permission, this interview will be taped and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts will be returned to you for your verification that the statements are accurate reflections of your thoughts and experiences. Upon verification, any identifying material in the transcript will be deleted, and any information gained from this interview will be used in an anonymous fashion in any publications or presentations that may result from this study. Your participation in this study will be kept confidential at all times.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate at any time without consequence or prejudice.

Questions about your rights as a research subject may be directed to Mr. Richard Throm, Office of the Vice President for Research, Institutional Review Board, Temple University, 3400 N. Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19140, (215) 707-8757.

Your choice to participate in the interview will constitute your consent to take part in the study, as well as your permission for the researcher to audiotape the interview. Do you agree to participate in this study?

## APPENDIX F

## CODING KEY

CODE	SUBCODE	EXPLANATION
TITLE		Alternate names that a coach knows about, or is familiar with, that refers to an SPC.
PER		Perceptions of SP
	PER-GEN, KNOW-GEN (p/n/nu)	Refers to how a coach generally perceives the field of SP, or his/her general knowledge about SP. Can be positive, negative, or neutral.
	PER-TIT (p/n/nu)	How does a coach perceive different titles provided. Can be positive, negative, or neutral.
	KNOW- SPEC (p/n/nu)	Specific knowledge about what an SPC does, or what the process is like. Can be positive, negative, or neutral.
	PER-PRO (p/n/nu)	Perceptions of people working in the field of SP. Can be positive, negative, or neutral.
	PER-TOP	Perceptions about which topics are important for an SPC to be knowledgeable about.
	PER-SPEC	Perceptions about specific aspects of SP. What is required in different situations?
	CKNOW (p/n)	Relates to a coach's feelings that they can cover some topics of SP. Can be positive or negative (i.e., they can feel as if they can or can't cover the topics).
SPORT- SP		Sport specific elements of sport psychology.
PEXP	p/n/nu	Previous experience with an SPC. What work has a coach done with an SPC in the past? Can be positive, negative, or neutral.

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	PEXP-SPEC	Relates specifically what an SPC may have done with a coach/team in the past.
	PEXP-EMP	Relates specifically to how an SPC was employed previously.
	PEXP-AVAIL	Previous experience in finding an SPC who was available.
	PEXP-RES	Specific results that a coach may have seen in his/her previous work with an SPC.
	PEXP-PROB	Problems encountered during previous experiences with an SPC.
FIT		General comments about having a FIT with an SPC and how that allows for more productive work (Including trust & rapport).
	FIT-EXP (p/n/nu)	Relates to why a coach liked the FIT with an SPC with regards to the experience he/she had. Can be positive, negative, or neutral.
WANT		Relates to the specific wants or needs of a coach, were they to hire an SPC.
	WANT-SPEC	Relates to what a coach specifically wants from an SPC.
	WANTSP	Comments revolving around wanting to hire an SPC.
	WANT-FAM	Comments revolving around wanting an SPC to be familiar with team members and to be familiar with the sport, rather than just coming in and talking to a group of strangers.
	WANT-FIT	Comments revolving around wanting a good personal FIT with an SPC that might be hired.
	TIME	How much time would a coach want to spend with an SPC?
	RELATE	What kind of relationship would a coach want with an SPC?
	XPT	Expectations of the coach for an SPC.

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BAR	Barriers to seeking, hiring, or working with an SPC.
BAR-PER	Barriers related to how the field of SP is viewed, usually in a negative way.
BAR-CRED	Barriers related to a lack of credibility of either an SPC, or the field as a whole.
BAR-DES	Barriers related to becoming desensitized to an SPCs information.
BAR-AP	Barriers due to apathy on the part of the coaches/athletic department or coaches thinking they can implement an SP program on their own.
BAR-FIN	Barriers related to finances.
BAR-AV	Barriers related to the availability of an SPC (or lack thereof).
BAR-NED	Barriers related to coaches feeling a lack of need for a SPC.
BAR-FIT	Barriers related to a lack of "fit" between the coach/team and an SPC.
BAR-FAM	Barriers related to a lack of familiarity between the SPC and the team. Could be not being around enough to personally know all of these athletes.
BAR-KNOW	Barriers related to a lack of knowledge on the coaches' or athletes' part.
BAR-BUY	Barriers related to getting more buy-in from the athletes.
BAR-T	Barriers related to fitting an SPC or that work into the schedule of the team - not wanting to take up too much time.
BAR-HEIR	Barriers related to the fact that SP is viewed as being somewhat low on the hierarchy of needs in the staff structure of most teams. In many cases SP is viewed as a luxury in this case.

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OVB	Overcoming barriers to hiring SPC.
OVB-AV	Overcoming barriers related to an SPCs availability.
OVB-FIN	Overcoming barriers related to finances.
OVB-FAM	Overcoming barriers by relating material in sport specific ways - delivering knowledge such that it is personally relevant to coaches and athletes.
OVB-VIS	Overcoming barriers by increasing the visibility of the field.
OVB-ASK	Overcoming barriers by simply requesting that an SPC be hired in one's Athletic department.
OVB-KNOW	Overcoming barriers by educating coaches and athletic directors about what an SPC actually does, how much it costs, and what they offer and bring to the table.
OVB-RES	Overcoming barriers through results with various teams, and having that be attributed to working with an SPC.
OVB-NED	Overcoming barriers based on a perceived need for an SPC.

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