

Creating a Self-Reflection Guide for Neophyte Sport Psychology Consultants

by Parker Hardcastle, Bachelor of Science

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## ABSTRACT

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by

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Research in the area of self-reflection is continuously growing. Many professions, including nursing, teaching, counseling, coaching and medicine have produced much research on self-reflection. Yet, there exists a dearth of self-reflection studies regarding sport psychology consultants (SPC). Further, self-reflection research highlights the effectiveness of proper reflection, but there is not yet a specific guide that explains self-reflection and how to reflect effectively in a practical manner, especially for SPC's. The purpose of this study was to create a specific guide for SPC's that teaches why reflection is important and how to reflect effectively. A secondary purpose was to pilot the guide using four neophyte consultants in order to collect feedback for the self-reflection guide. Four neophyte SPC's were used as participants ( $N = 4$ ). Participants were given the guide and taught by their consulting mentor how to comprehend reflection and use the guide. A semi-structured interview using open-ended and closed-end questions was conducted with each participant. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Grounded theory qualitative analysis was used to classify interview feedback using open, axial, and selective codes. Findings revealed that consultants may be able to attain significant experiential knowledge more quickly through reflecting and discussing reflections with a mentor. Core categories/selective codes indicate learning occurred in three dimensions: Self-reflective

learning experience, consulting learning experience, and the reflection guide has benefits and drawbacks. Reflection guide recommendations were then considered and implemented in the guide.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Self-reflection, or reflective practice, is the capacity to reflect on one's actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning (Schön, 1983). It is important to note the word continuous, which implies that the reflective learning process is incessant. Boyd and Fales (1983, p. 100) shortly after formulate a more specific definition, describing reflection as, “the process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by an experience, which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self and results in a changed conceptual perspective”. This definition provides us with not a complete conceptual understanding, but an idea of two aspects. First, it articulates the ability to recollect experiences as they happened and consider the negative experiences. Second, to be able to clarify those negative meanings with one’s self and understand them to create a more accurate perspective of how one interacts in their situation. Given that, introspection is defined as the examination of one’s own thoughts and feelings (Schultz & Schultz, 2012), self-reflection can be thought of as structured, retrospective introspection.

Soon after the initial definition in 1983, Kolb (1984) developed a reflective cycle that defined four items of reflecting: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. These steps are sequential, but also in keeping with the original “continuous” definition, the learning process is still incessant. Gibbs (1988) adapted this cyclical model to address six, specific means of consulting practice: description, thoughts and feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan (Gibbs, 2005). The only aspect these models lack thus far is a concrete structure in which a new reflective practitioner can advance their self-

reflection ability in a uniform manner (Cropley, Hanton, Miles, & Niven, 2010a; Holt & Williams, 2001). Ghaye (2001, p. 9) created a set of reflective questions to ask to provide structure for reflective feedback, which organizes reflective thoughts and creates a pattern for the practitioner to develop: “What is my practice like? Why is it like this? How has it come to be this way? What aspects of it would I like to improve? Whose interests are being served (or denied) by my practice? What nourishes and /or constrains what I do? What pressures prevent/limit me from practicing in alternative ways? What alternatives are available to me right now?”.

How might these questions and models be used after consultation? Practical application for post-client-interaction is exemplified as the following: answer structured reflective questions while considering thoughts and emotions about one’s self and the client during the experience, compare with post-experience thoughts and feelings about one’s self and the client regarding that same experience, identify strengths to fortify your practice, identify improvement areas, create an action plan for how one can combat weaknesses at the next opportunity during consultation, rehearse improvement action plans and strengths, compare to previous reflections, and review the recent reflection before meeting with the same client.

Self-reflection is a mental skill used by professionals in all fields. The purpose of reflection to enhance performance. SPC’s teach mental skills to enhance performance, thus self-reflection should be considered essential for SPC’s to practice themselves and improve consulting.

Learning proper self-reflection is proven to optimize experiential and self-reflective learning. Until now, there has not been a specific guide created to teach self-reflection. The aim of this research was to create a specific guide for SPC’s that teaches why reflection is important and how to reflect effectively. A secondary purpose was to pilot the guide using four neophyte consultants in order to collect feedback for the self-reflection guide.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-reflection, or reflective practice, is the capacity to reflect on one's actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning (Schön, 1983). It is important to note the word continuous, which implies that the reflective learning process is incessant. Boyd and Fales (1983, p. 100) shortly after formulate a more specific definition, describing reflection as, “the process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by an experience, which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self and results in a changed conceptual perspective”. This definition provides us with not a complete conceptual understanding, but an idea of two aspects. First, it articulates the ability to recollect experiences as it happened and consider the negative experiences. Second, to be able to clarify those negative meanings with one’s self and understand them to create a more accurate perspective of how one interacts in their situation. Given that, introspection is defined as the examination of one’s own thoughts and feelings (Schultz & Schultz, 2012), self-reflection can be thought of as structured, retrospective introspection.

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### **Purpose and Mechanisms of Self-Reflection**

Self-reflection can be defined in several ways, but the purpose of reflection remains ubiquitous. The purpose of self-reflection is to provide the opportunity to examine the full scope of the consulting practice, thoughts, and feelings that are associated with the practice (Cropley, Miles, Hanton, & Niven; 2007). Specifically, reflection allows practitioners to link professional knowledge with experience, which will raise tacit knowledge (individual, experiential knowledge) into consciousness, thus giving the practitioner a greater understanding of the

experience (Cropley et al., 2007). Reflection creates the opportunity to explore good practice, identify areas of strength and weakness, and produce new ideas to improve practice.

Furthermore, reflection also grants one the opportunity to review consultant effectiveness, gain perspective, identify competence, and enhance current consulting effectiveness (e.g., Anderson, Van Raalte, & Brewer, 2000; Cropley et al., 2007). Effectiveness is thought to be enhanced by generating a bank of actionable, procedural knowledge of what techniques “actually work” that can be enacted during the consulting experience (Cropley et al., 2010a).

Self-reflection is not only used by consultants in psychology. Reflection can and should be used by all serious professionals. The effectiveness of self-reflection is well documented in teaching, nursing, and coaching fields especially (Donoso-Morales, Bloom, & Caron, 2017; Ghaye, 2010; Schön & DeSanctis, 2011). Research by Maksimović & Osmanović (2018) found that the longer individuals are engaged in teaching and/or learning, the more they begin to naturally self-reflect and improve this process. Thus, it can be reasonably inferred that the sooner reflection is started and understood, the more one can accelerate their teaching and learning habits. Given any task, reflection can be used to simply think more deliberately and deeper about whatever task you may be involved in and improving that task effectiveness (Collins, Evans-Jones, & O’Connor, 2013). Reflection can be especially useful in regard to lifelong teaching and leading in high pressure situations. For instance, research on NCAA Division I university coaches concluded that not only do the head coaches find reflection to be salient in pressure situations in-game and post-game, but the most successful coaches engage in self-reflection more frequently to improve coaching throughout their career (Donoso-Morales, Bloom, & Caron, 2017). Further, all coaches who were in a national championship this year, in this sample, had all used self-reflection in some form in order to ground themselves, find their best perspective, and

focus on what the best plan of action is for their teams. Emotional-labor-intensive fields and those in positions of power would benefit even more from self-reflection as it can help in the act of self-care, formulating ideas for subordinates, and in understanding the idea of oneself as a leader in others' perspectives (Hings et al., 2018).

### **Self-Reflection and Sport Psychology Consulting**

In a research case study with experienced sport psychology consultants, Cropley, Hanton, Miles, & Niven (2010b) discovered common themes that emerge in reflection such as: recognizing the nature of one's practice, how much one focuses on one's self, potential improvements to practice, generating practice-specific knowledge, and becoming aware of the processes one uses during reflection. Comparatively, another study noted in their self-reflection research with practicing sport psychology consultants, that six themes emerged. These themes included: being personable, provision of good practical service, communication with self and client, knowledge and experience about sport and psychology, exhibiting professional skills, and honesty with self and client (Anderson, Knowles, & Gilbourne, 2004; Roberts & Stark, 2008). Similarities in these studies about consultants exists between the three subjects of one's practice, self, and reflection. Therefore, the general purpose of reflection is to improve practice, the self, and the act of reflecting. Improvement of self is performed by returning to the experience, attending to feelings, and re-evaluating those experiences (Boud, 2001). Reflection is even claimed to be essential for the learning experience, which is justified by stating everyone reflects to learn in their job field, but not as consciously as they should (Vana Hutter et al., 2017; Schön & DeSanctis, 2011). Consequently, quality of reflection and effectiveness of consulting are correlated (i.e. Knowles, Gilbourne, Cropley, & Castillo, 2014; Maksimović & Osmanović, 2018; Sharp & Hodge, 2011; Vana Hutter et al., 2017). Finally, by taking the time to view one's

self in a holistic perspective by considering all pertinent information, reflection can aid in career decisions such as professional and ethical dilemmas (Holt & Williams 2001).

### **Before Using Self-Reflection Considerations**

Previous findings regarding sport psychology consultants, reveals several characteristics that should be considered before beginning a self-reflection routine. Firstly, new consultants have reported ignorance of practice and don't exactly know the objective of best practice, what best practice looks or feels like, or understand what to improve (e.g., Collins et al., 2013; Croyley et al., 2010a; Hings, Wagstaff, Anderson, Gilmore, & Thelwell, 2019; Williams & Andersen, 2012; Woodcock, Richards, & Mugford, 2008). Ignorance, in this case, would certainly impede the goal of optimal consultation. A new consultant (or a general user of reflection in any case) will need to mandate a goal of consultation improvement in order to identify and outline precisely what aspects of themselves and their practice they wish to improve via reflecting. Striving to measure effective practice with no immediate goals in question is problematic (Croyley et al., 2010a). Self-reflection may be of limited value until the individual who's reflecting understands the purpose of reflection and what effective practice is. After comprehending effective practice, one can then critically reflect and judge their experiences (Abraham et al., 2009). As stated previously, the goal of self-reflection is to improve effectiveness by providing the opportunity to examine the full scope of the consulting practice, thoughts, and feelings that are associated with the practice (Croyley et al., 2007). Next, practitioners must remain adaptable in practice and self-reflection in order to reach effective reflection (Hings et al., 2018). Flexibility will allow the natural reformulation of goals that were set in reflections if inhibitory circumstances begin to disrupt goal achievement plans (Croyley et al., 2010a). Further, goal attainment and self-regulatory processes demand cognitive flexibility. Cognitive flexibility refers to an individual's

awareness that there are options and alternative courses of action available in any given situation, willingness to be flexible and adapt to the situation, and self-efficacy in being flexible (Martin & Rubin, 1995). All these aspects are enhanced by self-reflection as well. Goals become obsolete with no action plan to reach them. One must be prepared to adapt goals if circumstances with the client vary as this is common in consulting. Consequently, individuals need to spend a significant amount of time understanding proper, effective self-reflection in order to recognize deep-seeded beliefs since those have probably developed through implicit learning processes over a prolonged period of time (Abraham, Collins, Morgan, & Muir, 2009). This recognition of fundamental beliefs affords the opportunity to identify and question those apriori beliefs that may surface in the reflecting process. Essentially, the individual can identify belief structures in order to modify them if needed and can ensure that needs and wants are aligned in their practice.

In terms of a consulting, the goal is best effective practice. What is the definition of effective practice for applied sport psychology? Effective practice for sport psychology consultants is broadly defined as the ability to achieve stated goals or objectives by meeting the needs of the client as best as possible (Cropley et al., 2007). Particularly, effective practice is the process of forming a working alliance with the client(s), client's goals are clear and agreed upon, appropriate evidence-based interventions are undertaken to achieve goals, and goals are achieved or reformulated if needed (Cropley et al., 2010a). Other research in effective practice discovered sport psychology consultant themes that emerged in their study, which included: build a connection with the athlete to create positive change, build a professional consulting relationship with athlete, and consulting relationship meets athletes' needs (Sharp & Hodge, 2011). This research focuses more on the relationship aspect, whereas the research by Cropley (2007), concentrated on establishing and meeting goals with the client. These two themes work in unison

due to consultants need to be effective. Consultants must establish a close and trusting relationship which will allow them to set proper goals with the client. Then, these progress-oriented goals should be met. Thus, the consultant will help the athlete meet their needs for improvement. Correspondingly, within the themes of self-reflection purpose that were previously stated, more distinct goals can be found and determined (Anderson et al., 2004; Cropley et al., 2010b). The next consideration is that when beginning self-reflection, ignorance can inhibit progress to best practice if reflecting is unguided. The best use of self-reflection is to start with a structured outline of questions (created by a reflective practiced, experienced consultant) as to make reflecting more systematic (Cropley et al., 2010a; Holt & Williams 2001; Woodcock et al., 2008; Cropley et al., 2007). Then, it is encouraged to gradually deviate from this outline, by inputting one's own question into the structured questions, in order to personalize the reflection so reflecting can become more fluid, natural, and effective (Cropley et al., 2010a; Woodcock et al., 2008; Cropley et al., 2007). The last consideration about before beginning reflection, is that practitioners should understand that it is their experience of reflection that matters more than any associated model or theory at the moment (Knowles et al., 2007). This is because other ideas in self-reflection literature may influence reflection in a disingenuous manner (Boud, 2001). That is, it's easy to allow outside ideas from others' reflections to begin guiding thoughts away from one's natural thoughts and it is best to be aware of this phenomenon. This potential issue should be called into question upon using reflection.

Previous research regarding guided reflection interventions have also discovered other considerations that help guide others through self-reflective learning. The present study by Koh, Mallett, Martin, & Wang (2015) compared elite level (i.e. players at the national level) basketball coaches in a guided reflection intervention. The primary considerations (before beginning

reflective interventions) that were found: the coaches' motivation to reflect and belief that reflection is useful in helping improve coaching ability. This study confirmed earlier findings that motivation and belief are the most important factors in successfully adopting a habit of self-reflection (Cropley, Miles, & Peel, 2012). Levels of motivation were indicated by goals being set or not and the types of goals coaches set for their players. Coaches that want their players to learn team skills and psychological skills are more receptive to the idea of using a psychological skill themselves, such as self-reflection. One other suggestion the research makes is, in order to keep the self-reflection learner accountable, have them provide feedback with a self-reflection teacher. This can convey their belief in reflection and motivation to use it. Findings conveyed that coaches became more self-aware and developed greater relationships with their players, which improved overall team culture (Koh et al., 2015). Coaches report that they were more aware of their players' needs as well; a finding that is well supported in other reflective practice research (i.e. Cropley et al., 2007; Collins et al., 2013; Knowles et al., 2007). This research provides the knowledge of important considerations, specifically in respects to teaching self-reflection. If the practitioner (or anyone learning) is not receptive to the intervention or skill, then it proves to be useless because it will not impact their desire to reflect and effectiveness of their reflection. Thus, it is pertinent to show individuals the benefits of self-reflection before it is taught. Indicators of motivation such as goals for one's practice can elucidate whether or not an individual is taking reflection seriously. Feedback in teaching self-reflection is also recommended in order to uncover doubts of effectiveness and demotivation (Cropley et al., 2012; Koh et al., 2015).

One final consideration to make regarding self-assessment in reflection, is the human capacity to accurately reflect and self-assess. Research in social sciences have evaluated this

topic and the preponderance of evidence appears to be that humans do have a highly variable ability to self-assess (John & Robins, 1994; Davis, Mazmanian, Fordis, Harrison, Thorpe, & Perrier, 2006). When compared to peer evaluations and evaluative measures, on average, individuals have a propensity to overestimate their abilities and/or effectiveness. Overestimating effectiveness may stem from ambitions of self-improvement, which invoke a self-serving bias response. Conversely, there is also correlational evidence to suggest a harshness bias, in which self-assessors are overly negative in their evaluations of self. Hence, a vast difference between how individuals assess themselves. Differences in personality traits, such as narcissistic tendencies, are likely to account for this variance in self-evaluation (John & Rubin, 1994). Davis and colleagues (2006) concluded that the majority of physicians overestimate their competence. Further, experience did not tend to be a significant predictor of self-assessment accuracy. Therefore, experience does not always yield in increase in self-assessment ability and professionals need to hold themselves responsible for their effectiveness, no matter the level of experience. The phenomenon for those to overestimate their ability has occurred so frequently that it has been named the Dunning-Kruger effect. Recent research in this area has further found that those who are less competent tend to overestimate their abilities even more than those who are experienced (Schlösser, Dunning, Johnson, & Kruger, 2013). This misevaluation of self-issue is most likely due to a criterion problem. That is, a lack of objective criteria against which self-perception can be compared to (John & Robins, 1994, p. 206). This is precisely why peer and supervisor self-reflection is heavily advised. Self-perception can also be enhanced in reflections through feedback from peers or supervisors as a way to make oneself more perceptive of their practice. Similarly, identifying positives and areas in need of improvement may prevent overestimation in effectiveness, which will be explained in further detail. Note, when positives in

consultation are mentioned in one's reflection, support for why one knows those events or actions had a positive benefit for their practice should be given to further guard against self-serving bias.

### **Pitfalls During Self-Reflection**

Self-reflection is a simple concept. However, reflecting properly by being honest, organized, positive, fully aware, confident, all-inclusive, mindful, flexible, goal-oriented, action-oriented and pure (without outside influence) is a more arduous task. Without careful practice in self-reflection, the well-documented limitations of intuition can make us 'strangers to ourselves' (Wilson, 2004). One common mistake of reflecting is ruminating on negative experiences or fixating on only the areas of improvement (Andersen et al., 2000; Cropley et al., 2010b; Williams & Andersen, 2012). In fact, a healthy balance of what went well and what went poorly is necessary during reflecting to be effective because narrowing perspective on negative experiences can cause a negative association with one's practice and even degrade effectiveness and/or joy in one's practice (Collins et al., 2013; Andersen et al., 2000). If users of reflection only accept a standard of perfection then this will cause feelings of immense pressure and negatively affect reflection feedback, thereby decreasing reflection potency and performance effectiveness (Williams and Andersen, 2012). Moreover, this deprecating cycle of reflection and practice effects may lead to self-doubt and self-consciousness during consulting practice (McEwan & Todd, 2014). Contrastingly, self-reflection users may be too insecure to admit faults. Being dishonest about mistakes is common amongst new practicing consultants especially (Cropley et al., 2010a; Hings, Wagstaff, Anderson, Gilmore, & Thelwel, 2019). If reflection is merely a journal about how well one thinks their consulting practice is, then it is not effective because they are not striving towards goals of improvement (Cropley et al., 2007, Cropley et al.,

2010b). Another way to view the objective of self-reflection, is the idea to continually learn and improve, as previously stated. A lack of goals and improvement strategies in one's reflection indicates that one is simply maintaining the status quo. Stagnant practice is a type of resistance in reflecting and is a sign of ineffective practice (Andersen et al., 2000). It is further tempting to allow frequent routines to become monotonous. Self-reflection, being a frequent occurrence after each successive experience, is at risk of becoming daunting if done impetuously. This will invoke stagnation of consulting practice (Cropley et al., 2010b). Self-reflection must be intentional and purposeful in order to be effective, hence the importance of goal setting in reflection (Collins et al., 2013; Cropley et al., 2007). Lastly, individuals should be wary of concentrating on one's self too often in reflection as opposed to the environment and the client. An over-emphasis of self-focus is common when reflecting and can also lead to self-doubt and ineffectiveness (Cropley et al., 2007; Hings et al., 2019; Williams & Andersen, 2012).

### **Effective Use of Self-Reflection**

Understanding effective, self-reflection is considerably the most important aspect of reflection. Firstly, attempting to assume the mindset of the professional that one wants to be in the reflection can be very useful in shaping one's self to become that type of professional in action. Self-reflection tends to instill the attitude and drive in which the user inputs into the reflecting process, much like enacting a self-fulfilling prophecy (Cropley et al., 2007; Hings et al., 2018). In the case of self-reflection practice affecting users, it is important to remain positive when reflecting. One can highlight strengths and improvement areas in order to achieve a balance of rewarding effort/finding positive aspects and knowing weaknesses (more positively phrased as "areas of improvement"). Using positively phrased language in reflection can also enable the formation of positive self-talk in general (i.e. Hings et al., 2018). Next, reflecting can

increase or relieve pressure. To avoid added pressure, it is best to focus on one's own standard of excellence in their reflection goals, which should be framed in terms of constant improvement towards the goal of aiding the self, client, or others as best as possible instead of attempting perfection (Cropley et al., 2007; Williams & Andersen, 2012). Honesty and authenticity are crucial for effective reflection as well. Reflective writing mediates how one will perceive one's self in their field or practice. Disingenuous reflection can distort views of perception of self and this will cause one to be misalign with professional strengths, weaknesses, wants, and needs (Cropley et al., 2010a; Hings et al., 2019). Congruent reflections are the feedback to one's self that identifies where the individual is in their journey to improvement and effective reflection. Honesty and admission of faults in reflection, in fact, is a true sign of confidence and can improve the reflecting process by affording the individual an opportunity to learn from and correct mistakes (Holt & Williams, 2001). Furthermore, effective reflection will contain immediate and long-term goals (Anderson et al., 2004; Cropley et al., 2010a). These goals will be established in the reflective writings and should be within reach, but slightly push one slightly beyond their comfort level. Reflection goals should be mandated regularly and be specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, timely, self-determined, and unique to the individual. These goals will ensure improvement, promote continuous learning, and combat stagnation (Andersen et al., 2000; Schon, 1983). The unique reflection style tailored to the individual should reflect novel ideas if reflection is executed honestly and deliberately. Deliberate and explicit self-reflection will foster unique reflection and further repel stagnation by promoting new ways of thinking regarding one's practice as well (Cropley, 2010b; Sharp & Hodges, 2011). Next, reflection should be engaged as immediately as possible after experience in order to optimize reflecting effectiveness (Boud, 2001; Knowles, et al., 2014). Otherwise, details and issues may

easily deteriorate from memory. Prolonged time between reflection and actual experience will also make returning to the experience and re-immersion more difficult, as opposed to instantly after the occurrence. Boud (2001) also suggests one can reflect before the next experience/consultation in order to rehearse and envision how one would like the experience to occur. Lastly, according to sport psychology consultants, reflections should be shared with peers in the same field or better yet, supervisors (Cropley et al., 2010a; Woodcock et al., 2008). Outside feedback is a way to gain perspective for one's self and practice. Especially when new to reflection and/or a job field, having a supervisor or peer review reflection to ensure coherence of thought, ability to identify strengths and weaknesses, depth of reflection, novel ideas, and to holistically safeguard against potential impairment or blind spots in reflective practice (Andersen et al., 2000; McEwan & Tod, 2014; Woodcock et al., 2001). Peer or supervisor-reviewed reflection should possibly be considered the most essential component in order to achieve effective self-reflection. Some existing reflective advice guides list themes and elements that should be covered during reflection; these themes were analyzed and considered for the composition of a detailed self-reflection guide (Anderson et al., 2004; Boud, 2001; Boud, 2013; Cropley, et al., 2010b; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Ghaye, 2001; Ghaye, 2010; Gibbs, 1988; Gibbs et al., 2005; Kolb, 1984; Lew & Schmidt, 2011; Lysaker, 2017; Moon, 2004; Roberts & Stark, 2008).

### **On Action and in Action**

Schon (1983) defined two times in which self-reflection can benefit users; both on action (after experience) and in action (during experience). On action reflecting refers to reflecting on the experience after it has occurred (i.e. Anderson et al., 2004; Cropley et al., 2010a; Knowles et al., 2014; Schon, 1983). This type of reflection is what is typically referred to in research and

practice. When reflecting on action, one attempts to reconstruct the experience in which trying to reflect on (Schon, 1983). Anderson (2004) further explains reflection on action is incorporating the active processing of experiences that occurred in that moment with the time during reflecting. Hence, why it is integral and recommended to reflect as soon as possible after experience (Knowles et al., 2014). On action reflecting requires an ability to image and emerge one's self in an experience in order to relive the environment, thoughts, emotions, and re-evaluate the experience (i.e. Boud, 2001). Practicing imagery should be suggested for the purpose of recalling sessions as well, given that specific imagery-memory related studies indicate imagery aids in episodic and autobiographical memory recall as well (Vannucci, Pelagatti, Chiorri, & Mazzoni, 2016; Sheldon, Amaral, & Levine, 2017). Next, Schon (1983) defines reflecting in action as deploying the knowledge learned from reflecting on action at the same time they are acting; it's an attempt to form the cognitive habit of observing thoughts in the process of action and adapting the thoughts to fit the behavior that was established as a goal. Meaning, reflection in action is a byproduct and implementation of the tacit knowledge learned from the experience. Which, tacit knowledge is enhanced by reflecting on action (Anderson et al., 2004; Cropley et al., 2007). In action reflection is a mindful practice of observing the whole self in the environment and attempting to intervene in order to shift the environment in one's favor (Boud, 2001). In action reflection is dependent upon enacting actionable knowledge, which is the tacit knowledge gained from experiential learning (Cropley et al., 2007, 2010b; Hings, 2019; Vana Hutter, 2017). Fundamentally, in action reflection allows consultants to practice the application of recently acquired knowledge. Examples of actionable knowledge would include: aesthetic, ethical, personal, and empirical knowledge, social, norms, values, and prejudices (Anderson et al., 2004). Therefore, reflecting on action enhances the ability to acquire tacit knowledge, which can be

used in action to refine the experience that will, in turn, allow one to again reflect on action and learn more from the tangible examples from the experience (Cropley et al., 2007). Thus, this positive feedback cycle accelerates learning and consulting practice. It should be considered, however, that if the consultant begins to over-analyze themselves, then this will reduce consulting effectiveness due to neglect for a client-centered practice.

### **Self-Reflection to Combat Common, Neophyte, Sport Psychology Consultant Pitfalls**

As previously stated, self-reflection's main purpose for consultants is to enhance consulting effectiveness by improving practice through exploring one's consulting ability and meeting goals for the self and the client. Pitfalls for consultants can be internal (with the self) and external (with the environment or client). Neophyte consultants and experienced consultants tend to struggle with both internal and external pitfalls, and typically external conflict in neophytes is due to internal struggles (Collins et al., 2013; Holt & Williams, 2001; Woodcock et al., 2008). Therefore, reflection can eliminate common errors with the use of explicitly focusing on improvement, reviewing what exactly went awry, and how these actions can be retrofitted. Not only can self-reflective writing refine one's consulting practice, but the writing can also improve reflective ability. Outcomes data from 3,460 students suggests reflective ability improves with reflective writings and can further enhance metacognitive (thinking about one's own thinking) abilities (Lew & Schmidt, 2011). Metacognition is defined as, "the aspect of information processing that monitors, interprets, evaluates and regulates the contents and processes of its organization" (Wells & Purdon, 1999, p. 71). The following sections were revealed to be common themes that reflection can improve.

#### ***Identity***

Difficulty with identity is the most common issues as a neophyte consultant.

Concurrently, difficulties with incongruence, authenticity, and philosophy (which guides one to their identity) can be attributed to perceiving one's values or beliefs as being misalign with their practice- which is fundamentally an identity issue. Identities must be developed with experience, which implies neophytes, having little experience, will not yet possess a developed identity.

Cropley and colleagues (2007) found philosophy of a consultant is the driving force behind the technical aspects of consulting and plays a key role in the effectiveness of service. Therein, identity struggles can be a root cause of many issues with consultants. Experienced consultants can struggle with identity issues frequently (Williams and Andersen, 2012).

Incongruent behavior for consultants occurs when professional actions are not based on genuine, personal beliefs. (Cropley et al., 2010b; Hings et al., 2019). Therefore, incongruence could be synonymous with inauthenticity. Collins and colleagues (2013) found different levels of consultants feeling incongruent when they realized, through reflection, that consultants tended to get lost in the practice and lose sight of their personal and professional values in the consulting practice. Self-reflection enables consultants to observe their practice from a holistic perspective and track evidence of value and authenticity in practice when reflecting properly on action (Anderson et al., 2004; Collins et al., 2013; Cropley et al., 2010b; Poczwardowski et al., 2004). Specifically, a frequent problem for consultants is the feeling of wearing a professional mask that disallows consultants to congruently/authentically emotionally respond (Hings et al., 2019). This includes, in reflection, discovering conflict between felt emotions and observable emotions expressed in sessions. New consultants, especially, feel inhibited from revealing a true self as this seems threatening to their professional practice. However, as practice persists and congruence becomes more familiar, consultants feel a sense of belonging and fulfillment, and

this process can be expediated by self-reflection (Collins et al., 2013; Cropley et al., 2010b, Hings et al., 2019). New consultants may feel constrained by a professional mask due to unfamiliarity with operating in ethical boundaries. Although, reflection can also enhance comfortable actions regarding ethical bounds (i.e. Anderson et al., 2004; Holt & Williams 2001). It is also important to remain authentic one's about knowledge as a consultant with clients. Attempting to provide answers when the answer is unknown is ineffective, unethical, and could be damaging to client trust. Typically, neophyte consultants attempt to provide answers to questions not completely understood. This is due to insecurity of knowledge and a belief that the objective of consulting is to provide answers no matter the situation (Cropley et al., 2007). However, it is critical to understand there are unlimited situation and questions a consultant will encounter and it is improbable to expect to be able to navigate all the unknowns that will be inevitably encountered (Pack, Hemmings, & Monna, 2014). If consultants refuse to acknowledge ignorance, this could signal consultant impairment or resistance of discovering areas of improvement, which promotes stagnation. Furthermore, utilizing peers or supervisors as a source of differing perspectives is useful in terms of ensuring authenticity. Others can provide feedback about how authentic or hypocritical one may be behaving as they understand consulting practice ethics and can confirm if one is behaving genuinely (McEwan & Tod, 2014). A sense of openness in self-evaluation provides tremendous opportunity to reveal shortcomings and consequently perpetuates improving consulting effectiveness. Self-reflection can provide accountability by guaranteeing open self-critique.

Consultants have reported that philosophies are integral for establishing an identity that allows one to adapt to environment by responding genuinely and confidently because philosophy provides clarity for decision making (Cropley et al., 2007; Hings et al., 2018). Moreover,

understanding one's philosophy is an essential prerequisite to being an effective sport psychology consultant and ongoing self-reflection can facilitate this understanding (Cropley, 2010a; Poczwardowski et al., 2004). After all, as consulting practice develops, philosophies become clearer with that experience and discovery of authentic consultant self (Collins et al., 2013; Hings et al., 2019). However, why not reflect when initiating consulting practice to solidify a philosophy in order to establish more effective practice quicker? To reiterate, reflection aids in experiential learning of authenticity and philosophy, which will significantly reduce the amount of identity struggles a consultant encounters.

### ***Mismanaging Emotions***

As discussed, neophytes and consultants in general may feel incongruent between expressed and felt emotions. Along with issues of inauthenticity of emotions, emotions can disrupt effective consulting by causing consultants to become fixated on internal issues, judge one's own emotions, or become blinded to an emotional issue and become impaired (Andersen, 2000; Knowles, 2014). Reflecting is shown to reveal underlying emotion as well, which can allow one to become more in touch with emotions and how emotions impact consulting effectiveness (Hings et al., 2018; Hings et al., 2019). Consultants who are skilled in understanding their inner emotions during their encounters with clients are better at making decisions, distinguishing their needs from their clients' needs, understanding transference and countertransference, and can react more effectively to consulting situations. Adept consultants know how to cope with feelings so that are equal to the situation and their response is in the client's best interest (Prasko, Mozny, Novotny, Slepecky, & Vyskocilovae, 2012).

If a consultant is unaware of emotional fixation, this can cause impairment, which is defined as aspects that negatively influence effectiveness of service delivery that consultants are usually unaware of (Andersen, 2000). Reflection affords the opportunity for consultants to attain an overview of their consulting service and identify points of fixation or patterns of potential missing themes from previous reflections. Another option is to discover this through the use of a peer or supervisor self-reflection review as well. Next, consultants undertake a significant amount of emotional labor from clients. In this case, it is pertinent to ensure self-care and management of emotions (Hings et al., 2018; Hings, et al., 2019). Self-reflection can assist in establishing a routine of self-care and can help monitor emotional fixation or emotional avoidance as well. A lack of reflecting on emotions can indicate a resistance to admitting emotions, which is a another type of consulting impairment (Andersen, 2000). Emotions are integral in the life of consultant and using reflection to monitor emotional load and awareness is necessary. Consultants also need to consider the emotional, mercurial nature of consulting. Often, new consultants can be caught off guard by the turbulent shifting of emotions from the client and need to learn to be emotionally flexible. This demand for emotional adaptability can be observed and learned through self-reflection (Hings et al., 2018).

### ***Confidence***

Confidence is major component in becoming an effective consultant (Cropley et al., 2010a; Sharp & Hodge, 2011). Simply acknowledging and expressing honest emotions through self-reflection is shown to improve efficacy in sport psychology consultants (Cropley et al., 2010a; Hings et al., 2019). More generally, effective self-reflection is also proven to improve overall confidence (Cox, 2005). Part of the reason why neophytes experience a lack of confidence is due to feeling like an imposter in the practice and not knowing if they will be able

to navigate all situations of consulting (Hings et al., 2018; Pack et al., 2014; Williams and Andersen 2012). Consultants face many uncertain elements in their work. Reflection can familiarize consultants with the uncertainties and help them understand that volatility so that they are allowed to operate more confidently (Cropley et al., 2010a). As discussed, reflecting can help establish a professional identity as a consultant that can then be merged with a personal identity. This process is enhanced by self-reflection and therefore aids in establishing confidence as a new consultant (Cropley et al., 2007). Additionally, finding identity allows one to justify their consulting practice and improve confidence by eliminating doubts about their career or ability to consult (Anderson et al., 2004). Indeed, it is common for consultants to doubt effectiveness (Collins et al., 2013). Thus, reducing all doubts via self-reflection is a useful tool. By reflecting on how much the consultant dominates the conversation in sessions, consultants can observe insecurity. It is typically a sign of anxiety in practice when consultants move on too quickly or try to steer conversation in the direction they would like instead of where the client wishes to go (Cropley et al., 2007). This misbehavior typically stems from consultant's fear of silence and not inquiring enough. Reflection makes consultants aware of their anxiety (Cropley et al., 2007). However, it is important to know how to combat this anxiety with positive reflection and tactical, counter-anxiety goals. Next, intentionally reflecting in a positive mindset helps associate reflecting on experience with consulting clients and this positivity can bolster confidence during consulting services (i.e. Cox, 2005; Gilbert, 2011). Due to consulting being highly experiential learning based, semantic knowledge can only prepare neophytes so much for consulting. As stated, it is the experiential, tacit knowledge that is so vital for learning how to consult. Reflecting improves acquisition of tacit knowledge which will expediate the rate at which consultants can improve (Cropley et al., 2007). Furthermore, increased confidence allows

consultants to create new tactics and apply them, which guarantees a continuous learning and improving experience (Cropley et al., 2010b; Schön, 1983). Finally, self-reflection enables one to feel more competent in practice because reflecting allows one to mandate clear goals and track progress towards them (which increases efficacy alone), remind one's self of positives in consulting practice, and define areas of improvement with an action plan of how to combat these weaknesses (Cox, 2005; Cropley et al., 2007; Cropley et al., 2010a).

### ***Professionalism and Client Relations***

Not only will reflecting provide clarity to a professional philosophy and guide one in how to operate within ethical boundaries, but it can also ensure the consultant is maintaining professional relationship with clients (Collins et al, 2013; Holt & Williams, 2001). Often, consultants (especially neophytes) can experience boundary blurring, or acting too informally with clients, which has been shown to have a profound negative effect (Andersen et al., 2000; Hings et al., 2018). Self-reflection clarifies professional boundaries when reviewing client interactions with a professional mindset and assures the consultant is maintaining a professional distance (Andersen et al., 2000). Consultant-client relationships are essential for an effective practice. Sharp and Hodge (2011) categorized effective sport psychology consulting relationships as understanding concepts of communication skills, having knowledge to build relationship and rapport, possessing the ability to show empathy, being open and approachable, learning about the athlete's sport/needs, having a collaborative relationship, meeting relationship needs of athlete, and having a balance of communication between client and consultant. Self-reflection enables a consultant to view relationships with clients other than in the immediate present. Reflecting on action when referring to client relationships can provide a realistic perspective of interaction and studies have conveyed that reflecting improves understanding how

one's self interacts with clients. Holistically, reflection can provide an improvement in overall self-development and professionalism (Anderson et al., 2004). Conclusively, reflection can also benefit the field of sport psychology consulting. Reflecting challenges and improves the ideas of practice held by the institution of sport psychology, and further refines how sport is developed, coordinated, managed, and funded (Anderson et al., 2004).

### *Awareness of Client*

Self-reflection augments client-consultant relationships, but it can also enhance awareness of how the consultant perceives the client altogether. One glaring issue that faces neophyte consultants especially, is not using the perspective of a person/athlete-centered approach. Katz and Hemmings (2009) observed an overall shift in sport psychology from the medical model-approach to a client-centered approach. Frequently, novice consultants have a tendency to view their relationship with the client as merely fixing the clients' issues for them (Williams & Andersen, 2012). Sport psychology consultants reported that when beginning consulting, there is a tendency to assume the role as a problem solver and look for issues to solve (Collins et al., 2013). It is important to bear in mind that being an effective consultant requires practitioners to provide emotional support and present the encouragement and tools for athletes and clients to use in order to resolve their own difficulties, so they may learn how to cope and self-regulate (Lindsay et al., 2007; Ravizza, 1990). Reflecting *on* action about consulting practice with being client-centered in mind can provide opportunity to learn service effectiveness, while reflecting *in* action can aid the use of client-centered approach. The client-centered approach will help form an alliance with the client, and this type of humanistic relationship is what seems to be most effective for consultants (Anderson et al., 2004; Pack et al., 2014). Further, as consultants progress with experience, they tend to move towards a more client-centered approach that

focuses more on the process and factors that influence what is better understood to be effective service delivery, as opposed to focusing on psychological techniques to teach (Cropley et al., 2007). Reflection can potentiate the learning process so that the consultant can stay ahead of the typical learning curve. Another aspect should be considered when reflecting, is establishing who the client is as an individual. For instance, athletes are not only athletes, they are people. Andersen and colleagues (2000) found a common mistake is for consultants to misrepresent how they think of the client in their own mind, which inhibits service effectiveness. This research conclusion has been supported by Prasko and colleagues (2014). Just as in sport psychology, when the client must come before the consultant in order to achieve the goals that were mutually set between the consultant and client, effective consulting is reached (Cropley et al., 2007; Cropley et al., 2010a). Conversely, some new sport psychology consultants reported thinking of the client as self-directed and that once the consultant taught them the mental skills, the client would understand exactly when and how to use them effectively (Collins et al., 2013). Some consultants move on too quickly and search for the next problem and forget to attend to client's emotional reaction to advice, which indicates providing a lack of emotional support. This neglect exemplifies the need for a balance of attending to client's abilities and readiness to move forward. Otherwise, consultants are at risk for treating the symptoms and not the cause.

### *Awareness of Self and Accountability*

Consultants should remain aware of issues that may affect self-awareness. As stated previously, reflecting may exacerbate consulting issues if done improperly. This is why self-awareness is so crucial in self-reflection and will be further explained when referring to the supervisor's role with reflections. When reflection is correctly used, accountability can be established with one's self (Anderson et al., 2004). This is done by referring to the consultant's

philosophy and over-arching values that are discovered through reflection itself. Holt and Williams (2001) discovered reflection can lead to enhanced self-awareness. Reflective practitioners can then establish questions in their self-reflection that rehearse their philosophy and ensure proper behavior in regards to that philosophy and self-guided standards. Moreover, it is also necessary to understand consultants are prone to misrepresent themselves in reflection by distorting one's own reflection feedback (Williams & Andersen, 2012). Reflection can help shape one's perception if this distortion possibility is accounted for in the reflection. A way to combat distorted self-awareness is to highlight measures of positives and negatives in reflections; if one outweighs the other significantly then consultants should consider the possibility of self-misunderstanding. As discussed, a lack identifying areas of improvement indicates a resistance to change, and therefore a resistance to learning and improving (Andersen et al., 2000; Anderson et al., 2004). Neophyte sport psychology consultant research reveals that new consultants, primarily, undergo the issue of pressure (Ghaye, 2001; Hings et al., 2018; Williams & Andersen, 2012). Pressure is often described as overwhelming for consultants in these studies and interferes with ability to deliver effective service. Specifically, consulting pressure can come from self-imposed pressure to fix all client issues and maintain perfect consultation. Until consultants learn to not impose perfection on themselves, consulting will remain less effective due to the constraints of outcome focus (Cropley et al., 2010a). This is due to outcome focus as opposed to process focus, causes increased perception of pressure. Reflection helps consultants focus on the process of consulting due to increased concentration on process during reflections (Cropley et al., 2007). Therein, proper reflection can help alleviate pressure by focusing on the process in reflection and reminding one's self in reflection to remain emotionally available in the process of supporting the client.

### *Insight*

Insight is the deep and accurate understanding of something (Ellis, 1963). In relation to consulting, it is an understanding of a cause and effect in one's consulting experience. Insight is important for effective reflection and self-regulation (Roberts & Stark, 2008). Self-regulation consists of three domains: the need to reflect, engagement in reflection, and clarity of insight in order to initiate a positive behavior change (Grant, 2002; Roberts & Stark, 2008). Positive changes in consulting indicate increased effectiveness of practice. Grant (2002) also discovered effective reflection is correlated with higher levels of insight acquisition. These higher levels of insight are linked to a greater understanding of one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; which is what reflection provides. Data from 227 participants in a study by Stein and Grant (2014) found that self-reflection significantly helped induce insightful experiences. Two other findings from this study revealed specific mechanisms of what affects insight and well-being or comfort of practice. First, dysfunctional attitudes suppress the relationship between self-reflection and self-insight. That is, a negative and passive outlook on one's practice or on one's reflecting inhibits ability to glean any understandings from self-reflection. The second finding concludes that positive, core self-evaluations (reflecting) mediate the relationship between self-insight and subjective well-being. Thus, a positive and intentional mindset can enhance consulting experience through practice and self-reflection. Focusing on positive attitudes (controlling for a dysfunctional attitude) can improve frequency of self-insight, which increases positive self-evaluations. This cycle will, in turn, lead to a more positive outlook on practice and reflecting on consulting experience (Stein & Grant, 2014). Overall, reflection is shown to increase insights in practice, which can reveal positive changes to consulting and reflecting, which will lead to a more effective practice.

## **Role of the Mentor in Self-Reflection**

Self-reflection provides consultants an accountability measure to ensure they perceive the client correctly, but also that they perceive their own ability, emotions, shortcomings, and positives of practice correctly as well. Reflecting is a source of constant, accurate feedback to one's self when executed correctly. However, auxiliary safety measures other than one's self are recommended when reflecting to confirm correct consultant perception. Peer-shared reflections have been proven to be quite useful and consulting participants agree that shared reflections encourage even more accountability (Cropley et al., 2010a). However, supervisors, especially, can provide this consulting support and accountability. All common consulting and self-reflection pitfalls previously discussed, primarily for neophytes, can be combated with supervisor assistance. Reflection on experience simply allows for supervisors to review specific instances in practice and gain a greater understanding of the consultant's perception of themselves and ideas about their service effectiveness (Woodcock et al., 2008). In fact, Cropley and colleagues (2010a) recommend that the supervisor uses self-reflection also so they can comprehend the process and provide reflection advice. Reflecting on supervising consultants is further shown to improve supervising as well because supervisors can know what to expect from supervisees. Sharing reflections improves reflection effectiveness by helping the reflective user finish fragmented thoughts and establish better clarity overall if aware that others will need to understand it (Woodcock et al., 2008). Reflection enhances the learning process. However, sharing reflection with experienced supervisors can further accelerate this learning process of tacit knowledge acquisition and the understanding of consulting skills (Cropley et al., 2007; Woodcock et al., 2008). Furthermore, supervisors provide some emotional comfort for the supervisee by allowing them to share emotional labor with the supervisor and reduce

apprehension about their effectiveness (Hings et al., 2019; Knowles et al., 2007). Next, supervisors can assist with supervisee's reflections on session planning through the critical incidence report. In the critical incidence report the supervisee and supervisor review session reflections and attempt to complete the following: describe the phenomenon and assign meaning to it in terms of the accepted view, analyze structural inconsistencies, paradoxes, and other flaws, figure out why the dominant view ignored what you found that was wrong with your view, and then create a better structure of perception and understanding of the supervisee's service (Holt & Williams, 2001). The fundamental idea is for supervisor to provide feedback for consultant to create proper sessions with a sound framework. The consideration that supervisors will need to attend to when supervising consultants about reflection is: the possibility of consultant resistance and the distortion of feedback (Andersen et al., 2000; Woodcock et al., 2008). Supervisees can maximize bad and minimize good when reviewing feedback from supervisors or from their reflection (Andersen et al., 2012). Therefore, it is useful for the supervisor to ask for consultant feedback about the feedback that was just provided. Lastly, when supervisors provide reflection feedback, it is best to bear in mind that they should avoid providing easy answers that solve the supervisee's problems or impose on supervisee's personal difference and uniqueness of style (Holt & Williams, 2001). Remaining non-judgmental when supervising a consultant's reflections can help the consultant become non-judgmental about their own thoughts and effectiveness. Self-reflections essentially provide organized thoughts regarding consulting practice and session planning, and allows the supervisor to better understand and critique supervisees with reflection adjustments.

Although self-reflection has been well researched, with a renewed interest in the sport psychology consulting literature in recent years, there is yet to be a specific guide for consultants

to initiate and refine their self-reflection skills. The purpose of this study is to design a research-grounded self-reflection guide for sport psychology consultants, with a focus on neophyte sport psychology consultants to use in their own practice that will help create a system of self-reflection or improve current self-reflection. A secondary purpose of this study is to pilot this guide through a case study approach using four neophyte psychology consultants and improve the guide based on consultant feedback.

Effective reflection and consulting in sport psychology has been extensively reviewed for this research. Overall, research on the topic of self-reflection in sport psychology and effective practice within the field has been conducted and the findings are reported. Many factors that affect consulting and self-reflection effectiveness have been considered and used to compose a self-reflective guide for sport psychology consultants. Findings and implications were discussed in the literature review. The table below was created to clarify what research thus far has been written on these topics that lend to effective reflection and consulting.

**Table 1. Research Relating to Necessary Factors in Effective Reflection and Consulting**

<b>Critical Topics Covered in Research Regarding Effective Self-reflection and Effective Consulting</b>	<b>Research</b>
Defining Self-reflection	
In Action Reflection	Schön, 1983 Boud, 2001 Anderson et al., 2004 Cropley et al., 2010a Hings et al., 2019
On Action Reflection	Boyd & Fales, 1983 Schön, 1983 Anderson et al., 2004 Cropley et al., 2007 Cropley et al., 2010b Knowles et al., 2014

Introspection	Schultz & Schultz, 2012
Purpose and Mechanisms of Self-reflection	
Purpose of Reflection	Cropley et al., 2007 Abraham et al., 2009 Pack et al., 2014
Advised That All Professionals Should, and Most Do Use Self-Reflection	Schön, 1983 Anderson et al., 2004 Schön & DeSanctis, 2011 Donoso-Morales et al., 2017 Maksimović & Osmanović, 2018
Reflection was Directly Observed to Improve Learning	Schön, 1983 Anderson et al., 2004 Cropley et al., 2007 Cropley et al., 2010a Cropley et al., 2010b Ghaye, 2010 McEwan & Tod, 2014 Donoso-Morales et al., 2017 Vana Hutter et al., 2017 Hings et al., 2019
Self-reflection and Sport Psychology Consulting	
Reflecting Directly Improving Consulting Skills/Effectiveness/Delivery	Holt & Williams, 2001 Anderson et al., 2004 Cropley et al., 2007 Cropley et al., 2010a Cropley et al., 2010b Sharp & Hodge, 2011
Before Using Self-reflection Considerations	
Ignorance in Practice	Woodcock et al., 2008 Williams & Andersen, 2012 Cropley et al., 2010a Collins et al., 2013 Hings et al., 2019
Feeling of Competence is Essential in Effective Practice	Knowles et al., 2007 Sharp & Hodge, 2011
Need to Remain Flexible in Reflection and Practice	Martin & Rubin, 1995 Holt & Williams, 2001 Cropley et al., 2007 Cropley et al., 2010a Hings et al., 2018

Importance of Goals in Reflecting and Practice	Martin & Rubin, 1995 Boud, 2001 Grant, 2002 Anderson et al., 2004 Cropley et al., 2010a Cropley et al., 2010b Boud et al., 2013
Begin Reflecting with More Organization Initially	Holt & Williams, 2001 Cropley et al., 2007 Woodcock et al., 2008 Cropley et al., 2010a
Reflecting Improves Self-Regulation	Martin & Rubin, 1995 Grant, 2002
Necessary to Insert One's Own Personalized Questions	Cropley et al., 2007 Woodcock et al., 2008 Cropley et al., 2010a
Need for Motivation to Learn Reflection Effectively	Cropley et al., 2012 Koh et al., 2015
Pitfalls During Self-reflection	
Difficulty with Incongruence, Imposter Syndrome, Wearing a Professional Mask in Practice	Hings et al., 2019
Doubts/Negatives in Reflection	Andersen et al., 2000 Cropley et al., 2007 Cropley et al., 2010b McEwan & Tod, 2014
Self-Focus in Reflection	McEwan & Tod, 2014
Pressure as a Consultant	Ghaye, 2001 Hings et al., 2018 Hings et al., 2019 Williams & Andersen, 2012
Authenticity/Honesty in Reflection and Practice	Andersen et al., 2000 Holt & Williams, 2001 Anderson et al., 2004 Cropley et al., 2007 Cropley et al., 2010a Prasko et al., 2012 Williams & Andersen, 2012 Collins et al., 2013 McEwan & Tod, 2014 Pack et al., 2014 Lysaker, 2017 Hings et al., 2019

Growth in Practice and Learning Continuously Through Reflecting	Schön, 1983 Andersen et al., 2000 Anderson et al., 2004 Cropley et al., 2007 Prasko et al., 2012 Boud et al., 2013 McEwan & Tod, 2014 Lysaker, 2017
Effective Self-reflection	
Positivity in Practice and Reflections	Gibbs, 1988 Holt & Williams, 2001 Cropley et al., 2007 Ghaye, 2010 Boud et al., 2013 Collins et al., 2013
Importance of Athlete-Centered Approach Perspective In Reflection/Practice	Ravizza, 1990 Holt & Williams, 2001 Anderson, 2004 Lindsay et al., 2007 Cropley et al., 2010a Lysaker, 2017
Advised to Reflect Immediately after Experience	Boud, 2001 Knowles et al., 2014
Advised Reflections Should be Peer and Supervisor Reviewed	Andersen et al., 2000 Grant, 2002 Woodcock et al., 2008 Cropley et al., 2010a Lew & Schmidt, 2013 McEwan & Tod, 2014
Suggested Themes/Elements in Self-Reflection Journals	Kolb, 1984 Eyler & Giles, 1999 Gibbs, 1988 Ghaye, 2001 Boud, 2001 Anderson et al., 2004 Moon, 2004 Gibbs et al., 2005 Roberts & Stark, 2008 Cropley et al., 2010b Ghaye, 2010 Lew & Schmidt, 2013 Boud et al., 2013 Lysaker, 2017

Self-reflection to Combat Common, Neophyte, Sport Psychology Consultant Pitfalls	
Metacognition and Thinking More Deeply Promoted by Self-Reflection	Wells & Purdon, 1999 Cropley et al., 2010a Ghaye, 2010 Lew & Schmidt, 2013
Realizing Areas in Need of Improvement through Reflection	Holt & Williams, 2001 Cropley et al., 2007 Woodcock et al., 2008 Boud et al., 2013 Collins et al., 2013 Knowles et al., 2014 McEwan & Tod, 2014
Providing Emotional Support for Client	Collins et al., 2013
Reflection and Helping Relationship with Client	Cropley et al., 2007 Cropley et al., 2010b Prasko et al., 2012 Collins et al., 2013 Koh et al., 2015
Identity and Philosophy in Reflecting and Consulting	Anderson et al., 2004 Poczwadowski et al., 2004 Cropley et al., 2007 Abraham et al., 2009 Cropley et al., 2010a Williams & Andersen, 2012 Pack et al., 2014
Mismanaging Emotions	Andersen, 2000 Prasko et al., 2012 Knowles, 2014 Hings et al., 2018 Hings et al., 2019
Reflecting Raises Consulting Confidence	Anderson et al., 2004 Cox, 2005 Cropley et al., 2010a Williams & Andersen, 2102 Hings et al., 2019
Professionalism in Practice	Andersen et al., 2000 Holt & Williams, 2001 Anderson et al., 2004 Sharp & Hodge, 2011 Williams & Andersen, 2012 Collins et al., 2013 Hings et al., 2018

Reflecting Improving Awareness/ Perception of Client and Their Needs	Cropley et al., 2007 Knowles et al., 2007 Collins et al., 2013 Koh et al., 2015
Reflections Improving Awareness/ Perception of Self	Andersen et al., 2000 Holt & Williams, 2001 Anderson et al., 2004 Cropley et al., 2007 Cropley et al., 2010a Prasko et al., 2012 Williams & Andersen, 2012 Collins et al., 2013 McEwan & Tod, 2014 Pack et al., 2014 Koh et al., 2015 Lysaker, 2017 Hings et al., 2019
Mindfulness in Reflection	Boud, 2001 Williams & Andersen, 2012
Insight in Reflection	Ellis, 1963 Boyd & Fales, 1983 Grant, 2002 Stein & Grant, 2014
Use of Supervisor in Reflection Review and Practice for new Consultants	Cropley et al., 2007 Holt & Williams, 2001 Knowles et al., 2007 Woodcock et al., 2008 Cropley et al., 2010a Vana Hutter et al., 2017 Hings et al., 2019
Emotional Labor	Hings et al., 2018 Hings et al., 2019

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

#### **Participants**

Participants included four neophyte sport psychology consultants ( $N = 4$ ). The four participants consisted of two males and two females. These consultants were studying or had studied in an Exercise and Sport Psychology Master's Program and did not use self-reflection prior to the study. Participant 1 [P1] was a first-year student in the program, who was thirty years of age and female. Participant 2 [P2] was also a first-year student in the master's program, who was twenty-four years of age and female. Participant 3 [P3] was a second-year student, who was twenty-four years of age, male, and consults with his own athletes. Participant 4 [P4], who was thirty-five years of age and male, graduated the program a month prior to the interview.

#### **Measures**

Open-ended and closed-end questions: A set of open-ended and close-end question was created for the semi-structured interviews. The questions were based on topics from the review of literature to ensure that each essential reflection and consulting topic were attended to in the self-reflection guide. Further, the questions were designed to account for ease of use, clarity, and effectiveness of the guide. Other questions tended to the consultants' experience and consulting effectiveness in attempt to identify a relationship between self-reflection and effectiveness of practice. A co-investigator ensured that interview questions were not leading toward any bias findings. Examples of the open-ended questions: "Did the guide help you understand what reflection is? If so how? If not, what didn't you understand?", "How well do you think you reflected? Did you get better over time? If no, why not? If so, how?", "Did you reflect in action

(during consulting) as well as on action (after consulting)?”, “Did you note any improvements in the athletes’ mental skills ability or improvements in their performance?”. See Appendix B for all open-ended and close-end questions.

## **Procedure**

Participants were given the self-reflection guide and taught by the consulting mentor as to how they should properly reflect using the guide. The consulting mentor was a sport psychology consultant with several years’ experience working as a sport psychology professional and mentoring neophyte consultants. She had taught or was currently teaching all the neophyte consultants who used the guide for the study. The mentor read the participants reflections to ensure proper reflection and motivation to reflect. The mentor also answered questions about self-reflection and consulting periodically. A concluding interview was conducted by a co-investigator to review the consultant’s reflections, reflecting experience, and consulting experience. The interview was semi-structured and used open-ended and closed-ended questions designed by the creator of the guide, who is also the lead investigator. Reflection content was analyzed and thematized using axial coding. Consulting experiences were then assessed through a series of questions regarding client interactions, reflecting improvement, and guide usefulness. All interviews were recorded and coded to maintain confidentiality. The audio was transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were then thematized and analyzed using grounded theory qualitative analysis. Two research assistants, with no prior knowledge about the purpose of the study, separately reviewed the four interview transcripts and established all open codes. The lead investigator then scored the inter-rater reliability before identifying axial and selective codes.

## **Data Analysis**

Grounded theory by Strauss and Corbin was used for the qualitative data analysis (Strauss & Corbin,1990). Overall, this type of analysis involves formulating open, axial, and selective codes. Selective codes generate a core category or categories that then help form an underlying theory or explanation of how the phenome can be explained. The possible theory or explanation inductively emerges from the data based on analysis of codes. Two research assistants were trained in identifying open codes. They then reviewed the four transcripts to discover open codes. This assessment consisted of a phrase-by-phrase analysis. The open codes were found by observing repeated occurrences and significant phenomena. Open code assessments were performed on three separate occasions to verify the validity of the findings. In keeping with best practice, further validity was reinforced through the continuous comparison of all open codes:

Open coding and the use it makes of questioning and constant comparisons enables investigators to break through subjectivity and bias. Fracturing the data forces preconceived notions and ideas to be examined against the data themselves. A researcher may inadvertently place data in a category where they do not analytically belong, but by means of systematic comparisons, the errors will eventually be located and the data and concepts arranged in appropriate classifications. (Corbin & Strauss, 1990)

These codes were then thematized under various code names according to their context, actions, and interactions. Once the final codes were submitted, the lead investigator and a co-investigator scored the percent matches of each interview. All open codes were reviewed and compiled in a document and context, dimensions, and properties were assessed in order to establish appropriate axial codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Next, context, actions/interactions, conditions, and consequences of the axial codes were considered to form proper selective codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Two research assistants were trained in open coding through an in-person meeting and also completed multiple attempts of practice coding and correction via email. The lab assistants then coded the relevant research interviews once they achieved a firm understanding of open coding. After coding and re-coding transcripts for this research on three separate occasions, a total of thirty-five open codes were discovered. The lead investigator and a co-investigator scored the inter-rater reliability based on the percent match of the open codes separately and agreed upon the final figures. Inter-rater reliability was scored by summing all rater agreements for open codes and dividing this figure by the sum of total open codes. Total open codes included agreements and disagreements. Non-agreements, codes found by one rater and not the other, were categorized as disagreements.

### **Self-Reflection Guide**

The guide was created using research compiled from the review of literature. The reflection guide contains a series of questions that cover significant considerations and themes that the consultant needed to be striving to answer in their reflections. Considerations of self-reflection, such as pitfalls and goals of reflection, were established before self-reflection began. During reflection, also known as reflection on action, contains themes and subject reminders. These themes act as a checklist to ensure all categories of consulting and growth of practice are covered. It also ensures goals were being set and pursued. Reflection subject reminders were also input to guide consultants to reach their optimal reflective habits. Reflection in action was included in the guide as well. This section acted as a guideline that assisted enacting consulting improvements and noticing reflective moments via emotional, situational, and cognitive cues. See Appendix A for the full guide.

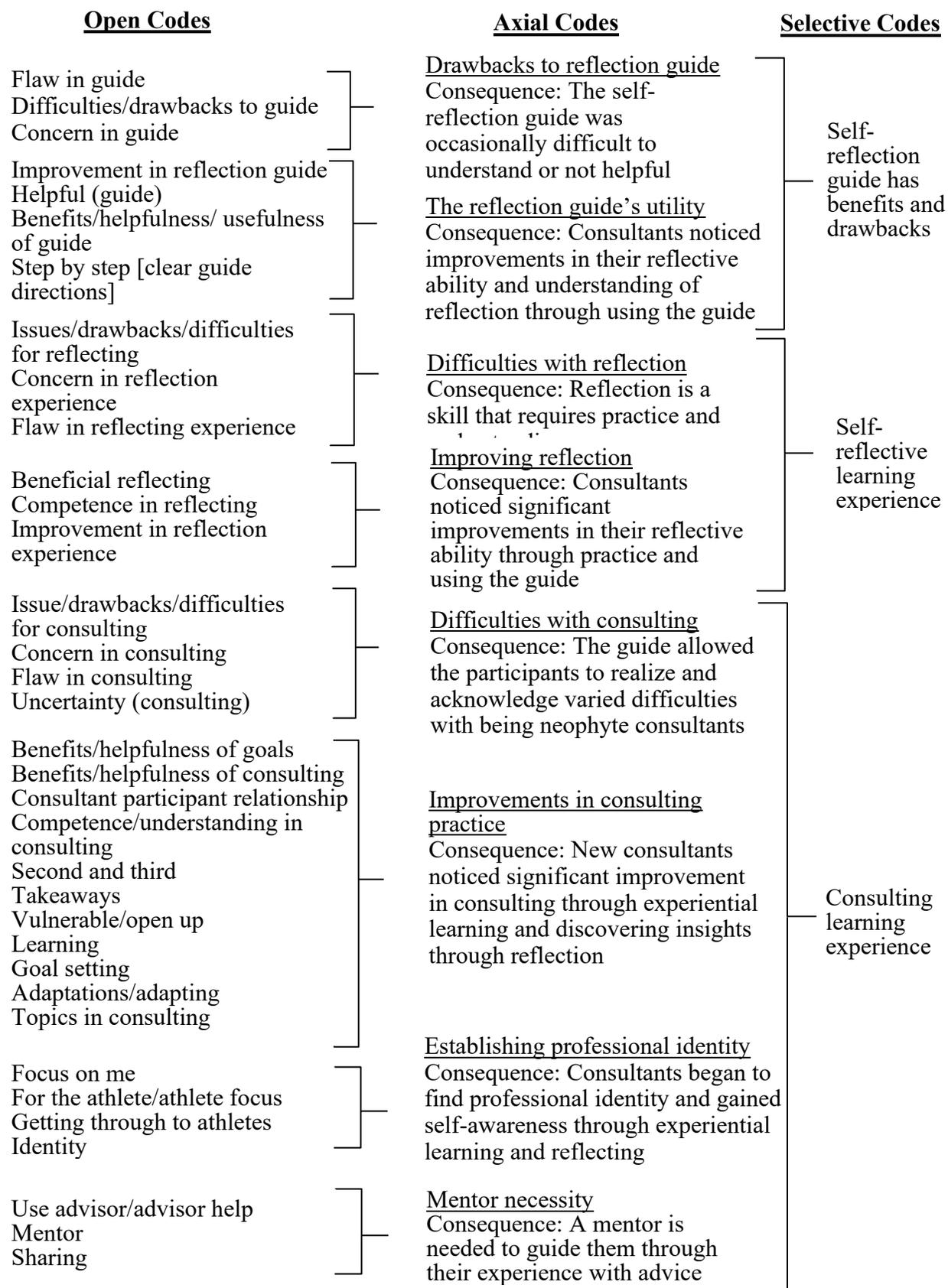
## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### **Open Codes and Inter-Rater Reliability**

A total of thirty-five open codes were discovered. Interview open code percent match is as follows and is represented by “r”, which stands for inter-rater percent agreement: interview one ( $r = 84\%$  match), interview two ( $r = 85\%$  match), interview three ( $r = 83\%$  match), and interview four ( $r = 90\%$  match). On average, the open code inter-rater reliability scores were an 86% match ( $M = 86\%$ ). The majority of codes were explicitly supported through consultants answering interview questions and expounding their answer that directly contained one of the codes. Other codes were implicitly supported. Meaning, inferences were made from participants statements when codes were more abstract. A coding table was composed to display all open, axial, and selective codes along with the axial codes’ consequences (see Table 2). The “consequences” for the axial codes given in the table help provide meaning and context of the phenomena given the descriptive nature of the outcomes for each dimension being explored.

Figure 1. Grounded Theory Coding



## **Axial Codes**

The open codes were grouped into a total of eight axial codes. These codes are the result of analyzing context, dimensions, and properties of the open codes. The axial codes consisted of the following categories and consequences. Consequences are stated as the first sentence for each category to provide more descriptive meaning of the code.

### ***“The Reflection Guide’s Utility”***

All four consultants noticed improvements in their reflective ability and understanding of reflection through using the guide. The interview question “Did the guide explain the usefulness and purpose of reflection well?” was answered “yes” or “it did” by three out of four participants. The other participant [P3] felt some areas were explained well and others were not. Reasons given that the guide explained usefulness and purpose were centered around “gave you a lot to think about” [P4] or “more in-depth [thought]” [P3]. The clarity of explanation and instruction was reported: “it [the reflective template] explained every question and how to answer it well” [P2], “self-explanatory” [P2], and “gave step by step examples” [P1]. The question “Did the guide explain what reflection is and how to do it effectively?” was answered “yes” [P1 and P4] by two participants and “mostly yes” [P3] or “to a certain extent” [P2] by the other two participants. The participants that answered mostly yes needed some guidance from a mentor when first reviewing how to reflect with the guide. Participants felt that the guide was organized to show the “process” and “steps” of how to reflect well. Participants also unanimously agreed that the reflective template was “useful for starting and organizing reflections” [P1] and also agreed that, due to using the guide, they “felt more competent as a consultant”. Overall, the most helpful aspects tended to be the reflective template questions that prompted deep thought that the consultants did not consider, goal setting, and enhancing their perspective about their practice

and themselves as a consultant. One consultant explicitly concluded “I don't think I would be where I'm at with consulting if I didn't have the reflection guide” [P2].

### ***“Drawbacks to Reflection Guide”***

The participants felt the self-reflection guide was occasionally difficult to understand. When asked about the guide difficulties, participants generally responded with: “In the beginning I think I was just confused. It was hard, but then the professor explained how to use it” [P1]. Seemingly redundant reflective template questions were commented on multiple times: “Just a slight repetitiveness of the two questions of ‘Have I made progress?’ and ‘What have I improved upon?’” [P3]. Another specific example of redundancy was about a template question, “I thought some of them [the reflective template questions] didn't really fit for a new consultant. Like a question was like, ‘How does meeting with this client serve your purpose?’” [P4]. One last example was addressed in the guide under the section, “What is self-reflection?”, where definitions and purpose of reflection are outlined. Yet, one participant stated, “As to what the purpose of the reflection was, I don't feel like the guide itself explained it very well” [P3]. Further, most participants did not understand reflection and reflection in action, which needs to be addressed more thoroughly. The reflectivity scale was not used, but could possibly be useful if understood well; one participant concluded: “I could definitely see how some find it [reflectivity scale] helpful” [P3]. Some of these difficulties with the guide may be due to the natural learning process of consulting and reflecting, but the guide appears to be in need of clarity improvement in the purpose area and redundancy elimination or explanation of how some template questions differ from one another. Finally, only two of four participants felt as though they developed a personal or consulting philosophy, when literature and the guide suggest that

finding one's professional philosophy is useful. However, consultants may not have completed enough sessions to discover this philosophy.

### ***“Difficulties with Reflection”***

Reflection is a skill that requires practice and understanding. When referring to beginning the process of reflection for the first time, participants stated how ignorance about reflecting was an issue: “I honestly didn't know where the reflection should go or how it should go” [P2] and “I didn't know what I should be reflecting on” [P1]. Ignorance hampered the consultant's ability to set goals: “I didn't really have something I was looking for [in reference to setting goals in reflection]. I just wanted to concentrate on the client” [P4]. One participant believed they did not focus on the self enough: “I don't think I was as judgmental [self-corrective] as I could have been” [P2] and “I had an issue in the first one and then I knew that I had to focus a little more on myself” [P1]. All consultants experienced difficulty with vulnerability in reflections: “I was less vulnerable... I didn't want to give up my weaknesses” [P2]. Initiating reflective writing was unnatural at first as reported by some: “in the beginning it was choppy... we did this and this...” [P4]. Most participants stated they were focusing on negative aspects too frequently: “were too negative” [P4] and “reminded me not be so hard on myself” [P3]. Generally, participants shared difficulty with honesty, positivity, focus, vulnerability, fluidity of reflecting, and ignorance of the act of reflecting. Lastly, all participants reported that the expectation of sharing the reflection with a mentor impacted their writing: “I put more detail in some things” [P3]. “I tried to make it sound more academic” [P4]. “I was less vulnerable” [P2]. Participants reported that as they reflected, some of these issues began to dissipate to some degree within a few reflective journaling cycles.

### ***“Improving Reflection”***

Consultants noticed significant improvements in their reflective ability through practice and using the guide. All four consultants expressed they noticed improvement in their reflections: “Then the second and third I did a good job because I could actually see what was my role as the consultant” [P1], “I feel like I knew how I was improving in my reflections” [P3], and “my last one was my best one [reflection entry]” [P2]. One consultant axiomatically reported what the point of reflection is for themselves: “I think it’s a way for us to understand or even like to know we did well or what we need to improve” [P1]. Previous issues were found to be remedied, “learned to open up... it [reflecting] got a lot better” [P2]. One participant explained how reflecting became a habit: “As time went on I kind of kept reflections in the back of my mind as I did Consulting and I think that helped... helped me keep aware of what I need to do... and what to improve on” [P4]. One participant noticed timing of reflection was important as is suggested in the guide: “I found the sooner that I could do it, the better” [P4]. Perception of consulting practice was observed to improve: “reflections went from about me, to kind of about the whole thing” [P3]. Self-purpose in reflecting became more apparent as one participant stated, “like probably towards the end of my consulting last semester, it was definitely- I felt I knew why I was reflecting” [P3], “I guess it just flowed better” [P4], and “it helped me just kind of see things that are bothering the client or things that I could do to help them the next session” [P4]. These response properties tended to center around perception of client and self, learning how to optimize reflecting, organization of thoughts, problem solving, and reduction in rigidity of reflective writing. Furthermore, all participants explicitly reported that they improved reflecting over time.

### ***“Difficulties with Consulting”***

The guide allowed the participants to realize and acknowledge a broad range of difficulties with being neophyte consultants. The difficulties varied widely and are represented by the following section: “I had issues with that because I focused too much on the participants instead of thinking about my job as the consultant” [P1]. Self-doubt overcame all consultants in some manner: “self-conscious” [P1, P2, and P3], “For my first two sessions I was really nervous, so I got in my head” [P2], “nervous” [all], “I always worried that I wasn't getting through to some” [P2], “I only have a master’s... do I have enough training?” [P4], and “In the beginning, you kind of have almost no idea what you're doing [consulting]” [P4]. Initial sessions were much like initial reflections as two consultants stated how unnatural consulting first felt: “I was trying to go word for word off my paper [session planning notes]” [P2], “When I first started, it was more of a lecture type situation and that didn't really go over too well, so I took a whole different approach” [P3]. Consultants had issues with concentration, most likely due to anxiety: “My attention would kind of slip sometimes [during consultation]” [P4]. Consultants did not find the first sessions enjoyable due to nervousness: “Just getting over the anxiety and nervousness kind of made it hard to enjoy in the beginning” [P2], “In the beginning I kind of wanted to show off and spew all my knowledge” [P4]. All consulting issues had a propensity to centralize around focus, self-consciousness, nervousness, anxiety, self-doubt, wrongful intent, session structure errors, worry about not reaching athletes.

### ***“Improvements in Consulting Practice”***

New consultants noticed significant improvement in consulting through experiential learning and discovering insights through reflection. This axial code contained the most open codes (twelve). An example of what the consultants learned about perception in practice include: “[Focus on] at the same time treating them individually” [P1] and “[Multiple sessions] it gets

you thinking about the overall process, and how you go from beginning stage to where you're at now" [P4]. Participants found how to best connect with audiences: "I try to put [speak] as simple as possible so they could understand" [P1] and what engages clients most "they [clients] need to talk a little bit more" [P3] and "Talk less. Get the athletes involved more. Make the activities more interactive" [P2]. The necessity of goals and clear preparation of how to improve in the next sessions became clear: "I went into each session ready to improve what I had said I needed to improve" [P2]. Perception of self during consultation was outlined by one consultant and reported to improve by all participants: "I was definitely more aware of my behavior during [consultation] because of the things I reflected on" [P3]. Next, enjoyment began to appear as consulting skills improved: "I think my overall listening skills improved and I actually started to enjoy consulting more" [P4]. The properties and dimensions of this category are fixated on what the client needs, consultant needs, correct focus, simplicity, behavior awareness, holistic perspective, planning, consulting skills, overcoming self-doubt/confidence, and enjoyment. Furthermore, all participants asserted that reflection did cause them to feel more competent as a consultant. All participants also stated that they set goals to improve consulting and met them. Client behavior also reinforced the idea of consultation improvement as one consultant noticed: "The client was also more open to share things with me" [P4].

Consultants also began to note the improvement in consultation through their ability to apply theories to practice better. Participants recalled useful activities the athletes engaged in and put theories to practice. Consultants were able to recall the topics covered in sessions that were reflected on: "We used focus and concentration, team building, and imagery" [P1] and "we had a whole week of goal setting" [P3]. One participant gave an example of how reflecting and experiential learning began to shape how they applied theory to the sessions:

Through the third session and after reviewing each reflection, I looked back and it was like they were more engaged after they got to do this activity or when we asked questions that were modified in a sense so where they could answer them. So, our last session was completely interactive with them. Then they were doing activities and playing soccer. That was one of the big reasons that we did that [P2].

As consulting understanding improved from reflecting and experiential learning, theory application began to become more obvious for consultants since they were able to effectively identify what was most beneficial for the athletes. These codes were predominantly implicitly stated. As consultants reflected, they focused on the question of “How to use that to reach the athletes effectively” and this question is what they based their session planning on. Connecting effectively with the athletes was mentioned very frequently when participants were speaking about how they can “reach” or “focus” on the athletes more and apply academic knowledge appropriately. One specific example of a consultant learning what to ask for planning his session is: “What do they actually need?” [P1]. This category was more implicitly supported. The difficulties with consulting were realizations of what could be improved and behavior or thought correction was enacted. Also, improvement in reflections or insights lead to amelioration of consulting practice.

### ***“Establishing Professional Identity”***

Consultants began to find professional identity and gained self-awareness through experiential learning and reflecting. Two consultants reported that they wanted to be viewed as a consultant to their clients and the other two did not speak about this exactly: “Because I had contact with them before the assignment, so I didn’t want to them to just see me as my role before. I wanted them to see me as a consultant” [P1]. All participants found they needed to adjust how they were perceiving themselves as a consultant: “A lot of that came from where I

needed work done a lot of that came going in and thinking this is just for the athletes” [P2] and later realized “They don't know that I'm new to this they don't know if I'm going to mess up so if I just go in and do my best for them it's going to be more beneficial for them” [P2]. One participant had a realization of how their responsibility to care for the athlete can vary and was reflected on:

You know that you are just meeting with them [client] sometimes. The client would tell me that that was great and it's nice just to talk to you about stuff that's going on. I didn't even necessarily give them a skill to work with or anything to take home. It was just, the client validated my helping them [P4].

Moreover, as a result of discovering a professional identity, consultants were able to improve their perspective and confidence through understanding themselves and their purpose. To further this same point one participant noted in reflecting: “Is there a goal [of this session]? Or is it just another meeting with them today and letting them talk. Letting them get something off their chest” [P4]. Additionally, “Getting through to athletes” [P2 and P3] or “focus on athletes” [all participants] was spoken about many times in each interview as consultants became more experienced in consulting and reflecting. This indicates that a professional self was emerging as they understood their role as a consultant and what to focus on during consultation. Two participants claimed to be finding their consulting/professional identity, and the other two believed theirs was still developing as they were. Consultants believed that reflecting allowed them to come to terms with their thought, and in turn their identity by finding their role and realizing how they want to be perceived.

### ***“Mentor Necessity”***

A mentor is necessary to guide new consultant experience and help with understanding of the self-reflection guide. All four participants commented on the importance of their mentor for

their consulting and understanding of the self-reflection guide. Specifically, the mentor was able to explain reflection and how to use the guide initially: “At first, I was just confused. For me it was hard but then the mentor explained how to use it [the guide]. In the end... it helped us a lot” [P1] and “I did have to ask [mentor name] a few questions, but with her help, I understood” [P3]. The mentor also helped guide reflections for all consultants: “I had [mentor name] as a mentor to help me get through it and talk through things” [P2]. The mentor was also reported to be clarify reflecting or consulting more in the beginning as consultants were learning to consult and reflect. Mentoring also played a significant role in direct experiential learning when discussing reflections and sessions with the mentor.

### **Selective Codes**

Grounded theory data analysis engendered three selective codes that proved to be core categories of every open and axial code: “consulting learning experience”, “self-reflective learning experience”, and “the self-reflection guide benefits and drawbacks”. These three main categories are the overall dimensions that were under question, which all emanate from the purpose of creating a helpful self-reflection guide that can benefit neophyte SPC’s and others. “The self-reflective learning experience” consisted of two axial codes that noted difficulties of learning reflection and positives about noticing development in reflection ability. The two selective codes “The self-reflective learning experience and “the guide has benefits and drawbacks” are similar in that these codes both contain two axial codes, both of which have one negative and one positive category.

The third selective code, “consulting learning experience”, is composed of four axial codes: mentor necessity, improvements in consulting practice, establishing professional identity, and difficulties with consulting”. On most occasions, participants’ insights directly or indirectly

lead to improvements in their consultation and reflection by identifying aspects of their practice or perception that were erroneous, as noted in the interviews. Other axial codes in this category pertained to understanding the necessity for guidance from a mentor, discovering their professional identity and learning ways of applying semantic knowledge to practice. Overall, the explanation of how effective the self-reflection guide began to emerge. Consultants gained experiential knowledge through repetition of consulting practice and reflecting on their practice using the self-reflection guide. Reflecting then allowed consultants to further their consulting knowledge by reflecting effectively. That is, analyzing their behavior in practice and thoughts about what they did well, what they didn't do well, what could be improved, if they set goals with themselves or their clients, if they are striving to meet those goals, and what could be done differently.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION, RECCOMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

#### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to create a self-reflection guide for SPC's that teaches what reflection is, the purpose of reflection, why reflection is important, and how to reflect effectively. A secondary purpose was to pilot the guide using four neophyte consultants in order to collect feedback for the self-reflection guide. Findings revealed that the self-reflection guide possessed overall utility in teaching neophyte SPC's how to reflect and improve their practice. Participants found important uses and drawbacks of the guide. Participant feedback will then be used to improve the guide. Findings in previous self-reflection and neophyte SPC literature was supported by this study's results.

The self-reflection guide was composed by first examining how self-reflection came into existence and how it was defined initially (Schön, 1983; Boud, 2001). Next, general self-reflection definitions and for SPC's was studied (Anderson et al., 2004; Cropley et al., 2010a) and used to explain self-reflection to SPC's. SPC purpose of reflection was then inserted into the guide to provide specific direction and present a goal to the reflective practitioner using the guide (Cropley et al., 2007; Abraham et al., 2009; Pack et al., 2014). Validity of the usefulness of self-reflection was studied for many professions such as coaching, teaching, nursing, and physician care, and was specifically researched for SPC's in this study (e.g. Cropley et al., 2010b; McEwan & Tod, 2014; Vana Hutter et al., 2017; Maksimović & Osmanović, 2018; Hings et al., 2019). Furthermore, consulting skills for SPC's were found, in previous literature, to be enhanced due to self-reflection (Holt & Williams, 2001; Anderson et al., 2004; Cropley et al., 2010a; Sharp &

Hodge, 2011). Thus, previous research has provided validity for the use of reflection for SPC's and other fields. Research regarding considerations to bear in mind before and during reflection as an SPC were then reported. This previous research stated that SPC's need to be aware of the following subjects in their practice and self-reflections, then were input into the guide: ignorance in practice, feelings of competence, effective practice, importance of goals, reflection organization, personalization of reflections, necessity of motivation to learn and reflect deliberately (e.g. Martin & Rubin, 1995; Holt & Williams, 2002; Croyley et al., 2007; Knowles et al., 2007; Woodcock et al., 2008; Williams & Andersen, 2012; Collins et al., 2013; Hings et al., 2019). Similarly, common SPC and reflection pitfalls were outlined in the guide in order to improve awareness of practice and common mistakes in reflection which includes: self-consciousness, imposter syndrome/self-doubt, pressure, being ingenuine, stagnation of practice (e.g. Andersen et al., 2000; Croyley et al., 2010b; Prasko et al., 2012; Boud et al., 2013; Koh et al., 2015). How reflection can be used to combat common SPC consulting pitfalls such as identifying areas or improvement, client-centeredness, client relationship, identity, managing emotions, improving awareness of self and client, insights in reflection, using a mentor, and professionalism is also used in the guide (e.g. Andersen et al., 2000; Poczwardowski et al., 2004; Cox 2005; Croyley et al., 2007; Abraham et al., 2009; Prasko et al., 2012; Pack et al., 2014, Koh et al., 2015; Hings et al., 2019). Effective self-reflection was then defined for general reflection (Gibbs, 1988; Lindsay et al., 2007; Ghaye, 2010; Boud et al., 2010; Lew & Schmidt, 2013) and specifically for SPC's (Ravizza, 1990; Holt & Williams, 2001; Anderson, 2005; Croyley et al., 2010a; Knowles et al., 2014; Stein & Grant, 2014). Lastly, Ghaye (2001) suggested a template of self-reflective template to ask one's self which was used as the template questions in the guide. This template was adapted to fit SPC's and other common elements to emphasize in reflection

were studied from previous self-reflection research and placed in the guide (Kolb, 1984; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Ghaye, 2001; Moon, 2004; Gibbs et al., 2005; Roberts & Stark, 2008; Croyley et al., 2010b; Lysaker, 2017). Self-reflection studies and information were extracted from many professions as reflection advice is generalizable to any field. Thus, this guide may also be applicable for use by more than just SPC's. This self-reflection guide was piloted with four neophyte sport psychology consultants who used the guide and provided feedback on its utility and their reflection and consulting experience. Grounded theory analysis results revealed thirty-five open codes, eight axial codes, and three open codes.

The eight axial codes represented the major categories in this research. The first axial code, "Utility of the guide", was the most directly supportive of how effective the self-reflection guide can be. All four participants agreed the guide helped them understand what reflection is and how to reflect, which indicates that understanding the definition and purpose of reflection is necessary in order to begin reflecting on consulting practice, as found by previous research (Croyley et al., 2007; Abraham et al., 2009; Croyley, 2010a; Pack et al., 2014). The guide was useful in guiding consultants through reflection by means of clear explanation and providing step-by-step instructions with understandable examples of how to reflect and what questions to ask. The guide seemed to lay the conceptual framework for understanding, while the users were responsible for beginning reflections by using the guide to reflect in their own way. This organizational component of the guide may help to organize thoughts in a coherent manner, which allows for easier analyzation and confronting of thoughts. Hence, organization is a critical element of self-reflection, which is why the template questions may have been so useful for the participants (Holt & Williams, 2001; Croyley et al., 2007; Woodcock et al., 2008; Croyley et al., 2010a).

The most helpful aspect that was explicitly reported was how the self-reflection guide asked questions that consultants would not consider initially since they are not aware of what they should be asking due to reflection and/or consulting ignorance (e.g. Cropley, 2007; Collins et al., 2013). Unanimously, consultants reported enhancement in consulting competence through reflecting while using the guide. Increased feelings of competence aids in conquering feelings of ignorance and the imposter syndrome, which is one of the neophyte consultant's most common challenges (Knowles et al., 2007; Hings et al., 2019). However, the guide did seem to have some drawbacks. Participant feedback included issues with these aspects: some of the reflective template questions were repetitive or redundant, and that the reflectivity scale was not useful. These guide alterations will be addressed in the "Self-reflection guide corrections and advised future use" section.

Participants did experience some issues in regard to their reflecting experience. They experienced difficulty with honesty, positivity, focus, vulnerability, fluidity of reflecting, and ignorance of the act of reflecting. These errors are addressed in the literature review under common neophyte SPC pitfalls. Errors in reflection are an expected part of the learning process. Consultants tended to report many negative feelings about their professional identity in their reflective writing, but the guide should explain how those thoughts are expected and it is a good sign of beginning to discover one's unique professional identity and that honesty is present in the reflections. Furthermore, consultants may not have realized they needed to correct these feelings of identity conflict without the help of the guide. An inability to realize an issue as a consultant is referred to as impairment (Andersen et al., 2000). Reflection could prevent impairment if utilized properly. In order to identify and overcome issues in consulting, reflection must first be honest. The guide and mentor can work together to emphasize honest reflection, and stream of

consciousness thoughts in reflection will allow for the most growth in experiential learning through reflection (Holt & Williams, 2001; Crompton et al., 2007; Prasko et al., 2012; McEwan & Tod, 2014; Pack et al., 2014). One further finding in this area conveyed that those who used the guide more times, were more likely to customize the reflective template, as is encouraged by the literature. This may indicate that more sessions are required to feel comfortable with adding one's own questions to the guide for some individuals.

Consulting experiences ranged from difficulties to improvements. Difficulties with consulting were related to the following areas: uncertainty, self-doubt, negative self-talk, anxiety, nervousness, focus issues, and session planning/consulting behavior mistakes. All of these issues are common mistakes for neophyte consultants and addressed as common pitfalls in this literature review and outlined in the guide, except for sessions planning issues. Improvement in consulting practice was the most frequently identified code in the open coding process. This axial code contained the most open codes and broadest code range (twelve). This may be due a tendency for the participants to communicate about consulting and the insights in reflections and major advancements that consultants observed about themselves. Consulting improvement was found in the following areas by the participants: what the client needs, consultant needs, correct focus, simplicity, behavior awareness, holistic perspective, planning, consulting skills, overcoming self-doubt/confidence, theory application, and enjoyment. These areas are also mentioned in the "Self-reflection to combat common neophyte SPC pitfalls" section. Consultants stated that they set goals to improve many of these areas and some reported they did. Others did not mention this topic specifically. Most of the previously stated difficulties in consulting were improved upon, while the other areas were not mentioned if they had been improved as well.

Similar to improvements in consulting or reflecting, consultants expressed a sense of establishing a professional identity through experiential learning. The subject of perception, how the consultants viewed themselves and the clients, and how consultants wanted clients to view them was stated frequently throughout the interviews. This is an important moment for consultants to overcome imposter syndrome and accept how new consulting is and how it's acceptable to not have experience already (Hings et al., 2019). Understanding one's consulting philosophy/identity can aid confidence (e.g. Ravizza, 1990; Anderson et al., 2004; Cox et al., 2005; Abraham et al., 2009). Participants did report improvement in their understanding of themselves as consultants while they were improving their effectiveness as consultants. Which, as research indicates, enhancing awareness of self and client can benefit one's practice by increasing areas like competence and purpose (e.g. Cropley et al., 2007; Collins et al., 2013; McEwan & Tod, 2014; Hings et al., 2019). Conversely, not all participants developed exact consulting philosophies to further discover professional identity. However, all participants did enhance self-awareness and awareness of practice in some manner. Consultants may have not had enough consulting sessions to begin developing their consulting philosophy as well. The importance and helpfulness of developing a professional identity may need to be further emphasized in the consulting philosophy section of the guide. Moreover, establishing a professional identity may help consultants' feelings of competence in reflection as well if they possess a greater understanding of themselves and their circumstance. Identity realizations tended to stem from experiential learning, which was augmented through reflection, in all of the participants' cases. Therefore, the guide was successful in helping consultants reflect on this topic as well.

The final axial code, mentor necessity, may possibly be the most important code. All four participants reported they needed someone with experience to first explain any part of the guide that was misunderstood, then look over their reflections to see how the reflections compare to the guide's instructions. Further, consulting advice is needed in order to ensure effective practice as a neophyte consultant. In the previous reviewed literature, similar conclusions were reached about just how crucial a consulting mentor is for neophytes for teaching reflection (Cropley et al., 2007; Knowles et al., 2007; Woodcock et al., 2008) and consulting (Cropley et al., 2010a; Vana Hutter et al., 2017; Hings et al., 2019). In summation, the guide is a useful tool for explaining and guiding reflections, but not a substitute for a mentor. Reviewing reflections with the mentor also allowed the mentor to understand organized thoughts and discuss the consultant's experiences and behavior. This notion is explained in the guide as well. Of course, there exists a possibility that the mentor may not use reflective journaling and will not have experience, however the guide can be used to teach SPC's at any level, given its explanation and references. It is furthermore encouraged that consultants begin to reflect if they have not (e.g. Andersen et al., 2000; Hings et al., 2018; Hings et al., 2019).

The selective codes provided understanding about the areas in which learning occurs most for neophyte SPC's using the guide to learn reflecting. Findings show that consultants learn in the following three general areas: consultant learning experience and reflection learning experience. Each consultant will, of course, form their own opinion about how useful the guide was to them, but the main purpose of this third selective code was found to provide feedback for this research. Although, this study does highlight that more learning will occur in the consulting learning experience dimension. This is due to increased reflection ability enhancing experiential learning. The experiential learning will occur in the domain of consulting in this case. This quote

is an example of how consultants needed more guidance with reflection in the beginning. Then, they began to shift their learning focus to consulting, since they were able to comprehend how to effectively reflect relatively quickly: “When I first started doing this [reflecting] with [mentor name], we went over the first two [reflections] almost question for question... Then once I felt comfortable, we stopped meeting all the time and just met when I felt like I needed guidance”.

Selective codes further revealed similarities in axial code dimensions and properties. The two selective codes “self-reflection guide has benefits and drawbacks” and “self-reflection learning experience” are composed of one negative axial code that highlights difficulties, and one positive axial code that highlights utility or improvement. The two axial codes “difficulties with consulting” and “improvements in consulting practice” under the selective category “consulting learning experience” are generalizable as positive or negative as well. However, other two axial codes in this selective category “mentor necessity” and “establishing a professional identity” are more closely related to the insights that the consultants were having about their consulting practice and lead or could lead to consulting improvement. This selective code, being more expansive than the others by containing the most axial codes (four), is most likely due to the fact that experiential learning in consulting was the main subject being explored and was expounded on the most. On most occasions, these insights directly or indirectly lead to improvements in their consultation and reflection by identifying aspects of their practice or perception that were issues, as noted in the interviews. Consultants reported more insights in their reflective journals as they became more familiar with reflection and consulting. Therefore, consultants may discover more insights because they are able to reflect more effectively and/or because they gain experiential knowledge purely through progressively gaining experience and reflecting on those past sessions.

The three selective codes were the final codes because at this point no further data could be extracted or further broadened from the codes. Corbin and Strauss define this threshold as, “The point in analysis when all categories are well developed in terms of properties, dimensions and variations. Further data gathering and analysis add little new to the conceptualization, though variations can always be discovered” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.263). The three fundamental axioms that were being studied, new consultants consulting experience, their reflection experience, and how well the self-reflection guide was for teaching reflection to the consultants, are inextricably linked. Therefore, it is a logical conclusion that theoretical saturation would be achieved after these final selective codes were arrived at. Moreover, Corbin and Strauss (1990) highlighted a need to support the conceptual depth of codes when reporting Grounded theory results in order to reinforce validity. Definitions of conceptual depth have evolved since then, and the most recent and fitting definition is generally thought of as this criterion is fulfilled by ensuring that multiple examples of concepts in the data can be provided and evidenced across a range of sources (Nelson, 2016). Conceptual depth is supported in the results section, which contains multiple examples for each code across every consultant interview.

When reporting qualitative results, Corbin and Strauss (1990) also suggested results should provide some reasonably good grounds for judging the adequacy of the research process by including the criteria in which the phenomena were observed and categorized. From a holistic viewpoint, an explanatory formulation began to emerge from the two assistant coders when discovering open codes. These explanatory themes tended to guide the data through open codes by focusing on if the consultants thought they were performing well or poorly in their practice, what happened in their sessions, if something was concerning, and how well they understood the reflection guide or the reflecting process. This was evidenced by categories such as: “beneficial

reflecting, helpfulness, flaw, drawbacks, uncertainty, takeaways, for the athlete”. Open codes needed to become more specified, given that the initial open codes were too equivocal. “Helpfulness” could have referred to the reflection guide or reflecting helping consultation. “Flaw” and “drawbacks” could refer to a flaw in the consultation session, in reflecting, or in the guide. The ambiguity created an issue with forming the axial codes, because codes would not have been able to be further extracted into more coding paradigms beyond just the three paradigms of open, axial, and selective codes. The open codes were effectively axial codes, in this case. These initial open codes were also redundant in some categories, which were re-evaluated and consolidated. Further analyses of the transcripts began to become more specific and directional once the coders began to consider events, actions, and interactions, as suggested by Strauss and Corbin. The open codes became more pointed toward the dimension they were representing. Coders found more codes each time as well, which resulted in a total of thirty-five open codes. Final open codes consisted of the following examples: “drawbacks to guide, helpfulness of guide, issues in reflecting, competence in reflecting, vulnerable, goal setting, identity, advisor help”. These codes elucidate much more information about the experiences of the consultants and what they reported to help and why. These codes provided “generative and comparative questions” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) for continued analysis and also produced context for the axial codes as well. The final set of thirty-five open codes proved to be representative of the entire data, given that the majority of lines and sentences were coded and no interview answers to questions were neglected. Corbin and Strauss (1990) further advocated for answering the question of: What were some of the events, incidents, actions, and so on that indicated some of these axial codes? Events, incidents, and actions in this study all centered around consulting with clients and learning what their flaws are in consulting and reflecting,

what the guide's flaws are, how to better their practice and reflecting, and discovering insights about themselves. All of these areas are grounded in experiential learning by interacting in the context of reflecting or consulting.

Two consultants reported within only three sessions, they were able to begin discovering many insights and improve. This interview feedback seems to be align with previous findings that self-reflection does expediate experiential learning (Schön, 1983; Anderson et al., 2005; Donoso-Morales et al., 2017; Vana Hutter et al., 2017). The guide was helpful enough to teach consultants how to reflect so they would be able to reap the benefits of proper reflection. By examining all of these data, these research findings allow for an understanding of how to improve the self-reflection guide and if reflection helped improve experiential learning for neophyte consultants. Based on consultant interview feedback, the results indicate that the self-reflection guide was useful in teaching new consultants how to reflect, and that deliberate reflection seemed to enhance the consultants' ability to learn from consulting experience.

### **Self-Reflection Guide Corrections and Advised Future Use**

The self-reflection guide was reported to be useful by participants. However, feedback also indicated some aspects of the guide needed improvement. First, the reflectivity scale may need to be better explained so that consultants can understand how the scale may help them identify their progress in reflective ability. Though it was reported by one participant that they could see how it could be useful for others, all participants expressed that it was not useful in their experience. The reflectivity scale will be amended to read "Compare your reflections to this scale to help you understand how well you are able to reflect. This scale may help you understand where your reflective ability currently is and what your next step is for improving reflective ability. Note: S1 is the lowest reflective ability and S6 is the highest". Prior to this

correction, there was no indication of what S1 through S6 indicated in reflective ability, which may have generated some confusion.

Next, some of the reflective template questions may need to be better explained, given that participants believed the questions were redundant in some areas. The template questions that were reported to be too similar will be explicitly differentiated in the guide. Additionally, the explanation for the question “Whose purpose am I serving?” will state how this question is intended to prompt one to think about if they are serving themselves or the client more. Furthermore, the consultants seemed to struggle with feelings of self-doubt and elements of imposter syndrome. The guide should explain how those thoughts are common for neophytes and noticing these thoughts is a good sign that honesty is present in the reflections; realizing these feelings is the first step to overcoming them. Next, only two out of four of the consultants added their own questions to personalize the reflective question template. Consultants will be encouraged to enter their own self-reflective questions to further personalize the reflections, but only when they feel a question is necessary for the betterment of their practice.

Purpose seemed to be an issue for one consultant even though purpose was stated in the first section: “As to what the purpose of reflection was, I don't feel like the guide itself explained it very well”. This area needs to be more clearly stated or possibly separated into its own section. Next, session structure should also be added as a common pitfall, as this was indicated by all participants' feedback. The consulting philosophy section will be amended to emphasize how a consulting philosophy can help establish a professional identity, which can improve feelings of competence and, in turn, enhance confidence as a consultant. Finally, to further safeguard against impairment, emphasis that the guide cannot serve as a replacement for a mentor will be further reinforced as an unequivocal disclaimer. One consultant reported that they used the guide when

they were not able to meet with their mentor to discuss consulting: “You can't always go one-on-one with somebody or advisor [talking to a mentor about your consulting]. You can just work things out for yourself”. Although the guide states the necessity for a mentor to guide them in reflecting and consulting, this should be further stressed by specifically stating that the guide is not a mentor replacement, but reflecting can help one analyze thoughts.

This research discovered that the guide can produce effective understanding of reflection with proper input from a mentor. Some sections, such as purpose and the reflectivity scale may need to be read more carefully and discussed with a mentor or supervisor. Hence, one participant believing the guide did not explain purpose. Others misunderstood these sections or did not think of them to be useful. Before disregarding sections, it may help to try to understand them further, perhaps by reading the literature that is cited in the guide. If this guide is to be distributed by a mentor, advisor, or supervisor, it would be helpful to read some of the referenced literature in the guide in order to understand why the instructions are advised or to clarify any confusion.

### **Limitations**

Though this study's findings are aligned with similar studies regarding neophyte SPCs' experience and using self-reflection (e.g. Anderson et al., 2004; Cropley et al., 2007; Knowles et al., 2007; Cropley et al., 2010a; Collins et al., 2013; Pack et al., 2014; Lew & Schmidt, 2011), it possesses limitations that should be addressed. This study did only receive self-reflection guide feedback from a total of four participants. Participants represented both males and females, varied in field experience and knowledge, and represented a relatively broad range of ages. Although case studies generally use a lower number of participants, a larger sample size could yield more diverse feedback and more generalizable results. Furthermore, two participants only completed three consulting sessions and entries in the self-reflection journal. The other two

participants completed seven sessions and journal entries. More use of the guide would help provide greater feedback about progression of reflection. Nevertheless, this study focuses on initiating and learning self-reflection while utilizing the self-reflection guide. The guide is specialized for SPC's, however research in self-reflection in all fields was supplemented to help create it, and could be applicable to any field. By altering wording in the reflective template and a few other circumstances, it could be highly applicable for any profession.

### **Future Research**

This research served as a pilot study for a novel tool for self-reflection that is tailored toward SPC's, but could be used in any field. These preliminary results were centered around SPC's in their beginning stage of consultation (neophytes). Further research using the self-reflection guide is encouraged as this is the first of its kind. Subsequent research using this guide may look to investigate a use by more experienced consultants or even seasoned consultants who have not engaged in self-reflection before. Those who have more reflecting experience would be able to gradually improve the guide. A longer-term study may also be useful, because it allows researchers to identify how consultants are able to use this guide to improve reflection over a longer period of time, as suggested by other literature (Cropley et al., 2010a). Interviews could be conducted after a few sessions and again after many more sessions in order to better understand how consultants are able to progress their reflective ability while using the guide. Furthermore, every section of the guide was not able to be reported on. Thus, future studies could cover the sections that were not reported on in this research (i.e. the sections that contained specific explanations about how to think about reflecting and reflecting effectively).

If quantitative data could be obtained on the topic of how well one is reflecting, this data could be used to objectively compare groups that used the guide to learn self-reflection and those

who did not. Reflection ability could be measured based on frequency of insight. Insight is, again, loosely defined as the deep understanding of something (Ellis, 1963). Once a more concrete definition is established, this could become a gateway to measure reflective ability.

Grant (2002), while attempting to create a reflectivity scale that is adapted in the self-reflection guide, posited:

The development of reliable measures of self-reflection and insight would provide researchers and practitioners with the means to assess metacognitive processes such as psychological mindedness, self-reflection and insight and enhance our understanding of their roles in purposeful behavior change.

Further, research in the area of measuring insight is progressing and is based on subjective well-being, dysfunctional attitudes, and core self-evaluations

Two key findings are reported: first, dysfunctional attitudes suppress the relationship between self-reflection and self-insight; and second, positive core self-evaluations mediate the relationship between self-insight and subjective well-being. These two findings imply that a path exists from self-reflection to subjective well-being through self-insight and positive core self-evaluations. This path model was found to be a good fit (Stein & Grant 2014).

Moreover, the role of imagery seems to be a function of reflection ability that allows consultants to recall more about a consulting session if they are able to re-emerge themselves in the past experience (e.g. Boud, 2001). Specific imagery-memory related research indicates imagery ability is strongly correlated with greater ability in autobiographical, episodic, and past-event recall (Vannucci et al., 2016; Sheldon et al., 2017). Imagery ability could be explored via imagery ability questionnaires, along with reflective ability scale and the self-reflection guide for reflection understanding, to determine how salient imagery is as a source of reflective ability.

## **Conclusion**

This self-reflection guide is the first of its kind for self-reflection for sport psychology consultants. Although the guide is still in the developmental stage, it was successful according to the consultants who used it to reflect. Moreover, research using the self-reflection guide is recommended in order to refine it. This study also advocates for more research in self-reflection for sport psychology as there is a dearth of research on this subject for the field. This guide was also produced in hopes that the existence of a reflection guide will encourage consultants to begin reflecting more and reflecting properly; as self-reflection is the mental skill used for SPC's to improve their performance, just as they teach clients to use mental skills to improve their performance.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: SELF-REFLECTION GUIDE FOR SPORT PSYCHOLOGY CONSULTANTS

#### **What is self-reflection?**

Self-reflection is recalling an event you were a part of then internally examining your thoughts, behaviors, and emotions at that time. The purpose of reflection is to maximize learning of an experience. In this case, consulting with athletes. This reflection guide will be used in the form of a reflection journal in which you will write your thoughts about an experience.

- Reflecting is also thinking about your own mindset both in the present and when the consulting session occurred. Thinking about your thinking is known as metacognition<sup>1</sup>.
- The goal of reflection is to improve your practice through understanding the experience of consulting.<sup>2</sup> Which means making your practice as effective as possible.(i.e. what works, what doesn't work, understanding of self and client, etc...)
- Reflecting should encourage you to discover insight into your consulting practice.<sup>3</sup>
  - Insight occurs when you have a novel idea about how to change your practice or behavior to make your consulting more effective, which means improving the client's performance or reducing mental barriers to performance.
- To self-reflect effectively you must:
  1. Re-emerge yourself back into the consultation you wish to reflect on by memory and the use of imagery.
  2. Recall and write the individual experiences with the athlete/athletes.
  3. Write the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors you had during each specific event.
  4. Continue this cycle while answering structured questions.

#### **How is self-reflection useful?**

- You can acquire all the semantic knowledge about theories and models through learning in readings, but the missing component you need in the field of sport psychology is the

experiential knowledge. Self-reflective practice is one of the best ways to learn the experiential knowledge you need to have for an effective practice.<sup>4, 5</sup>

- Reflection expedites your understanding of how to behave in consulting situations.<sup>6</sup>
- Self-reflection allows you to further your understanding of your practice, philosophy, strengths, areas of improvement, and goals you wish to achieve to better your practice.
- As you answer your reflective questions you should be writing down the following<sup>7</sup>:
  - What? – What happened in the session
  - So what? - How do you interpret what happened and what is your reaction to it
  - Now what? – What will you do about how you reacted and how things transpired during the session? What aspects will you keep and what will you try to improve or stop trying to use?

### **When to use reflection**

- On action- This type of reflection is when you recall events from memory and reflect on what you did, your reactions to your behavior, and what you could have done differently. This will be the type of reflection you will be emerging yourself into during the reflective journal writings. For best results, it is recommended that the consultant reflects on the consultation session immediately after the sessions concludes.<sup>8</sup>
- In action- This type of reflection occurs during the events. Such as the consulting experience itself. The lessons you gleaned and goals you set from reflection on action need to be enacted in action in order to execute improving your consultation.<sup>8</sup>
- Preflection- This is the act of using imagery to place yourself in the consulting session before it happens. You should imagine yourself executing an effective practice with your client/clients (i.e. adjusting your behavior to meet your set consulting goals, being prepared to answer questions, having a fluid and meaningful conversation, not feeling self-conscious, but focusing fully on the client/clients). Image yourself reflecting in action in order to rectify your areas of improvement.<sup>9</sup>

### **How to reflect effectively**

- The biggest challenge for new consultants is answering the questions: How would I define effective consulting? And what would that look like for me?
  - Take some time and reflect on these questions. This will also be a part of your personal philosophy.

- Personal philosophy is answering the questions: What matters most to me in life? What is my purpose? Why? How can I strive to achieve that every day? Your personal philosophy will be the base in which you form your consulting philosophy.
- Your consulting philosophy consist of the same set of questions and stem from the personal philosophy, but is in regard to your practice. What is the purpose of my practice? Why? What does effective practice look like to me? How can I achieve this?
- Answering these questions will give you the big picture of what your consulting goals are and the manner in which you want to consult.
- Next, you need to find your reflective and consulting process goals. These process goals will consist of small goals you can meet after every reflection or during any session. Meeting each process goal will propel you to meeting your long-term goals.
  - Example of a **consulting** process goal: I want to be more focused on my client and less focused on myself during the consultation.
  - Example of a **reflective** process goal: I want to identify more positives about my consultation in my reflections.
- Considerations of reflecting- The Don'ts of self-reflection
  - Don't write the way you wish the session would have gone. Be all-inclusive. Acknowledge the positives but be true and identify the points of improvement an effective consultant needs to correct.<sup>4</sup>
  - Don't be too negative. Be wary of the fact that it's just as easy to get carried away with recollecting negative aspects of your practice as well.<sup>10</sup> Highlight positive and negative comments in two different colors and compare them to ensure your ratio of positives and negatives isn't skewed.
  - Don't be fake. Be as authentic as you can. Write non-judgmentally in your reflections. Don't edit your entries.<sup>11</sup>
  - Don't be passive about reflecting. Think critically or else reflecting is useless.<sup>12,13</sup>
- Don't get stuck in the status quo. Always be learning and changing.<sup>10</sup> It is best to begin with a set of structured questions that cover most elements of what you want to focus on in your practice. Next, you can and should add your own questions as you progress to the next reflection writing.<sup>14,15</sup> Once you add a question you can leave it in the reflection

writings if you find it stimulates your ideas for new consulting practices or enhances your understanding of your consultation.

- How you should think about reflecting with **The 4 C's**<sup>9</sup>
  - CONTINUOUS: Critical reflection should ideally be an ongoing component of a consultant's entire education and service involvement. Pre-reflection assists in preparing consultants for issues they may encounter and ready them for spontaneous adjustments. Reflection during consulting takes place through problem solving and direct experience with the client. Reflection on action invites an evaluation of the experience, integrating newly gained experiential knowledge into existing knowledge.
  - CONNECTED: Service-learning reflection connects experience to intellectual and academic pursuits. Consulting puts theories in real-life context, transforms statistics into people and situations, and sparks critical questions. Connected reflection creates bridges between classroom learning and firsthand experience.
  - CHALLENGING: Critical reflective thinking addresses client needs and professional responsibility by fostering meaningful dialogue and discussion around client-based performance improvement.
  - CONTEXTUALIZED: Reflection is the link between learning and doing, and preparing for doing again. A guide can help to shape the process, content, and location of reflection. Reflection can occur with colleagues or supervisors as well.
- It is highly recommended that you share your reflection with peers in a similar field and with a supervisor. This process will ensure your perception isn't misguided and it will protect against consultant impairment.<sup>11, 13,14,16</sup>
- Highlight, color, underline. The reflection is yours. There are no restrictions.
- When you have an insight after writing you can go back and enter this in the journal (some of your greatest insights about yourself can occur outside of the act of reflecting).

### **What your journal reflections should include- A comprehensive guide**

- Begin with the structured questions in the template that will be provided below.

As you reflect and get used to the process, you should enter your own customized questions as you progress.<sup>4,14</sup> These questions should be unique to you and your style of consulting. They should stimulate your creative thought and help you organize your reflection.

- Review previous session reflections before your next session in order to remind yourself of goals and how you want to conduct the session. Highlight negative and positive entries in two different colors and ensure that one isn't far outweighing the other.
- Compare the most recent session's reflection to the previous reflections. Identify differences. Find an emerging pattern of differences once you have multiple reflection entries.
- Periodically review reflections and begin another journal of reflecting on your own reflections and consulting progress. This will aid in forming an accurate perception of your practice and self.<sup>16</sup>

### Reflection Journal Template

Consultation goals: *can write outcome/big-picture goals here but, most importantly, always include the process goals here. Examples: be more aware of client, think more positive thoughts during reflection, enact reflection goals during session.*

Reflective practice goals: *can write outcome/big-picture goals here but, most importantly, always include the process goals here. Examples: look for deeper insights into my thought, image a more vivid recall, find more positives characteristics in your reflection on your session, find one way to improve reflecting with a new question.*

Answer the following questions after each consultation. Refer back to your personal and consulting philosophy before you begin consulting sessions and when reviewing your reflections. This will help you follow your authentic nature and keep your practice and reflection aligned with your deepest values. This review will also remind you of any principles you may have forgotten. The italicized text is an elaboration on the question. No need to keep these elaborations in your reflective journal.

Structured questions<sup>17</sup>:

1. What is my session like (for the client and myself)? *Let the initial thoughts for this question flow out of you. Allow yourself to non-judgmentally write everything you can remember about the experience. While answering this question, place yourself back in the experience using imagery and try to re-emerge yourself and relive the thoughts, emotions, and context of the experience here. Use this first question to recall as much of the session as you can. You do not need to note feelings and thoughts about these*

*recollections just yet. After reflecting on the experience from memory, use the video taken of the session to see what you didn't remember or misremembered (no need to write the video assisted recollections in your journal).*

2. Why is it like this? *Can begin to bring up emotions and reactions to your and the client's behavior here.*
3. How do you perceive yourself and client? Why? *How do you think you are doing as a consultant? Do you think your client is responding well or improving?*
4. How has my session come to be this way? *What past events, behaviors, and mindsets have led to my consulting sessions being the way they currently are?*
5. What would I like to improve and why? *Can number each improvement as you list them. How can I help my client improve further or at all?*
6. How can I improve these areas/ how can I reach these goals? *Can number each improvement plan to correspond with the number improvement you'd like to make listed in question 4.*
7. Whose interest are being served by my practice? *Are you thinking about the client, someone else, or yourself before, during, and after the session?*
8. How much did I talk as opposed to the client? *How can you get them to communicate more if need be? Am I being client-centered in my approach?*
9. What pressures or concerns do I feel when consulting?
10. What alternatives are available to me right now? *How can I alter my session plan or the environment in which I consult?*
11. Have I made progress in my consultation? Why not/How? *Skim back through previous reflections and recall the sessions you described in them.*
12. Did I enact the changes I wanted to since my last session? *Review previous reflection entry's improvement areas section*
13. Have I made progress with my reflections? Why not/How? *Skim back through previous reflections and note what you wrote about and the feelings you focused on versus now.*

Elements you should be covering in your reflections:

1. Authenticity and honesty in reflecting and consulting

2. Perception of yourself (clarity of perception of yourself and communication with client)
3. Level of trust and openness between you and the client
4. Perception of your client and your own abilities or learning styles
5. Ensure progression in reflection and consultation
6. Have a positive approach, but acknowledge areas of improvement. The guide is a friend, here to help.
7. Flexibility as a consultant and reflective practitioner
8. Context of your practice
9. How is your reflection in action?
10. Emotions and feeling about the client and yourself
11. Information you don't have that you need to facilitate your practice
12. Analyze your descriptions of issues to see if this will spark insight
13. Applicable theories that could be used in your practice
14. What could have been done differently in a situation or overall/alternatives
15. Mindfulness of consulting practice and reflecting process
16. Professionalism and ethical standards
17. Client-centeredness

### **Reflectivity Scale (S) – Adapted for consultants<sup>18</sup>**

*This scale will give you an idea about where you are in regards to effectiveness and understanding of reflecting ability. Also, this can give you an outline of what the next step in reflection of ability you should be striving for next.*

- **S1:** Awareness of metacognitive experiences that are one's own. Consultants are aware that they are having thoughts and ideas which are occurring within the boundary of their own mind. Consultants can initiate and acknowledge that they are having metacognitive thoughts. Reflections feel more structured.

- **S2:** Consultants are aware of their experiences of different kinds of mental activities and are able to differentiate thoughts and emotions from one experience to the next. Consultants can retrieve emotions from each experience that occurred during their session. Reflections start becoming organized and familiar.
- **S3:** Ability to produce insight as to why certain emotions were being experienced in reaction to behaviors from sessions. Consultants begin to grasp an understanding of the client and themselves as a consultant. Consultants have a routine in their reflection and are comfortable with reflecting.
- **S4:** Consultants can reflect in real-time and enact behavior improvements they planned to in their reflections. Insights occur more often in reflection. Feel comfortable with admitting areas of improvement and view them as an opportunity to enhance practice.
- **S5:** In reflections, consultants feel fluidity and freedom to allow their thoughts flow into the reflective journal in a free, organized fashion. The reflection is organized and coherent.
- **S6:** Consultants experience frequent insights and integrate new questions into their reflections. Reflection organization is maximized and feelings of security in practice are established. The role of consulting feels comfortable and consultants come to understand themselves through reflection.

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## APPENDIX B: OPEN ENDED AND CLOSED-END QUESTIONS

### What is Self-Reflection?

1. How many self-reflections did you complete with the guide?
2. Did the guide explain the usefulness and purpose of reflection well? If so, how? If not, what was confusing?
3. Did the guide help you understand what reflection is and how to do it effectively? If so how? Why not?
4. Did you feel your competence of consulting improved? Due to using the reflection guide did you feel more competent as a consultant? Did reflecting help you feel more competent as a consultant?
5. How well do you think you reflected? Did you get better over time? If no, why not? If yes, how?

### How is Self-Reflection Useful?

6. What themes or topics did you about most in your self-reflection guide (e.g. trust, positivity, honesty, perception of self/client, flexibility, emotions, issues, etc...)?
7. Do you believe you kept yourself honest/authentic in your reflections?
8. Was the self-reflective template useful for starting and organizing your reflection?
9. Was the reflectivity scale helpful in teaching you how to reflect and conveying how advanced you are in your ability to reflect?
10. Did you think reflecting was useful before reading the guide? Do you believe it is now?

### When to Use Reflection

11. Did using the guide impact your use of reflection (before reflection), reflection in action (during consulting) and reflection on action (after consulting)? Maybe separate all these like ask reflection let them answer... then the next then the next.

### How to Reflect Effectively

12. Did you feel like you have a personal and consulting philosophy?
13. Did you add your own questions to your self-reflections? Why/why not? Ask for multiple examples for this one?

14. Did you set goals in your reflection to improve your practice? Did you track those goals separate this from the next by letting them answer this one ..... and meet them then this one?
15. Did reflection help you discover more about your client(s) and their needs? If so, how? Did you help your client set goals for themselves?

#### The Don'ts of Self-Reflection

16. Did you notice your reflections becoming too self-focused and judgmental? Did you notice yourself being self-conscious in your consulting practice? If so, what did you do to combat this in your reflection and practice?
17. Did you share your reflections with peers or an advisor? Did this expectation of sharing affect your reflective writing? If it did affect your writing, did you correct that in subsequent reflections? How so?

#### What Your Journal Reflections Should Include

18. What themes or topics did you about most in your self-reflection guide (e.g. trust, positivity, honesty, perception of self/client, flexibility, emotions, issues, etc...)?
19. Do you believe you kept yourself honest/authentic in your reflections?
20. Was the self-reflective template useful for starting and organizing your reflection?
21. Was the reflectivity scale helpful in teaching you how to reflect and conveying how advanced you are in your ability to reflect?
22. Did you have any dislike or likes about the questions? Or anything you want to add on?