

# Sheffield Hallam University

*The journey of the developing sport psychologist - 'Navigating the applied lowlands and limitations of our language'*

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**Title: THE JOURNEY OF THE DEVELOPING SPORT  
PSYCHOLOGIST – ‘Navigating the Applied Lowlands and  
the Limitations of our Language’**

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Published works submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Sheffield

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published work.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Title: THE JOURNEY OF THE DEVELOPING SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST – 'Navigating the Applied Lowlands and the Limitations of our Language' .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>DECLARATION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PUBLICATIONS UNDERPINNING THE THESIS.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>CRITICAL APPRAISAL .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>PUBLICATION 1 .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>PUBLICATION 2 .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>PUBLICATION 3 .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>PUBLICATION 4 .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>PUBLICATION 5 .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>PUBLICATION 6 .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>43</b>

## DECLARATION

I, Peter James Lindsay declare that this thesis and the work presented within it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

[Title of thesis]

**THE JOURNEY OF THE DEVELOPING SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST – ‘Navigating the Applied Lowlands and the Limitations of our Language’**

I confirm that:

- The works submitted have not been submitted for a research degree at any other university.
- The published works included have not been submitted for a comparable academic award.
- Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.
- Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given.
- Where the thesis is based on work done by myself in collaboration with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Lindsay', with a long, sweeping flourish extending downwards and to the right.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## **PUBLICATIONS UNDERPINNING THE THESIS**

**The following published works underpin this thesis submission and are used to directly contribute to any award for the submitting candidate:**

### **PUBLICATION 1**

Lindsay, P., Maynard, I.W., & Thomas, O. (2005). Effects of hypnosis on flow states and cycling performance. *The Sport Psychologist, 19*, 164-178.

### **PUBLICATION 2**

Lindsay, P., Breckon, J.D., Thomas, O., & Maynard, I.W. (2007). In pursuit of congruence: A personal reflection on methods and philosophy in applied practice. *The Sport Psychologist, 21*, 335-352.

### **PUBLICATION 3**

Lindsay, P., Thomas, O., & Douglas, G. (2010). Exploring and transforming client generated metaphors in applied sport psychology. *The Sport Psychologist, 24*, 97-112.

### **PUBLICATION 4**

Lindsay, P., & Thomas, O. (2014). Reflections on being a neophyte sport psychologist in the media: Conversations with my younger self. *The Sport Psychologist, 28*, 290-301.

### **PUBLICATION 5**

Lindsay, P., Pitt, T., & Thomas, O. (2014). Bewitched by our words: Wittgenstein, language-games, and the pictures that hold sport psychology captive. *Sport & Exercise Psychology Review, 10*, 41-54.

### **PUBLICATION 6**

Lindsay, P. (2014). A week in the life of an Applied Sport Psychologist. *Sport & Exercise Psychology Review, 10*, 80-86.

## ABSTRACT

There is a growing body of literature exploring the early development of sport psychology consultants (Collins, Evans-Jones, & O'Connor, 2013; Tod & Bond, 2010). However, there remains limited exploration of the longitudinal development of practitioners, an area which may provide important insights relevant for both training and education. Rønnestad and Skovolt's (2003) six-stage practitioner development framework can be applied to the development of sport psychologists, each maturing at different rates and at times regressing through stages (Tod, 2007). Via six discrete published works this thesis details the author's development as a practitioner over a 15-year period. Each publication is characterized by a stage of development, highlighting significant sources of influence, both professionally and personally. Study one details the author's initial professional philosophy, grounded in the dominant western approach of CBT (Holt & Streat, 2001) and characterized as by a 'layhelper' and 'beginning student' phase. This philosophy shifted towards person-centered and briefer approaches as the author progressed through 'advanced student' and 'novice professional' phases, as detailed within studies two and three. Study four, an autoethnographic account, explored the challenges experienced by the author as a resident psychologist during a televised sporting event, characterized by the shift from 'novice practitioner' to 'experienced practitioner'. Study 5 highlighted a shift in professional philosophy driven by an exploration of the philosophical writings underpinning brief therapeutic approaches. Finally, study six explored the development of a professional philosophy encompassing beliefs about the discipline as a whole and its role in supporting performers. Through a greater



understanding of the journey from 'lay helper' to 'senior practitioner', the thesis highlights a range of areas for consideration by neophyte, mid-career and experienced practitioners. The thesis highlights the confusing and frustrating nature of development, highlighting that such feelings are natural and helpful to the development of skilled applied practitioners.

## **CRITICAL APPRAISAL**

**THE JOURNEY OF THE DEVELOPING SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST – ‘Navigating  
the Applied Lowlands and the Limitations of our Language’**

Whilst there is a growing body of literature focusing upon the development of sport psychology consultants (e.g. Collins, Evans-Jones, & O'Connor, 2013; Tod & Bond, 2010; Lindsay, Breckon, Thomas & Maynard, 2007; Tod, 2007; Tonn & Harmison, 2004), limited enquiry has explored practitioner maturation and the longitudinal development of applied practitioners. The emerging literature in this area is beginning to provide details of the applied sport psychologist's lifecycle, however, many of these accounts focus either upon student, early-career, or highly experienced practitioners (Tod & Bond, 2010).

Although Tod and Bond (2010) detailed how a neophyte practitioner's perceptions of sport psychology delivery evolved over a 2-year period, a psychologist's development can cover a number of decades, with practitioners continually evolving throughout this period (Hemmings, 2014). Systematic enquiry detailing practitioners' development over longer timescales may provide insight into more significant shifts in philosophy of practice. This focus upon the longitudinal development of the practitioner from neophyte to experienced professional may provide important insights relevant for both training and education. Tod (2007) has previously highlighted numerous benefits of such accounts, including trainee practitioners being forewarned of obstacles to development and finding comfort in learning about the experiences of others in similar positions.

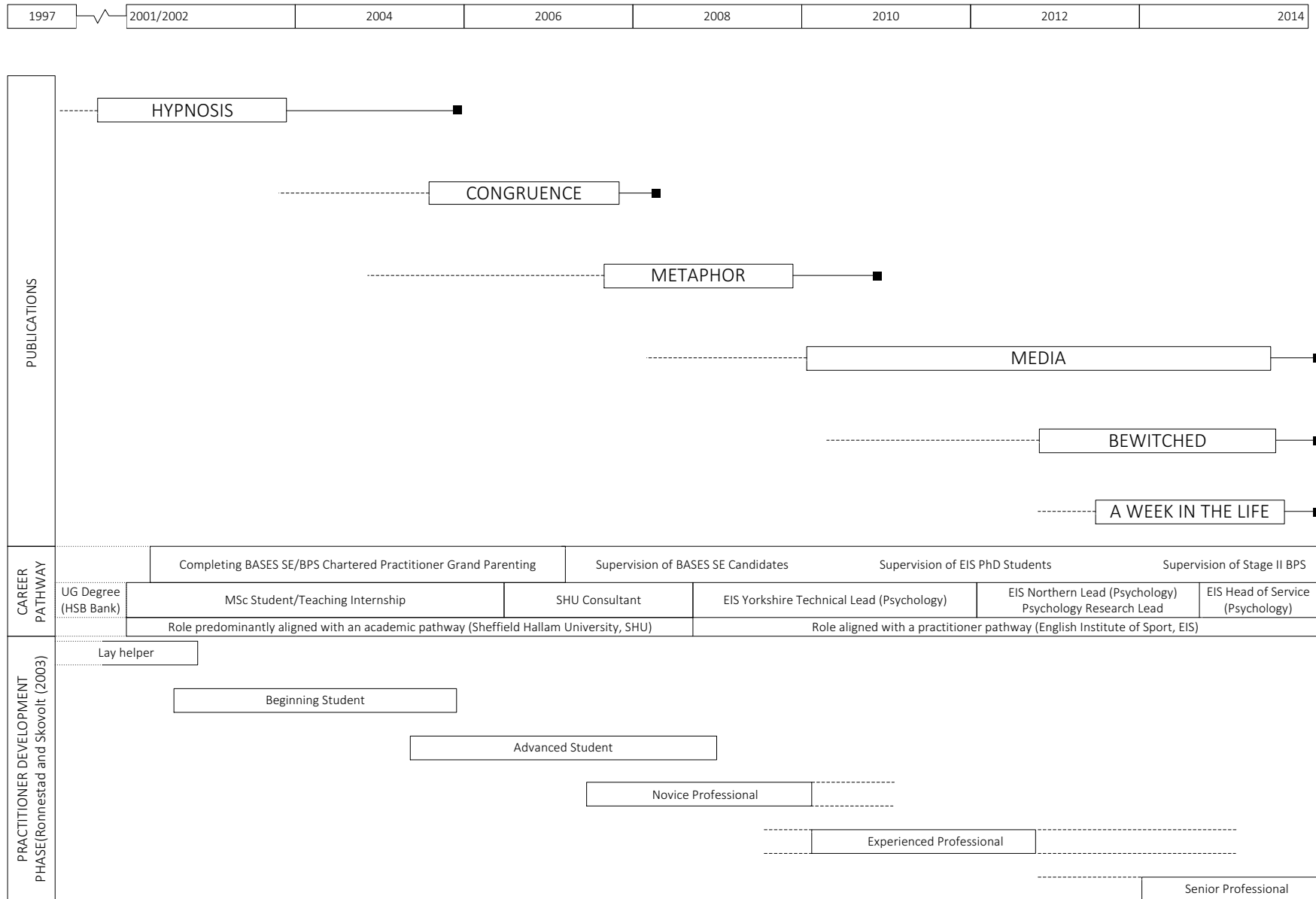
Outside of sport psychology, Rønnestad and Skovolt (2003) developed a practitioner development framework via in-depth interviews with 100 American counselors and therapists at differing experience levels. Their six-phase model describes development across a theapists' entire career. As Tod (2007) highlights, a practitioner's development through these phases is gradual and

individual, with practitioners often maturing at different rates and at times regressing through the phases. Additionally, at any one moment, a practitioner could be characterized by more than one of the stages outlined within the framework.

Via six discrete published works, this thesis details my own (the author's) development as a sport psychology practitioner over the course of approximately 15 years. Each publication represents a stage of development in my personal beliefs and values, central focus, predominant sources of influence, and the major conceptual ideas utilized. Aligned to Rønnestad and Skovolt's (2003) phased model of Counselor and Therapist development, each publication highlights the significant sources of influence from interpersonal experiences in both my personal and professional life domains.

In presenting an overview of each publication, discussing the phase of development that is represented therein, I will also provide some details of the professional roles that I was undertaking at each time point. These details will hopefully aid the reader in contextualizing the key conceptual areas being explored within each of the publications, but also aid in understanding the author's route of professional development over the 15 year period. Each of these roles contained specific demands, constraints and primary responsibilities. The professional roles influenced the applied focus of the author at the time of conceptualizing and writing the article prior to its publication. It is hoped that such details add to the richness of the thesis, helping to ground the abstract development process into concrete realities. As an initial overview of the 15 year timeline, Figure 1 details the timing of each publication (including conceptualisation, writing and publication timescales), alongside the

professional roles I was primarily undertaking and has been associated with the phases within Rønnestad and Skovolt's (2003) framework.



**Figure 1: Publication and Practitioner Development Timeline** 13

Publication 1 was based upon the previous research into flow states (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) and hypnosis conducted by my co-supervisors Dr John Pates and Professor Ian Maynard at the time of my post-graduate degree. Pates and colleagues (e.g., Pates & Maynard, 2000; Pates, Oliver, & Maynard, 2001) had previously explored the impact of a hypnotic intervention on both flow states and performance in closed skill tasks (e.g., golf putting and chipping).

To provide some context to my professional and personal situation at this time, prior to undertaking my post-graduate degree, I was employed within a large financial institution as an analyst, having previously gained an undergraduate degree in Applied Psychology. My dissatisfaction with this role, and passion for both sport and psychology, had led me to begin exploring opportunities to become an applied sport psychologist. At this time, despite a lack of real theoretical or practical base, I had also been asked to support local athletes at an athletics club with their “mental preparation”. This role was essentially that of a “lay helper” (Phase 1 of Rønnestad and Skovolt’s, 2003 framework), with my practice essentially being guided by my personal epistemology and common sense conceptions of how to assist others.

In beginning the post-graduate degree, I had a desire to gain a greater understanding of how to impact performance. The results of Pates and colleagues previous studies led me to explore this area with a desire to find a model to imitate to achieve similar success in my own applied practice. Rønnestad and Skovolt (2003) consider this desire to find such easily imitated, simplistic models to be characteristic of the beginning student (Phase 2) phase of development.

The standardized intervention procedure detailed within Publication 1 was based upon audio recordings of hypnosis sessions from previous studies by Pates et al. (2001). Within the publication, the first author cited that further research was required into “modifiable hypnosis scripts” based upon the words and phrases of the participant. Lindsay et al. (2005) acknowledged that:

“...While a standardized script was used within this study, applied practitioners should seek to develop individualized scripts based upon the athletes’ experience and individual interests. Some hypnotic scripts may not be appropriate for some athletes (e.g., a staircase induction may not encourage deep rapport with an individual who has a fear of stairs), and so flexibility and specificity in the practitioners approach is vital.” (Lindsay, Maynard & Thomas, 2005, pp. 175)

In addition to this recognition of the need to tailor the intervention to the client, Lindsay et al. (2005) highlighted that other hypnotic inductions should also be explored (e.g., non-authoritarian approaches). They went on to suggest that when using a single, standardised script across all participants, much of the richness of human interaction, which is necessary during hypnotic inductions, can be lost.

This publication essentially captured a phase in my own development where I had competing desires for both a standardized, simple intervention model that can be applied across all contexts, alongside a recognition that the richness of human interaction, so vital in consultancy endeavours, can easily be lost by such an approach. At this time, my philosophy of practice was grounded in the dominant western approach of Mental Skills Training, primarily underpinned by a CBT (Holt & Streat, 2001). Rønnestad and Skovolt (2003) stressed that the desire to establish a viable model for practice can often be pursued with great intensity during the ‘Beginning Student’ phase. Such easily



mastered methods, that can be absorbed quickly with focused effort and applied to all clients, are often seen as a 'life saver' for the beginning student (Rønnestad & Skovolt, 2003). This pursuit for such "easy to learn" methods, can lead to a simplifying of the consultancy task, and may impede professional development if not questioned and challenged in due course.

Publication 2 represents my own challenging of the notion of a single model that can be applied across all clients and contexts, leading to a period of personal reflection on my methods and philosophy of applied practice. At this time, two years post-MSc, I was employed by Sheffield Hallam University as a Graduate Teaching Assistant undertaking supervised applied practice with individual student athletes, and external referrals, whilst I pursued both my BASES accreditation and BPS Chartership. At the time of the sessions detailed within the paper, I had recently gained BASES accreditation and BPS Chartered status.

During these consultancies, as highlighted within the autoethnographic account, I came to recognise the limitations of such a narrow philosophy of practice focused primarily on an MST approach, how such simplistic methods lacked congruence (Rogers, 1961) with my own beliefs and values about human beings and human nature. Poczwardowski, Sherman and Ravizza (2004) stressed the importance of practitioners exploring their innermost beliefs and values with regard to behavioral change, growth and human behavior in establishing the foundations of their professional philosophy. As shown in Figure 1, this publication represents the author's development spanning Phase 2 (Beginning student), Phase 3 (Advanced Student) and the beginning of Phase 4 (Novice Professional) of Rønnestad and Skovolt's (2003) framework.

Within the 'Beginning Student' phase, students can often feel threatened and anxious during consultations, at times feeling overwhelmed by their own emotional responses (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992). During the first consultation detailed within Publication 2, I detail the anxieties I experienced during one of the sessions:

"Reflecting in action, the combination of Jane's responses and my own internal dialogue generated negative thoughts and feelings of inadequacy regarding my ability as a practitioner. My frustration increased as I perceived resistance in trying the proposed solutions. As these feelings grew, I noticed that my own commitment to the solutions that I offered was diminishing, and the self-doubts led to increased hesitance and timidity in my voice." (Lindsay, Breckon, Thomas & Maynard, 2007, pp. 341)

Rønnestad and von der Lippe (2001) suggested that therapists at this stage are also likely to feel irritation with a client who is perceived to be actively blocking their efforts and subsequently feel guilty about having mishandled a critical situation with a client. Such feelings were certainly experienced by the author within the consultancies detailed in Publication 2, as I attempted to solve each client's (Jane and Katie's) problems and offer expert advice. Tod, Eubank and Andersen (2014) stated that such behaviors appear to be motivated by a crisis of competence, where trainees question whether they have anything valuable to offer clients.

These consultancies acted as seminal experiences in shaping my own philosophy of practice as I became an Advanced Student (Phase 3), questioning key assumptions and the nature of applied practice. Following the sessions with Jane, I reflected that:

"No longer did I feel completely at ease with my toolbox of skills to use in consultations, but I felt at ease in the uncertainty that the realization brought. How comfortable are other practitioners in the uncertainty and ambiguity of the applied lowlands compared with the more certain

terrain of the laboratory? As we develop and learn, do we grow toward being certain about being uncertain? Knowing that we will never fully know but making the best choices available to us at that time?" (Lindsay, et al., 2007, pp. 344)

This move towards feeling comfortable as opposed to petrified, and a simultaneous assessment and evaluation of models of practice is characteristic of Phase 3 (Rønnestad & Skovolt, 2003). This period of reassessment following certification or accreditation is also characteristic of Phase 4, where following a period of seeking to confirm the validity of training a period of disillusionment with professional training and oneself ensues, something that the practitioner is not usually prepared for. Rønnestad and Skovolt (2003) suggested that it can prove particularly difficult for practitioners who had earlier relied exclusively on a single conceptual system when confronted with a heterogenous population. This disillusionment is characterised within publication 2 by my own feelings of betrayal by the tools I'd learnt in my academic studies (p.342), questioning of the tools I had learnt, and a more fundamental questioning of myself as a practitioner (p.341). Rønnestad and Skovolt (2003) suggested that following this disillusionment however, there is a period of more intense exploration into self and the professional environment. This intense exploration into self and our environment may lead to multiple serial attachments to other theories and conceptual systems.

Aligned with my growing awareness of my frustrations with the dominant Psychological Skills Training (PST) / Mental Skills Training (MST) approach, primarily underpinned through a Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) philosophy of practice, publication 3 (Lindsay, Thomas, & Douglas, 2010) details my own exploration of client-centred approaches, which I perceived to be more

congruent with my personal beliefs and values regarding human beings and change. The approach detailed within the publication was forged following my early explorations of both brief methods, and more person-centred methodologies. In essence, furthering some of the sentiments reflections within Publication 2 associated with avoiding the “I’ll fix it” philosophy associated with PST (Ravizza, 2002).

Publication 3 detailed a composite framework to aid in the exploration of client-generated metaphors. This framework was described via several case examples taken from the first and third author’s consultancy experiences whilst working in a University consultancy environment. Such consultancies were constrained to a maximum of 4 sessions due to the funding each athlete received. Therefore, adopting brief methodologies was both a function of necessity and preference. This influence of the environment on a practitioner’s philosophy of practice has received scant attention within the literature, with models such as Poczwardowski et al’s (2004) framework suggesting that it is the practitioner’s beliefs and values that drive such philosophical stances.

During this stage of my development, spanning the phases of Novice Practitioner (Phase 4) and Experienced Practitioner (Phase 5), I began a role within the English Institute of Sport (EIS) as Lead Psychologist and Technical Lead for Yorkshire. This purely applied role involved working with numerous elite athlete groups, mentoring junior practitioners and attending major tournaments (e.g., World Championships and Olympic Games). Briefer methods such as those outlined in Publication 3, and initially explored within Publication 2, were more appropriate for many scenarios associated with the role; those characterized by McCann (2000) as the dinner queue or hotel lobby consultation.

Within Phase 4, Rønnestad and Skovolt (2003) suggested that the Novice Practitioner typically reports a renewed interest in learning specific techniques, driven now by a more inner directed approach to learning for professional development. Likewise, within Phase 5 the key task is to create a role that is highly congruent with their self-perceptions. In the domain of applied sport psychology, it may also prove that the therapeutic setting plays a significant role in forging such congruence.

Publication 4 (Lindsay & Thomas, 2014) was an autoethnographic account detailing the ethical, professional and personal challenges faced by the first author whilst working as the “resident sport psychologist” for an international television broadcaster during a World championship sporting event. The experience detailed therein effectively represents a 6 year period, encompassing both the applied experience of being the “resident psychologist” at a time when I had recently gained chartership and accreditation (circa 2005) and my own subsequent reflections on this experience (circa 2011).

The autoethnographic account combined a series of reflective fragments that were abstracted from professional development documentation (e.g., my reflective diaries, supervisory meeting records). In addition, supervisory meeting records of the time, and my own recalled reflections of when I undertook the role were used to produce the autoethnographic product. Within the publication, the practical implications for the training and certification of practitioners in relation to working within the media were also considered.

The publication utilized various narrative tools to convey the range of emotions felt by the first author during this experience, alongside making links to the existant literature in this area. Two of the writing tools utilized were that

of crafting a “layered narrative” and the creation of fictional conversations to further explore the internal dynamics and tensions within the first author. The layered approach to writing was used where each fragment was juxtaposed with theoretical, reflexive or literature-driven discussions (Anzul, Downing, Ely, & Vinz, 1997; Krane, 2009; Zanker & Gard, 2008). Whereas, the fictional conversations between my current self (CS – circa 2011) and younger self as I was approximately six years ago (YS – circa 2005) were used to further explore the questions and dilemmas a neophyte practitioner may encounter when considering working with the media. These fictional conversations were crafted to attempt to portray a closeness to recalled supervisory discussions of the time and the meeting logs of the supervisory meeting held; this was done with the hope that they provide a picture to the reader of the ethical, professional practice, and some of the supervisor-supervisee dilemmas we faced during this period of work for the first author.

This period of acting as “resident psychologist” represented a time when my own sense of congruence (initially explored throughout Publication 2) was severely put to the test. It was a time where I had competing personal and professional drives, ongoing insecurities about my professional capabilities as a “novice practitioner”, competing with narcissistic and self-aggrandizing desires (Andersen, 2005; Tod, Andersen & Marchant, 2009). The environment within which I was operating was one that challenged my own professional ethics when asked to commentate on a specific player’s emotional turmoil. However, the publication also represented by 6 years of reflections upon those experiences in the media, effectively acting as an opportunity to review my practice and

development and hopefully highlighting my own progression as a practitioner over those 6 years.

At the time of these experiences, as detailed within the autoethnography, I can recall feelings aligned to that of both a Novice Practitioner (Phase 4) and fleetingly an Experienced Practitioner (Phase 5). Holland (1997) suggested that it is during this phase of development that there is increasingly little tolerance for a lack of fit between the environment and a practitioner's own sense of self. This tension, during a time of significant growth as a practitioner, was played out by the conflicting drives, paired with a strong sense of what I believed to be ethical in practice. Six years later, the fictional conversations between my current and younger selves highlighted the increased ability to maintain a sense of congruence whilst in a testing environment. The views expressed by my current self within the fictional conversations represent the lack of tolerance that Holland (1997) highlighted, paired with the opportunity for growth that such environments provide.

Aligned to the development at Phase 5, in writing the autoethnography, I reflected that 6 years later, I was increasingly able to regulate my own emotions and handle the professional challenges that I faced (Rønnestad & Skovolt, 2003). This period of challenge and growth seemed to fuel a refinement and confirmation of elements of my own practice, and my congruence when faced with ethical dilemmas. The reflections detailed within the publication, particularly the reflections of the fictional character of my "current self", detail an increasing awareness of the impact of interpersonal experiences on professional practice. Specifically, understanding factors such as how becoming a father provides a sense of perspective on professional matters which were

once all encompassing, or how professional pride combines with perceptions of familial expectation. Such interpersonal experiences can often play an increasingly impactful role throughout a practitioner's career. With greater experience, however, this is increasingly the case (Rønnestad & Skovolt, 2003).

As Rønnestad and Skovolt (2003) noted, it is often during this phase of development a practitioner may become increasingly aware of their own shortcomings, strengths, and personality. Taking the role of "resident psychologist", and reflecting upon the experience of doing so 6 years later, provided the first author with the opportunity to explore these shortcomings in detail via the public forum of a professional publication.

In addition to the challenges faced during the event itself, by reflecting on such challenging periods and documenting this, and I found myself facing specific challenges in writing the autoethnographic account of the events. One aim of the publication was to highlight challenges and potential lessons for trainee and neophyte practitioners. Whilst a potentially admirable aim, as a professional in a relatively small field, there is an inherent risk in bearing one's soul in front of peers and senior practitioners.

While writers of autoethnographic accounts can risk being accused of self-indulgent, narcissistic navel gazing tendencies (Sparkes, 2000), there have been various calls for such accounts within sport psychology (Poczwardowski, & Lauer, 2006). The desire and sense of obligation to write in this way, sharing such revealing stories for the benefit of young (or experienced) practitioners, stands alongside the potential inherent risks to the violation of privacy writing such a highly personal and revealing account can provide (Mellick & Fleming, 2010). These opposing drives, potentially parallel the conflicting sense of



responsibility to undertake work with the media (Jones, 2005), and the need to adopt a cautious approach (Biddle; 2005; Faulkner & Finlay, 2005) so as not to be misrepresented.

At the time when I wrote, and thus formally reflected upon the experiences detailed within Publication 4, I was working at the EIS with Olympic athletes and coaches within a range of sports in the build-up towards the London 2012 Olympic games. These sports included the likes of GB Boxing, British Gymnastics and specific individual athletes. At that time, the demands placed upon me as an applied practitioner alongside my experiences as both a technical lead (mentor) for other practitioners, led me to explore other potential sources of influence on practice. Specifically, I began exploring the philosophical writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) and the potential for his writings to support briefer and more conceptually clear approaches to applied work. As Rønnestad and Skovolt (2003) noted, within Phase 5 of a practitioner's development, there is typically a broadening in what influences the applied work of an experienced professional. This phase can lead to exploring our understanding of human behavior through professional literature in related fields (e.g., anthropology) or via other artistic expressions.

My own interest in Wittgenstein's writings was piqued following exploring the conceptual and applied roots of "briefer" approaches, which I had first become aware of during the experiences detailed in publication 2. It coincided with a growing frustration at the seeming lack of "anything new" within the discipline. Indeed, Rønnestad and Skovolt (2003) suggested that as practitioners accrue more hours of practice as an experienced professional (Phase 5), they may find themselves adopting the belief that there is not much

new in the field. Despite this frustration, at such times practitioners may find themselves increasingly focused on more internalized models, which they may have experienced earlier in their careers.

Specifically, I explored the writings and practice of clinical psychologist Paul Watzlawick and his colleagues at the Mental Research Institute (MRI) in Palo Alto, California. The MRI was founded in 1959 as a research and training facility dedicated to therapy, funded initially via a Rockefeller foundation grant given to the anthropologist Gregory Bateson. This group of practitioners, initially focused upon communication and the interactional nature of psychological problems, then created the Brief Therapy Centre (BTC) within the MRI in circa 1967. It was the work conducted within the BTC that led to the practitioners questioning much of what they had previously believed about human behavior and change, guided by the philosophical thinking of Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein's writings specifically alluded to the issues in language which lay at the heart of many of the problems within philosophy and psychology.

Publication 5 (Lindsay, Pitt & Thomas, 2014) explored the writings of Wittgenstein and its relevance to the language of sport psychology. Whilst Wittgenstein was arguably the most important philosopher of the 20th century, almost no attention has been given to his works within sport psychology. This is surprising given that Wittgenstein's work has filtered into developmental and cognitive psychology, neuroscience and psychotherapy. This lack of consideration is in spite of the Corlett's (1996) assertion that scholars, practitioners and the discipline could benefit from the clarity provided by deeper philosophical thinking.

Until this time in my career, my own consideration of philosophy within sport psychology was largely that of my own professional philosophy of practice (Poczwadowski, Sherman & Ravizza, 2004) as detailed in publications 2 and 4. As I explored the writings of Wittgenstein, I increasingly came to the conclusion that in addition to potential incongruence in practitioners, there could also be considered to be incongruence within the discipline of sport psychology itself. Within publication 5, the authors suggested that our discipline frequently suffers with conceptual confusion and misunderstandings driven by our unintentionally misguided use of language. This confusion is exemplified by the limited conceptual clarity or shared consensus in defining and explaining many of our major concepts, creating a myriad of problems in both research and practice.

Wittgenstein used the term “language game” to describe the relationship between our vocabulary and our associated behaviors, to further understand how our language is part of an activity. Wittgenstein also latterly used the term “picture” to denote a conception that holds thinking captive, but which is hidden in our language. Racine and Müller (2009) suggested that such pictures often lead to the false assumption that our language mirrors reality. As I explored the concept of language games and pictures, I began to recognize a series of assumptions, hidden in my own use of language associated with sport psychology, which I recognized had held my own thinking captive over the course of my professional development.

Publication 5 detailed three pictures that the authors believe to be common in the language games of sport psychology. The first of these is that of the concept-object confusion. This refers to times when a verb or adjective is deceptively frozen into the noun form of a psychological entity. For example, to

“act confidently” is transformed into the entity of “confidence”. What may to some appear to be nothing more than a linguistic curiosity, I recognized as being at the heart of many of the issues I found myself tackling with athletes and coaches on a daily basis. This mistaken belief that I was dealing and intervening with actual things, as opposed to a process of interaction or level of description, had held my own thinking captive from my beginning attempts as a “lay helper”.

Within Publication 5, it was suggested that this concept-object confusion is often compounded by our use of metaphor within the discipline; for example through the use of terms such as “mental toughness”, “momentum”, or motivational “climates”. The use of metaphor had been central to both Publication 1 (e.g., the metaphor of “flow”), and publication 3 where I had specifically explored client-generated metaphor, and so this realization forced me to reflect on the processes and frameworks I proposed at that time. Reflecting upon the framework that I proposed within Publication 3, it could be suggested that the “expansion and development” phase might consist of recognizing the limits of the client’s metaphor. However, this process remained firmly within the metaphorical landscape, and would thus suffer with many of the same assumptions that beset the language of sport psychology. Finally, within publication 5 it was suggested that our language creates within each of us a need to see our world in “causal” terms. Such searches for causal explanations takes a practitioner away from accurately describing the situation that they and their clients are facing.

In exploring the writing of Wittgenstein, and authoring Publication 5, I came to challenge many of my own previous beliefs about the nature of the psychological phenomena that I faced in my applied work. It impacted

specifically upon my approach to 1-1 consultancy, but also my supervision of other practitioners with the EIS. At this stage of my career, I was increasingly viewed by other practitioners in Olympic sports as a “senior practitioner”. As Rønnestad and Skovolt (2003) noted, as practitioners become viewed as being more senior, and a guide for novices, it can be a source of great stimulation to explore their thinking and help guide their practice.

At this time during my career (circa 2013), I was supervising four PhD students within the EIS, being responsible for both their research direction in conjunction with their academic institutions, and also their development as applied practitioners. One of these PhD students began to more formally explore the work undertaken within the MRI and BTC during the 1960’s; areas surrounding the use of “consultancy teams”, “single-session therapies” and more “brief contact” approaches furthering the initial calls for exploration of such approaches within Publication 5. For me professionally, it fuelled another period of intellectual and professional growth, helping me to avoid the potential for intellectual apathy that can at times become apparent at times for the Experienced (Phase 5) and Senior Practitioner (Phase 6) alike (Rønnestad & Skovolt, 2003).

The final publication of this thesis was written when I had recently taken the role of “Head of Psychology” at the EIS. Publication 6 (Lindsay, 2014) served as both an opportunity to reflect on a “week in the life”, but also on my own beliefs and values regarding leading a team of upwards of 20 psychologists as they work with Olympic and Paralympic sports. These practitioners range in experience, backgrounds, and philosophical orientations, delivering applied work across a wide range of performance contexts.

Publication 6, an invited professional practice paper to the Sport and Exercise Psychology Review, detailed my own recent applied work. This included supporting leadership teams in professional football, pit crews in Formula 1 and the work that I delivered in Olympic sport prior to London 2012. Within the article I detailed the varied roles that I play as the Head of Psychology, including leading iPsych sessions, 1-1s with specific athletes, developing the Continued Professional Development (CPD) programme for the team, and liaising with external groups to better position the discipline. These roles are a function of my current beliefs and values, forged over the course of the experiences and publications explored previously within this thesis.

Professionally, I have started to recognize that psychology as a discipline is not simply one of a selection of the sport sciences. I believe that psychology has the potential to be the most integrated of the sport science disciplines, with its conceptual and theoretical richness influencing how each of the sciences can create sustainable behavior change. Likewise, raising the awareness with the wider sport science community on topics such as mental health and athlete wellbeing, safeguarding and the EIS Mental Health Referral Pathway is central to creating a system that is increasingly psychologically mature.

Critically, in terms of my own development as a practitioner, I have increasingly come to believe that athletes and practitioners alike, bring their whole selves to a consultancy session. As Andersen (2014) noted, early career practitioners often see their professional and personal selves as being quite disparate, but through time these selves seem to coalesce. I have certainly found this to be true in my own case, and have similarly found other false dichotomies (e.g., wellness versus performance) to dissolve as my own professional practice

has evolved. This realization of false dichotomies is potentially aligned to the “loss of innocence” or “fading of illusions” that Tod (2007) alluded to when discussing practitioner development. In the case of my own development, such a “fading” or “loss” might be considered part of a wider shift in epistemology and ontology as a practitioner-researcher.

Whaley and Krane (2011) previously summarized an individual’s ontological stance as being encompassed by what one considers to be ‘the nature of reality and the nature of the human being in the world’ (Denzin and Lincoln 2011, p. 91). This sits alongside one’s epistemology, which is a more a theory of knowledge and knowledge production (Harding 1991, Letherby 2003). Thus the range of experiences and topics detailed within the six publications outlined above serves to demonstrate this ontological and epistemological shift experienced across a 15 year period. Table 1 summarises how my own development as a practitioner-researcher has taken the form of a series of key transformations:

*Table 1. The shifts in epistemology and ontology as a practitioner-researcher*

<b>Initial Stance (circa 2000)</b>	<b>Revised Stance (circa 2015)</b>
Lab / Field	Context
Individual	System
Linear	Systemic
Desire to explain	Desire to describe
Growth as a practitioner	Growth of the discipline
Deliverer of the intervention	Working through others

The shift towards more qualitative research methodologies utilised across the six publications, paralleled a growing appreciation of context in both

research and practice, a theme that other authors have previously recognized (Krane, 2011). This shift essentially involved moving from a linear, Newtonian view of the world, where problems were considered to be “things” which could be solved with interventions that had a predictable impact, towards one where our own language and context sits at the heart of both our predicaments and potential salvation. As Scanlon (2011) highlighted, learning lessons regarding the importance of understanding context and ecological validity, can be central to a journey of discovery around one’s own scientific methodology.

A willingness to question one’s epistemology is often triggered by a element of discontent, along with the introduction of an alternative way of thinking (Posner, Strike, Hewson, & Gertzog, 1982; Sandoval, 1996). Within the six published works, my discovery of methods such as autoethnography and philosophical investigations as valid methods of inquiry, went hand in hand with a shift towards more systemic and context specific methods of practice. However, this shift was not simply confined to my own perspective on practice, it also led me to question the overall direction of the discipline from a research perspective.

As mentioned within publication 5, I have come to believe that in our rush to explain psychological phenomena, and study them scientifically, we have at times forgotten to accurately describe the things which we seek to study. I concur with other authors (e.g. Hardy, Bell, & Beattie, 2013) in that we should focus more of our efforts upon accurately describing the behaviours associated with key psychological constructs, before making claims about the importance of different emotions, cognitions or attitudes. Without this, we are potentially at



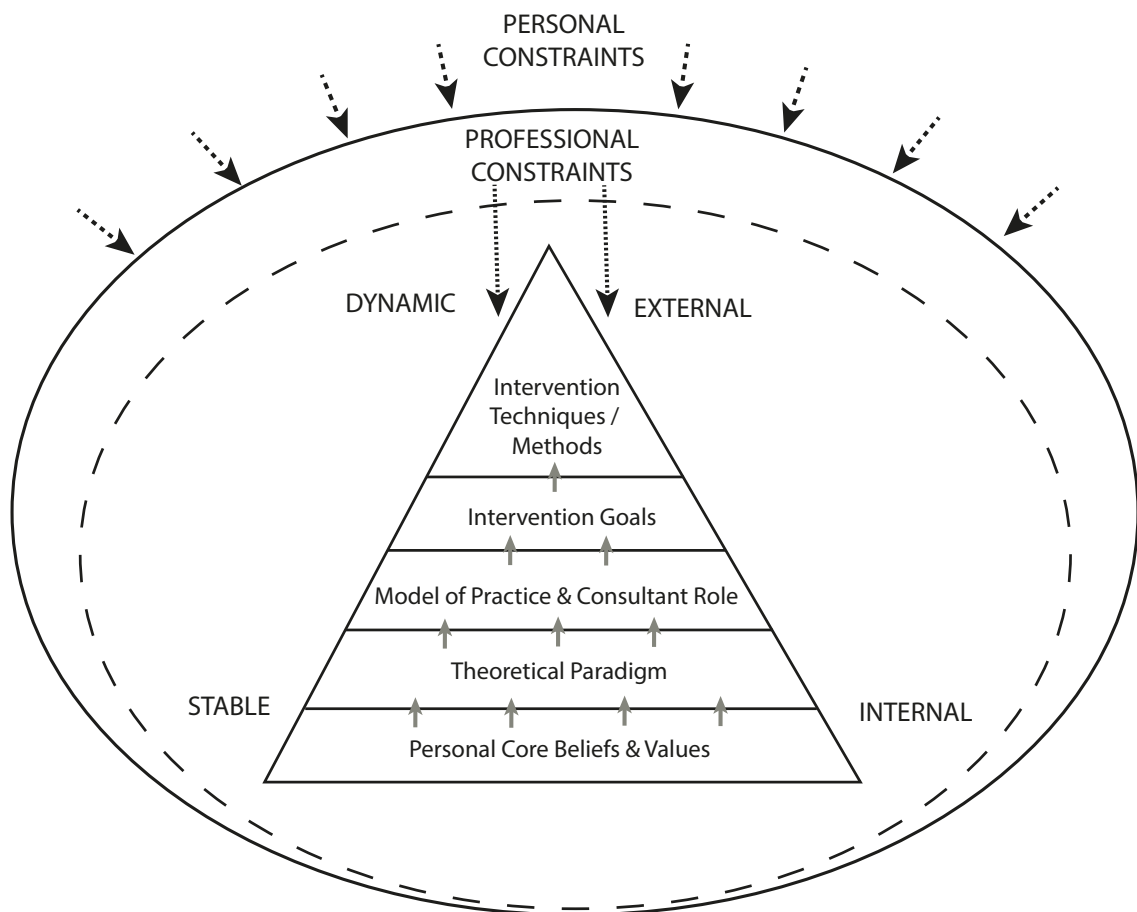
risk of applying misguided strategies to poorly defined phenomena, trying to explain before accurately describing the phenomena at hand.

In essence, this shift as a practitioner-researcher has led to an increasingly systemic and interactional view of our roles and practice, alongside a gradual reduction in my own levels of anxiety. Over the course of the 15 years of development, as detailed within the six discrete published works above, I have developed through six key phases as outlined by Rønnestad and Skovolt (2003). This development has been gradual and individual in nature, at times progressing and at other regressing through phases depending upon the professional and personal challenges that I faced. As Tod (2007) noted, self-reflection has been central to this development, as have the lessons learnt from colleagues and clients alike. The reduction in anxiety, and a sense of increased competence, were congruent with counselor development theory, and are aligned with the findings of other researchers in this area (i.e. Tod, Andersen, & Marchant, 2011).

Whilst the journey of development has been individual in nature, there are a number of areas which might have implications for the development and training of practitioners and the discipline more widely. These implications might serve both the neophyte and experienced practitioner alike in exploring their own practice. Critically, whilst previous authors have highlighted the need for practitioners to explore and refine their philosophy of practice, models such as those by Poczwardowski, Sherman and Ravizza (2004) have suggested a relatively simplistic view of this process. Across the six publications, the shift in practice, and research, was influenced by the professional and personal constraints that I experienced. A growing need to operate in a brief manner, the

need to work through significant others in the system and the lack of contact time, all contributed to exploring new intervention techniques and methods. In applying such approaches, my own model of practice, paradigm and beliefs about change were impacted.

Figure 2 provides an update to Poczwardowski, Sherman & Ravizza's (2004) framework, and offers a more interactional perspective of the process of developing a more congruent philosophy of practice.



**Figure 2: Interactional structure of professional philosophy**

Despite this need to explore our personal philosophy, neophyte practitioners, fuelled by their romanticized views of professional sport, and their need to earn a living, will typically gravitate towards learning single, simplistic methods which they believe can be applied across all contexts (e.g., Lindsay et al., 2005). Whilst such approaches should not be discouraged, they should perhaps be set within the wider context of attempting to develop as a more rounded practitioner. Ensuring that neophyte practitioners have access to simple tools and frameworks to utilize will aid in reducing the common anxieties that they experience. However, the misplaced certainty that comes with such approaches can potentially restrict their development over the longer-term. Ensuring that practitioners remain mindful of the “longer game”, whilst engaging in the “here and now” is critical to their development as effective practitioners.

As intimated above, I believe that exploring our own personal professional philosophy is critical to development as an effective applied practitioner (Lindsay et al., 2007). The process of actively considering ones own beliefs and values with regard to human beings, behavior, sport and our role as practitioners is central to developing a rich discipline. Such exploration may serve to identify innovative approaches from other areas of psychology, or potential other disciplines (e.g., anthropology, design, art, management, architecture). Approaches developed by exploring these different domains will potentially contrast with the dominant world view of the discipline at that time. This contrast should be encouraged if the discipline is to continue to meet the evolving demands of elite sport. Identifying such approaches (e.g., Lindsay, et al., 2010; Lindsay et al., 2014) may serve to move both the discipline and the practitioner forward, into a more impactful and effective state of affairs.

Aiding a neophyte practitioner in exploring their initial philosophy of practice may be further enhanced by supervisors trained in the discipline of philosophy itself. Supervisors who are aware of the philosophical rabbit holes that practitioners (both junior and senior alike) and researchers can unknowingly fall into, may be better placed to help neophyte practitioners to explore their own beliefs and values. Likewise, understanding the impact of our language on our worldview, as per the seminal work of Wittgenstein, would also enhance the early supervisory experiences of practitioners, challenging them to see behind the models and frameworks, exploring and describing the phenomena we seek to understand.

As a practitioner, and evidenced within the series of papers contained within this submission, I believe we each have a responsibility to make our work accessible and understandable to a wide range of individuals. This may involve working within the media (e.g., Lindsay & Thomas, 2014) or helping to embed psychological principles into the day-to-day practice of other sport scientists or coaches (Lindsay, 2014). Integrating and collaborating as a discipline, in spite of professional anxieties and personal foibles, can at times lead to some initial anxieties and challenges, but ultimately allows us to have far a greater impact on those that we serve.

Whilst we should explore our own personal philosophies, I have also come to believe that neophyte practitioners, like their supervisors, would also benefit from an awareness and training in philosophy as a discipline. Exploring the works of individuals such as Ludwig Wittgenstein may lead to more fundamental questions being asked of the discipline, ultimately placing future research and practice on much more certain ground. Without such thinking

being central to the development of sport psychologists, we run the risk of getting caught in “language games”, viewing our world through the limiting “pictures” that hold our thinking captive (Lindsay, et al., 2014).

Research methods, such as those utilized across the six publications, may also serve practitioner-researchers in describing their experiences. Such intimate and self-reflective accounts can not only aid in developing more self-aware practitioners, but also more accessible and relevant research. Until more practitioner-researchers are willing to share such accounts, we may find the distance between research and practice continues to grow.

In conclusion, the development of the discipline of applied sport psychology rests upon the development of the practitioners and researchers within it. Whilst previous literature has explored the development of the neophyte practitioner, little attention has been given to practitioner maturation and the longitudinal development of applied practitioners. How practitioners develop over extended periods of time, questioning their conceptual, theoretical, professional and personal worlds should be of great interest to those focused on the development of the discipline as a whole. Through a greater understanding of the journey from “lay helper” to “senior practitioner” those responsible for the development of the next generation of practitioners may question current practices.

Such knowledge may serve to forwarn and forearm practitioners and supervisors alike to some of the obstacles and “bumps in the road” that they will inevitably experience. It may also provide comfort to those applied practitioners currently experiencing confusion and frustration within their practice, helping them realize that such feelings are both natural and helpful to their development.

## **PUBLICATION 1**

## **PUBLICATION 2**

## **PUBLICATION 3**



## **PUBLICATION 4**

## **PUBLICATION 5**

## **PUBLICATION 6**

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