

The Intersection of Context, Professional Philosophy, and Working Alliance: MPCs'
Experiences within Professional Baseball

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Abstract

Professional philosophy and the working alliance between consultant and client have been consistently identified by researchers as foundational to effective mental performance service delivery (Perna et al., 2005; Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011). Mental performance consultants (MPCs), especially those embedded within organizations, work in complex environments that can exert major influence on their service delivery process (see Hardy, Jones, & Gould, 1996). While researchers have recognized the need to consider the context of service delivery (Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011), there has been minimal investigation into how context influences the foundations of consulting. Today, MPCs are employed by and deliver services throughout 27 of 30 major league baseball organizations (Nightengale, 2018), making professional baseball a setting worthy of exploring the intersection of context, professional philosophy, and working alliance. Therefore, Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR; Hill, 2012) was used to explore this intersection through semi-structured interviews with 13 MPCs (10 males, three females) who have worked in professional baseball. Five domains were constructed: (a) The Context of Professional Baseball, (b) Intersection of Cultures Within Professional Baseball, (c) Long-game Philosophy of Establishing Value of MPC Services, (d) Cultivating Trust in the Working Alliance, and (e) Personal and Situational Factors that Influence Receptivity to and Delivery of MPC Services. MPCs discussed how unique factors about the context (e.g., limited player privacy) and cultural considerations (e.g., nationality, language, gendered norms) influenced their philosophy of service delivery. MPCs emphasized trust as critical and focused on the development of working alliances in their first few years with an organization. This included building the trust of multiple stakeholders (coaches, support staff, scouts, front office) in the MPC's services. Client and MPC characteristics, organizational

support, and agents also influenced MPCs' process of service delivery. Findings from the current study revealed that context does shift an MPC's service delivery process. MPCs should consider adapting their professional philosophies and working alliance to contextually meet the needs of clients within the environment they are working. In addition, MPCs' experiences revealed that professional baseball has placed an emphasis on mental skills training, offering considerations for other professional sport organizations looking to integrate mental performance services.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Mental performance consultants (MPCs) focus their services on psychological skills (e.g., building confidence, enhancing focus, managing stress) and strategies (e.g., imagery, self-talk, focus cues) that aid athletes' mental and emotional preparation for sport performance (Fortin-Guichard, Bodreault, Gagnon, & Trottier, 2018). While there has been a particular interest in the exact skills and strategies used by MPCs, researchers suggest that it is as important to consider factors that influence what services are delivered and how these services are delivered effectively (Poczwadowski, Sherman, & Henschen, 1998). As such, a professional philosophy and the working alliance have been identified as two critical factors that influence the process of service delivery (Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011; Poczwadowski, Sherman, Ravizza, 2004). In addition, it has been argued that the context of where service delivery takes place, and how it influences professional philosophy and working alliance, must also be considered (Eubank, Nesti, & Cruickshank, 2014; Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011). Thus, it is important to understand how context influences the service delivery process. In this study, I explore the intersection of the context of professional baseball and service delivery with particular attention paid to the professional philosophy and the working alliance.

Mental Performance Service Delivery

Gaining knowledge in the effectiveness of mental techniques and interventions has been of great interest to sport psychology researchers and practitioners, as it helps to obtain credibility by demonstrating that what MPCs do makes a difference (see Zakrajsek & Blanton, 2017). While the mental techniques and interventions MPCs employ are important, it has been argued that the “events that precede and follow applying these techniques and unique characteristics that may

determine specifically how techniques are used” are just as important, but rarely addressed (Poczwadowski et al, 1998, p. 192). Consequently, a number of general frameworks of (Keegan, 2015; Poczwadowski et al., 1998; Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011; Visek, Harris, & Blom, 2009) and specific approaches to (Aoyagi & Poczwadowski, 2012; Aoyagi, Cohen, Poczwadowski, Metzler, & Statler, 2018) mental performance consulting have been proposed to guide MPCs in the service delivery process.

These frameworks of and approaches to service delivery, such as the Sport Psychology Service Delivery heuristic (Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011) and the Youth Sport Consulting Model (Visek et al., 2009), share relatively similar critical factors that are influential to the design and implementation of mental performance services (Poczwadowski et al, 1998). Two of these critical factors include foundations of service (i.e., professional philosophy; Aoyagi et al., 2018; Keegan, 2015; Poczwadowski et al., 1998; Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011; Visek et al., 2009) and working alliance (i.e., the individual characteristics of the consultant, the individual characteristics of the client, and the MPC-client relationship; Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011).

Professional philosophy. Professional philosophy, a foundation of effective service delivery (Botterill, 1990; Perna, Neyer, Murphy, Ogilvie, & Murphy, 1995, Ravizza, 1990; Rotella, 1990), refers to the MPCs’ values and beliefs about human nature, their views on behavior change, and their “beliefs and values concerning his or her potential role in, and the theoretical and practical means of, influencing their clients toward mutually [and organizationally] set intervention goals” (Poczwadowski et al., 2004, p. 449). Therefore, a professional philosophy involves MPCs’ beliefs about their profession and professional role as well as core values that underlie their professional practice.

The MPC's values and beliefs are the most stable and internal components of a philosophy and influence the MPC's theoretical paradigm and views on behavior change (Poczwadowski et al., 2004). For example, Henriksen and Diment (2011) have discussed their professional philosophy with Team Denmark (Denmark's organization for elite sport). In their listing of beliefs and values, Henriksen and Diment (2011) emphasize that they believe an athlete's identity is broader than just the sport, that athletes "operate from the interplay of thoughts, feelings, physiology and actions" (p. 8), and that elite athletes are a product of the environment in which they are embedded. Their belief and values led them to adopt theoretical paradigms of behavior change from cognitive-behavioral psychology (see Ellis, 1957), ecological psychology (see Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), and humanistic psychology (see Rogers, 1942). Similarly, Friesen and Orlick (2010) examined a variety of MPCs' values and beliefs and the influence they held on theories of behavior change. Focusing on a holistic philosophy, MPCs such as Ken Ravizza, Tom Patrick, Cal Botterill and others, highlighted their beliefs that elite athletes are still human and they are made up of personal identities and athletic identities that cannot be separated from each other (Friesen & Orlick, 2010). These personal beliefs, along with values of caring, authenticity, and professionalism led MPCs to adopt eclectic (Keith Henschen), existential (Ken Ravizza), and humanistic (Cal Botterill) theoretical paradigms of behavior change (Friesen & Orlick, 2010). Therein, it is not as important to be concerned with what professional philosophy is "right" or better than another as they will differ (Danish & Hale, 1981), but to consider how values, belief, and education influence one's professional philosophy of service delivery (Poczwadowski et al., 2004).

Working alliance. In mental performance consulting, Poczwadowski and Sherman (2011) define the working alliance as being comprised of the characteristics of the client (e.g.

willingness, receptivity, commitment), characteristics of the MPC (e.g. personality, knowledge, trustworthiness), and the MPC-client relationship (e.g. mutual trust, care, commitment). The working alliance between the MPC and client has also been identified as a critical factor in the mental performance service delivery process (see Petitpas, Giges, & Danish, 1999; Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011; Sharp & Hodge, 2011; Zakrajsek, Steinfeldt, Bodey, Martin, & Zizzi, 2013). Athletes and MPCs alike acknowledge that effective mental performance consulting can take place when (a) the MPC is athlete-centered, focused on building a connection, and knowledgeable; (b) the athlete is open, honest, and respectful; and (c) there is a mutual commitment and trust in the consulting dyad (Sharp & Hodge, 2011; 2014). MPCs in Longstaff and Gervis' (2016) study reiterated this notion by referring to the working alliance as a “two-way working relationship” and as “driven by the athlete but fostered by the practitioner” (p. 281). An MPC's ability to build trust and rapport has been reported as essential for enabling positive changes with clients regardless of the theoretical paradigm and approach taken (Gould, Tammen, Murphy, & May, 1989; Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011; Sharp & Hodge, 2011; Sharp & Hodge, 2014; Sharp et al., 2015; Zakrajsek et al., 2013).

Organizational Sport Psychology and the MPC

While the conceptual frameworks offer general guidelines about the process of service delivery, the realities of consulting extend beyond these models and MPCs should consider the context of where service delivery takes place (Poczwadowski et al., 1998, Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011). Similarly, Fletcher and Wagstaff (2009) suggest that the consideration of context should extend beyond the individual level and into the group and organizational levels. It is important to recognize that the process of service delivery, and in particular professional philosophy and working alliance, may be influenced by a number of factors, such as or including

the other actors and the situations in which they act (Wagstaff, 2019). Thus, organizational psychology (Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009; Jones, Gittins, & Hardy, 2009) and organizational sport psychology (Wagstaff, 2019) researchers have recently begun investigating the environmental and organizational influences on sport performance. At most, this research has primarily focused on the athletes and coaches within the organization (see Arnold & Fletcher, 2012) with limited attention paid towards support staff (Arnold, Collington, Manley, Rees, Soanes, & Williams, 2019), or specifically MPCs (Fletcher, Rumbold, Tester, & Coombes, 2011), working within the organizations.

Fletcher and colleagues (2011) interviewed MPCs in academic and applied settings about the stressors related to their work (research, consultancy, administration, and teaching). MPCs identified stressors related to their roles in the organization, climate and organizational structure, sport psychology as a field, performance and career developments, and interpersonal demands. Specific stressors emerging from their roles in the organization and the organizational climate were role overload and role conflict (roles in the organization) and bureaucracy within the organization (organizational climate; Fletcher et al., 2011). MPCs described that the organizations they worked within required them to not just fulfill multiple roles, but also limited who they could and could not work with. Additionally, and in relation to organizational bureaucracy, MPCs felt a lack of autonomy and a sense of mistrust within the organization; the organization was controlling what the MPCs were allowed to do. Therefore, the influence of power must be considered when seeking to understand the experiences of MPCs working within an organization.

The influence of power. As Foucault (1998) highlights, power is not often explicit, but implicit; beneath the surface and constantly at work. It is therefore important to consider the

power dynamics and hierarchies MPCs may encounter when working within organizations.

Some MPCs who are hired by an organization to deliver services to and within the organization may encounter multiple bases of power (French & Raven, 1959). The MPC will have to identify which basis of power (i.e. legitimate power, referent power) has the most authority at any given moment and learn to navigate within that power. MPCs may also have to navigate the multiple powers and influences of power that exist beneath the surface (Foucault, 1997). Organizational bureaucracy and role conflict (Arnold et al., 2019; Fletcher et al., 2011) are just two specific influences of power an MPC can encounter. However, they provide further evidence that an MPC does not work in a vacuum and; thus, there is a need to consider the influence of context on MPCs service delivery. Specifically, the intersection of context, professional philosophy, and working alliance.

Context, professional philosophy, and working alliance. While core beliefs, values, and views on behavior change may be considered stable components of a professional philosophy (Poczwardowski et al., 2004), it is also important for the MPC to be flexible (McDougall et al., 2015; Poczwardowski et al., 1998). Larsen (2017) recounts from his experiences in professional soccer that a consulting philosophy that does not take context into consideration is not enough to be effective. Larsen's (2017) philosophy was rooted in a developmental framework that emphasized building relationships and earning trust from coaches and athletes. Following substandard performances by the team, the head coach was let go and replaced by a performance director who saw "building awareness, relationships, mutual sharing and reflection [as] now a problem rather than a solution" (Larsen, 2017, p. 127). The short-termism of professional soccer disabled Larsen (2017) from following through with his long-term developmental program. Larsen (2017) emphasized that when entering a professional sports

organization, a practitioner needs to be self-reflective and culturally sensitive when integrating his/her philosophy. A professional philosophy must also be adaptable to and within the organization.

MPCs have also discussed the influence of the elite sport setting on the working alliance (McDougall et al., 2015). In elite sport, relationship-building is essential for MPCs as it can positively influence athletes' and coaches' perceptions of MPCs worth and value (McDougall et al., 2015). However, MPCs working within elite sport often must be able to manage multiple relationships at once with limited time for one-on-one interventions (McDougall et al., 2015). MPCs maintaining multiples relationships must be more flexible and able to provide a wider range of services to meet all of their client's needs (McDougall et al., 2015). Therefore, the context of where service delivery takes place, especially in professional sports (Eubank et al., 2014; Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009; Nesti, 2010), may influence the professional philosophy (Larsen, 2017; McDougall et al., 2015) and working alliance (McDougall et al., 2015).

A context that researchers have explored more fully is the Olympics (Gould et al., 1989; Haberl & McCann, 2012; Partington & Orlick, 1987; Partington & Orlick, 1991). For example, in the United States, a small number of MPCs are employed full-time by the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) and can help up to 200 Winter and 500 Summer Olympic athletes prepare for one competition that could potentially be "the defining moment" of their career (McCann, 2008, p. 268). In order to work effectively within this setting, the Sport Psychology Department for the USOC reoriented their philosophy and approach to focus more on being immersed with coaches and athletes (McCann, 2008). In order for mental performance services to be immersed, the Sport Psychology Department decided to choose specific teams to work with rather than try to reach all athletes and teams. In addition, and with regard to the working

alliance, Partington and Orlick (1987,1991) found Canadian Olympic coaches and athletes identified effective consultants as those who fit in with everyone, were relatable, trustworthy, and ready to build relationships and work together collaboratively. Therefore, like the Olympic setting, mental performance service delivery—including philosophy and working alliance—may look different in other settings. In professional baseball, some MiLB and MLB players have a full-time MPC on staff available to them. Instead of one defining moment like the Olympics, players consistently compete over a 162-game season that spans 187 days (Stephen, 2016), to move up or down the roster within a team or move across the MiLB and MLB system.

Professional Baseball: A Worthy Context to Explore

Major League Baseball comprises 30 teams separated into two 15-team leagues (Thomas, 2015), the National League and American League. Within each league are three divisions (East, Central, West) with five MLB teams in each division (Thomas, 2015). Each MLB team has a Minor League Baseball (MiLB) system in which players attempt to progress from the lowest rookie ball clubs to multiple low A/Single A teams, to Double-A teams, and then to Triple-A teams; the latter being the final step before the major leagues. Some teams, like the Houston Astros, may only have two rookie-ball clubs while others, such as the Los Angeles Dodgers, have five (MiLB, n.d.). Within each organization and team, there are departments of staff and coaches working with players to support their growth and win championships. One such staff member is the MPC.

Today, MPCs are employed by 27 out of 30 MLB organizations and are delivering mental performance services from the Single A level to the major leagues (Nightengale, 2018). In the early 1990's, nearly 30 years ago, only a small number of MPCs worked in professional baseball. They published professional practice articles and book chapters about their work within

professional baseball and discussed how the setting influenced their delivery of mental performance services (Ravizza, 1990; Smith & Johnson, 1990). For example, Ravizza (2012) stated that the “context of the situation... is critical in modifying my approach, program, and skills to meet the unique needs of that group” (p. 202). Ravizza worked with MiLB players because they were more receptive to mental skills training as compared to MLB players. His humanistic (see Rogers, 1942) and existential philosophy (see Merleau-Ponty, 1962) that emphasized connecting with individual athletes on a personal level had to be adapted as most of his work in MiLB occurred at the group level (Ravizza, 1990). This is because the structure of the organization allowed minimal time to work one-on-one with athletes. For other practitioners such as Smith and Johnson (1990), their philosophy included demystifying sport psychology and focusing on enhancing coaches’ receptivity to mental training. This led Smith and Johnson (1990) to adopt an educational approach where they focused on educating MiLB coaches, managers, and instructors instead of having themselves be the sole providers of mental skills training with players. Therefore, these practitioners appeared to have flexible and dynamic philosophies that they adapted to provide effective mental performance consulting within the context of professional baseball.

The working alliance may also need to be modified to meet the varying contextual elements. As Smith and Johnson (1990) highlight, “providing continuity is perhaps the greatest challenge in professional baseball, where most organizations have five to eight minor league teams situated in widely scattered geographical areas” (p. 348). As such, MPCs’ clientele will most likely extend beyond one team’s 40-man roster and into the hundreds of players within the professional baseball organization. Also unique to professional baseball is the nature of player movement. MiLB players can start in rookie ball or Single-A teams and work their way up to

Double-A, Triple-A, or even the major leagues (Bernier, 2012). Players can also be traded, let go, or quit along the way (Bernier, 2012). Building working alliances with baseball players where trust, rapport, and commitment to each other is essential (Longstaff & Gervis, 2016; Sharp & Hodge, 2014), may look differently from MPCs working in other arenas where there is less player movement and clients are more localized. Thus, there is a need to empirically explore MPCs' experiences with how the context of professional baseball influences professional philosophies and the ability to create and maintain working alliances.

Thirty years have passed since the publication of professional practice articles by practitioners working in professional baseball (see Dorfman, 1990; Ravizza, 1990; Smith & Johnson, 1990). Currently, nearly all MLB teams have employed MPCs (Nightengale, 2018). In 1990, there was an increasing receptivity towards sport psychology and mental skills training (Ravizza, 1990), and thus, the setting of professional baseball and the willingness to utilize mental performance services may be different today. By interviewing MPCs directly, sport psychology researchers can better understand how the process of service delivery (e.g., professional philosophy and working alliance) is influenced by the context of professional baseball.

Statement of the Problem

Mental performance service delivery frameworks have been developed as general guides for practicing MPCs (Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011). Professional philosophy and working alliance have been discussed in the literature as common factors of the service delivery process with limited empirical investigation into how the setting and context influences these factors. Therefore, gaining experiential insight of mental performance consulting in various contexts would provide realistic descriptions that help guide practitioners on what works (or doesn't

work) within a specific setting. Professional baseball is one context that has seen growth in the number of MPCs employed full-time (Nightengale, 2018). Using professional baseball as a context to understand mental performance service delivery may enable researchers and practitioners to better understand how the context influences (a) the professional philosophy and (b) the formation and maintenance of the working alliance.

Purpose of the Study and Guiding Research Questions

The purpose of the current study was to explore MPCs' experiences of the influence of context on the service delivery process in professional baseball. My main research question is: What are MPCs' experiences with the influence of context on service delivery in professional baseball? Two sub-questions were explored.

1. How does the context of professional baseball influence MPCs' professional philosophy?
2. How does the context of professional baseball influence MPCs development and maintenance of working alliances?

Limitations

1. The professional baseball season, for both minor and major league teams, is quite long. MPCs may have limited time and availability to take part in a 45- to 60-minute interview.
2. MPCs working in professional baseball are mostly male and Caucasian.

Delimitations

1. Purposeful criterion-based sampling will be used. The sample is delimited to MPCs who work full-time within an MLB organization, and have worked within the organization for at least one season.

Most Relevant Definitions

Mental Performance Consultant (MPC) are “individuals with a master’s or doctoral degree in sport science, psychology or closely related field” who have “expertise in helping clients develop and use mental, life, and self-regulatory skills to optimize performance, enjoyment, and/or personal development in sport or other domains (e.g., performing arts, military)” (AASP Certification, n.d.).

Professional philosophy refers to the consultants’ values and beliefs about human nature, their views on behavior change, and their “beliefs and values concerning his or her potential role in, and the theoretical and practical means of, influencing their clients toward mutually [and organizationally] set intervention goals” (Poczwardowski et al., 2004, p. 449).

Working Alliance consists of “the consultant-client relationship, the consultant variables, and the client variables” (Poczwardowski & Sherman, 2011, p. 528).

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

In this chapter, I review the relevant literature related to mental performance service delivery. To begin this review, I investigate the importance of context by examining industrial/organization psychology and organizational sport psychology. Next, I broadly discuss the MPC and general frameworks of mental performance service delivery, isolating two critical factors of service delivery—professional philosophy and the working alliance—and how they may be influenced by the context. Then, I specifically focus on the context of professional baseball, exploring its organizational components while locating the MPC within baseball. Finally, I explore the intersection of the context of professional baseball, professional philosophy, and working alliance.

Industrial/Organizational Psychology

Industrial/Organization (I/O) psychology is characterized by the American Psychological Association (APA) as “the scientific study of human behavior in organizations and the workplace” (APA, n.d.). Psychologists working in I/O psychology focus on individual, group, and organizational behavior while addressing problems related to training, development, recruitment, motivation, quality of work life, leadership, and structure of work (APA, n.d.; Wagstaff, 2017). Many researchers have noted the similarity between business organizations and sport organizations (Weinberg & McDermott, 2002). In both business and sport organizations, there are leaders, role players, a collective mission, stressors, and other factors that influence the day to day performances of the individuals within the organization. For I/O psychologists working in business or sport, the focus then is to understand the organizational factors that

influence performance. One such model that demonstrates this organizational influence is Jones, Gittins, and Hardy's (2009) High Performance Environment (HPE) model.

Jones and colleagues (2009) HPE model was created from reviewing organizational performance literature as well as their collective experience in the high performing environments of sport, business, and military (Jones et al., 2009). The HPE model identifies key social and psychological factors at the individual, group, and organizational levels associated with sustainable high performance. Thus, In the HPE model, Jones and colleagues (2009) highlight leadership, performance enablers, and people as important factors that influence and are influenced by the culture of the organization.

In the HPE model, leadership is at the center and inner most circle “and is hypothesized to interact with *performance enablers* to impact on the *people* variables” (Jones et al., 2009, p. 141). Overall, leaders in high performance environments seek to create conditions for followers to excel by maximizing support and minimizing constraints (Jones et al., 2009). Specifically, Jones and colleagues (2009) suggest leaders promote commitment and motivation in a high-performance environment by providing a vision to the people, supporting people by offering them the resources and means necessary to achieve that vision, and challenging people in an appropriate manner that is within their means to handle. If there is no vision, a lack of support, or too high of a challenge, the people's motivation and commitment to their work may be diminished.

Performance enablers—the second circle just outside the center circle of leadership—are environmental supports that are necessary for people to perform effectively (Jones et al., 2009). Performance enablers consist of the information necessary for people to perform their roles (i.e. clear goals, role clarity), the instruments people require to do their jobs effectively (i.e. physical,

knowledge-related, and structural instruments), and incentives to enhance the people's motivation.

The outer-most circle represents the people, which include the attitudes, behaviors, and capacity of the people (Jones et al., 2009). Attitudes are reflected in the trust people have towards leaders, the level of job satisfaction one has, and the perceived competence one feels (Jones et al., 2009). These attitudes then influence the behavior of the people. In a high-performance environment where the people perceive positive support, respect, and trust from the leaders in the organization, the more engaged they are and more likely they are to go above and beyond their duties (Jones et al., 2009). In a high-performance environment where people perceive a lack of support, information, and respect from leadership, the more likely they are to be disengaged and maintain a minimal commitment to their work. Lastly, the people within the organization are ultimately hired because they have the capacity to do their job. This capacity refers to the skills and abilities of the people as well as their emotional intelligence and mental toughness needed to perform the job (Jones et al., 2009).

Finally, surrounding the three concentric circles of leadership, performance enablers, and people, is the culture or organizational climate of the organization. Jones and colleagues (2009) discuss four climate factors, or values, that influence organizational performance: achievement (e.g., productivity and goal achievement), well-being (e.g., development of people), innovation (e.g., creativity), and internal processes (e.g., internal control of systems). Jones and colleagues (2009) outline that organizations may differ on what values are emphasized, especially across different industries, but that organizations may try to achieve a balance of each value that best represents the organization's mission.

The HPE model has been used as a lens to study the high-performance environment of an elite swim team (Fletcher & Streeter, 2016). Fletcher and Streeter (2016) interviewed 14 participants (10 male, four female) which included coaches, swimmers, biomechanists, directors, lifeguards, and an external consultant. The interview questions were based in the HPE model and asked participants such questions as “can you tell me about your leaders and their qualities” (Fletcher & Streeter, 2016, p. 128). Following analysis, Fletcher and Streeter (2016) arrived at 13 higher order themes under the four main dimensions of the HPE model: leadership, performance enablers, people, and organizational culture.

With regard to leadership, participants emphasized that leadership’s responsibility was to provide vision, support, and challenge (Fletcher & Streeter, 2016). Specifically, the leadership provided a vision by being focused and adaptable, provided support by offering encouragement and managing discontent, and challenged by holding the team to high expectations and providing intellectual stimulation (Fletcher & Streeter, 2016). For example, one coach (leadership) demonstrated challenge by expecting a lot from their swimmers, but not having too high of expectations that swimmers could not reach (Fletcher & Streeter, 2016). The higher order themes under the dimension of performance enablers were information, instruments, and incentives (Fletcher & Streeter, 2016). Participants identified information as positive feedback and goal setting, instruments as facilities and support staff, and incentives as internal rewards and social recognition. For example, one swimmer highlighted how effective s/he felt the coaches’ feedback (information) was to the team’s progress. Higher order themes under the dimension of people consisted of attitudes, behaviors, and capacity (Fletcher & Streeter, 2016). For example, members of the swim team held attitudes of commitment and positive belief, and thus in their behaviors, they adopted extra role behaviors and were more enthusiastic and engaged. Members

also felt the swim team's capacity was established in its recruitment and star performers; they did not seek to bring in the fastest swimmers, but the ones that could grow the most. Lastly, the higher order themes under the domain of organizational culture included achievement, well-being, innovation, and internal process. Of these four values, the majority of the members of the swim team felt that the organization valued achievement and well-being. Achievement was demonstrated by striving for success and setting performance goals while well-being was emphasized through satisfaction and personal development.

As can be seen from the HPE model provided by Jones and colleagues (2009), and with support from Fletcher and Streeter (2016), there are many factors that influence how people—whether that be employees, athletes, support staff, or coaches—perform in business or sport organizations. Thus, some sport psychology researchers have begun to practice and conduct research through an organizational or social-psychological lens in order to better understand and advance sport performance, quality of work life, and organizational functioning (Wagstaff & Larner, 2015). The specialization of this practice and research, then, may fall under a new subfield of organizational psychology and sport psychology; organizational sport psychology.

Organizational sport psychology. In 2019, the *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* dedicated a special issue to organizational sport psychology. In the opening introduction, Wagstaff (2019) defines organizational sport psychology as “a subfield of sport psychology that is dedicated to better understanding individual behavior and social processes in sport organizations” (Wagstaff, 2019, p. 1). While the field of sport psychology generally promotes applied work and research around optimal states of individuals, the individual as a whole in relation to the organizational context has been underexplored (Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009). To best capture this, Wagstaff (2019) writes that,

recurrent success in elite sport is not solely dependent on the talent of individual performers, but on how effectively these individuals build and maintain working relationships with a systematic collective of stakeholders...supports...networks...and bodies...to optimize day to day productivity. (p. 4)

While Wagstaff (2019) is primarily referring to athletes as the “individual performers,” this same statement can replace “individual performers” with coaches, managers, or any sort of support staff personnel such as an MPC. In this manner, then, a coach’s, manager’s, or MPC’s ability to work effectively in an organization is not solely dependent on her/his talent or capability, but on her/his ability to build and maintain relationships with those in the surrounding organizational hierarchy. As Hardy, Jones, and Gould (1996) state “elite athletes [and people in general] do not live in a vacuum; they function within a highly complex social and organizational environment, which exerts major influences on them and their performances” (pp. 239-240). Likewise, the MPC, then, is not just an isolated actor within a system, but is influenced by the context or environment of which they exist and operate. Before investigating the context and environment, it is important to first discuss the MPC.

The Mental Performance Consultant

Generally speaking, an MPC’s services are geared towards helping performers, elite and non-elite, to reach and operate more consistently at their optimal level of performance (Portenga, Aoyagi, & Cohen, 2017). To do this, MPCs and specifically Certified Mental Performance Consultants (CMPCs®) have formal training and knowledge in sport sciences, psychological sciences, and sport psychology (Become Certified, n.d.). With this training, MPCs assist performers with the mental and emotional demands of their sport in order to improve performance (Fortin-Guichard, Boudreault, Gagnon, & Trottier, 2018). To do this, MPCs may

use various mental strategies (e.g., goal setting, self-talk, imagery) to regulate mental skills (e.g., confidence, focus, team and coach communication; Donohue et al., 2004; Wrisberg, Simpson, Loberg, Withycombe, & Reed, 2009).

MPCs can work with and serve individual clients or they can work with and serve an entire organization. The MPC that works with clients at an individual level and in which the work is primarily one-on-one, may be less influenced by other actors and more autonomous than that of the MPC who works within an entire organization. Again, and like the elite athlete, an MPC that is employed within an organization does not work in a vacuum (Hardy et al., 1996).

The MPC in context. Revisiting the HPE model, Jones and colleagues (2009) clearly outline leadership at the center of the model with the leadership being responsible for establishing the vision, offering support to the people through performance enablers. With this in mind, leadership are responsible for employing MPCs in a high-performance environment. MPCs can be classified as the people within an organization—as they have attitudes, behaviors, and capacity—working to support the organization. However, and perhaps a secondary argument to be later investigated, is whether or not MPCs—and any support staff for that matter—can also be performance enablers. Performance enablers, again, are the environmental supports that are necessary for people to perform effectively. Performance enablers may initially appear to be non-human, but there may be reason to consider humans as a form of performance enablers. One performance enabler MPCs could fall under include the knowledge-related instruments (Fletcher & Streeter, 2016; Jones et al., 2009). MPCs provide education and feedback (e.g. knowledge-related information) to the people within the sport setting, and these people are ultimately the ones who are performing (e.g. the athletes and coaches).

To better understand how MPCs work in organizations, Fletcher and colleagues (2011) interviewed 12 MPCs: six were sport psychology academics (three males and three females), six were sport psychology practitioners (three males and three females), and all participants were accredited by the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences. Participants were interviewed about the organizational influences on their work, and in particular, about issues related to research, consultancy, administration, and teaching. Using a combination of inductive and deductive content analysis, five general dimensions were identified: stressors that are intrinsic to sport psychology, roles in the organization, interpersonal demands and sport relationships, performance and career developments, and climate and organizational structure of the profession. Stressors intrinsic to sport psychology included workload and hours, consultancy, evaluation in the workplace, ethical obligations, and presentation issues. Career and performance development issues included career advancement, income and funding, and job insecurity. Organizational climate and structure of the profession included issues related to the culture and political environment, bureaucracy within the organization, and management styles. Roles in the sport organization included role ambiguity, responsibility, and role overload. Lastly, interpersonal demands and sport relationship issues included personality type and lack of social support.

Looking closer into the experience of these MPCs, Fletcher and colleagues' (2011) highlighted that practitioners were stressed about their roles in the organization. Specifically, under the dimension of organizational roles, participants identified that they were often required to fulfill multiple roles (role overload) with conflict existing at times between these roles (role conflict). In this role conflict, participants identified that they were often uncertain about the expectations of the organization. One participant highlighted this by describing that his

expectations were different from the organization expectations which led to reduced efficacy of the MPC; while the MPC expected to work with both coaches and players, the organization wanted the MPC to work with the players but not with the coaches. As can be seen, there are many factors to consider when serving an entire organization.

In the elite sport setting, Arnold and colleagues (2019) interviewed 40 support personnel about the influence of the context and environment on their service delivery and the consequences of these influences. The majority of personnel were male ($n = 33$, 82.5%) and included performance directors, sport scientists, strength and conditioning coaches, and physiotherapists. Arnold and colleagues (2019) identified four higher-order themes: relationships and interpersonal issues, physical resource issues, contractual and performance development issues, and organizational structure and logistical issues. Examples of relationship and interpersonal issues included being micromanaged by leaders, athletes lacking professionalism, coaches being unsupportive, broken down communication, and expectation to perform at the highest level daily. Physical resource issues consisted of poor facilities, lack of equipment, and pressure to turn around data quickly. Contractual and performance development issues included lack of job security, work role uncertainty, being judged on player's performances, and working long hours. Examples of organizational structure and logistical issues included organizational decision-making being too slow, too much traveling, a male dominated culture, and lack of role clarity. The consequences of the organizational stressors included support personnel developing emotions of anger, frustration, and anxiety which led to outcomes of questioning their jobs, being underprepared for sessions, feeling demotivated, taking work home, and restricted family time and time for personal care (Arnold et al., 2019). Because MPCs were not included in the

study, and are often a part of the support staff who work with elite sport organizations, there is need to further explore the influence of context and environment on an MPC's service delivery.

Support staff (Arnold et al. 2019) and MPCs (Fletcher et al., 2011) responses align with the social and psychological factors found in the HPE model (Jones et al., 2009). To revisit, Jones and colleagues (2009) first identify leadership at the center and responsible for setting the vision, offering support, and challenging the people. Participants in both Arnold and colleagues' (2019) and Fletcher and colleagues' (2011) studies identified leadership and management styles as influential in their day to day work. More specifically, support staff in Arnold and colleagues' (2019) study perceived coaches (leadership) to be unsupportive and the challenge of performing their best daily was too high and unattainable. With regard to performance enablers in the HPE model (Jones et al., 2009), support staff (Arnold et al., 2019) and MPCs (Fletcher et al., 2009) felt that they were not given the information (i.e. role clarity), instruments (i.e. poor equipment, poor facilities), or incentives (i.e. funding) to work effectively. This lack of support from leadership and limited performance enablers led support staff (Arnold et al., 2019) to develop emotions of anger and frustration which led to poor performances (i.e. under preparedness, fatigue, demotivation). In all, as MPCs and support staff work in elite sport, there are many factors that influence their work and how they deliver their services. One factor that needs to be considered is power.

Power and the MPC. French and Raven (1959) define power as the influence on psychological change and further elaborate that a person, when influenced by some force, may change their behaviors, opinions, values, attitudes, goals, and other psychological aspects of their self. French and Raven (1959) identify five bases of power: reward power, coercive power,

legitimate power, referent power, and expert power. Each of the five bases of power and how they may influence MPCs is discussed below.

From the perspective of the person being influenced, reward power is perceived when the influenced feels as if the influencer can provide her/him some reward (French & Raven, 1959). If an MPC perceives high reward power from leadership, s/he may be more influenced to alter her/his behavior and beliefs to attain that reward. In contrast, coercive power exists when the influenced perceives the influencer to have the ability to punish her/him (French & Raven, 1959). An MPC may fear that s/he will be fired or punished if they do not share information to management, and thus, they change their values and ethics and submit to the coercive power. Legitimate power is when the influenced believes that the influencer has the legitimate right to define what s/he, the influenced, should do (French & Raven, 1959). Legitimate power is often seen in typical organizational hierarchies where a boss has legitimate power over his/her employees. An MPC may be more willing and likely to change their behavior, values, and goals for a coach or leadership than an athlete if the MPC perceives the coach or leadership to be higher on the hierarchy. French and Raven (1959) define referent power as the sense of connectedness the influenced feels with the influencer. If there is a greater sense of likeness or belonging with the athlete, the MPC may change her/his behaviors for them over a coach of which s/he feels no sense of connectedness. Lastly, expert power is the perception of the extent of knowledge the influenced believes the influencer possesses (French & Raven, 1959). The MPC may be more likely to change her/his behaviors for someone in the organization who is an expert and has more years of experience than for someone who is a novice and has fewer years of experience.

From the perspective of French and Raven (1959), power is always apparent, ever present, and can be isolated to one person or object of influence. Power, however, according to Foucault (1998), resides beneath the surface and comes from everywhere. The manner in which Foucault (1997) discusses power is through a more subtle form of influence. Foucault (1997) first identifies the body as an object or target of power; the body is trained and manipulated in ways to obey and increase its forces. Foucault (1997) adds that in every society, the body is in the grip of power and there are “a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviors (p. 138). This policy of coercion, and later referred to as a mechanic of power or technology of power (Foucault, 1988), subtly control the behaviors of the body through discipline. Chapman (1997) describes technology of power further as “not seen as possessed by particular individuals and operated through repression but as dispersed as a web throughout society and enacted through a myriad of everyday practices (p. 206). Thus, unlike French and Raven’s (1959) position to isolate power, Foucault (1997) moves to recognize power as a more subtle influence through everyday discipline. Foucault (1997) offers that “discipline increases the forces of the body (in terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in terms of obedience)” (p. 138). Foucault (1997) would add, using the illustration of a panopticism, that people perceive this technology of power as external surveillance—regardless of whether or not they are being watched—and thus start to internally surveil their own behavior and bodies.

MPCs then, are not immune to such influences of discipline and power. First and foremost, MPCs have been influenced by their most immediate political, social, and cultural environment. In addition, through various institutions and organizations—to include their university and the Association of Applied Sport Psychology (AASP)—MPCs have been broken

down and rearranged (Foucault, 1997) into apt and capable docile bodies. Then, within the system they currently operate—such as a professional sport organization or university—MPCs are further shaped, manipulated, and trained (Foucault, 1997) to operate within the mechanics or technologies of power in that system. It is within this entire societal web and technologies of power (Chapman, 1997) that MPCs can finally practice freedom (e.g. technology of self; Foucault, 1996).

Therefore, power—whether subtle or visible—is being constantly negotiated. Power exists within and beneath the surface of every system (Foucault, 1997), yet at the same time, there are physical reminders (e.g. people) that perpetuate and reify the influence of power (French & Raven, 1959). Depending on the hierarchy of the organization and where the MPC is located within that hierarchy, the MPC will have to navigate influences of power as they work with and through front office management, coaches, other support staff, and athletes. MPCs must also consider their own power and influence they hold over others in the organization (e.g., players, coaches, support staff).

Perna and colleagues (1995) suggest that when serving multiple clients, it is vital for MPCs to first and foremost identify who the client is, whether it be the athlete or the organization, as there are many ethical dilemmas to consider. For instance, MPCs may be faced with confidentiality issues and trust issues when the organization or leadership uses their legitimate power to ask for something they or the athlete is unwilling to share (Fletcher et al., 2005).

Summarizing the MPC. Once again, and with organizational functioning (Jones et al., 2009) and power (Foucault, 1998; French & Raven, 1959) in mind, MPCs do not operate in isolation. Their service delivery may be heavily influenced by the context they operate within as

well as the other actors working within that context. To narrow this discussion and literature review, I focus in on mental performance service delivery while highlighting two critical factors of this service delivery process and how these factors may be influenced by context.

Mental Performance Service Delivery and Context

Gaining knowledge in the effectiveness of mental techniques and interventions has been of great interest to sport psychology researchers and practitioners, as it helps to obtain credibility by demonstrating that what MPCs do makes a difference (see Zakrajsek & Blanton, 2017). While the mental techniques and interventions MPCs employ are important, the service delivery process involves much more than that. For instance, the “events that precede and follow applying these techniques and unique characteristics that may determine specifically how techniques are used” are just as important (Poczwardowski et al, 1998, p. 192). In 1995, Perna, Neyer, Murphy, Ogilvie, and Murphy pointed out that there were no standard service delivery models to guide MPCs in their applied practice. To perhaps initiate the conversation, the authors recognized that service delivery should be guided by the consultant’s professional philosophy, contain structured interaction, and maintain professional and ethical limitations (Perna et al., 1995). As part of their cognitive behavior model of mental performance service delivery, Perna and colleagues’ (1995) highlighted the need to identify the client, choose a consultation model (i.e. educational, clinical, supervisory, cognitive-behavioral), perform an assessment and case conceptualization, and finally, deliver the intervention.

Following Perna and colleagues (1995), Poczwardowski, Sherman, and Henschen (1998) proposed the Sport Psychology Service Delivery (SPSD) heuristic that included eleven critical factors they believed should be present in the design, implementation, and evaluation of psychological performance enhancement service delivery (Poczwardowski et al., 1998). These

eleven factors include professional boundaries, professional philosophy, making contact, assessment, conceptualizing concerns and interventions, range and types of services, program implementation, managing the self, program and consultant evaluation, conclusions and implications, and leaving the setting (Poczwadowski et al., 1998).

A decade later, Poczwadowski and Sherman (2011) sought to add qualitative insights to the SPSD heuristic with the intent of clarifying, expanding, and revising the heuristic. Seven males and three females who were internationally and nationally known MPCs were interviewed using questions based in the SPSD heuristic. At least nine out of 10 MPCs mentioned the following factors as important to service delivery: client centeredness and working alliance, ethics as the foundation for effective practice, philosophy as being fundamental and complex, education as foundation to practice, the first session being critical in determining fit, dealing with fatigue and managing life balance, and a working relationship as a foundation of work (Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011). Thus, Poczwadowski and Sherman (2011) revised the SPSD heuristic (SPSD-R) to include the critical factor of a working alliance, which is comprised of the consultant-client relationship, consultant variables, and client variables. Poczwadowski and Sherman (2011) wrote that in some cases, philosophies and interventions will not matter if there is no relationship or working alliance between the client and consultant. Poczwadowski and Sherman (2011) also included goodness of fit, immersion, and person-focused values into the SPSD-R. While the SPSD is a general model of service delivery, the majority of the interviewed MPCs agreed on the critical factors as indeed being critical.

Two years prior to Poczwadowski and Sherman's (2011) revision of the SPSD, Vissek, Harris, and Blom (2009) put forth a Youth Sport Consulting Model (YSCM) that "conceptualizes the planning, implementing, and evaluating steps necessary to effectively work with a youth

sports team” (p. 274). Visek and colleagues (2009) wrote that Poczwardowski and colleagues’ (1998) SPSD heuristic provided a general framework for service delivery but did not address “specific issues” related to youth sport athletes. To be more specific, Visek and colleagues (2009) were careful to highlight that MPCs need to consider the cognitive, social, physical, and emotional development for the youth sport population in the service delivery process. Thus, considering both Poczwardowski and colleagues’ (1998) SPSD framework and the developmental stages of the youth population, Visek and colleagues (2009) proposed a six-phase consulting model. The six phases of the YSCM include practitioner considerations (such as professional philosophy and education), initiating contact, doing sport psychology, wrapping up the season, assessing the consulting relationship, and termination and/or continuation.

Following 11 years of practice, and in conjunction with Poczwardowski and colleagues’ (1998; 2011) heuristic, Keegan (2015) developed his own service delivery model containing “key steps that are all unavoidable aspects of the role” (p. 1). Keegan (2015) writes that by offering MPCs a common model and vocabulary, there can be improved training, quality assurance, improved service delivery for MPCs, and an improved understanding of sport psychology services for clients. Keegan’s (2015) model first emphasized the foundations and underpinnings of service delivery which are comprised of philosophical assumptions and ethical standards. These foundations then influence the consulting process which include intake and relationship building, needs analysis, case formulation, choosing an intervention, planning the intervention, and delivery and monitoring. Finally, Keegan (2015) included learning and quality assurance by incorporating record keeping, reflective practice, and supervision and mentoring.

In addition to sport psychology service delivery frameworks, some researchers and practitioners have discussed their specific approaches to service delivery. Aoyagi, Cohen,

Poczwadowski, Metzler, and Statler (2018) offer their approaches to sport psychology consulting in one article and Aoyagi and Poczwadowski (2012) compile various approaches from different expert MPCs in their edited book, *Theories of Performance Excellence*. Overall, MPCs unique approaches stem from their own professional philosophies which are further derived from their theoretical perspectives on behavior change and their personal core beliefs and values (Aoyagi & Poczwadowski, 2012; Aoyagi et al., 2018). In addition, Aoyagi and colleagues (2018) all offer that it is necessary to have a theory-grounded model that can be adaptive. Aoyagi and colleagues (2018) suggest that the goal of consulting is to not teach or explain all factors related to performance excellence (such as motivation, self-talk, or focus), but to pragmatically organize and leverage the factors that are most important to the client and in the given situation.

When reviewing the aforementioned frameworks of and approaches to service delivery, one factor that has been continually identified as critical to effective service delivery is a professional philosophy (Aoyagi et al., 2018; Keegan, 2015; Perna et al., 1995; Poczwadowski et al., 1998; Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011; Vissek et al., 2009). Another factor highlighted as critical to effective service delivery is the working alliance (Petiitpas et al., 1999; Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011; Sharp & Hodge, 2011; Zakrajsek et al., 2013). In addition, several sport psychology researchers and practitioners have emphasized the working alliance and MPC-client relationship as critical to effective mental performance service delivery (Halliwell, 1990; Ravizza, 1990; Rotella, 1990; Sharp & Hodge, 2011, 2013, 2014; Sharp, Hodge, & Danish, 2015). In sum, a professional philosophy and working alliance have been identified as imperative to both starting and maintaining an effective service delivery process and in influencing the actual interventions MPCs choose to implement with clients (Poczwadowski et

al., 1998; Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011; Poczwadowski et al., 2004). Thus, in the following sections, the professional philosophy and the working alliance are discussed in more detail to understand the influence each has on the service delivery process.

Professional philosophy. There is consistent support by researchers (Poczwadowski et al., 2004; Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011) and MPCs (Balague, 2012; Botterill, 1990; Dorfman, 1990; Ravizza, 1990; Smith & Johnson, 1990) that a professional philosophy is foundational to effective practice. Poczwadowski and colleagues (1998) define professional philosophy as “the consultant’s beliefs about the nature of reality” and “the nature of human behavior change and a human being’s basic nature” (p. 193). Poczwadowski and colleagues (1998) also state that a professional philosophy guides MPCs in their service delivery process, their model of practice, and how they choose to help clients. In an attempt to conceptualize professional philosophy further, Poczwadowski and colleagues (2004) put together a hierarchical structure that outlines the most stable and internal to the most dynamic and external aspects of an MPC’s professional philosophy. The bottom of the hierarchy—the most stable and internal—are the personal core beliefs and the theoretical paradigm of the MPC. At the top of the hierarchy—the most dynamic and external—are the intervention techniques and methods used by the MPC. A professional philosophy has been such a point of emphasis that many MPCs have outlined their philosophy of consulting with professional sport organizations and athletes (Aoyagi & Poczwadowski, 2012; Botterill, 1990; Poczwadowski, Aoyagi, Shapiro, & Van Raalte, 2014; Ravizza, 1990; Rotella, 1990) as a way to inform other practitioners about their work and decision making processes.

Professional philosophy examples. In Aoyagi and Poczwadowski’s (2012) book, various MPCs outline their theories of performance excellence and consulting processes. For

example, Gloria Balague's (2012) professional philosophy was heavily influenced by a cognitive-behavioral model (see Ellis, 1957) but also incorporated tenants of the acceptance and commitment framework (see Hayes & Strosahl, 2004). Therefore, Balague (2012) believed that while thoughts do influence behaviors, the meaning and strength of those thoughts are ascribed by the person doing the thinking. Bruce Ogilvie (2012) reported that he worked from a humanistic philosophy (see Rogers, 1942). Ogilvie (2012) cared about the athlete as a whole person and not just the problems the client was facing.

A string of articles in *The Sport Psychologist* in 1990 were dedicated to sport psychology practitioners and their work in the applied setting, with many practitioners devoting the first section of their article to their professional philosophy. Working in professional hockey, both Halliwell (1990) and Botterill (1990) outlined their cognitive-behavioral philosophies. This philosophy led them to focus on an educational approach of mental skills teaching and mental skill development with the players (Botterill, 1990; Halliwell, 1990). Ravizza (1990), Dorfman (1990), and Smith and Johnson (1990) all worked in professional baseball but had differing philosophies. Ravizza (1990) consulted from a humanistic philosophy (see Rogers, 1942), Smith and Johnson (1990) took an educational approach to consulting, and Dorfman (1990) was more eclectic; adopting both a clinical and educational philosophy. As can be seen, there are many different professional philosophies which MPCs work from and these philosophies ultimately drive the service delivery process of MPCs.

Influence of context on professional philosophy. While a professional philosophy is said to be an internal and stable aspect of service delivery (Poczwadowski et al., 2004), it is also important for practitioners to be flexible (McDougall et al., 2015). In the coaching context, Cox (2011) believes that coaches should recognize theories and beliefs as important but be willing to

amend them. Cox (2011) also states that good coaches have malleable beliefs and are willing to be flexible; ready to inspect these beliefs at every opportunity. Coaches and MPCs are alike in that they work within their theories and beliefs to guide performers. Thus, like coaches, MPCs may also need to be more pragmatic, taking into consideration the context's influence on service delivery (Poczwadowski et al,1998). Specifically, we must consider how context might influence a professional philosophy.

Reconsidering the HPE model, Jones and colleagues (2009) identify leadership as being ultimately responsible for driving the culture of the organization. If the leadership emphasizes one vision or value, the members of that organization may have no choice but to abide in that manner. Similarly, if the MPC perceives leadership—as well as others in the organization—to hold power (reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, expert; French & Raven, 1959), the more likely the MPC will change her/his beliefs, values, behaviors, and so forth. Larsen (2017), an MPC working in European professional soccer, discusses the complex interaction between an organization and an MPC's philosophy.

Larsen's (2017) philosophy was rooted in a long-term developmental framework of building trust and relationships. The top management of the organization also believed in this long-term approach. Thus, Larsen (2017) spent time at the beginning of the season building relationships, gaining trust, establishing value, and educating staff and players about his role in the organization. After three months, the players and coaches became more familiar with Larsen, and he continually tried to adapt his program to meet the needs of the club. However, as the season progressed and the team played poorly, the head coach was fired and replaced by the performance director. This hiring and firing mentality is common in elite sport where there is such a short-term perspective of wanting to win and meet expectations (Cruickshank & Collins,

2012. The performance director, now guided by a short-term perspective, wanted to focus on winning and not have the distraction of a sport psychology program. Thus, the performance director stopped the mental skills sessions altogether and after the season was over, a new coach came in, brought in his own staff, and terminated the sport psychology program. Larsen (2017) felt that his philosophy, theories, and years of experience did not matter in the business culture of professional sport. Larsen (2017) tried to integrate self-reflexivity and maintain cultural sensitivity to the organization. When all was going well, his philosophy and the organization aligned. When it wasn't and the team was underperforming, Larsen's (2017) philosophy was no longer enough to be effective and did not align with the values of the new leadership.

In another elite sport context, MPCs of the USOC work with a large number and wide variety of Olympic athletes (McCann, 2008). When MPCs first started working full-time and were hired by the USOC, they valued and believed that connection with every team was necessary. This philosophy and approach led MPCs to feel like they were spreading themselves thin and not being immersed with teams as much as they would like to be (McCann, 2008). Following their work in the 2000 Summer Olympic Games in Sydney, the USOC Sport Psychology department collectively decided to adjust and reorient their philosophy. Instead of connecting with every team, the MPCs decided they would be most effective by immersing themselves and becoming more integrated with fewer teams, and more specifically with teams that had greater performance potential, more receptive staff, less coach turnover, and teams they could travel with (McCann, 2008). For the teams they were less immersed with, the MPCs provided general educational materials such as videos, brochures, training manuals, and special events (McCann, 2008).

Summarizing professional philosophies. In summary, a professional philosophy is said to guide MPCs work and how they operate as a consultant (Poczwadowski et al., 2004). No one philosophy is stronger than another; rather, it is important to recognize that differing philosophies yield differing consulting styles and goals. Additionally, it is just as important to recognize that the context in which an MPC works can heavily influence their philosophy. The next section focuses on the second factor critical to effective consulting; the working alliance and its influence on the service delivery process.

Working alliance. The term working alliance stems from a psychoanalytic perspective and consists of the emotional bond between the participants (counselor and client), the agreement on the goals of counseling, and the agreement on tasks (Bordin, 1975). Using these components, Gelso and Carter (1985) present the working alliance as the alignment between the counselor and the client. Sport psychology researchers emphasize the working alliance as important in the consulting process (Andersen, 2000), but the term working alliance is used infrequently compared to consultant-client relationship (Friesen & Orlick, 2010; Petitpas et al., 1999). In addition to the emotional bond or agreement between the MPC and client, Poczwadowski and Sherman (2011) also consider the characteristics of each stakeholder within the consulting dyad as important. Thus, Poczwadowski and Sherman (2011) consider the working alliance to include the characteristics of the client, the characteristics of the MPC, and the consultant-client relationship.

Characteristic of the client. There are several characteristics of the client that have been identified as facilitative or debilitating to an effective working alliance. For example, both MPCs (Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2001; Sharp & Hodge, 2011; Sharp et al., 2015) and athletes (Sharp & Hodge, 2014) have recognized the essential nature for clients to actively build and

commit to the relationship. Specifically, Sharp and Hodge (2011) interviewed 13 MPCs (nine men, four women) about their perceptions of effective service delivery. The MPCs clearly identified the need for the client to be an active participant in the consulting process as an essential client characteristic (Sharp & Hodge, 2011). This meant that the client needed to be open, committed, and invested in building the relationship with the MPC. Mirroring their study from 2011, Sharp and Hodge (2014) interviewed elite athletes about their perceptions of effective MPCs. Again, athletes also recognized the need for themselves, the client, to contribute to the consulting dyad, be an active participant, and be open and honest with the MPC (Sharp & Hodge, 2014).

Characteristics of the MPC. There are also several characteristics of the MPC that have been identified by MPCs (Sanchez, Godin, & Zanet, 2005; Sharp & Hodge, 2011, 2015), athletes (Anderson, Miles, Robinson, & Mahoney; 2004; Orlick & Partington, 1987; Sharp & Hodge, 2014), and coaches (Zakrajsek et al., 2013) as facilitative or debilitative to an effective working alliance. For example, MPCs have identified the need to build a connection with the athlete, meet the athlete's needs, and build a professional relationship (Sharp & Hodge, 2011). Sharp and Hodge (2015) interviewed 10 MPCs (eight men, two women) on the more specific characteristics MPCs believe were needed to be effective. Overall, MPCs believed that being honest and committed, listening and communicating, providing comfort, and focusing on the whole person were essential characteristics of the MPC. Sanchez and colleagues (2005) interviewed 13 MPCs (10 men, 3 women) about the progress of the field of sport psychology and found that "good consultant" qualities included being adaptable, having useful knowledge and expertise, fitting within the team, being able to communicate, and being trustworthy.

Anderson and colleagues (2004) interviewed 30 elite athletes from the United Kingdom and found that desirable characteristics of an MPC included being honest, trustworthy, approachable, and someone who took the time to know them. Orlick and Partington (1987) interviewed 75 Canadian athletes and found that the best consultants were described as those who were able to build rapport, were good listeners, and cared about them. In their interviews with elite athletes, Sharp and Hodge (2014) found that the characteristics perceived as essential for effective work included the MPCs' friendliness, understanding the athlete as a person, as well as supporting the athlete and meeting their needs.

Zakrajsek and colleagues (2013) interviewed eight collegiate coaches (five male, three female) on their beliefs and expectations about mental performance use and how the MPC could work with their athletes. Coaches' desirable characteristics of MPCs included trustworthiness, competent, confident, high work ethic, nurturing, and moral (Zakrajsek et al., 2013). In line with more personal characteristics, coaches described MPCs as someone who could connect with the athletes, maintain boundaries, and build trust and rapport with the athletes.

Characteristics of the relationship. Having considered the characteristics of each member in the dyad separately, it is also important to consider the alignment and relationship between the members together. In the psychology literature, Lambert (1992) proposed that relationship factors account for 30% of the variance in consulting/therapy outcomes. In the sport psychology literature, practitioners such as Ravizza (1990; 1998), Rotella (1990), and Halliwell (1990) all emphasized the importance of developing rapport and a trusting relationship with their clients. In research with MPCs (Gould, et al., 1989; Sharp & Hodge, 2011), athletes (Sharp & Hodge, 2014; Sharp et al., 2015), and MPCs and coaches (Sharp & Hodge, 2013; Zakrajsek et al., 2013), relationships built on trust have been found to be fundamental for effective work.

Gould and colleagues (1989) interviewed 44 MPCs working in national governing bodies who believed their best services to have come when trust was created first. In addition to trust between the client and MPC, 13 MPCs delivering services in the U.K. described characteristics of the consulting relationship to consist of self-disclosure, empathy, warmth, congruence, and unconditional positive regard (Longstaff & Gervis, 2016). Sanchez and colleagues (2005) also found that according to MPCs, there should be a clear delineation of roles, a positive environment, and long-term agreement in the relationship.

Influence of context on working alliance. While the working alliance has been consistently reported as critical to an MPC's service delivery process (Andersen, 200; Friesen & Orlick, 2010; Gould et al., 1989; Petitpas et al., 1999; Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011; Ravizza, 1990; Rotella, 1990; Sharp and Hodge, 2011, 2014; Sharp et al., 2015), the influence of context on the working alliance has rarely been investigated. When an MPC works within an organization, the MPC may have to establish value, as demonstrated by Larsen (2017), with multiple clients (McDougall et al., 2015). Specifically, within the sport setting, these multiple clients could consist of front office management, coaches, support staff, and athletes. Thus, while trustworthiness, honesty, and ethical boundaries are essential characteristics of the MPC, the MPC may be placed into situations in which these characteristics are tested due to the differing influences of power. The MPC may have to navigate between the legitimate power (French & Raven, 1959) perceived from coaches and leadership and referent power (French & Raven, 1959) perceived from athletes. Because of the nature of this predicament, confidentiality may be tested, and it may take longer for MPCs to earn the trust of the client; which is not always an option as elite sport is often short-term focused on achieving positive results (Larsen, 2017).

Additionally, consulting work can take place within an office or established setting as well as on the road, in hotels, at practices, or in the locker rooms (Etzel & Skvarla, 2017; Loughran, Etzel, & Hanks, 2014). Therefore, and if at all possible, it appears vital for the MPC to find ways to maintain ethical boundaries in open spaces. Due to this, consulting that takes place in the same setting at the same time may be more advantageous in building the working alliance than consulting that is on-the-fly and stochastic (Etzel & Skvarla, 2017). This continuity and consistent face-to-face interaction may also influence the level of willingness and receptivity of the athlete to continue to seek mental performance services.

McCann (2008) and his colleagues in the USOC Sport Psychology department felt as if they were not being as effective when they were too dispersed and trying to reach every team. Spreading themselves thin lead to slower built relationship and thus, there was a need to invest in and be more immersed with fewer teams. This investment meant traveling with teams, working with these teams earlier in the year, and emphasizing specific mental skills. In this light then, beneficial characteristics of MPCs may not just be those that are supportive, trustworthy, and time-considerate (Anderson et al., 2004; Sharp & Hodge, 2014), but those who take the time to invest long-term (Sanchez et al., 2015) and are willing to pursue connection despite distance or location. In the same regard, beneficial characteristics of clients may also include those who are open, invested, and committed (Sharp & Hodge, 2011, 2014) over time and potentially at a distance.

Summarizing the working alliance. The working alliance is not just the relationship or agreement between the MPC and the client but considers the characteristics of each member in the dyad. An effective working alliance is more likely to occur when MPCs' are open, approachable, good listeners, caring, and trustworthy (Anderson et al., 2004; Orlick &

Partington, 1987; Sharp & Hodge, 2011, 2014; Sharp et al., 2015). Client characteristics that facilitate an effective working alliance include being open, committed, and active in the consulting process (Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2001; Sharp & Hodge, 2011, 2014; Sharp et al., 2015). An effective working alliance (Bordin, 1979) also exists when both members of the dyad contribute to the relationship (Sharp & Hodge, 2014) and when the relationship is built on trust and rapport (Gould et al., 1989; Sharp & Hodge, 2011; Sharp & Hodge, 2014). Finally, the context of where working alliances are formed must be considered as it may influence how they are formed, when they are formed, and what clients working alliances are formed with. Without an effective working alliance, change or self-actualization in the client may be slow to occur or entirely non-existent.

Summarizing the influence of context on service delivery. In his Multidimensional Model of Leadership, Chelladurai (2007) proposed that leaders do not operate under their own accord; they must consider what is preferred and required of both the members and situation. Much like the leader, the MPC must also consider what is preferred and required of the members and situations. In this, MPCs' professional philosophy and how they build and maintain working alliances must be understood at the group level (Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009). How MPCs deliver their services may not be entirely up to them but may be dependent on the other actors in the organization (Jones et al., 2009) and on which actors hold more perceived power (French & Raven, 1959). The MPC must be able to effectively adapt their philosophies and maintain relationships within the "systematic collective of stakeholders" in the organization (Wagstaff, 2019, p. 4). One such organization in which the MPC may be influenced is professional baseball (Hawkins & Tolzin, 2002).

Professional Baseball

Major league baseball (MLB) has a total of 30 teams (Thomas, 2015). There are two leagues (National League and American League) and three divisions (East, Central, and West) with five MLB teams in each division (Thomas, 2015). Each MLB team has a 25-man roster (Bernier, 2012) to fill nine on-field positions with most roster spots belonging to pitchers. In case of injury or bad performance, MLB teams can sign free agents, trade from team to team, or call up players from their MiLB affiliates. In professional baseball, the players are important, but there are also many other people to consider within the organization. In these next sections, I highlight the front office staff, the coaches, and the players as important people to consider within the organization. I then locate the MPC within this setting.

The front office. On any MLB team's website, you can find the season schedule, tickets, the 25-man roster, the coaching roster, and even the roster of those in the front office. The front office directory identifies individuals who are the executives including the chairman of the board, president and vice president, and executive assistant. This group of executives are the primary decision makers in the major league team's organization. Falling under their purview is a stratified system of baseball operations, which include the general managers and assistant general managers, a director of baseball operations, and a director of personnel (Fisher, 2016). The baseball operations personnel are typically more specialized and responsible for the day-to-day operations of the club (Fisher, 2016) and include such support staff as MPCs. The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, or TIDES, creates a gender and racial report card every year for various sport organizations to assess fairness (Lapchick, 2018). According to the TIDES report, majority owners—Presidents, and General and Assistant General Managers—are all men and mostly White (Lapchick, 2018). It is within the roles of Vice Presidents, Professional

Administration, and Senior Administration where women and people of color are more represented, although these numbers are still in the small minority compared to White men. For a further breakdown of each front office role, see Lapchick (2018).

The coaches. Also listed under the organization's front office directory are the major league and minor league coaches. Each member of the coaching staff has a very specific role and includes a manager, bench coach, pitching coach, hitting coach, first base coach, third base coach, bullpen coaches, and a few additional general coaches. Each coach wears the uniform of the organization and has their own designated number and name on the back.

Like the front office, coaching positions are staffed by mostly White men. While the year 2002 saw the most managers of color (32.3%), that number has fallen to 13.3% in 2018 (Lapchick, 2018). This means that during the 2018 season, there were only four managers of color (Lapchick, 2018). For the rest of the coaches working under the manager, there was a greater distribution of diversity. Out of 994 coaches working in the MLB, 527 (53%) were White and 467 (47%) were people of color. Latino coaches accounted for 35.9% of the coaches of color (Lapchick, 2018). Only three out of 994 coaches (.3%) were women.

The players. Professional baseball players may be drafted out of college, signed from international teams, or developed through MLB established baseball academies in the Dominican Republic (Flynn & Lenaghan, 2013). Outside of the United States, the majority of professional baseball players are born in the Dominican Republic compared to any other country (Flynn & Lenaghan, 2013). TIDES report for the MLB's 2017 season indicated that on opening day rosters, most players were White (57.5%), followed by Latin (31.9%), African American (7.7%), and Asian (1.9%, (Lapchick, 2018). The TIDES report also indicated that the 2017 season included the highest percentage of players (29.8%) born outside of the United States (Lapchick,

2018). Place of birth for these players spanned 19 countries and territories outside of the United States (Lapchick, 2018).

When players are selected to be a part of an MLB organization, they typically sign a seven-season contract and are sent to rookie ball teams (Bernier, 2012). For instance, although a player may be signed by the MLB's Houston Astros, they typically begin their professional baseball career on one of Houston's two rookie teams, the Gulf Coast League Astros or the Dominican Summer League Astros. Some teams may only have two rookie-ball clubs while others, such as the Los Angeles Dodgers, have five (MiLB, n.d.). Players on single-A and rookie ball teams may only make \$850 a month but can work their way up to Double-A and Triple-A teams in hopes of a larger paycheck of \$2,000/month to \$2,500/month during the season (Bernier, 2012). At any point, however, players can be sent down to the league below (i.e. from Triple-A to Double-A) either due to poor play or to make space on the roster for another player. Some players can play for just two years in the minor league before leaving the game altogether (Witnauer et al., 2007). At any point after the seven-season contract, players may be dropped from the team they were drafted by and become free-agents. Players who survive the process and make it on the 25-man roster of a major league team may make \$43,000/season in their first year and \$86,000/season in their second and third years (CBA, n.d.). As of 2017, the majority of players (66%) in the MLB were at or below the age of 30 (Lapchick, 2018).

The MPC in professional baseball. MPCs, just one type of support staff member within the organization, may be listed under the front office's baseball operations. There is evidence that MPCs' presence and visibility within professional baseball has risen since the late 80's and early 90's. In the mid 80's, Karl Kuehl, the Oakland Athletics' Director of Player Development, hired Harvey Dorfman as one of the first ever full-time practitioners in professional baseball in

charge of delivering psychological skills training to the team (Dorfman & Kuehl, 1989). Ken Ravizza was hired by the Chicago Cubs in 1985 to deliver mental performance services to the players in the organization. Shortly after in 1986, Ronald Smith and Jim Johnson began to deliver mental performance services to the Houston Astros organization. Ravizza (1990) stated that mental training was not a “priority” in professional baseball at the time, but there was “increasing receptivity” to the idea of an orchestrated mental performance service delivery program.

Most recently, Nightengale (2018) reported that 27 out of the 30 MLB organizations were responsible for hiring an MPC on staff to deliver mental performance services. This increase in number of MPCs working in professional baseball since the mid 80’s may be a reflection of the openness to and value for mental performance services. Recently, and listed under Article XIII (J) of the 2017-2021 MLB Players’ Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), players’ have requested access to sport psychology services for each club (CBA, n.d.). Specifically outlined in the CBA is that

Each Club shall provide Players with access, on a voluntary basis, to confidential sports psychology resources in a private space. Clubs that employ or provide Player access to a sports psychologist or psychologist under the Club’s Employee Assistance Program shall be deemed to have satisfied this requirement. (CBA, n.d.)

This request by players seems to illustrate their value of and interest in having access to mental performance services. MPCs working in professional baseball have also demonstrated their interest in supporting their work by organizing themselves into a group known as the Professional Baseball Performance Psychology Group (PBPPG). President of the PBPPG, Charlie Maher, outlines the PBPPG as a professional resource for MPCs and sport psychologists

working with MLB teams (Sport Psychology Council, 2016). The mission of the PBPPG is to assure that quality mental skills and sport psychology services are being delivered and that collaboration is occurring between them and the Employee Assistance Program (i.e. licensed mental health services (Sport Psychology Council, 2016). As of 2016, the PBPPG was comprised of 37 applied sport psychologists and mental skills coaches working for 20 of the 30 MLB teams (Sport Psychology Council, 2016).

Summarizing the actors in baseball organizations. Professional baseball is becoming increasingly diverse in ethnicity (Lapchick, 2018) and is heavily populated with front office personnel, coaches, and support staff who are looking to challenge players to win championships. More and more baseball organizations are looking for the smallest margins of error to win, which may mean investing in new “performance enablers” (Jones et al., 2009) such as MPCs. MPCs have become increasingly present in professional baseball organizations (Nightengale, 2018) and thus, the growth of and emphasis placed on mental performance services make professional baseball a worthy context of studying the service delivery process of MPCs.

Finally, having established the need to contextualize the MPC and their professional philosophies and working alliances, and having identified professional baseball as one context worthy of investigation, I now aim to explore this intersection. In the final section, I explore mental performance service delivery in professional baseball, looking closely at how context of professional baseball has influenced and may influence MPCs’ philosophy and working alliance.

Mental Performance in Professional Baseball

When MPCs work in professional baseball, they do not work alone; their services are likely influenced by a number of people and factors in the organization. In terms of how MPCs

operate and what services they deliver, MPCs themselves may need to navigate multiple power dynamics that exist between the front office, coaches, support staff, and players. How the MPC behaves and delivers services may ultimately depend on the influence of power (Foucault, 1997; French & Raven, 1959) that is most prevalent and visible at that time. When working with others and for others, the MPCs may also consider the cultural differences of players and staff (Flynn & Lenaghan, 2013) as well as be able to understand the unpredictable nature of professional baseball players being let go (Hawkins & Tolzin, 2002) and the ensuing stressors perceived by the players as a result of this environment (Bernier, 2012).

MPC service delivery in professional baseball. MPCs working in professional baseball find themselves in a variety of roles, delivering mental skills and life skills on and off the field (Sport Psychology Council, 2016). For the members of PBPPG, MPCs focus their work on the mental side of the game, working with athletes to utilize their thoughts, emotions, and actions to support improved performance and life skill development (Sport Psychology Council, 2016). On the field mental skill development includes education, training, and conditioning players to use and refine mental skills such as self-awareness, imagery, routines, mindfulness, self-evaluation, and relaxation (Sport Psychology Council, 2016). Off the field life skills development include education about healthy lifestyles and implementing time management strategies, coping with risk, health and nutrition, substance abuse, and cultural awareness (Sport Psychology Council, 2016). Once again, while the services being integrated are important to understand, it is equally as important to understand why and how the MPCs are delivering these services (i.e. philosophy and working alliance) and how the baseball setting influences the service delivery process.

Professional philosophies in professional baseball. Dorfman (1990), trained in counseling, discusses his eclectic philosophy and integrating both clinical and educational

psychology principles; familiar to what many members of the PBPPG do today (Sport Psychology Council, 2016). Smith and Johnson (1990) worked from an educational perspective and a train-the-trainer model to teach mental skills. Smith and Johnson (1990) recognized there were far too many members in the organization to deliver services to, so they lightened their load by educating coaches and other staff on sport psychology principles. This way, coaches and staff could be resources for the players.

Working alliances in professional baseball. As professional philosophies were adjusted in baseball, so too were working alliances. It was not that working alliances were forgotten or seen as less important, but the approach to build these working alliances changed. As Smith and Johnson (1990) stated, there were far too many members in the organization which led them to focus on the coaches as the clients and build relationships with them. Ravizza (1990) also noted that context was critical, and thus, his approach was different when working with players in the major league versus players in the minor league. In the major league, the players were less receptive to sport psychology services, so he spent his time building relationships and trust. Whereas in the minor league, players were more receptive, so Ravizza (1990) focused on mental skills training and teaching.

Summarizing mental performance in professional baseball. MPCs and sport psychology have come a long way since the early 90's and today there are more MPCs working in professional baseball than ever (Nightengale, 2018). The setting of baseball and the willingness to utilize mental performance services is most likely different today than it was 30 years ago. Likewise, as mental performance service delivery in the setting of professional baseball is investigated, it would be a disservice to ignore the context in which it takes place and the influence that the context has on the service delivery process. As has been reiterated

throughout this literature review, the MPC is not an isolated actor within a system (Wagstaff, 2019). The MPC must be cognizant of the hierarchy of the front office, player development, and coaching staff. The MPC must also be cognizant of the client, their cultural background, their stressors, and their journey through the MLB. Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to better understand the influence of context on mental performance service delivery from the perspective of the MPCs delivering services in professional baseball. In this, the current study aims to understand the influence the context has on an MPC's professional philosophy and the working alliance.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

In this chapter I highlight the important elements of qualitative methodology as it pertains to my dissertation. First, I begin by bringing awareness to my positionality in this research context. My positionality informs my beliefs, values, and perspectives on reality and mental performance services which guides my methodological choice and research topic. Next, and stemming from my positionality, I highlight the research paradigm, methodological lens, and methodology of Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR; Hill, 2012) as it aligns with my dissertation study. Lastly, I outline the current study to include the participants, procedures, and data analysis methods (Hill, 2012).

Positionality

I am a 29-year-old, cisgender Caucasian male. I was born and raised in Indonesia where my parents served as missionaries. At four years old, and following the departure from missionary service, my family moved back to Johnstown, Pennsylvania where I attended a predominately Caucasian primary, intermediate, and high school. It wasn't until high school and the start of my secondary education that I began to truly experience and "understand" diversity. To better give the reader an understanding of my positionality, I highlight what I believe to be the most important "identities" in my life: race, religion, and politics. I also identify how these identities inform my practice and research in sport psychology.

There is a certain safety I am awarded for being White (McIntosh, 2004). I was raised in a Caucasian home and went to school and church with Caucasian people. I didn't recognize race as a "construct" until my nephew was born which is curious considering I was born in a different country and surrounded by people whose skin looked different than mine. Instead, when my

nephew was born, I began to see that being Black, or biracial, was different. I began to see that the safety I was awarded was not also awarded to people of color. To some, different was bad, and to others, different was good. It took me awhile to accept different as good. Growing up in Pennsylvania and surrounded by Whiteness, a lot of my friends were almost shocked to find out that I had a biracial nephew. On occasion, I was teased, and I didn't always know how to handle it: but deep down, I knew I loved my nephew. Over the years, I became an older brother to him. I started to see that he was really no different from myself. Just because our skin was different didn't make either of us any greater or lesser than the other.

I believe this time in my life really helped to shape my view on race. My experiences helped shaped not only how I see others, but how I see myself. I have been fortunate enough to learn from stellar professors in my undergraduate and graduate classes. Through teachings, readings, reflexive journaling, and assignments, I became more tuned in to my own race and the privilege that comes along with it. I acknowledge that I have it, and at some point in my life it has been on display or used without my awareness; but I am actively working to see how it shapes and limits my worldview.

Despite growing up in a Baptist Christian household to missionary parents, religion was not something I truly internalized and was self-responsible for until my first year of undergraduate school. I joined a campus religious organization and became heavily involved. After a few years, I became aware of the internal conflicts and rules of the organization that those outside of the organization did not see. I began to question the integrity of this campus group and grew irritated with the "rules" of religion. While they talked about love and acceptance, they failed to translate this talk into action. I still considered myself Christian, and do

today, but I became leery of those who claimed to be Christian but acted in contrast with their beliefs.

Christianity has, unfortunately, cast some dark shadows over those with differing beliefs, and for that, I do apologize. This is something that I never personally want to do and try to stay away from doing. I never want to let my own beliefs control the people I associate with. It is unfortunate to have people categorize all Christians in one way, so I attempt to be a better example of what Christianity means. I still struggle and do not have the answers.

Politically, I am not right-wing, nor left-, nor right-leaning or left-leaning. I would rather say that I believe in putting humanity first above political party. It is not a cop-out, but a belief that each individual policy and aspect of human life should be understood separately while still in context. It might be curious to the reader why I state such a personal matter and reveal myself politically; but this type of thinking informs my research, my teaching, and my everyday interactions. I try to approach most things with an open eye and ear and truly understand it within the context it is derived from. In practice, I try to understand who the client is wholly. I try to know their background, their upbringing, their life today. In research, I aim to become aware of my assumptions and challenge them with new evidence. I do not take what appears to be at face value. In all, I try to maintain an approach where I push myself to work in the particulars by generalizing less and being more specific. In this same political mindset, I advocate for applied sport psychology but remain open-minded to consider the context of service delivery.

To categorize me as a White male, or a Christian male, or as a cisgender male, would be rather misleading to who I am as a whole person. Yes, I am all of these, but I do not think being White means everything and I do not think that being Christian means everything; just as I do not believe that being Black, or gay, or female, or Muslim means everything. I believe that if we

continue to only reduce ourselves and others to single identity categories, then we are missing out on getting to know some really incredible people for who they are wholly. In my later years in life, and in post-undergraduate education, I became friends with people of varying religions, sexualities, and gender identities. Prior to this time, it was not that I consciously ignored those who were not Christian or removed myself from them; it was just that I found myself in a bubble of Whiteness and Christianity. I was with like-minded people who believed the same things as myself and valued what I valued. I eventually came to see this bubble as “safe” and wanted to learn more about myself and the things around me that I had not cared to pay attention to. Soon, I befriended people of color and who identified as transgender, lesbian, and asexual. In the development of these friendships, I never considered their identity as an influence on whether or not I let them into my life. I saw them as friends; as people, as humans. I feel guilty even reducing them to an identity in this reflection.

In all, I write this to inform the reader of my perspective as a “straight, White male”. I recognize that to say identity is not a large influence on my life most undeniably comes from a place of privilege. And, indeed, it does. As McIntosh (2004) says, White privilege is an “elusive and fugitive subject” (p. 322) and perhaps I just have not recognized every way in which it works. But to be reduced to one identity of our many does nothing for the person as whole. Therefore, in my world, in my work, and in my research, I aim to understand people holistically and contextually; at the intersection of their identities (Crenshaw, 1989).

In addition, in my first job after graduate school, I was awarded the opportunity to work with other young mental performance professionals as Master Resilience Trainers for the Army. While I expected our group to be diverse in gender, religion, and race, I did not expect such diversity in our education and training. I encountered MPCs who were teaching skills and

concepts not grounded in science and who were simultaneously violating respect for peoples' rights and dignity and compromising professional responsibility. It was in this moment that I realized that no graduate program is the same and that many people who work in the field of sport or performance psychology have vastly different knowledge bases and views on ethical behaviors. Wanting the best for the field, I became concerned with mental performance service delivery. This has led to my desire to mentor future MPCs and to investigate critical factors underlying effective service delivery.

I acknowledge that my focus is on mental performance rather than mental health. As much as I value mental health, I advocate for the field of mental performance. There is most likely, and definitely in the National Collegiate Athletic Association, more job opportunities for those with training in counseling, clinical psychology, or social work. There is also a very real need for professionals to operate in those capacities. However, I also believe that mental performance is just as important, and when done effectively, the people who have used the services can become more resilient and have more cognitive resources to handle their stressors and anxieties.

With regard to the current study, I also acknowledge and inform the reader that I have a limited working knowledge of baseball and professional baseball. When I was in middle school, I actively participated in little league baseball for two to three years of my life. Since then, my participation has been rather passive; it consisted of nothing more than being a fan of professional baseball. To gather more insight into the interworking of baseball, I have spent time in conversation with others and in the literature (Bernier, 2012; Dorfman, 1990; Grusky, 1963; Keidel, 1987; Nightengale, 2018; Ravizza, 1990). The ideas that I bring with me are limited; so,

I feel that the meanings created about baseball will be mostly constructed by the professionals I interview.

In all of this dissertation work, I acknowledge that I want the best for the field of sport psychology and for MPCs. I also want effective mental performance services being delivered in professional baseball organizations. Recognizing this, there is then a need for me as a researcher and as a practitioner to adequately represent those who are delivering mental performance services in professional baseball.

Research Paradigm

Paradigmatically, there is a feeling of dissonance within me. As a post-positivist (Kuhn, 1962), I believe there is an objective truth, but we can only approximate what that truth is. In a post-positivist view of mental performance (Brustad, 2008), there is a right or effective way to deliver mental performance services, but we can only approximate the factors that lead to proper service delivery. On the other hand, I also adopt a paradigm of constructivism (Geertz, 1973) in that what is true for one person is not true for all people. Instead of one reality, there can exist multiple realities which are informed by our experiences, our interactions, and our interpretations of those experiences and interactions. Service delivery as I—a straight, White male—see it, may look different for someone with a completely different identity. Thus, while MPCs should strive for evidenced-based practice, there may not be one way or a “right” way to deliver mental performance services. What we can do, then, is understand more about service delivery and the process of service delivery by listening to the experiences of those delivering the services.

Methodological Lens

My world view, and the purpose of this study, fit well within Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR; Hill, 2012). Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997), creators and propagators of

CQR, outline that they believe there are multiple and equally valid constructions of reality (i.e., constructivist ontology) and that the researcher and participant have an influence on each other (i.e., constructivist epistemology). However, they acknowledge that using a standard protocol, not wanting biases to influence results, and striving for objectivity in reporting are post-positivist qualities. It is important to note here that Hill and colleagues (1997) do recognize that biases cannot be eliminated and that researchers can never be truly objective; this is why they blend post-positivism and constructivism. Thus, CQR maintains a constructivist ontology and epistemology while also leveraging some aspects of post-positivism (Hill et al., 2005) which aligns well with my theoretical paradigm.

Guided by a constructivist paradigm, CQR is used to intensively investigate a small number of cases naturally and holistically. Rather than trying to gather a large amount of data to generalize findings, CQR is used to only understand the sample being investigated in the context in which it is being investigated (Hill et al., 1997). In order to gather such data, researchers adopting CQR use open-ended questions. This use of open-ended questions is a primary form of data collection in constructivist research as it allows for the participant to interpret their experiences and construct meaning from those experiences. Through interviews and interactions, the participant may interpret experiences they may not have otherwise interpreted. Additionally, by using semi-structured interviewing (Hill et al., 2005), the researcher is able to further probe into the participant's interpretations and meanings constructed from the experienced phenomenon.

Constructivist characteristics of CQR include seeking data from natural settings (i.e., naturalistic inquiry), using inductive analysis, emphasizing description, using empathy with participants, assuming causes of experience as non-linear, and being "concerned with meaning or

understanding phenomenon from the participant's perspective" (Hill et al., 1997, p. 520). From these characteristics, it is apparent that in CQR, Hill and colleagues (2005) pull from grounded theory (in their use of inductive analysis; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and from phenomenology (in using thick description in understanding the participant's perspective; Giorgi, 1985). Hill (2012) also pulls from comprehensive process analysis' use of consensus (Elliot, 1989) and a feminist approach of working collaboratively with open dialogue (Fine, 1992).

The Current Study

For the current study, I explored MPCs' experiences of the influence of context on their service delivery within professional baseball. Particular attention was paid towards understanding the influence of the baseball setting on professional philosophy and working alliance. In order to gain such an understanding, the meanings and experiences were first interpreted and constructed by the MPC, reconstructed by each member of the research team, and then reconstructed in collaboration with myself and the research team. Adopting this perspective, I used CQR (Hill, 2012; Hill et al., 1997; Hill et al., 2005) and constructivism to guide the investigation.

Participants

Thirteen MPCs (10 males, three females) working in professional baseball full-time for at least one year participated in the current study. There are 64 members of the Professional Baseball Performance Psychology Group (PBPPG) and all 13 participants (20.3%) were members of this group. Of the 13 MPCs, 12 self-identified as Caucasian and one self-identified as Hispanic. The average age of the participants was 39.2 years ($SD = 11.7$). Participants averaged 10.1 years ($SD = 5.9$) of experience providing mental performance services with 6.8 years ($SD = 6.3$) working in professional baseball. All 13 MPCs held the title of mental skills

coach or mental skills coordinator. All participants provided solely mental performance services. Eight of the 13 MPCs held CMPC[®] designation through AASP and one MPC held a mental health licensure. All 13 MPCs held a degree in a field related to sport psychology, with 10 MPCs holding a master's degree and three holding a PhD. Six participants provided services to their organization's major league and triple-A team. Four participants provided services to their organization's minor league affiliates, from double-A teams down to rookie ball clubs. The remaining three participants provided services to the entire organization, including the major league team and the minor league affiliates. Geographically, MPCs provided mental performance services across the entire United States and the Dominican Republic.

Procedures

Semi-structured interview guide. Interviews are the most common and one of the most important forms of data collection in qualitative work (Merriam & Tisdale, 2015). Interviews give the researcher some control over the questions asked and where the conversation goes (Creswell, 2014). Interviewing is also useful when the participant is unable to be observed and when the investigator wants to understand more information about the context behind experiences (Creswell, 2014). Hill and colleagues (1997) suggest that “interviews be semi-structured so that adaptations can be made to fit the particular interviewee and to obtain the needed information” (p. 538). Semi-structured interviews allow the interview to flow more naturally and enable the interviewer to probe for more information (Adams, 2015; Bernard, 2006; Whiting, 2008). Additionally, and in line with CQR methodology, using semi-structured interviewing encourages the researcher to have more focused questions around specific topics, yet remain open and flexible to hear the interviewee's story (Hill et al. 1997). While some qualitative researchers (Charmaz, 2006) argue against incorporating past literature as it may

influence the researcher, Hill and colleagues (1997) suggests that it helps to build stronger questions that can add to the existent literature.

In order to develop the semi-structure interview guide, literature surrounding mental performance service delivery was used to frame the questions. Specifically, questions on the interview guide (see Appendix D) were formulated around Poczwardowski and colleagues' (2014) definition of professional philosophy and Poczwardowski and Sherman's (2011) definition of the working alliance. To build rapport and to prime the interviewee to think more about the context of their service delivery, the interviewee was first asked to talk about their role within the organization, how they came to work in the organization, and who they provided services to within the organization. To better understand how the context of professional baseball influenced their service delivery, MPCs were then asked questions about what was effective/ineffective in this setting (i.e. "In this setting you currently work, what factors do you believe contribute to effective service delivery?") and how specifically this setting influenced their service delivery (i.e. "Compared to other settings, in what ways has the context of baseball changed the way you deliver services?"). Additional questions about the cultures and power dynamics within the organization were included to gain a better understanding of the organizational structure and support. Finally, having primed the interviewees to consider context, participants were asked questions about their professional philosophy and how it changed within the context of baseball (i.e. "How has the setting of baseball influenced your professional philosophy?") and about working alliances and how they were influenced within the context (i.e. "In the setting you currently work, what influences your ability to maintain working alliances?"). Using Poczwardowski and Sherman's (2001) definition of the working alliance, MPCs were

asked about client, MPC, and relationship characteristics that contributed to an effective/ineffective working alliance within the context of professional baseball.

Bracketing interview and memos. One area for concern, as with most qualitative research, is the ability for the researcher's bias to have some influence on how and what questions are asked, how the data is analyzed, and how the data is reported. In adopting both post-positivist and constructivist values, Hill and colleagues (1997) incorporate the use of bracketing interviews prior to collecting data to bring awareness to biases. Bracketing, with origins in phenomenology, is "a method used by some researchers to mitigate the potential deleterious effects on unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research and thereby to increase the rigor of the project" (Tufford & Newman, 2010, p. 81). Hill and colleagues (1997, 2005) refer to these "unacknowledged preconceptions" as expectations and biases, and suggest that through bracketing and outlining biases, the researchers can become more aware of themselves. More recently, Stahl, Taylor, and Hill (2012) acknowledge that researcher's biases are inevitable, "but suggest that these biases can be bracketed such that the degree to which they influence the results is minimized" (p. 27).

Following the obtainment of institutional review board approval, I engaged in a bracketing interview with a member of the research team who was a trained qualitative researcher using the semi-structure interview guide (see Appendix D). My biases and expectations were influenced by my knowledge of the organizational and mental performance literature and by my own experiences delivering mental performance services. The major biases I held toward this research was that I believed relationships to be critical in the service delivery process. I also believed professional baseball to be hyper masculine and because of this, expected members (e.g., players, coaches) within this setting to not be as receptive to service delivery.

From my own experiences working within baseball, I expected coaches to be a major contributing factor to MPCs' ability to deliver services and I expected culture, both ethnicity and language, to impact the service delivery process. Completing this bracketing interview did not eliminate my biases but allowed me to be more fully aware of them in the interviews and data analysis. Within each stage of coding and consensual analysis, I reviewed my biases to maintain a high level of awareness.

In addition to bracketing interviews, recording memos also allows the researcher to become aware of how new understandings are being interpreted and meanings are being made (Hill, 2012). Therefore, I also used a researcher journal to continually monitor my biases, to record my impressions, comment on the flow of the interviews, and to highlight any new insight I gained (Hill et al., 1997). Throughout the interview process, I continued to read more about service delivery and organizational sport psychology. I summarized each participant's interview, highlighted major points of interest, and then integrated those points of interest back to the organizational psychology literature (see Appendix H for an example). Over time—between and after each interview—I began to cross-reference major ideas and themes.

Pilot interview. To refine the semi-structured interview guide and to gain a better sense of the flow of questions or if additional questions needed to be asked, a pilot interview was conducted. The pilot interview was conducted with a female MPC who had previous experience providing mental skills training in professional baseball. Following the pilot interview, and from comments from the pilot interview, questions were reorganized, and additional information and probes were added to the interview guide for clarity. No major changes were made to the interview guide (see Appendix D). The pilot interview was not included in the final analysis because the pilot interviewee became the external auditor. Hill (2005) suggests that the target

population be recruited for pilot interviews and that external auditors “be involved in reviewing the interviewing protocol” (p. 202). Thus, the pilot interviewee became the external auditor and provided a critical and external perspective on the interview guide and cross analysis of the final interviews.

Participant recruitment. Since the aim of this study was to explore MPCs’ experiences in professional baseball, I set out to recruit 12-15 MPCs who were currently working full-time in professional baseball. Hill and Williams (2012) advise researchers that while there is no specific number of participants to interview, 12-15 participants may be a large enough sample to see consistency in their experiences. In addition to consistency, this range of number of participants would likely provide some theoretical sufficiency (Braun & Clarke, 2019) surrounding service delivery in professional baseball. To do this, I recruited MPCs via two routes.

First, I established contact with Dr. Charlie Maher, the president of the PBPPG. The PBPPG is comprised of many, but not all, MPCs working in professional baseball. I was informed by Dr. Maher that there were 64 members of the PBPPG with 26 of the 30 MLB organizations being represented. I sent to Dr. Maher three documents: a copy of the dissertation proposal, the IRB approval letter, (see Appendix A), and a recruitment letter (see Appendix B) informing members of the PBPPG about the purpose of this study and assuring confidentiality. Dr. Maher forwarded the recruitment letter to the members of the PBPPG. Second, I identified some of the MPCs working in professional baseball by examining each MLB’s team website and through running a Google search of “sport psychology” and/or “mental coach” along with the MLB team name (e.g. “sport psychology Arizona Diamondbacks”). I sent out the same recruitment letter (see Appendix B) to the identified MPCs. Some professional baseball organizations were identified as having multiple MPCs working at different levels within the

organization (e.g. major league, Triple-A, Double A). Thus, because these MPCs have their own unique experiences, more than one MPC working within the same organization was considered for interviews. Five MPCs reached out directly following the email from Dr. Maher while the remaining eight were recruited directly.

Main study interviews. After participants emailed me and agreed to take part in the study, a date and time was scheduled for the interview to take place. Participants were sent the informed consent (see Appendix C) and were asked to review it and sign it prior to the interview. Finally, I interviewed MPCs using a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix D). Due to MPCs being displaced throughout the country working for various minor and major league baseball teams, it was not feasible to interview each MPC face-to-face and in their natural setting. Instead, all interviews were conducted via telephone and were audio recorded. While FaceTime, Zoom, and Skype could have been used to see the participant, and perhaps develop better rapport, only audio interviews were used to maintain consistency. The average length of the interviews were 59 minutes and 42 seconds ($SD = 13.7$). Each interview was transcribed, de-identified, and returned to the MPC via email with a thank you letter (see Appendix E). In the interviews, the participant's identity was replaced with either a self-selected pseudonym or one chosen by me, the interviewer. Four participants chose their own pseudonym. In the thank you email, participants were also asked to check their interviews and make adjustments and additions/subtractions as they deemed necessary. Only one participant made minor adjustments for reasons of confidentiality and clarity.

After the 13th interview, no more participants were interviewed. While Low (2019) suggests that new theoretical insights can be made as long as data is collected, the information from the participants had reached theoretical sufficiency or saturation (Braun & Clarke, 2019),

meaning, it was not that there was no new information or meaning being interpreted, but that the information provided and the meaning that was abstracted was already rich, deep, diverse, and complex (Nelson, 2016). Therefore, a sufficient level of understanding of how the context of professional baseball influenced an MPC's service delivery was reached.

Data Analysis

Primary research team members. In CQR (Hill, 2012), a research team is incorporated into the data analyses process. The research team consists of a primary team to analyze the data and an external auditor to inspect the work of the primary team (Hill et al., 1997). Hill and colleagues (2005) suggest that the research team consist of at least four members; three members to offer a variety of perspectives and at least one external auditor to provide feedback and question discrepancies among the primary team (Hill et al., 2005).

In accordance with Hill and colleagues (2005), the primary research team consisted of three members: two graduate students and one university professor. One member was myself, a White male and doctoral candidate in sport psychology and motor behavior. The second member was a White female and my PhD advisor. The third member was a White female and doctoral student in sport psychology and motor behavior. Because the majority of MPCs in professional baseball are White, I did not consciously consider racially diversifying the research team. However, doing so may have provided a perspective different than that of the dominant group. Instead, the research team was chosen because of their experience with CQR and baseball. All members of the primary research team had experience with qualitative research, including CQR. One member of the primary research team had played baseball at a young age and one member had played softball in high school. Two members had prior research experience with professional

baseball players. Prior to analyzing the data, all members of the research team signed a confidentiality statement (see Appendix F).

In addition, the research team also collectively addressed our biases together. Sim, Huang, and Hill (2012) offers that addressing biases before the analysis can enhance the rigor of the study by making sure that the research team's understandings were not just our own, increase our self-awareness and self-knowledge, and allow the reader an insight into how we as researchers' perceived and analyzed the data. Research team members reported the perception of baseball to be a multicultural space yet occupied by mostly White-male MPCs. There was also a belief that professional baseball would be a masculine environment with gendered norms. In this, there was a curiosity with regard to MPCs and the competence they may or may not demonstrate. The researchers also shared an awareness that MPCs are hired by the organization, and the services MPCs provide may be constrained. These biases and expectations were monitored throughout the entire data analysis process. Prior to every analysis meeting, biases and assumptions were restated to bring them into our awareness. Following disagreements in the construction of categories and domains, researchers referred back to transcripts to stay true to the experiences of MPCs rather than the biases or assumptions of any one individual research team member.

Data analytic procedures. Transcripts were analyzed using CQR (Hill, 2012) guidelines. First, each primary research team member independently read the transcripts multiple times and constructed preliminary domains. Then the primary research team members met multiple times to come to consensus on an initial thematic structure. First, members came to consensus on emergent domains. Domains are identified by the meaningful and unique topics examined in the interview guide and discovered by reviewing the transcripts (Thompson, Vivino,

& Hill, 2012). A domain list was compiled and applied to new transcripts “until the list stabilize[d]” (Thompson et al., 2012; p. 105). Next, core ideas were highlighted and abstracted with the domains in mind (Hill et al., 2005; Thompson et al., 2012). Core ideas capture the nature of a participant’s statement and are essentially summaries of the data but in fewer words (Thompson et al., 2012). Core ideas also remain close to the data without interpretations or assumptions (Hill et al., 2005). Hill and colleagues (1997) argue that researchers should use the explicit meanings rather than the implicit meanings of the data. Third, and last, the research team moved to “a higher level of abstraction in analyzing the data” (p. 200) by comparing the data across the individual cases (Hill et al., 2005). The research team formulated categories which were derived from the data and comprised of core ideas that were similar to one another. In this final step, the initial cross analysis, the research team began to record the frequency of the categories and apply “general,” “typical,” and “variant” labels to the data. Categories that applied to all cases or all but one case were labeled general. Categories that applied to more than half the cases were labeled typical and categories that applied to half or less than half the cases were labeled variant (Hill et al., 1997).

Following the initial cross-analysis procedure, the external auditor received a copy of the transcripts and the preliminary thematic structure. The external auditor, a White female and university professor in sport psychology, was chosen to be the pilot interviewee and external auditor because of her experience working as an MPC in professional baseball. Her unique experiences enabled her to challenge and bring a critical eye to the study. The external auditor determined if the interviewees were adequately represented by the domains constructed, if the material was in the proper domain, if the important material from the domain was highlighted, and if the core ideas were neat and reflected the raw data (Hill et al., 1997). Lastly, the research

team received and incorporated feedback from the external auditor, conducted a final cross-analysis, and sent the final table to participants for their records and feedback. No feedback was provided.

CHAPTER 4

Results and Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to explore MPCs' experiences of the influence of context on the service delivery process in professional baseball. More specifically, I aimed to explore the intersection between context (i.e., professional baseball), professional philosophy, and the working alliance. After interviewing 13 MPCs working full-time in professional baseball, and following CQR procedures (Hill, 2012), five domains and 31 categories (see Appendix G, Table 1) were constructed: (a) The Context of Professional Baseball, (b) Intersection of Cultures Within Professional Baseball, (c) Long-game Philosophy of Establishing Value of MPC Services, (d) Cultivating Trust in the Working Alliance, and (e) Personal and Situational Factors that Influence Receptivity to and Delivery of MPC Services. MPCs described the aspects of professional baseball that were most influential to their service delivery (Domain 1 & 2). Based on these unique features of this context, MPCs discussed the various ways in which they sought to establish the value of their services (Domain 3). While trust was critical in establishing value, MPCs further highlighted methods of cultivating that trust (Domain 4). With context and its influence on their service delivery in mind, MPCs identified additional factors—personal and situational—that influenced the receptivity to and delivery of their services (Domain 5).

In this chapter, I discuss the results while using the participants' words to best represent their perceptions and experiences, as well as bring in literature to provide a more robust and critical understanding of the results. All names associated with the participants' own words are pseudonyms. Before discussing each of the domains, and after each domain, I briefly discuss power. Power was not just present in one domain or category, but in each domain. It was

embedded in the organization of professional baseball and thus, also in the narratives of participants.

Baseball and Power

Power (discussed in depth in Chapter 2) can be said to be an influence on behavior, both in subtle (Foucault, 1997) and obvious ways (French & Raven, 1959). Baseball organizations—like all organizations—hold embedded mechanisms of power (Foucault, 1997). Bodies within the baseball system in the current study (e.g. coaches, players, MPCs) appeared to be obedient to the organization. The front office (e.g. directors, presidents, executives) served as a daily reminder of the “legitimate” power within the organization (French & Raven, 1959). Front office leadership was at the center of power according to participants and was responsible for the vision of the organization (see Jones et al., 2009). MPCs fell under their purview and influence. In the current study, participating MPCs discussed that the front office used their power to not just establish the vision of the organization but also provided MPCs with the means necessary to achieve their vision. The majority of participants in this study, though, did not feel constrained by the organization’s power in their service delivery; rather, they felt supported. MPCs abided by their own ethical standards and deemed the players to hold greater referent power than leadership’s legitimate power (see French & Raven, 1959) even though the leadership held “legitimate” power (see French & Raven, 1959) over MPCs and players. In other words, even if they were to face coercive power, participating MPCs would prioritize the player above all. MPCs recognized that players themselves were, at times, stripped of their power and surveilled (Foucault, 1997) by the organization. For example, Phil said that one of the biggest barriers to having a trusting team environment was the organization’s

power to demote players, or the power of their playing time. There's no reason a player couldn't tell his manager or his hitting coach what he's telling me most of the time, except he's afraid that if the coach knows what he's thinking, they're not going to play him. Or they're going to send them to AAA. And so, there's this fear of, “if I [the athlete] tell them [the MPCs] what I'm really thinking, I'm out of here.”

In fact, MPCs sought to leverage their own power—whether expert, referent, or legitimate—to protect players. For example, though Kelly was willing to protect players' confidentiality at the expense of her job, she did not really fear losing her job. Throughout the discussion of each domain and category, it is important to note that such negotiations of underlying power structures may have influenced the ways in which MPCs operated in this setting.

Domain 1: The Context of Professional Baseball

The first domain that was constructed reflects MPCs' contextualizing the sport of professional baseball. When talking about their experiences working in professional baseball, MPCs discussed the most prominent characteristics of the baseball setting and the specific aspects of professional baseball that influenced their service delivery—namely, their professional philosophy and the working alliance. The categories in this domain include (a) baseball is a business, (b) limited player privacy, (c) quantity of clients, (d) MLB vs. MiLB, (e) competition sport, (f) player livelihood, and (g) player and coach commitment.

Baseball is a business. Professional baseball is situated within a capitalist system (Gramlich, 1994). Participants in the current study also emphasized that, first and foremost, baseball is big business. Organizations are trying to find people (i.e. players) to invest in that have the capacity to meet the organization's demands at the lowest possible price. Whether in

free-agency or in arbitration, the organization wants to make the most profit; either trade a player for more money or pay a player less money. MPCs in the current study reiterated that baseball is a “multibillion-dollar business” and that an organization’s mission is to invest money into the right players at the lowest price while trying to “find the smallest margins of victory” (Marco).

As David put it:

Owners don't want to give more money than they have to. And players want as much money as possible. And this process of arbitration basically has, you know, front office looking at their physical stats and their performance stats and saying you should be paid this much for because of this.

In addition, MPCs recognized that as organizations look to win championships, players are moved up and down within the organization as well as outside of the organization. Hawkins and Tolzin (2002) and Ravizza (1990) identified that baseball is unique in the amount of turnover it has from year to year and within the season. This “transitory nature” of players moving in and out of the system were problems Ravizza (1990) encountered, making it harder for him to establish his presence and maintain relationships. The business side of baseball revealed itself in the current study when participants discussed the organization’s investment in certain players. As organizations sought to win championships, they minimized costs and invested in players they believed in while moving around other players that were less likely to make the team successful. This business logic impacted participants’ service delivery, in which some MPCs discussed the need to focus on the development of players who had longer contracts with the organization and who were more likely to be a part of the team’s future success. For example, Mr. Scott outlined that it was important to have

this understanding of the business of baseball, like if he [a player with a one-year contract] completely understands you or knows what you're doing, that's not as important as if the guy who signed for four years for 80 million knows what you're doing. You know, and so, again, it's not a thing where you give them more attention or better treatment. You just need to make sure they understand what you're doing.

Lastly, MPCs were aware that they were a resource that the organization invested in, and because baseball is a business, the organization would want to see a return on their investment.

Marco added:

We have as an organization undertaken some pretty thorough projects to try to decipher and place value on my role and the role of folks in our department and what value we bring. And, you know, I wouldn't give you a dollar amount, I think the overwhelming feedback is that this is really important stuff.

This is similar to Ravizza (1990), who also suggested that because it was difficult to establish a direct cost benefit of mental performance services, he had to operate carefully and not have his services weighed on his players and coaches' performance or participation. In professional soccer, Larsen (2017) discussed similar concerns. Larsen (2017) recalled that while the organization had invested in different technologies and information to succeed, such as himself and mental performance services, the ultimate goal of the organization was to win. When the organization was not winning, leadership took steps to minimize "distractions" and costs, like Larsen (2017) and his services, that a new leadership believed took away from their focus on winning. Thus, there appears to be a difference between Larsen's (2017) experience and participants' experiences in the current study. Professional baseball and professional soccer, and like every other sport, are driven by success. While participants knew that baseball as a business

is focused on achieving results, they also did not feel pressure by the organization to achieve results instantly. The perception from MPCs, who had been with their organizations from one to 10-plus years, was that their organizations had a long-term and vested interest in mental skills training.

Limited player privacy. MPCs described how players had limited privacy in professional baseball. Much of the limited privacy stemmed from the front office having access to information about players. Kelly elaborates on this limited privacy and stated, “the players have given up a certain amount of their HIPAA rights, particularly if it's any medical thing that would keep them off the baseball field. So there's not a lot of privacy there.” As seen in the previous category, participants discussed that organizations want to minimize costs by investing in players that are more capable of success. The front office can use the information known about a player to leverage what the organization is willing to pay for the player. This type of panopticism (i.e., external surveillance; Foucault, 1997) made MPCs perceive players as feeling as though they were constantly being watched even though they may not have been (e.g. internal surveillance). According to MPCs, just the idea that players were being watched by the organization caused a sense of distrust between the players and the organization. For example, participants discussed that some players might be hesitant to use their services because of the fear that it could be used against them. What is rather unique to note in this setting is that MPCs did not discuss the ways in which they *themselves* felt limited privacy or surveilled by the organization. MPCs did discuss the organization wanting information about players; however, in terms of MPCs’ service delivery, it seemed the organization was taking a hands-off approach.

In addition, MPCs felt this limited player privacy impacted how and when they delivered services or even influenced when they engaged in casual conversation with players. For example,

MPCs felt they had to be very mindful of the presence of media, coaches, and other players when talking with players. According to Duke,

because of the media coverage, because of social media, because of the writers, the television, and all that stuff, the big-league guys are a little, they're a little more conscious of being discreet about it. And, you know, when you're on a major league field, there's a camera on you every second, you're out there on that field, whether you're out there at 12:30 in the afternoon, or you're out there at 11:30 at night. There's a camera. There's a camera in the dugout, there's a camera on the field, there's a camera in the bullpen, there's a camera everywhere.

Because many conversations MPCs have with players happen in “real time” and in front of a number of people, participating MPCs were highly aware that a certain level of privacy is sacrificed simply due to the nature of their work. Thus, educating the organization about confidentiality was a critical component for MPCs working within this setting and is discussed further in Domain 4.

Quantity of clients. Participants emphasized the mass quantity of people they can potentially serve within the organization. What is unique about this setting, compared to other professional sports like football or basketball, is that there is not just one professional team and one developmental team. Instead, each MLB organization has an entire system—comprised of multiple minor league teams (MiLB, n.d.)—to develop players. MPCs in the current study served and were serving in various mental performance roles for the organization. Some MPCs delivered services to every team in the organization, while others delivered services to just the major league team or just the minor league affiliates. This means that the number of clients MPCs may be expected to serve within an organization can be extremely high. For example,

some MPCs worked with one MLB team, which meant trying to serve between 25 and 40 players and possibly more when including coaches and support staff. Other MPCs worked with anywhere between 250 and 350 clients in the entire organization—from rookie ball to the major league. Kellen stated that “with hundreds of players and the staff that go with it, just there's not enough hours in the day to really fully spend time with people in the way that that I'd like to do the work properly.” Additionally, Nicole—whose mental skills team served roughly 350 people in their entire organization—added:

I think this is one of the reasons why people are building [mental performance] departments... we're even like wanting to grow even more. ... We have so many players were responsible for... we're each seeing like 100 players and that can, it can get to be a lot.

This finding is similar to the barriers that MPCs of the USOC faced while providing services to Olympic athletes and teams (McCann, 2008). Due to the large quantity of Olympic teams and athletes, the MPCs chose to focus their services with a small number of teams and coaches who had the best chances of winning during that Olympic cycle. In the current study, rather than limit who their work was with, the mental skills coordinators were working to expand their departments by hiring additional MPCs.

MLB vs. MiLB. MPCs highlighted the differences between the MLB and MiLB, which influenced the delivery of services. For participants, they became aware of the differences between the MLB and MiLB and used these differences to their advantage. For example, participants noted that in the minor league, the focus was much more developmental in nature. Mr. Scott outlined how the structure of MiLB influenced the ability to develop mental skills with athletes:

the minor leagues is all about development; there's time. There's time to try new things, there's times to explore, be creative, you know, make adjustments to your routine. And there's a lot of time to do that, because you have the opportunity to develop and if we win or lose tonight, it's not the end of the world.

The developmental nature of the minor league has also been reported by Bernier (2012) and Ravizza (1990). MPCs in the current study emphasized that professional baseball organizations placed an emphasis on the development of their newly acquired players. Minor league players can be seen as a relatively low-cost investment that can make the organization better and perhaps more successful. Because of this, MPCs working in MiLB could slowly introduce and develop mental skills with these players. As Kellen put it:

It's not like the sink or swim model that's in other professional sports. Even a first-round draft pick we're going to have several years to work with and develop these skills, which is really helpful when you try to, you know, really change the way people think.

In the MLB, MPCs' focus of service delivery was different. Marco added, "you're going to deliver training to the major leaguers differently than you would, you know, [a] rookie ball player." Mr. Scott specifically identified that the focus of the major league was on winning; "[players] need a specific strategy that [they] can hold on to tonight that can give [them] the best opportunity to succeed." Phil added that because "there's more pressure" to win, "there's more of everything. There's more media. There's more, there's just more scrutiny on everything." Instead of development, then, MPCs focused on the strategies that could give players the best opportunity to succeed in the short term.

Competition sport. MPCs discussed how baseball was unlike other sports in that players were competing far more than they practiced. Mr. Scott emphasized this difference:

Baseball is what I call a competition sport versus like football, what I would call a practice sport, right? Meaning football, you spend far more time practicing than you ever do playing a game, you know. There's more time for meetings and teaching. So, I think that's kind of built into the fabric of football because you only play once a week or lacrosse, you know, sports like that. Whereas baseball you practice literally for like 25 days all year, at the most and then you play 162 games. So, how you deliver services is a lot different.

The nature of baseball as a competition sport led MPCs to approach service delivery differently than they would in other sports. In this, MPCs talked about the unique nature of trying to develop players, yet at the same time win games that were occurring day in and day out. MPCs were able to implement mental skills daily and in the short-term but were also able to see the long-term effect of mental skills training. Kellmann and Beckmann (2003) define this process of continual feedback as a feedback loop and establish it as an integral component of action research. In action research, rather than hypothesizing what mental skills might help the player in theory, MPCs were able to actively and continually collect data and understand the problem (e.g. action research) to provide the best mental skill(s).

Player livelihood. In this category, MPCs highlighted that for many professional baseball players, baseball is their livelihood and career. For example, David stated that baseball is more than just sport; “this is peoples’ livelihood...this is a make or break deal and I am now part of that cog in the machine that could change somebody’s life” and “give them generational wealth.” For players who make it to the major league, a minimum payment of \$555,000 per season is guaranteed (CBA, n.d.). MPCs also noted the disparity in salary for players’ in professional baseball. Nate put it:

the population that I'm working with, like, this is their career, and many of them are scratching and clawing and doing whatever they can to pursue this kind of lifelong dream that they've had. And they, they're barely in some cases, they're barely making enough money to support themselves, let alone a family that they might have, all the way to, you know, the highest level where players are more financially stable and there's maybe less concerns there. But there's still their own set of challenges.

As Nate describes, many players are trying to support families on minimal paychecks. These minimal paychecks in the MiLB range from \$850 per month to \$2500 per month, depending on the level of affiliate (Bernier, 2012). McIntosh (2018) reports that these low paychecks are partly restricted by Congress' bill that does not allow MiLB players to collect overtime pay. If players are rewarded with the opportunity to sign their first MLB contract, they will make at least \$43,000 in their first year and will double their salary in year two (CBA, n.d.). For MPCs in this study, they were keenly aware of the importance of baseball in most players' lives. Baseball was more than a game; it was players' career and livelihood. MPCs found it meaningful to be a part of helping players change their lives, yet also noted that adopting baseball as one's livelihood added pressure to players to succeed on the field.

Player and coach commitment. MPCs in the current study also discussed that players and coaches worked tirelessly day in and day out with few days off. For example, MPCs emphasized that players were there every day “grinding it out” (George) and working hard, competing for jobs and a spot on the team. Marco describes this by saying “every single day they play and every single day they're failing, or they're performing, or there's people getting promoted, or there's people getting demoted.” MPCs also saw this commitment in that players

and coaches hardly took days off and spent a lot of time away from their families. Mr. Scott added that for players and coaches:

along the way, you're going to have to sacrifice things and sacrifice meeting time with family, sacrifice, sometimes money, sacrifice, living comfortably, you know, sharing [with other players and coaches] that willingness to sacrifice things that are important to you to chase a dream.

Mr. Scott goes on to say that knowing this type of sacrifice “has really helped me understand the athlete in the client that I'm working with, you know, and then also understanding the volatility of sport, of professional sport and how you can be here one day and gone tomorrow.”

McDougall and colleagues (2016) have also found this “ruthless pursuit of performance” to be the case in other elite sport settings. Participants in their study linked success to financial gain and saw players pursue this success at the expense of everything else, including their personal values and respect for other teammates (McDougall et al., 2016). This led the MPCs in McDougall and colleagues’ (2016) study to consciously resist getting sucked into that type of culture.

Power in the context of professional baseball. Professional baseball is situated within an individualistic capitalist system (Gramich, 1994). Organizations compete with each other to maximize their gains with little regulation on how they do so (Gramich, 1994). King-White (2018) writes that in this *laissez-faire* capitalist agenda, individuals—or organizations— “will operate solely in her or his [their] own self-interest and therefore will succeed or fail based on her or his [their] own merits” (p.5). This freedom enables organizational leaders to do as they please such as maintaining scrutiny on their capital (e.g. players) to know which members to sacrifice. Integrating power and Foucault (1997), then, the members most susceptible to this

sacrifice are those who are not docile. MPCs believed they had the freedom to practice as they chose, but perceived the technologies of power (see Foucault, 1997) to be of greater restraint to players. For the players, MPCs perceived they (the players) were aware of the surveillance, and in turn, internally surveilled their own behavior (see Foucault, 1997). MPCs perceived that players committed and dedicated their lives to succeeding in this capitalist sport context. As Wacqaunt (2005) writes about pugilism, yet applicable to this setting, these “regulated practices...aim at maximizing the fructification of corporeal capital and the readiness of the fighter for battle in the ring” (p. 461). Wacquant (2005) adds that these practices have a “practical effect to sharpen the social and symbolic boundaries between the devotees of the Manly art and those around them” (p. 461). In essence, and in relation to baseball, MPCs perceived players to behave in ways in which they could maximize their bodily capabilities, distinguish themselves from others, and be of most service to the organization, and, therefore, make more money for themselves. As will be discussed in Domains 3 and 4, MPCs behaved similarly.

Domain 2: Intersection of Cultures within Professional Baseball

The second domain reflects the intersection of multiple cultures within the professional baseball setting. The various cultures that exist *within* baseball are, of course, related to the context and prominent characteristics *of* baseball (Domain 1), yet seemed to warrant a separate domain. Specifically, in Domain 2, MPCs identified various cultures that exist within baseball and discussed how these cultures intersected with one-another to influence the service delivery process. Categories, and thus cultures, in this domain include (a) norms of nationality/ethnicity, (b) language, (c) a man’s world, and (d) age.

Norms of nationality/ethnicity. MPCs in this study discussed the various nationalities and ethnicities that exist within professional baseball, among the players, coaches, and staff. While the majority of professional baseball players self-identified as Caucasian (57.5%), many self-identified as Latin (31.9%), African American (7.7%), or Asian (1.9%; Lapchick, 2018). MPCs discussed the norms that were part of the players' nationality or ethnicity and how important it was to consider the players' backgrounds and cultural norms when working with them. For example, Nicole talked about how she made sure to shake every Latin players' hands because it was important to

acknowledge their existence and say, 'Good morning, how are you?' That is super important, because if you don't, they actually think you're mad at them. Yeah, it's actually, I didn't know that. Like, the American culture isn't like that. You don't have to say hi every day, but in their culture it's so important.

MPCs also discussed how faith and family were important to Latin players. When speaking about how cultural norms influenced the way he delivered services, Travis stated, "Some of the Latin cultures tend to be more family-based, faith-based things of that nature. So, it's more likely that you'll have players from those backgrounds where those types of things should be taken into consideration." George's comments highlight the need for mental performance theories and services to be culturally adapted:

We talk about norms, social norms, we have players from Taiwan, and they are Asian and when they come to the country, they, the way they interact with older figures or coaches. If you look into the American lens, or all the theories that we know, you know, they don't make eye contact. They will not argue with you, they will say 'yes, sir', 'no, sir.' They will be very polite. And if you look at self-determination theory, per se, and you talk

about, you talk about autonomy and ownership, it seems like they don't have any autonomy. But it's their culture; it's the way they were raised.

George continues on to say that many of the theories that are used in mental performance have been developed using a mostly White-male, college age population. As such, not all theories will fit and be applicable to different cultural populations. For example, while intrinsic motivation is an important source of motivation “when you talk to a Latin player that comes from poverty, one of the biggest motivators...they want money and they want to be able to provide for their family” so “we need to understand that there are the cultural differences and how those theories apply to different cultural backgrounds” (George).

In a study by Friesen and Orlick (2011), Ken Ravizza discussed the need to know both the culture of the sport and the cultural background of the client. Researchers today have advocated for the field of sport psychology to be more culturally competent (Blodgett, Schinke, McGannon, & Fisher, 2014; McGannon, Schinke, & Busanich, 2014). Cultural competence, according to Sue (2006) is “possessing cultural knowledge and skills of a particular culture to deliver effective interventions to members of that culture” (p. 237). MPCs in this study emphasized that in order to be most effective in the environment of professional baseball, they had to be aware of the backgrounds and cultural norms of those they were working with and adapt their services to best meet the client's needs. George provided encouraging insight, saying “You don't have to be bilingual to be bicultural,” meaning that one does not need to speak the language in order to seek to understand the norms of that culture.

Language. MPCs also discussed that for many players, English is not their first language. MPCs noted that a large percentage of players were predominately Spanish speaking, and thus, MPCs needed to be able to translate mental skills training into different languages. For example,

educational group sessions were delivered in both English and Spanish. As a result, MPCs discussed the need to make sure the mental skills concepts translated from English to Spanish. Nicole said, “I think that those concepts are so important to double-check and make sure that everything's translating properly, because sometimes it just doesn't.” Additionally, as MPCs delivered services to both English and Spanish speaking players in an educational setting, they needed to be mindful that the amount of information that they could actually cover was cut in half. Will added, “Because of the time it took to translate and to send the same message, took twice the amount of time which cut down the amount of time for the overall presentation.” In addition to educational sessions, “the workbooks had to be done in Spanish and even Chinese or Japanese” (Will).

MPCs identified that their organization had and was taking steps to meet Spanish speaking players needs by hiring translators, adding bilingual MPCs—of which two were a part of this study—to the mental skills departments, and educating players to learn English. Many MPCs worked with translators to teach mental skills, and sometimes, this translator was also a coach who happened to be bilingual. Duke described his experiences:

what I've done in the past, is if a Latin guy trusts me and he's got an issue, I ask him, if there's a Latin coach around that they trust and could simply be a translator. And it's got to be the right kind of person. It can't be somebody that's going to you know, offer any opinion or anything, and then we can work on it. And that works but that's obviously not the best way to provide the service, but it's worked and I've done it.

While happy with the organization’s initiative to hire translators and bring on more culturally similar staff, Will said, “It has always killed me that we make the players learn English, but we don't make the coaches learn Spanish.” For some MPCs, however, they were taking their own

initiative to try to learn Spanish, personally investing in players and their backgrounds, and even traveling to the Dominican Republic to gain a better understanding of Latin clients. Thus, a recommendation for MPCs working in this setting, and for the PBPPG, is to enhance cultural competency and to attempt to learn the language of the clients with whom they are working and/or employ more bilingual MPCs.

A man's world. MPCs emphasized professional baseball as being predominantly male. In professional baseball, the players are male, the front office is mostly male, and coaching staffs are predominantly male (Lapchick, 2018). For Nicole she “was [one of] the first females with the [organization]. And so...I think it was harder for other people because they didn't know quite how to act around me.” Similarly, Kelly stated that it “took people a little bit to figure out how to take [my being female].” MPCs in the current study also emphasized the “male-oriented macho culture” (Duke) of professional baseball. Duke described this as players “being tough and macho, and being able to handle things yourself” without any help. The amount of cussing, joking, or making fun of each other were also used as examples to describe the macho culture. Sarah noted that compared to other settings she has worked, in the baseball setting “I cuss a lot more...I try bringing humor into almost every single thing I do, especially group workshops” so “we curse a lot and we laugh a lot.”

The three female MPCs who participated in this study all shared the perception that they had to work harder than men in the professional baseball setting to be taken seriously and viewed as competent. For example, female MPCs discussed having to be more “aware” and conscious of their service delivery. Sarah says:

I do think it takes a little more conscious effort than just being a male... And so I do think there's just a little bit more, you got to be a little louder, you got to be a little bit

funnier, you got to be a little bit more attentive, you gotta like get [players] attention a little bit more, than probably a male would have to do, but I think that kind of comes naturally to me.

In line with this, female MPCs discussed the privileges males were awarded for being male that the women did not. Kelly added:

there are things that are different. There's no man that has to figure out where the bathroom is at every single ballpark we go to, because they have a bathroom in the clubhouse, I had to worry about wearing credentialing more often. The style of jokes I could crack are different. I have to be aware of when everybody's trying to get changed. And that's probably not a good time to walk into the clubhouse. There's no dress code set for me. I have to set my own because there aren't women around [to use as examples].

The male MPCs had bathrooms, were assumed to be with the organization without credentials, and didn't have to worry about entering the locker room when players are changing. Nicole also talked about how she had to be conscious of where she delivered services and who she engaged with:

a lot of our player or a lot of our staff will be like, 'Hey, let me take you out to dinner and we'll talk.' I can't do that. Because if somebody walks by and saw me at dinner with one of our players, and it's perceived wrong, that could be really bad. So, I have to think about those things. Where sometimes, you know, our guys don't have to. And there's nothing wrong with it. It's just something that you have to be aware of being a female.

Kelly's, Nicole's, and Sarah's experiences are not isolated events but have been felt and experienced by other female MPCs (Roper, 2002; Roper, 2008; Roper, Fisher, & Wrisberg, 2005; Yambor & Connelly, 1991). Female MPCs in Roper's (2008) study revealed that they

faced challenges related to the language men used, entering men's locker rooms, and generally just existing in a male-dominated space.

For all MPCs in the current study, it was important to gain buy-in and the trust of clients. For the women MPCs, however, they had to go to greater lengths to gain this trust; they had to be more cognizant and self-regulate their behaviors and words. Sarah initially felt that the men would not cuss around her because she was a woman. When they finally did, she perceived it as a sense of trust in her. Importantly, she felt it was important to “be authentically me because I want them to be authentically them.” Kelly said that as a female, you have to be able to play within the set of rules of a male-dominated culture, but “also realize where as a female you can't [play by all the rules] and you're the exception to the rule, and you need to leverage that too.” It was after these female MPCs gained buy-in and credibility that they discussed what might be an advantage to being female in a male-dominated culture. In this, Kelly added, “I think sometimes players would come to me with more vulnerability and openness because I was a female and because I wouldn't judge them as another male might judge another male.” This finding is supported by Yambor and Connelly (1991) and Roper (2002). Yambor and Connelly (1991) suggest that “men are always competing with each other on some level” and, thus a characteristic that helps women is that they are “perceived as more nurturing than men” (p. 309). Female MPCs in Roper (2002)'s study described similar experiences of being perceived as nurturing by athletes. Roper (2002) challenges that while these perceptions may seem positive, and are used by female MPCs to their advantage, the behaviors reinforce and normalize gender stereotypes.

This “male-dominated culture” is not just prevalent in baseball and has been reported by various support staff working in elite sport (Arnold et al., 2019, p. 18). Roper (2002) suggests that throughout all sport, there are fewer women and it is men who occupy the higher positions

of power. This dynamic, of both increased power and presence of men, has placed women at a disadvantage in sport psychology (Yambor & Connelly, 1991) for nearly 30-plus years. Female MPCs in this study discussed the disadvantages they experienced by being females in a male-dominated culture. Yet, female MPCs also recognized that “baseball’s evolving...even in a short period of time. There’s way more women on staff” and there’s now a women’s locker room, which was “life changing...to be able to like workout and shower at work was just such a luxury” (Kelly); a luxury that men in this context have never had to know as a luxury. For the men, it was standard. While this evolution may seem positive, it begs the question as to why it has taken so long for women to be afforded such spaces in professional sport, and, more specifically, in professional baseball.

Age. In this category, MPCs talked about how the players and personnel in baseball were young in age. In terms of players, Lapchick (2019) reported that 70% of players on opening day rosters were aged 30 or younger. MPCs in this study talked about working with players from age 18 to 27 years and noticed a difference in the level of maturity between these age groups. In Sarah’s words, “Even an 18- [and] 23-year-old is a lot different.” This age range, of 18 to 25 years, is what Arnett (2006) refers to as “emerging adulthood.” Arnett (2006) outlines that this period is categorized by identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and the age of possibilities. In the baseball setting, MPCs felt that players’ relatively young ages really allowed them to make an impact on their development. George said:

I think that the fact that we get young men so young, when they're still exploring their values, understanding who they are as human beings...[its] a good opportunity to create an impact on their development.

In addition, MPCs also noted that players younger in age had likely been exposed to mental skills concepts before and thus “each generation is more open and willing to accept these ideas” (David). Participants also felt this was true of personnel. David added that “we just hired a new [executive]... and so I think there is a shift to a younger mindset.” This mindset of openness to change and possibilities, is again, in line with Arnold’s (2006) research on emerging adults. Additionally, as found by Michel (2013) and Zakrajsek, Martin, and Wrisberg (2015, 2016), previous experiences—especially positive previous experiences—with mental training has been found to have a positive influence on receptivity and willingness to use MPCs in the future.

Power and intersecting cultures. Power may not be as apparent in this domain, but nonetheless the practices and behaviors of the individuals in this setting demonstrate the presence of power. What power was formed was a “policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviors” (Foucault, 1997, p. 138). Baseball was perceived by MPCs as predominantly Eurocentric and those within the system conformed and adjusted their behavior to fit this dominant society. Players, MPCs, and coaches were not pushed to learn Spanish, Chinese, or Mandarin and MPCs did not have to adopt mental skills training to fit a Eurocentric view. In addition, being masculine was also accepted as the norm and the female MPCs were subtly and not-so-subtly disciplined into working within this macho-oriented culture. I highlight this coercion on behavior to suggest that MPCs were not solely responsible for their conformity and docility, but to put some ownership on baseball organizations to become more culturally accepting.

Domain 3: Long Game Philosophy of Establishing Value of MPC Services

The third domain highlights the long game philosophy adopted by MPCs, meaning that they recognized that it takes time to establish the value of mental skills training within an

organization. For example, Marco emphasized that his focus was on “playing the long game, being patient, recognizing that there’s a lot of people influencing the athlete and their development.” If he, and other MPCs, wanted members of the organization to use and value their services, they had to be patient.

Participants recognized that it was nearly impossible to demonstrate causality of their work to a player’s success and thus, it took time (3-5 years) to establish value for their departments. Will suggested that “it was going to take, you know, probably three years to get it [mental skills program] going” and Marco added that “it takes minimum three to five years to really even, in my opinion, to even begin to see like some long term impact” related to mental performance services. Some MPCs discussed the success of taking time to establish the value for their services. As Sarah noted, “we definitely made steps in becoming part of the culture. And I think this year is going to be even better.” She goes on to say “I think we’re seen pretty closely of importance with nutrition and strength and conditioning. We may be a little bit behind strength and conditioning, just because they’ve been around so long.” In this domain, MPCs’ discussed how they laid the groundwork to, over time, establish value for their services within the entire organization. The categories within this domain include: (a) trust as foundational, (b) client-readiness, (c) integrated, (d) collaboration, (e) education/ normalization, and (f) individualized resource.

Trust as foundational. Nearly every MPC emphasized that their job was to “first and foremost” (Nicole, Mr. Scott) establish trust. More specifically within this setting, MPCs emphasized trust as the “the bottom line of it all” (Duke). Trust was a foundational piece of MPCs philosophy of playing the long game and establishing value of their services. Travis added that “trustworthiness” is a “big time” thing that comes into play when establishing value

Because when you build those relationships, and then they have an understanding that you have knowledge that you can sort of deliver to them to help them be better at something, then you can put in the work and figure out ways to get things done.

Travis, and other MPCs, believed trust was foundational to relationships, and relationships were necessary for service delivery to be most effective. The more players, coaches, and support staff trusted the MPCs, the more value was placed on MPC services as an important resource within the organization. Duke added, “because they talk among themselves, and the guys that use me and they tell another player that ‘Yeah, it’s safe.’” If MPCs did not establish trust, “nobody is going to tell you anything” (Nicole) and “you’re going to be out of a job pretty quickly” (Sarah).

Dorfman (1990), one of the first MPCs to work in professional baseball, also identified trust as critical in his service delivery and in building relationships. Trust, though, is not just unique to professional baseball as MPCs, coaches, and athletes working and competing in a variety of sports and setting have deemed trust to be critical in developing relationships (Anderson et al., 2004; Gould et al., 1994; Sharp & Hodge, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015; Zakrajsek et al., 2013). Trust, while critical in relationships and the working alliance, was also clearly viewed as a foundational component of MPCs’ philosophy. The working alliance and ways in which MPCs in this study cultivated a trusting relationship is the focus of Domain 4.

Client-readiness. Similar to the viewpoints of MPCs in Friesen and Olick’s (2011) study, MPCs in this study recognized that clients are more likely to buy into MPCs’ services if clients are in control of whether or not they utilized services. MPCs talked about not forcing clients into individual mental skills sessions, rather “letting people come to you” (David) when they are ready. Kellen talked about his need to remain patient and wait for players to come to him:

when the student is ready the teacher appears. And I found that to be really true in this field because sometimes I have a player that says ‘I wish I would have talked to you sooner.’ And like, well, I’ve been here all year. But he wasn’t ready.

MPCs knew that it took time for some clients to be ready and they recognized that they had the time to not force their value, nor relationships. Specifically, for Marco, he said:

just stay patient and recognize that it's not personal. And, you know, tap into my evidence-based practice. [I] did a lot of research on self-determination theory and readiness to change...the change process. They're in pre-contemplation and the conversations I have with them are different than somebody who comes into my office the day after they sign a contract and say, ‘I’m ready to work, what do you got for me?’

In the Transtheoretical Model of behavior change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 2005), clients in pre-contemplation do not intend to change and are not aware of the need to change. Only when a client enters contemplation do they start to weigh the pros and cons of change. Rather than forcing clients, MPCs working in professional baseball gave clients autonomy—a basic tenant of intrinsic motivation within self-determination theory (see Deci & Ryan, 1985)—and waited for them to seek their services. For Sarah, “giving them that autonomy really helps them to buy in” to and value MPC services.

While MPCs perceived giving clients autonomy, there is still a need to consider that clients, and particularly athletes, may have little autonomy in this environment overall. Professional baseball has already been established as a business organization with limited privacy (see Domain 1). With the organization in control and perceived by MPCs to be watching every move of their athletes, the athletes may have had no choice to wait until they knew it was safe or they felt they were no longer being watched.

Integration. Within this component of the long-game philosophy, MPCs worked to establish value by integrating themselves and their services into the environment. The MPCs in the current study did not just operate as additional or “add-on” services. In her hiring and getting started with the team, Sarah’s goal was to make mental performance an accepted and valued part of the culture and not just something extra:

no, it's a part of it. Just like they're working out throughout the day, just like they have on field work. They have meetings, they have film, they have all of these things. Like mental skills is a part of that, it's not an addition.

In other words, MPCs worked in ways where they blended in with the environment. MPCs described themselves as “participant-observers.” For example, Duke stated “I’m a participant observer, I participate in their culture, and I know everything about it. And at the same time, I’m just observing behavior.” Being around, present, and participating in the environment was an important way these MPCs became integrated into the culture and established value for their services. For example, MPCs discussed “shagging balls” or throwing batting practice (BP) and using that time to integrate mental techniques into players training sessions. Will said, “you can go out on the field, you can shag BP, can throw BP, you can catch balls... You can be, you don't have to observe from the sidelines. You can be an active participant in providing the service.”

In both elite sport and collegiate sport, researchers and practitioners (Fifer, Henschen, Gould, & Ravizza, 2008; McGuire & Scogin, 2013; Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011) have suggested that MPCs and MPC services be immersed and integrated into the team and practice sessions. Dorfman (1990) said that being around and in uniform enabled him to deliver services effectively. Ravizza stated that you “gradually build trust and respect by being around and helping out” and that in this process, “you wait for the teachable moment” (Fifer et al., 2008, p.

370). In the current study, being around allowed for additional integration of Sarah's services; as she stated, "This year we're going to actually be in the cages with and working simultaneously with the hitting coaches on some stuff to pair in the physical and the mental aspects together." This type of integration was not necessarily laid out in the job description but was something MPCs felt they could do to better establish their value.

Collaboration. Baseball, again, is unique in that in this environment, MPCs could be serving between 25 and 300 players. For the MPCs in this study, the "best work that [they] have ever done is in collaboration with coaches or medical staff or aspiring coaches" (George). MPCs, then, not only integrated themselves within the organization and team, but also collaborated—working with and through—coaches, support staff, and scouts to best support the players. MPCs felt that collaborating with coaches, support staff, and scouts helped to establish value for mental performance services and had everyone "speaking the same language" (Mr. Scott). Kelly added:

I think I had to, I needed to work by, with, and through the coaching staff, the medical staff, the strength conditioning staff, the players and how they currently set stuff up. I don't think you can force mental performance development or mental performance culture and so you have to understand the culture and then slowly figure out where you're going to apply pressure or want change.

Marco also added, "coaches have to be your ally in this environment." Participants nurtured collaboration with coaches by asking them for their input on how they could begin to integrate mental skills into the organization. Nate specifically stated:

We've tried to build collaborative relationships with them, because one of the things that we found is that our work a lot of times, is connected or can be enhanced through other people and other departments.

Nate continued on to add that this collaboration occurred with players and support staff as well as coaches. MPCs working in other elite sport settings have also highlighted the need to develop multiple relationships with those in the organization (McDougall et al., 2016; Smith & Johnson, 1990). Smith and Johnson (1990) believed it to be necessary to work with and through coaches, and McDougall and colleagues (2016) found that by working with and through support staff, the value of their services was better established. McGuire and Scogin (2013) offer a comprehensive and integrated approach to service delivery which entails MPCs becoming integrated and working with support staff and coaches in the environment. Thus, in addition to integration as discussed in the last category, MPCs may be more effective working in collaboration with others around them (Friesen & Orlick, 2011).

Serviced multiple clients. By serving multiple clients in the organization, MPCs were better able to establish value for their services. MPCs in this study discussed delivering services to coaches, support staff, front office members, and scouts. In describing who her clients were, Nicole stated “literally anybody in the organization. I provide services for our scouts. I provide services for our front office...for players, and for our support staff.” Duke carried this sentiment by stating “I worked with groundskeepers. I work with service providers. Really who’s ever involved with our [MLB team] organization. If they want to use me, I’m available.”

While MPCs work with and develop players, and may view players as their primary client, participants discussed the ways in which they worked with all others in the organization. More specifically, David worked with coaches to “find ways for the coaches to understand the skill acquisition concepts.” Marco stated:

I’ve worked with front office members who have been interested in improving their efficiency and learning a lot of the same mental skills that we teach our athletes. So, in

those cases, they're my client...if I'm working with our scouts, and I'm trying to train them up on mental skills.... educate them on improving their interviewing practices... they're my client.

In their initial service delivery framework, Perna and colleagues (1995) reiterated the importance of identifying the client. Without this identification, MPCs may leave themselves open to crossing traditional professional boundaries (Stapleton, Hankes, Hays, & Parham, 2010) and serving those who hold power over those they were hired to serve. Etzel and Skvarla (2017) warned MPCs to anticipate such multiple relationships and consider the ethical boundaries as defined in General Ethical Standard 9 of the AASP Ethics Code (2011). While MPCs in the current study identified teaching mental skills and strategies to everyone in the organization, MPCs such as Kellen recognized that:

I think in professional sports, and there's a couple of different other aspects. It's, it's like, 'Who are you answering to?' You know, 'Are you, are you client focused? Are you front office focused? [Who] are you pleasing, are you trying to please? And who you're trying to help? And are you trying to keep a job or trying to do your job well'?

Education/normalization. In 1990, Smith and Johnson outlined that when working in professional baseball, their philosophy of establishing value included enhancing the receptivity to their services by demystifying sport psychology. This approach was adopted by MPCs in the current study. To establish value, MPCs educated clients in the organization on their services and attempted to normalize mental skills and mental skills training. Mr. Scott said, "My goal was to create value, you know, to show how it's not just, you know, 'There's something wrong with you, you come talk to me', but it's more than that." This perception was common among MPCs in this study as they talked about the need to "get educational programs in place" (Kelly) and normalize

and destigmatize the services. MPCs worked with coaches, players, and support staff to consistently educate them on what MPCs could do for the organization in terms of mental performance services. Travis said, “I think, clarity of message about the ways that you can provide support and really an opportunity for them to get better at something.” This meant, for Mr. Scott, “just creating education around what it [mental training] is and what it isn't.”

For athletes and coaches, mental performance services may be thought of as similar as mental health services, especially since both can exist under the umbrella of sport psychology (Van Raalte, Brewer, Matheson, & Brewer, 1996). Aware of this, MPCs in this study were clear in educating clients about their role in providing mental performance services. They were also clear on their boundaries in knowing when to refer clients out to a mental health provider. In fact, MPCs discussed a referral system already in place to the Employee Assistance Program. Because MPCs were clear about their services and aware of their boundaries, they were careful of the language they used. To avoid confusion, David “rarely use[d] the term ‘sport psychology’” and Mr. Scott suggested that “what we can do with baseball, professional baseball, is really establish the distinctions between clinical and performance psychology.” This intent to establish the distinction between mental health and mental performance appeared to be a mission of the PBPPG as well. MPCs talked about using the same title (mental skills coach, mental skills coordinator) and changing the language in the MLB CBA to better represent their services and to further educate clients on what services they were able to provide. Mr. Scott outlined this confusion and stated that in the Collective Bargaining Agreement, “they use both languages in there. They said, you know, sport psychologist and then they followed up with someone that provides sport psychology services.” Mr. Scott added that the MLB CBA will end in 2021 and in the new version:

the language will stay in there, you know, they might revise it [CBA] where it's more, I know there's talk around revising it and removing the word 'sport psychologist' and just putting 'sport psychology services' or 'mental performance consultant' in there. But I can't confirm or deny that. I just know there's talk about it.

Individualized resource. A part of MPCs' long game philosophy of establishing value included taking the time to understand the needs of the organization in order to individualize their approaches. It was clear that MPCs saw themselves and wanted others to see them as a resource. Marco very clearly outlined why a general and untailored approach did not work in professional baseball. He said:

Like, there's just all of this, all these layers that, you know, if you go in and you think like, this is what I was taught to do. And so I'm going to go in and I'm going to roll out this group session, and you don't take the time to understand what's going on at the affiliate, you're just, you're never going to maximize your impact.

Other MPCs also reinforced this need to be an individualized resource and to tailor their approach. For example, Kellen stated that you cannot “apply a template on to everyone that you develop... trying to plug people into a certain box and not giving credit to their phenomenological experiences.” He goes on to say that trying to do mental skills training “in a very standardized way is a recipe for limited success, if any.” If the players or coaches perceived the MPC as not investing in their team and considering the needs of their team, the MPC could lose value and support from the coaches and players.

An individualistic approach is not new to mental performance and has been identified as a significant component of an MPC's service delivery (Fifer et al., 2008). MPCs “must assess the needs of that specific team or individual” (Fifer et al., 2008, p. 363). However, and depending on

the context, it may be difficult for MPCs to individualize their approaches especially when delivering services to a large group or an entire organization. Ravizza (1990) highlighted that he had minimal time working at the individual level, and that instead, much of his work was at the group level. Even though MPCs in the current study had a large number of clients, they believed individualizing their services was critical to making an impact within the organization. This has also been found to be true of MPCs who worked in professional sport as they emphasized the need to individualize their service delivery even when working with a large number of clients (Botterill, 1990; Dorfman, 1990; Ravizza, 1990; Rotella, 1990). As such, and in a recommendation to the Association of Applied Sport Psychology's Certification Council, greater emphasis should be placed on the MPCs' and CMPCs'® individual experiences and consultancy hours rather than the successful passing of a generalized exam.

Power and the long game philosophy. Chapman (1997) and Johns and Johns (2000) both discussed how the female athletes in their studies viewed the technologies of power of their sport and organizations as the influence over their dietary habits. They reported that female athletes in their studies came to internalize this influence as a technology of the self and used it as a means of personal transformation, although Markula (2003) has critiqued this idea. In the current study, MPCs also recognized similar mechanisms of power they had to operate within that was specific to the context of professional baseball (see Domain 1). In this Domain, the behaviors exuded by the MPCs were behaviors they perceived as having the most impact to adjust to the unique factors of the setting they were working within. MPCs sought to leverage themselves and their information as a source of expert power (see French & Raven, 1959) in order to liberate themselves. Furthermore, they sought to establish value in their services so that

this practice of liberation was not just alone but carried by others in the organization with more power.

Domain 4: Cultivating Trust in the Working Alliance

While trust was a foundational component of MPCs' long game philosophy of establishing value (Domain 2), MPCs also emphasized trust as a critical factor in developing working alliances. Categories in this domain reflect the ways in which MPCs discussed cultivating trust in the working alliance: (a) time, (b) timing/feel, (c) confidentiality, (d) MPC commitment, (e) informal interactions, (f) consistent follow-up, and (g) personal investment/person-centered.

Time. MPCs in the current study emphasized spending time, sometimes between two to three years, building relationships and establishing trust. Kelly offered that “time and trust have to grow naturally.” After a few years, Kelly felt she was doing her best work:

I'd say some of my best work with the major league team was at my year kind of four or five and six and really five and six when I had a lot, enough time around the players that they really felt like they knew me and knew that they could trust me.

Time was extremely important in building relationships and developing trust, and many MPCs highlighted the setting of baseball as facilitative to having the time to build trust. For example, MPCs took advantage of the long season, downtime during practices, and the opportunity to work with coaches and players who would be with the organization for multiple years. For David, there was “time to be around”, “so much downtown”, and time for “conversations to happen organically.”

Lewicki and Wiethoff (2000) describe two types of trust: calculus-based trust and identification-based trust. With calculation-based trust, people perform in accordance with what

is expected; if there are rules within a system, the person must follow those rules (Lewicki & Wiethoff, 2000). It takes time to build this trust, and if a mistake is made, the progress that has been made in building that trust can be undone quickly. With identification-based trust, two people come to know each other and can develop a collective identity, knowing what each other wants in a situation (Lewicki & Wiethoff, 2000). Again, it also takes time to build identification-based trust. The MPCs in this study were working to establish both calculus-based trust and identification-based trust. The participating MPCs needed time to prove to clients that they were working on the client's behalf and in accordance with their duties (calculus-based trust; e.g. maintaining confidentiality). The MPCs also needed time to get to know their clients better and develop a collective identity with the client (identifications-based trust; e.g. personal investment).

Without time, the client may not be able to develop a calculus-based or identification-based trust with the MPC. One hindrance to time is the “short-termism” in professional sport organizations (Larsen, 2017). Some professional sport organizations want to see a return on their investments (i.e. mental performance services) rather quickly (see Domain 1); in other words, and as was the case with Larsen (2017), the leadership may not be patient enough to see results. It appears that for the MPCs in the current study, the “short-termism” was mostly prevalent, albeit minimal, in the MLB and not the MiLB. MPCs in the current study worked within organizations that allowed MPCs to work over the long term, and because of the time available, MPCs were able to build both calculus-based and identification-based trust. Time appears to be a critical factor in developing trust, but there has been limited research in mental performance on the direct impact of time on trust.

Timing/Feel. In building trust, multiple MPCs mentioned that it was vital to have a feel for the environment to know when, if, and how to deliver services. If MPCs said something or did something at the wrong time, they could lose trust quickly (e.g. calculation-based trust). “Feel” is a word often used in baseball culture but extended into MPCs’ descriptions of mental performance service delivery. Phil said:

You've got to have a good feel for players and coaches in the room. And that means number one, you've got to have good awareness of, you know, where to have a conversation and when to have a conversation. You've also got to just be comfortable yourself being around.

MPCs talked about how timing was important in their service delivery. When considering the timing of providing feedback, Nicole said she asked herself three questions: “Do they need to hear it? Do they need to hear it now? Do they need to hear it by me?”

MPCs suggested that feel can be developed. David said, "it's definitely something that can be trained. I shouldn't say trained, it's something that you can learn.” MPCs mentioned that having feel came from knowing the language, tradition, and culture of baseball. Duke, who has been working in professional baseball for some time, says “when I walk into a locker room somewhere, I know exactly what everyone's doing, when they're gonna do it, how they're supposed to do it, why they're doing it. I know the culture.” This “feel” is often achieved and may be more easily learned by MPCs who are working in a sport that they have previously played or have had experience in (McCann, 2008; Poczwardowski & Sherman, 2011).

Participating MPCs knew the culture of baseball and of the organization and were able to fit well within the day to day operations. Duke added that his organization wanted someone specifically that knew their way around baseball:

they wanted someone who was real[ly] discreet and having been in the industry as long as I was and knowing the business inside and out like I did, I fit right in there. I can hide in plain sight and provide the service, and nobody knew what I was doing.

Kelly added that this fit and feel of the organization was critical:

I think you have to continually assess whether or not it's the right fit. Fit is huge. So I would say that there are powers beyond being a good mental practitioner that are important, but then your ability to really read [and] understand the context and the culture [is equally important].

Confidentiality. There is limited privacy in professional baseball as a whole and participating MPCs recognized that privacy is especially limited for players (Domain 1). Participating MPCs talked about the fear from players that what would be said would get back to the organization. Kellen outlined:

I do think that there's an underlying feeling that the players have. The fact that the team pays the mental skills coaches, to me creates a caution on the side of the player because they don't know if they can really trust you.

This sentiment wasn't just perceptual, but explicitly expressed by players. Phil recounted an experience he had with a player who got traded to the team Phil worked with midway through the season:

I was just sitting with him in a lunchroom and he's like, 'Well, so how does this work?

Are you a spy for the GM [General Manager]?' I was like, 'What are you talking about?'

But those are the kinds of narratives that that these guys have.

This perception of internal surveillance, again, aligns with Foucault's (1998) metaphor of panopticism. From the MPCs' perceptions, players believed that organizations were constantly

watching them and viewed MPCs as an extension of the organization but working for the organization (e.g. external surveillance). This, in turn, led players to be apprehensive about their own behaviors such as utilizing mental training services (e.g. internal surveillance). Because of this apprehension, the MPCs worked hard to establish confidentiality by not sharing what was said in private to other staff members or members of the front office.

Therefore, one way in which MPCs built trust, and particularly calculus-based trust (Lewicki & Wiethoff, 2000), was through establishing and maintaining confidentiality with their clients. Before some MPCs started working, players did not have a confidential resource within the entire organization. Mr. Scott said that he was “a confidential resource that was not available before.” Confidentiality, defined in AASPs Ethical Code (2011), is defined as the “primary obligation to uphold and take reasonable precautions to respect the confidentiality rights of those with whom they work with” and identifies that MPCs working in organizations should discuss the “relevant limitations on confidentiality... and the foreseeable uses of the information generated through their services.” MPCs emphasized that if the front office did not respect confidentiality then they were willing to leave the organization. For example, Kelly stated:

I would never betray the trust [of the players] because it wasn't like I had to have this job. It wasn't like the front office could threaten me with, you know, ‘We'll fire you or else’. I would have just walked if they had ever done that. Our front office was great, they never did.

Despite the emphasized importance of maintaining confidentiality, MPCs revealed that the nature of their work came with challenges in the maintenance of confidentiality. Because MPCs were integrated and a part of the culture, other players and the media would often see them talking to players and there was a possibility that they could interpret it as something more

than it really was. Nate emphasized that “that's the part where we have to be very careful sometimes is knowing who we're talking to, where we're talking to them with, and who's seen that interaction.” Thus, “feel” and timing was also a component MPCs reflected on with regard to confidentiality.

MPC commitment. As a way to build trust, MPCs felt the need to almost match the players’ and coaches’ commitment identified in Domain 1. MPCs talked about the “demanding” nature of the job and how they were at the field and in the building from anywhere between 12 to 16 hours a day. George referred to his role as “super full-time” and MPCs talked about working almost 26-28 days out of the month. When talking about why he was there so often, George explained, “we put in the time, and we make the sacrifices. And the players do it and they see it.” George added, “if I go to the Dominican Republic and I've been on a month-long vacation, like they will be, the players and the coaches will be like, ‘Oh, you're living the nice life, good for you, while we're grinding’.” George felt that to maintain trust, he needed the players to see that he was also committed.

The baseball season can range from 140 to 162 games, and MPCs working in this setting delivered services to clients associated with the major league team and the multiple minor league affiliates. Because of this, multiple MPCs were traveling with some clients and were away from other clients for long periods of time. Therefore, MPCs discussed that part of demonstrating commitment was being accessible for clients while in different time zones. Specifically, Mr. Scott stated:

after a game, you know, they're in [west coast city] and it's 11 o'clock there and, and I'm with the team in [east coast city] which is now two in the morning there and they just want to connect with you after the game. They're going to shoot you a text or give you a

call at 2 am you know, which is not always ideal...And it's hard because you got to create boundaries, but at the same time there's an emotional component to learning and sometimes the best time to teach them is after a really tough game.

Kellen added that this availability and commitment was demonstrated by “meeting them where they're at, being on the field, and you know for as long as they are. Being available whenever they have time, whether that's at 5:30 in the morning or you know [whenever] they need you.”

Kellen added that “You need to make the time for them” but that this level of availability “really does make it difficult to have a life.”

While coaches have expressed their desire to have MPCs available to them as needed (Zakrajsek et al., 2013), and as much as MPCs in the current study talked about their commitment, it was never directly expressed that the organization required them to be as accessible as they were. Some MPCs even clarified that they were able to choose their own schedules. Duke said, “The General Manager simply says, ‘Do your job’. That's how much freedom I have. I do my own schedule.”

The commitment MPCs demonstrated in the current study was what they believed they needed to do to build trust in the working alliance. This is similar to how other MPCs have described their commitment within the service delivery process. For example, Henschen believed that “With individuals, my cardinal rule of operation is to be available night and day (anytime) for the convenience of the athlete...I care about my athletes and want to be available when they need me” (as cited in Fifer et al., 2008, p. 368). In contrast, MPCs in this study as well as sport psychology researchers and practitioners (McDougall et al., 2016; Poczwadowski et al., 1998) have emphasized the need for self-care and setting boundaries related to time. MPCs in McDougall and colleagues’ (2016) study felt that the obsessive nature surrounding support and

the commitment of athletes to their sport was not just hard to mirror but was something that they personally did not want to mirror. Nonetheless, in the context of professional baseball, the MPCs' commitment in the current study to building trust in the working alliance aligned with the commitment that they perceived from players and coaches.

Informal interactions. Even though MPCs delivered mental skills training formally (e.g., educational workshops, one-on-one sessions), they also recognized the value of informal interactions in building trust. Being integrated and a part of the culture, MPCs recognized that batting practice and fielding were great opportunities for informal conversations to happen with players and coaches. While some MPCs worked in offices, they also talked about positioning themselves in the environment in ways that made it easier for players to organically talk to them. As David stated, “the way baseball works and the fact that I am around 12 hours a day, there is so much downtime...allowed for the deeper conversations to emerge organically.” Sarah would “walk around all the time during practice, during live bullpens, during regular bullpens, during stretching, and just have like, kind of subtle casual conversations with players.” While informal interactions often occurred in environments related to training, Kelly would even sit at a lunch table all alone as a way to invite someone to sit with her:

And you know, initially when players would come kind of quote, unquote, ‘save me’ and come sit down and say, ‘Oh, you know, I don't want you sitting alone.’ But then they strike up a conversation that they probably have been wanting to have and looking for a space to have it.

Kelly and other MPCs did not need to be saved. Rather, by positioning themselves alone in the environment—such as at a lunch table or in the dugout—they created non-invasive ways to informally connect with athletes.

Positive informal interactions with MPCs have been found to be related to positive perceptions of the benefits of mental training, willingness to use mental performance services, and support for including MPCs as members of the support staff (Zakrajsek et al., 2015, 2016). In addition to these empirical findings, Ravizza stated that in these informal interactions he was able to do some “profound” and “great work” (as cited in Fifer et al., 2008, p. 370). Friesen and Orlick (2011) noted that many consultants “hang around the training and competition environments as many teachable moments” will occur (p. 29). MPCs in the current study resonated with the great work that can occur during informal interactions. Nicole added:

baseball isn't ‘Come into my office, schedule a time, and see you later afterwards; we'll schedule you again for next week’. It's not like that. I mean, some of my best sessions are done when I'm shagging balls in the outfield during BP [batting practice]. And again, some of them are sitting in the dugout during the game, chatting in between, like ABs [at bats].

Consistent follow up. Researchers and practitioners have identified the need for MPCs to follow up with clients throughout the consultation process (Fifer et al., 2008; Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2001). To be effective in baseball, and to cultivate and maintain trust, participating MPCs also talked about the need to follow up on previous formal or informal conversations. MPCs made sure that if they talked about something with someone one day, they would ask about it or bring it up the next time they saw them. Nate said, you have to “follow through with your word basically with players.” Nicole adds:

I think that's something that can get left behind. It's like, you know, you're at the field, you're doing everything. And then when you leave, you're just done. And that's not true. I think that when you leave, it's even more important to make sure the guys that you've

talked to, that you're following up with. Maybe not that moment, but even if it's the next morning or the next day...remember something that [they] said that wasn't super significant. They're like 'Wow, they're really listening.'

While following up mostly occurred in person, MPCs talked about how the advantages of technology allowed them to maintain continued connection with players. Will added:

because of the access of, you know, phones have been great. You know, we can text or FaceTime or Skype. So you don't have to be there to stay in touch with him, which is a huge benefit for people in our field.

In 1990, Smith and Johnson suggested that follow up and consistency was the biggest issue in their service delivery in professional baseball. It appeared that technology allowed MPCs of the present study to follow-up more easily as well as be accessible (see MPC commitment).

Personal investment/person-centered. MPCs in this study cared about their clients as humans and not just as baseball players. MPCs took the opportunity to invest in the players, show empathy, and “give a damn” (Duke). MPCs talked about being privileged to be able to develop players as human beings and to be able to build relationships in this setting. In this personal investment, MPCs also talked about getting to know their clients’ personal lives outside of baseball. MPCs talked to players and coaches about their families, kids, movies, and other things that they were interested in. Phil reiterated that “you have to care about [their] own well-being and personal worth.”

In the previous literature, MPCs Botterill, Ravizza, Henschen, Patrick, and Friesen all reported the need to personally invest in clients and even become friends with the client (Friesen & Orlick, 2011). This friendship allowed the clients to see them (the MPCs) as real people they could trust (Friesen & Orlick, 2011). This is in line with Travis’s comments from the current

study: “those are people to me. Like those are my friends.” He goes on to say that the relationships are “not manufactured,” rather “I’m trying to have a good relationship so I can have a good relationship. And then that good relationship should let me help coach better.” This relationship, built on a mutual commitment to each other, is also emphasized by Sharp and Hodge (2011; 2014).

One major consideration of developing such relationships relate to Ethical Standard 9 (Multiple Relationships) of the AASP Ethics Code (2011). MPCs are warned to be sensitive of relationships that can impair the MPCs objectivity and to “take reasonable steps to avoid harm” (Ethical Standard 6, Avoiding Harm). Multiple researchers and practitioners have outlined the need for MPCs to not just be aware of such multiple relationships that can occur, but to recognize that multiple relationships will exist and it is up to the MPC to maintain professional alertness (Etzel & Skvarla, 2017; Haberl & Peterson, 2006; Moore, 2003; Stapleton et al., 2010). Hays (as cited in Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2011) noted that these ethical issues and boundaries deal with “how one keeps the parameters straight of who one is, and how one is in relation to the particular performer” (p. 526). Some MPCs in the current study were “alert” to such professional boundaries. For example, Phil stated that the mental skills coach “should not get too close to the players and staff...I think it ends up kind of melding the role in a way that shouldn’t happen. I think there should be some distance.”

Power and cultivating trust. Once again, MPCs felt the constraints and technologies of power they worked within the system (see Domain 1). Due to the subtle influence of this power, an obvious reminder of legitimate power from the front office, MPCs practiced in such a way as to not be perceived by players as also wielding this same power and so as not be perceived by coaches and front office to be challenging their power. Instead, MPCs worked patiently (see

Domain 3) to establish trust (see Domain 4) with the coaches, players, and staff. MPCs were constrained in ways they could operate and build trust; however, they sought to leverage those same constraints (e.g. limited privacy, player/coach commitment) to build trust (e.g. confidentiality, MPC commitment) and practice their freedom.

Domain 5: Personal and Situational Factors that Influence Receptivity to and Delivery of MPC Services

The fifth and final domain reflected additional personal and situational factors that MPCs believed influenced clients' receptivity to services and the use of services. Researchers have found that personal and situational factors (i.e., antecedents) influence peoples' attitudes and beliefs, which in turn, influence peoples' willingness, use of, and satisfaction with mental performance services (i.e., consequences; see Zakrajsek & Martin, 2011). Categories in this domain include (a) organizational support, (b) paradox of time, (c) agents, (d) client characteristics, (e) MPC characteristics, and (f) ego.

Organizational support. MPCs in the current study very clearly stated that the organization was supportive of mental performance services. In their HPE model, Jones and colleagues (2009) position leadership at the center of the model and responsible for the vision and direction of the organization. The leadership's role in the high performing environment is to challenge people and also provide them the support to meet the challenge demands (Jones et al., 2009). In this setting of professional baseball, MPCs perceived that the front office demonstrated support by providing resources, time, funding, and autonomy for MPCs to create and carry out their vision for mental performance.

While leadership may have had a vision and direction for the organization, MPCs perceived that the leadership in the front office didn't have a vision for the mental skills training

department or completely understand mental performance services. Phil outlined that leadership in professional baseball organizations “have not necessarily had a vision of what they wanted other than they want someone to come in and know what they're doing.” In addition, some organizations invested in MPCs because other professional baseball organizations were doing so—a ripple effect so to speak. According to the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010), people are influenced by the social environment (e.g., social norms) and are more likely to engage in a behavior if it is perceived as accepted by the group. Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) coin this as *perceived norm*, or the level of pressure a person perceives from others to engage, or not engage, in a behavior. Mr. Scott added, “in professional sports, it's a copycat League, and other teams are starting to grow their mental skills departments. I think the [team] was just like we need this. Not sure what it is, but we need it.” Therefore, MPCs emphasized that the leadership provided autonomy to establish the vision for the mental skills department and in how services were provided. MPCs in this study appreciated the autonomy they were given.

In addition to being given autonomy, the leadership in the organization also supported MPCs by being a voice for their services. Multiple MPCs talked about how important it was to have the right leadership and people in the organization advocating for their services and believed it influenced others' receptivity to mental training. For example, Sarah stated that

the farm director, like his support and him saying ‘I believe in mental skills’ even if he doesn't fully completely comprehend what we do...he's still like, is a huge advocate. And, it's pretty much what he says everyone does. And so when he's supporting us, I think that's our biggest element of help and getting us into conversations, not just with players, but also with the staff.

Yet, it was also important to, as Kelly emphasized, be careful not to “overly push that support.”

She goes on to say

I think a mistake that is sometimes made is that front offices bring kind of their good idea into a coach's or a player's realm and it's theirs, it's not... then it becomes the front offices' pet project versus actually owned or feeling like it's owned by the players or coaches themselves.

Referring back to the HPE model, performance enablers consist of the information, incentives, and instruments (Jones et al., 2009). MPCs were provided a role (i.e. deliver mental performance services) and the time and resources (instruments) by the leadership to achieve that mission. MPCs talked about being provided with the funds to start a department, hire more staff, and travel to meet with clients. Travis added:

you see the investment that the org[anization] has made with such a built out mental performance department; such a built out high performance in general, to go along with all the player development resources that they have. It just shows you that they take the development process really seriously and want to give us those resources to do what we do well.

MPCs added that they were also given the time to intervene and provide services, whether asking for it or just being given it. Phil added:

we've been very lucky to have good people that build that time in...I've had player development directors and field coordinators say, ‘Take these players off the field, stop them from whatever they are doing. I don't care if they're taking, you know, 30 extra ground balls, I want them to spend 20 minutes with you, that's much more valuable than taking an extra round of BP [batting practice]’.

While Eubanks and colleagues (2014) believed elite sport would be resistant to change, MPCs in the current study experienced a magnitude of support. Participating MPCs' experiences demonstrate that change may occur as a ripple effect from organization to organization. Then, in order to keep up with other organizations, MPCs perceived the support needed that allowed them to achieve their services full potential.

Paradox of time. As reported in the category Time (Domain 4), MPCs perceived that building trust took time, and they had the time to develop that trust. However, the paradox of time was that MPCs still felt constrained having to compete with coaches and support staff for this time. Phil added that

the number one factor that impairs probably every mental skills coaches' ability to effectively deliver services is time...Spring training, especially in instructional league, there is so much being thrown at these players and their schedules are so busy that there is almost no time for them to stop and say, 'Hey, I want to talk.' And we've been very lucky to have good people that build that time in.

Other MPCs felt the same. In talking about the players, Kellen added, "this is always an equation, you know, a return on investment kind of discussion is you know, what's going to be the most valuable use of their time because their time is valuable." David added that coaches "are incredibly busy" and they have so many responsibilities that it is hard to connect with them.

In professional sport and collegiate sport, there are a multitude of support staff and resources for athletes to utilize such as strength and conditioning, nutrition, mental performance, mental health, and athletic training. There has been no direct investigation into how coaches and athletes prioritize the use of each service and as a result, future research is needed.

Agents. In the current study, MPCs perceived agents as an influence on players' receptivity and use of services. As Will stated, "there are some agents who really would prefer that their players not talk to the mental skills person on the team." This is a new finding, as MPCs working in professional baseball in the early 1990s (Dorfman, 1990; Ravizza, 1990; Smith & Johnson, 1990) did not identify agents as barriers or as influences on the use of mental performance services.

The agent's role in professional baseball is to increase the financial value of their client and build the market for their client (MLB Agents, n.d.). According to Article VI, Section 6 (Salary Arbitration), Subsection 10 (Criteria) of the MLB CBA, MLB Clubs can only use certain criteria to negotiate the Player's compensation. Two specific criteria include "special qualities of leadership" and "the existence of any physical or mental defects on the part of the Player" (CBA, n. d., p. 21). With this, and according to MPCs, agents were warning players that MPCs may share information (i.e., "mental defects") to the organization that could potentially hurt their status with the team and the opportunity for higher compensation. Nate says:

They're [players] kind of encouraged to be extremely careful with what they divulge to people within an organization because the thought behind it is, the organization, if they [players] say something that they shouldn't, that can be used against them later on in contract negotiations.

David similarly stated, "There is a fear that information about how somebody is mentally or how what they've worked on mentally could be used against them to cost them money, however unfair that is."

As has been discussed, there is an underlying surveillance that is perceived by players and agents alike which affects MPCs. Out of fear of disclosure, MPCs perceived agents to

discourage players from sharing information with MPCs so as to better protect the players' future. And, agents may actually encourage players to work with MPCs outside the organization. Marco stated that a player told him, "I appreciate what you're doing. You know, I know that there's a lot of value here. But, you know, my agent has told me not to trust folks in the organization... my agent has a guy that I'm working with." The influence of the agent on the players made MPCs perceive confidentiality (see Domain 4) to be even more important.

Client characteristics. MPCs believed that clients' personal characteristics and past experiences with mental training influenced their use of services and the effectiveness of service delivery. Specifically, MPCs reported that clients who were open, honest, and committed to mental skills and the relationship made for an effective working alliance. These client characteristics have been also been reported in the sport psychology literature (Longstaff & Gervis, 2016; Poczwadowski & Sherman, 2001; Sharp & Hodge, 2011; Sharp & Hodge, 2014; Sharp et al., 2015).

MPCs in this study also emphasized growth mindset (Dweck, 2006) as a client characteristic that impacted the use, and effectiveness, of services. Growth mindset, according to Dweck (2006), is an approach-oriented mindset in which people feel as if they can learn more, grow from failure, and develop their abilities. MPCs perceived a growth mindset to include a client's recognition that they could get better and were open to receiving help in the process. George said:

I feel like those players who have a desire to get better, that they don't think they have every answer, that they are constantly seeking to challenge their self-growth. Those players that look at feedback as a strategy to get better and learn instead of a criticism. And we tend to find a lot of alignment with those players.

In addition, some of the athletes who had made it into a professional baseball organization had not encountered adversity in their playing careers. MPCs perceived these clients to hold less of a growth mindset and be not as open to services. MPCs suggested that it often took some kind of adversity to open these players up to mental skills training. David said that clients “won’t really open up until they get punched in the mouth” while George added, “because of adversity, or challenges in life in and out of baseball, they learn to become more open and they use us as a resource.”

In addition to growth mindset, MPCs also talked about the clients’ “ability to trust and be attentive to us” (Sarah). Referring back to Domain 3, trust was identified as essential to playing the long game and establishing value of MPC services. What may have either contributed to or constrained the trust of clients in MPC services was the clients’ past experiences (see Zakrajsek & Martin, 2011; Zakrajsek et al., 2013). Clients’ past experiences with mental performance have been reported to influence their beliefs and attitudes toward mental performance services as well as their willingness to utilize services in the future (Michel, 2013; Zakrajsek & Martin, 2011; Zakrajsek et al., 2013). In terms of contributing to trust, some MPCs in this study mentioned that clients are having more and more experiences with mental skills in baseball, making them more open to the services. Phil said:

I think that's where it's gotten a lot easier in the last 10 years is most players have had a mental skills coach on their way up, whether it was in college or in the minor leagues, or in the big leagues. And so if they come here without having gone through our system, if they've gone through our system, they, it's part of their process, they come in and or they'll ask, ‘When do you want to meet’?

In terms of constraining trust, MPCs talked about how negative experiences shaped the players' and coaches' use of and openness to mental performance services. If players or coaches had negative past experiences, they were quick to dismiss mental skills training and the MPC.

After talking about past experiences, Phil added:

one of the greater barriers for me is people having worked with a mental skills coach who wasn't very good. And didn't help them or didn't phrase it right, or didn't treat it right. Or they, you know, had it be that stereotypical guru kind of stuff where they're like, 'I don't need this'.

In all, MPCs noted that players were mostly receptive to mental performance services. This receptivity, however, was distinct between players in MiLB and MLB. Similar to Ravizza (1990), MPCs in this study felt that players in the minor league were much more committed and willing to engage with mental skills training than players who had already "made it" to the major league. Marco perceived that the players that were just "coming into professional baseball, they're all ears, all eyes there. They want to demonstrate their willingness to adapt to whatever the system is, they want to try everything, they want to listen to every coach." This attitude of players ultimately attributed to the MPCs' ability to develop players. In the major league, Will felt as if the players "don't have to do it [mental training], you know. They're already there."

MPC characteristics. Similar to client characteristics, there are certain MPC characteristics critical to the working alliance and effective service delivery. MPCs in the current study reported that trustworthiness, competence, and caring were essential characteristics for them to have for an effective working alliance. These desirable characteristics of trustworthiness, being a good listener, honesty, openness, caring, and competent have also been reported in previous literature (Anderson et al., 2004; Orlick & Partington, 1987; Sanchez et al., 2005; Sharp

& Hodge, 2011, 2014, 2015; Zakrajsek et al., 2013). Caring—defined by Fisher, Larsen, Bejar, and Shigeno (2019) in the coaching context—consists of the investment in whole person development and building long lasting relationships. In this same light, the MPCs cared about clients in this setting by personally investing in them and building real, long-standing friendships (see Domain 3).

Like the clients, and distinct from the previous literature, MPCs also talked about their own need to have a growth mindset. Travis talked about how for him, it was important to have a “flexible mindset over how each person might get to their solutions, but also be able to be looking at it from a framework that is based in you know, research and best practices and things of that nature.”

In addition to mindset and various personality characteristics, multiple MPCs talked about their how their past experiences helped them to better deliver services. Six male MPCs all had some experience with professional baseball which helped them to feel more “comfortable in the clubhouse” (Phil), “empathize with players” (David), and gave them a “greater understanding of the nuances of the game” (Mr. Scott). Other MPCs, both females and males, talked about how their background working with very diverse and unique clients enabled them to “create connections with people with different backgrounds” (Kelly). The aforementioned adds new insight to the sport psychology and mental performance literature.

Similar to other MPCs working in elite sport (Dorfman, 1990; McDougall et al., 2015; Ravizza, 1990), multiple MPCs in the current study talked about the need to be flexible in their approaches. Because MPCs were integrated within the organization, they had to be ready to deliver services at a moment’s notice and also be ready to adapt to what the team needed at a specific time. MPCs in this study additionally talked about the overall flexibility and evolution of

their approaches. The perceptions of the MPCs in the baseball setting were shared by Ravizza (1990) and were similar to the perceptions of MPCs working in other elite sport settings (Eubank et al., 2014; McDougall et al., 2016). McDougall and colleagues (2016) and Ravizza (1990) highlighted that it was important to be able to shift and adapt to the environment they were working in.

Lastly, MPCs identified that it was important for them to practice self-care in this setting. The setting of professional baseball was demanding and because of this, MPCs were working long hours and long weeks (see MPC commitment in Domain 4). Participating MPCs as well as MPCs in the mental performance literature (Fifer et al., 2008) reiterated that this job took a lot of self-care and it was critical for MPCs to practice self-care working in this environment. George closed his interview acknowledging that many MPCs want to work in baseball, but it may come at a cost:

It's a very, very big price to move away, to just travel so much. You know, it's a blessing in disguise and it's also something hard to travel so much and being away. I know baseball has the highest rate of divorce of any professional sport, I think. And in order to not be part of those stats, we need to be self-aware and take care of ourselves and our family, and then you know, we're going to be able to be really good practitioners.

Ego. In the last category, MPCs talked about how having an ego constrained the service delivery process. MPCs in this study described ego as a sense of self-importance, knowing everything, and needing to be in control or not need anyone. Specifically, MPCs talked about how coaches or players with an ego made their work difficult. Talking about coaches, Duke said, “they want to be in control and they don’t want somebody around that might hinder that.” With players, Sarah said:

guys who feel like they are at the best of the best and they don't need us. And they don't need not only us, they don't need anybody, right? They got here on their own merit. Why would they need us to get them any farther?

Additionally, MPCs talked about how an MPC's ego could get in the way of connecting with and working effectively with others. David said that what is critical to service delivery, is "just letting your ego fall away and just being the person in the passenger seat rather than trying to steer the car at the same time as the athlete." Other MPCs talked about the need to be humble and show humility, not acting like you know everything or having all the answers. Travis added that MPCs should be "humble enough to listen to what's actually happening and what the players experiencing and try to figure out the solution that's right for them."

While ego may not be explicitly discussed in past literature, one important tenant of a humanistic approach that may align with ego is non-directive support (Cuijpers, Driessen, Hollon, van Oppen, Barth, & Andersson, 2012). Adopting this as part of their framework, the goal of the MPC is to not push the client toward any outcome or to understanding a new skill but to create the appropriate atmosphere and conditions for the client to self-actualize (Cepeda & Davenport, 2006; Cuijpers et al., 2012; Doyle, 1998). David talked about his need to step back and be a "guide on the side not the sage on the stage." In essence, MPCs should be there for the client and embedded in the organization, but in the background and in a supporting role (see Zakrajsek et al., 2013).

Power and personal and situational factors. MPCs perceived that the organization gave them support by way of money, time, and resources. Ultimately, this subtle recognition of power positions, once again, the leadership at the center of the organization, imposing its forces and discipline on the people within the system. This discipline "increases the forces of the body

(in terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)”

(Foucault, 1997, p. 138). Those who were within the organizations (e.g. MPCs, player, and coaches) were all subject to such forces and MPCs worked to establish themselves as people free of such influence. Agents, people truly outside of the system and not influenced by mechanics of power in this system, tried to protect the players from those within the system (e.g. MPCs). In terms of docility (see Foucault, 1997), MPCs recognized that the opposite (e.g., ego) did not work in this setting.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions, Implications, Limitations, and Future Directions

Conclusions and Implications

This is the first study to empirically investigate mental performance service delivery within one specific context. In the current study, MPCs' experiences of the influence of context on their service delivery process in professional baseball was explored. More specifically, MPCs were asked about how the context of professional baseball influenced their professional philosophy and the working alliance. Even though MPCs worked at different levels within their respective organizations—and differed in their years of experience delivering services both in and out of baseball—they provided similar insight into the intersection of context, professional philosophy, and working alliance. Within this intersection, organizational support, trust, time, integration, and gender emerged as significant features to be considered with power woven through each (see Figure 1).

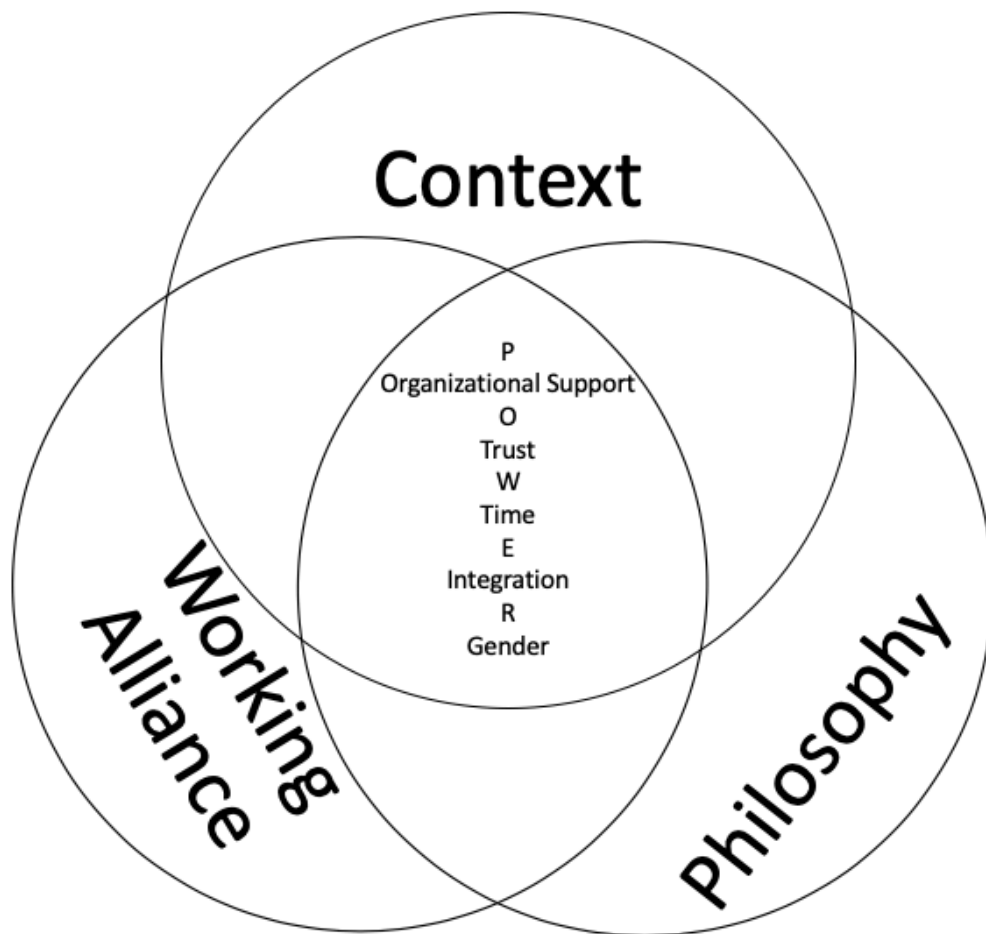


Figure 1. The intersection of context, philosophy, and the working alliance.

First and foremost, the dynamic nature of power was heavily embedded within the neoliberal (King-White, 2018) and capitalist system (Gramlich, 1994) of professional baseball. Participants perceived that organizations sought to maximize profits by any means possible. One primary mean to achieve this goal was accomplished through surveillance and discipline. Within these organizations, and most likely established by leadership, was a political anatomy that “defined how one may have a hold over other bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes” (Foucault, 1997, p. 138). While not explicitly described in those terms, MPCs appeared to recognize such discipline and surveillance in the threat of turnover, limited privacy, arbitration, and, in turn, the behavior of coaches and players. What was not necessarily internalized, however, was the MPCs’ internal surveillance of their own behavior. Rather, it appeared that MPCs perceived themselves to be existing outside these confines or were actively seeking to exist outside these confines and portray to those within the system that they were not controlled by the organization. Regardless, the processes in which services were delivered were ultimately constrained by the political anatomy (see Foucault, 1997) MPCs found themselves within. Therefore, and recommended moving forward, it is vital for MPCs to be cognizant of the implicit and explicit facets of power existent in the contexts in which they practice. The facets of power are woven into the context of baseball and, were thus discussed within each of the domains (in the previous chapter) and in the main conclusions here.

Although researchers have hypothesized that elite sport organizations would be hesitant to change (Eubanks et al., 2014), MPCs working in professional baseball were provided with what they perceived as strong and positive organizational support. The value of mental skills was not just being pushed by players (CBA, n.d.) or members of the PBPPG, but MPCs in this study believed leaders in the organizations outwardly supported the use of mental performance

services. For MPCs to take hold and establish themselves as an important influence on the performance of individuals, they have to have top-down or inside-out (Jones et al., 2009) support. Professional baseball organizations, and more specifically front office staff, used their power to invest time, money, and additional resources into the development and growth of the mental skills department. This investment is not something that has been seen consistently in professional sports in the United States. The National Football League (Graziano, 2019), National Basketball Association (Roscher, 2019), and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (Hosick, 2019) have appeared to place more of an emphasis on providing mental health services for their athletes. Although the MLB has emphasized mental health services as well—provided through each organization’s Employee Assistance Program—they also decided to invest in a mental skills department that is distinct from yet collaborates with mental health services. MLB organizations looking for the smallest margins of victory were willing to invest in new arenas (i.e. mental skills) to succeed in these margins. Uniquely, while mental performance may be seen as a new arena, the current presence of mental skills across the MLB and MiLB suggest that it is becoming a perceived norm (see Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). This perceived norm, then, likely impacts the willingness of organizations to add, and receptivity of coaches and athletes to utilize, mental skills training.

Once MPCs were hired, the first step to being effective within this setting was establishing trust with players and coaches. Trust, having been identified as a foundation of the MPC-client relationship (Gould, et al., 1989; Sharp & Hodge, 2011, 2013, 2014; Sharp et al., 2015; Zakrajsek et al., 2013), was also identified as foundational by the MPCs in this study. Trust was foundational to MPCs’ long game philosophy of establishing value and critical to the working alliance. One of the underlying influences of this need for trust appeared to come from,

again, the power dynamic and negotiation of power between players and the leadership in the organization. Whether looking generally at the HPE model (Jones et al., 2009), or specifically in professional baseball, it is evident that leadership is the majority shareholder of power.

Leadership, being the front office in professional baseball, consists of people that make the executive decisions such as drafting, signing, trading, releasing, and moving players in and out of the organization. According to the MPCs, players were hesitant to give up any share of their (bargaining) power and perceived those working *in* the organization to be working *for* the organization. Thus, MPCs' first priority was to establish trust with players, and they cultivated this trust by maintaining confidentiality and investing in and committing to the player, almost at the expense of their personal lives and professional boundaries; this could be considered as "maximizing the fructification of corporeal capital and the readiness" (Wacquant, 2005, p. 461) of the MPC. MPCs working within elite sport or professional organizations should seek to understand the power—both subtle (Foucault, 1997) and obvious (French & Raven, 1959)—that exists within the context and consider how this power informs their behavior, and more specifically, the building of trust with clients.

For trust to grow, it also takes time. Time was and is as a multifaceted construct influencing the MPCs' philosophy and working alliance. In one facet, time can be considered with regard to the entire history of mental performance in professional baseball. Mental performance services have been a part of professional baseball for close to 30 years (Dorfman, 1990; Ravizza, 1990). Therefore, the recent expansion in the number of mental skills departments and positions is likely, at least partially, a result of the experiences with the MPCs' services before them. Second, MPCs recognized that it took time, at least three years, to establish trust in and value of their services within the entire organization. Building trust required a long-

term support from the leaders of the organizations. Importantly, MPCs in this setting educated the front office about their services. MPCs interested in working within the professional setting are encouraged to be up front about the need for time and the importance of trust in effective service delivery. Third, time was represented by the length of season and length of players' contracts. MPCs in this study discussed that they would be with players over the long season and sometimes for years. MPCs believed that this time allowed them to be more successful with developing players' mental skills. Outside of the transitory nature of baseball, the context of baseball in and of itself appeared to be a truly ideal context for "time" in the delivery of mental skills. MPCs knew that they could not simply go into their position and "do" mental training right away. Rather, to establish value for their services and to establish themselves as free from the mechanics of influence within the system, MPCs would need to pursue and develop trust over time. Within the structure of professional baseball, there was and is a lot of downtime for MPCs and clients (e.g., players, coaches) to engage in informal interactions. These informal interactions were viewed as valuable to building trust and establishing value for their services. Based on these findings, MPCs should consider ways they can work within the context and structure of the organization to build trusting relationships and establish value.

Seeing that trust and value were vital to establish, and that MPCs had time to do so, MPCs played the long game. MPCs were adamant to have members in the organization see their services as a "part of" rather than an "addition to" baseball. Thus, MPCs became integrated into the organization and in this, they educated, collaborated, and worked with and through coaches and support staff to normalize and bring value to mental performance services. By being around and "participant observers" in the environment, MPCs put themselves in positions for clients to approach them (i.e. client-readiness), to engage in informal conversations, to allow their services

to be viewed as normal (i.e. destigmatize), and to engage in teachable moments. Again, researchers have emphasized the need to be around (Dorfman, 1990; Ravizza, 1990) and collaborate with coaches and staff (Friesen & Orlick, 2011; McDougall et al., 2016; McGuire & Scogin, 2013) and the findings of the current study further support this notion. Therefore, as MPCs approach mental performance service delivery with organizations, they should aim to become integrated into the day-to-day operations of the organization.

Last, but certainly not least, the gender of the MPCs and the context in which they work are inextricably woven together. In this setting, male MPCs were afforded certain privileges that female MPCs were not. Because baseball has been a male-dominated sport, many of the spaces were built for men, and thus privileged for men. Male MPCs appeared to be able to fully integrate their services in the manner in which they saw fit without being questioned. Female MPCs had to adapt to masculine gendered norms and become docile bodies (see Foucault, 1997) in their service delivery. The female MPCs were not afforded the same privileges, and as such, identified the conscious and unconscious need to “try harder.” Standing out, however, was the female MPCs’ perceptions of how accepting the organizations were—or came to be—of them and their services. The organizations added offices, bathrooms, and locker rooms to meet the needs of the women they were hiring. As of 2018, there were only seven women who had an on-field coaching position in professional baseball, which was an increase from three in 2017 (Lapchick, 2019). While only two of these seven women were mental skills coaches, there were/are women providing mental skills that do not occupy “coaching” positions. Importantly, female MPCs in this study perceived professional baseball as a context that is evolving. Front office personnel, coaches, and scouts are becoming more open to and inclusive of females. Regardless, female MPCs still have a limited presence in professional baseball and have had a

limited presence in sport generally (Roper, 2002). As female MPCs enter into professional baseball, and other predominantly male-dominated spaces, they should be aware of the challenges they may face. Ultimately, though, female MPCs and male MPCs alike should not just accept the challenges, constraints, obligations, nor gender norms, but work with and through front office and coaching staffs to bring about change from within. In the same manner in which MPCs established value of their services, MPCs should seek to build trust, become integrated and embedded within the organization, seek power, and then use this influence to promote change from within as an insider rather than an outsider.

The findings of the current study reinforce that it is suitable and necessary to consider the context in which service delivery takes place. MPCs do not deliver services in a vacuum; they work within complex environments which exert major influences on their service delivery process. Sport psychology programs should continue to educate undergraduate and graduate students on the value of, and the components of, a coherent philosophy (Poczwardowski et al., 2004) and working alliance (Poczwardowski & Sherman, 2011). However, faculty in sport psychology graduate programs should also aim to bring awareness to how professional philosophies and working alliances may need to be adjusted within different contexts such as in individual, group, or larger organizational settings. Novice and experienced MPCs should also be able to understand the context of the system they are working within, knowing what and where power exists, and how trust and value are best cultivated. Last, students and MPCs alike should incorporate reflective practice (Cropley et al., 2007; Keegan, 2015; Poczwardowski et al., 1998) into their service delivery and should continually identify the barriers that can impact trust.

Furthermore, and more specifically for MPCs wanting to work in professional baseball, there should be an emphasis on becoming culturally competent, learning to communicate mental

performance techniques through multiple languages, individualizing approaches, and developing a feel for the sport. In terms of the latter, it may be helpful for MPCs to gain experience in baseball in some capacity, albeit through coaching, consulting, or observational experience.

Lastly, and with a focus on the organization instead of the individual MPC, professional baseball organizations should continue to invest time and resources in mental skills training, allow MPCs to operate with autonomy, and provide athletes and coaches with that same autonomy when offering mental skills services. Professional baseball organizations, having made strides in hiring women, are still predominantly male (Lapchick, 2018) and thus, should continue to advance equitable practices. Finally, organizations should attempt to minimize the surveillance on player's mental states and primarily gain insight into a player through their physical performances. One suggestion is for players to advocate for the removing of "mental deficits" from the 2021 proposed collective bargaining agreement.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study is not without limitations, and these limitations can serve to drive future research. First, nine of the 13 MPCs in the current study were male. In addition, the vast majority of MPCs were Caucasian and English was their first language. Therefore, additional insight may be gained from the perspectives of women, MPCs from various cultural backgrounds, and MPCs who are bi-lingual or where English is not their first language. Second, the MPCs who participated in the current study were employed full-time by the organization. MPCs operating in a different role, such as part-time or contracted, may work differently. Specifically, MPCs who are contracted may have different experiences working *for* the organization rather than *in* the organization.

Third, the majority of the MPCs who agreed to participate in the interview held favorable views about the organization and their work within the organization. These MPCs believed the organization was supportive of their services and gave MPCs autonomy to carry out their vision. Other MPCs who have worked, or are working, in professional baseball may have experienced different levels of receptivity and support from the organization. In the future, and when examining MPCs work at the organizational level, researchers should attempt to gain the perspectives of those currently working for an organization and those no longer working for an organization. MPCs who are no longer working for organizations may have faced different challenges than the MPCs in the current study.

Fourth, insight was only gained from the perspectives of MPCs working in professional baseball. For a wider and deeper understanding of the influence of context on MPCs service delivery, players, coaches, and front office leadership should be interviewed. A case-study or ethnographic study may allow the researcher to better understand the receptivity of services from the clients themselves, gain a better understanding of the day-to-day life of baseball, and see first-hand how services delivery is maximized to meet the contextual demands.

Finally, the intent of the current study was to specifically explore the context of baseball and its influence on the service delivery process. Thus, the findings of the current study may only relate to MPCs working in professional baseball. MPCs working in and with other professional sport organizations, such as the National Football League, National Hockey League, and (Women's) National Basketball Association, should be interviewed. From this, we may be able to gain a better understanding of the influence of context on the service delivery process of MPCs.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

November 25, 2019

Matt Jones

UTK - Coll of Education, Hlth, & Human - Kinesiology Recreation & Sport Studies

Re: UTK IRB-19-05525-XM

Study Title: 2.0 MPC's Perceptions of and Experience with Effective Mental Performance Consulting in Professional Baseball

Dear Matt Jones:

The Human Research Protections Program (HRPP) reviewed your application for the above referenced project and determined that your application is eligible for **exempt** review under 45 CFR 46.101. Category 2: Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: i. The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; ii. Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or iii. The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by .111(a)(7).

Your application has been determined to comply with proper consideration for the rights and welfare of human subjects and the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects. This letter constitutes full approval of your application (Version 1.2).

Institutional Review Board | Office of Research & Engagement
1534 White Avenue Knoxville, TN 37996-1529
865-974-7697 865-974-7400 fax irb.utk.edu

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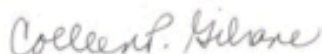
Approval Information:

- Downgrade to Exempt Category 2
- 15 participants
- Written informed consent
- UTK Knoxville Main Campus IRB Application – Version 1.2
- Informed Consent - Version 1.2
- Appendix E Research Team Pledge - Version 1.0
- Appendix D Thank you - Version 1.0
- Appendix A Recruitment - Version 1.0
- Appendix C Interview Guide 11.5 - Version 1.0

In the event that volunteers are to be recruited using solicitation materials, such as brochures, posters, web-based advertisements, etc., these materials must receive prior approval of the IRB.

Any alterations (revisions) in the protocol must be promptly submitted to and approved by the UTK Institutional Review Board prior to implementation of these revisions. You have individual responsibility for reporting to the Board in the event of unanticipated or serious adverse events and subject deaths.

Sincerely,



Colleen P. Gilrane, Ph.D.
Chair

Appendix B: MPC Recruitment Letter

To mental performance consultants working in professional baseball,

My name is Matthew Jones and I am a doctoral student in Sport Psychology and Motor Behavior at The University of Tennessee. For my dissertation, I am interested in learning more about Mental Performance Consultants experiences delivering effective sport psychology services in professional baseball with particular attention paid to professional philosophies of practice and working alliances. I would like for you to participate in an interview to gain a better understanding of the foundations of service delivery in professional baseball. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and all information will be held in strict confidence. In other words, no references will be made in oral or written reports that could link your participation to the study.

I would greatly appreciate your participation. If you are willing to participate in the interview, please email me at mjone213@vols.utk.edu and we will organize a time that's convenient for you. I anticipate the interview taking roughly 60 minutes. The time frame can be adjusted based on your availability.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you and learning more about your perceptions of the foundations of service delivery in professional baseball.

Best,
Matthew Jones, M.Ed.

Appendix C: Informed Consent Statement

Consent for Research Participation

Research Study Title: The Intersection of Context, Professional Philosophy, and Working Alliance: MPCs' Experiences in Professional Baseball

Researcher(s): Matthew Jones, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Rebecca Zakrajsek, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Why am I being asked to be in this research study?

We are asking you to be in this research study because you are a Mental Performance Consultant who has been working in professional baseball for at least one year.

What is this research study about?

The purpose of the research study is to understand mental performance consultants' perceptions of and experiences with effective service delivery in professional baseball, with particular attention on professional philosophy and working alliance.

How long will I be in the research study?

If you agree to participate in the study, your participation will last for 60-minutes.

What will happen if I say "Yes, I want to be in this research study"?

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to complete this consent form and then schedule a time to interview for 60 minutes. The time frame can be adjusted based on your availability and at your convenience. This interview will take place over the phone or using Skype. During the call, the researchers will be located in a private room in the Health and Physical Education building.

What happens if I say "No, I do not want to be in this research study"?

Being in this study is up to you. You can say no now or leave the study later. Either way, your decision won't affect your relationship with the researchers or the University of Tennessee.

What happens if I say "Yes" but change my mind later?

Even if you decide to be in the study now, you can change your mind and stop at any time.

If you decide to stop before the study is completed, your interview audio will be terminated. If the interview has been transcribed, the transcription will also be deleted.

Are there any possible risks to me?

It is possible that someone could find out you were in this study or see your study information, but we believe this risk is small because of the procedures we use to protect your information. These procedures are described later in this form. There are no unusual risks to participating in the study. It is possible that participating in this study may lead you to become more aware of how you deliver mental performance services and the challenges you have faced.

Are there any benefits to being in this research study?

We do not expect you to directly benefit from being in the study. The information you provide in this study may be valuable for mental performance consultants. The information may also be valuable for coaches, athletes, and players utilizing mental performance services both inside and outside of baseball. Your participation will also increase the limited body of knowledge on effective mental performance service delivery in professional baseball.

Who can see or use the information collected for this research study?

Most research involves some risk to confidentiality, and it is possible that someone could find out you were in this study or see your study information, but the investigators believe this risk is unlikely because of the procedures we will use to protect your information.

We will protect the confidentiality of your information by keeping information confidential and using a pseudonym of your choice in place of your name. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons involved in the data analysis, unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. All investigators will treat your interview as strictly confidential.

Direct quotes from the interview may be used in research reports or publications. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link participants to the study. The members of the research team are the only ones who will have access to audio recordings.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information or what information came from you. Although it is unlikely, there are times when others may need to see the information we collect about you. These include:

- People at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville who oversee research to make sure it is conducted properly.
- Government agencies (such as the Office for Human Research Protections in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), and others responsible for watching over the safety, effectiveness, and conduct of the research.
- If a law or court requires us to share the information, we would have to follow that law or final court ruling.

What will happen to my information after this study is over?

We will/will not keep your information to use for future research or other purposes. Your name and other information that can directly identify you will be deleted from your research data collected as part of the study.

We will not share your research data with other researchers.

What else do I need to know?

About 15 people will take part in this study. Because of the small number of participants in this study, it is possible that someone could identify you based on the information we collected from you.

If we learn about any new information that may change your mind about being in the study, we will tell you. If that happens, you may be asked to sign a new consent form.

Who can answer my questions about this research study?

If you have questions or concerns about this study, or have experienced a research related problem or injury, contact the researchers: Matthew Jones, mjone213@vols.utk.edu (814-418-2163) or Rebecca Zakrajsek, raz@utk.edu.

For questions or concerns about your rights or to speak with someone other than the research team about the study, please contact:

Institutional Review Board
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
1534 White Avenue
Blount Hall, Room 408
Knoxville, TN 37996-1529
Phone: 865-974-7697
Email: utkirb@utk.edu

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the chance to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have more questions, I have been told who to contact. By signing this document, I am agreeing to be in this study. I will receive a copy of this document after I sign it.

Name of Adult Participant

Signature of Adult Participant

Date

Appendix D: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

The Intersection of Context, Professional Philosophy, and Working Alliance: MPCs' Experiences Within Professional Baseball

Introduction:

- Greetings
- Informed Consent
- Permission for Recording

Demographics:

- Age
- Gender
- Race
- Degrees and Majors
- Years of Experience providing mental performance consulting
- Years working as an MPC in professional baseball
- Certifications (e.g. CMPC)
- Licensures
- Employment Status with the organization (eg. Full time; contracted)
- Position Title
- What level do you work at within the organization?
- Geographically, where does most of your work occur?

Questions:

I would first like to get a general idea about your role:

1. Can you please describe your responsibilities in your role within the organization?
 - a. How receptive is the organization, players, coaches, and leadership to the services you want to provide?
2. Can you tell me about how you came to work as an MPC in professional baseball?
 - a. What do you think you were hired to do?
 - b. How would you describe your goals compared to the organization's goals and the player's goals?

I am interested to know more about how the setting of professional baseball has influenced MPCs' perceptions of and experiences with mental performance consulting.

3. First, how would you define effective service delivery and more specifically, effective service delivery in baseball?
 - a. In this setting you currently work, what factors do you believe contribute to effective service delivery? What has worked?
 - b. In this setting you currently work, what factors do you believe impair effective service delivery? What hasn't worked?
 - c. In what ways has the context of baseball changed the way you deliver services?

- i. Can you give me an example comparing a past experience in a different context to your experience in your current setting in baseball?
- d. What, if any, cultural components have influenced the way you deliver services in this setting?
- e. How much agency/autonomy do you have based on your embeddedness/position within the organization?
 - i. In what ways does management constrain your work and/or support your work?
 - ii. How would you describe the power dynamics at work in the organization? In what ways do they impact you and your work?

I would like to focus more on the setting of baseball and your professional philosophy.

- 4. How would you describe your professional philosophy? (What theoretical frameworks and views on behavior change guide your philosophy?)
 - a. How has your professional philosophy changed over time?
- 5. How has the setting of baseball influenced your professional philosophy?
 - a. In what ways does this setting differ from other settings you have worked in? If it does, can you describe for me those experiences?
 - b. Are there specific aspects of the baseball setting that hinder or contribute to your integration of your professional philosophy?

In this section, I would like to focus the setting of baseball and working alliance.

- 6. How would you define a working alliance?
 - a. What do you believe contributes to an effective working alliance? Impairs?
 - i. What athlete characteristics make for an effective/ineffective working alliance?
 - ii. What MPC characteristics make for an effective/ineffective working alliance?
 - iii. Describe the components of the relationship between the athlete and MPC that is essential/impairs to a working alliance.
 - b. In the setting you currently work, what influences the ability to create working alliances?
 - c. In the setting you currently work, what influences your ability to maintain working alliances?
 - d. How does the setting you currently work in differ from others in terms of developing a working alliance?
 - i. Can you give me example to elaborate on these differences?

Up to this point, we have discussed the setting of baseball and its influence on service delivery, professional philosophy, and working alliance.

- 7. Is there anything else about the setting of baseball that influences your service delivery?
- 8. Is there anything else you would like to add to what we have talked about today?

Appendix E

Thank You Email

The Intersection of Context, Professional Philosophy, and Working Alliance: MPCs'
Experiences Within Professional Baseball

Hi /Mr./Ms. _____,

Thank you for your contribution and participation in our research that examined MPC's perceptions of effective service delivery in professional baseball.

We really appreciate you taking time from your schedule to allow us to ask a series of questions that enabled us to gain greater insight into your perceptions of effective service delivery and the foundations of your service delivery.

Once the interview data is transcribed a copy of the interview will be sent to you for your records. Please feel free to contact me or my advisor with any questions.

Thank you for your time and participation in this research.

Sincerely,

Matthew Jones, M.Ed.

Rebecca Zakrajsek, Ph.D.

Appendix F

Research Team Member's Pledge of Confidentiality

Study Title: The Intersection of Context, Professional Philosophy, and Working Alliance: MPCs' Experiences Within Professional Baseball

As a member of this project's research team, I understand that I will be reading transcriptions of confidential interviews. The information in these transcripts has been revealed by research participants who participated in this project on good faith that their interviews would remain strictly confidential. I understand that I have a responsibility to honor this confidentiality agreement. I hereby agree not to share any information in these transcriptions with anyone except the members of the research team of this project. Any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards, and I pledge not to do so.

 Research Team Member

 Date

 Research Team Member

 Date

 Research Team Member

 Date

 Research Team Member

 Date

 Research Team Member

 Date

Appendix G

Table 1

Summary of Domains, Categories, Core Ideas, Frequencies

Domains/Categories	Illustrative core idea	Frequency
Domain 1: The Context of Professional Baseball		
(a) Baseball is a business.	Professional baseball is a billion-dollar industry. Winning is important and organizations invest money and resources to find the smallest margins of victory.	Variant
(b) Limited player privacy	There is not much information about a player that is private.	Typical
(c) Quantity of clients	MPCs provided services to anywhere between 25-300 players and more than 50 staff in the organization.	Variant
(d) MLB vs. MiLB	The MiLB is more developmental in nature and there is less of a media presence. In the MLB, there is more media and wins are more important.	Typical
(e) Competition sport	Baseball is different from other sports in that players compete far more than they practice.	Variant
(f) Player livelihood	Baseball at the professional level is players vocation. For some, baseball is their livelihood and a means for generational wealth.	Variant
(g) Player and coach commitment	Players and coaches work tirelessly day in and day out with few days off.	Typical
Domain 2: Intersection of Cultures within Professional Baseball		
(a) Norms of Nationality/Ethnicity	There are various ethnicities/nationalities, and cultural norms, within professional baseball.	Typical
(b) Language	While predominantly English speaking, a large percentage of the baseball population was Spanish speaking.	Typical
(c) A man's world	Baseball is a male-dominated environment. Female MPCs had to adapt to the norms of the macho-culture and felt they had to put more effort into their service delivery than male MPCs.	Variant

(d) Age	MPCs reported that players and some coaches were young, and due to their experiences, were open to new ideas.	Variant
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Domain 3: Long-Game Philosophy of Establishing Value of MPC Services

(a) Trust as Foundational	MPCs' number one priority was establishing trust with the players, coaches, support staff, and front office.	General
(b) Client-readiness	MPCs recognized that clients had to be in control of whether or not they utilized services. MPCs waited for clients to approach them.	General
(c) Integrated	MPCs were not just an additional service, but a part of the fabric of the team; present and integrated.	General
(d) Collaboration	MPCs worked with and through coaches, support staff, and scouts to best serve the players.	Typical
(e) Serviced multiple clients	MPCs delivered services to not just players, but to coaches, support staff, scouts, and the front office.	General
(f) Education/ Normalization	MPCs spent time educating clients in the organization on their services and normalizing mental skills	General
(g) Individualized Resource	MPCs believed in individualizing their approach and viewed themselves as a resource to clients.	Typical

Domain 4: Cultivating Trust in the Working Alliance

(a) Time	MPCs emphasized spending time, sometimes between 1-2 years, up front to build relationships and establish trust.	General
(b) Timing/Feel	MPCs had to have a feel for the environment to know when, if, and how to deliver services.	Typical
(c) Confidentiality	MPCs were one of the few confidential resources for players and earned trust by maintaining confidentiality.	Typical
(d) MPC commitment	MPCs worked to match the players' and coaches' levels of commitment by being accessible and present almost 24/7.	Typical
(e) Informal interactions	MPCs cultivated trust by positioning themselves in the environment, which allowed for informal conversations related or unrelated to baseball and mental skills.	Typical

(f) Consistent follow-up	MPCs identified being consistent with following up with clients and perceived it to be critical in maintaining trust.	General
(g) Personal investment/ person-centered	MPCs cared about clients as people, not just as baseball players.	General

Domain 5: Personal and Situational Factors that Influence Receptivity to and Delivery of MPC Services

(a) Organizational support	Coaches and front office demonstrated support by providing resources, time, funding, and autonomy to MPCs so they could create and carry out the vision for mental performance.	General
(b) Paradox of time	Even though the season and days are long, MPCs had to compete with coaches and support staff for time.	Typical
(c) Agents	Agents discouraged players from seeing MPCs as they believed the MPC would disclose information to the organization.	Typical
(d) Client characteristics	Clients with a growth mindset, past mental training experience, and who were facing adversity were more open to mental skills training.	General
(e) MPC characteristics	MPCs' background, theoretical orientation, mindset, and flexibility influenced their service delivery.	General
(f) Ego	Ego (client and MPC) was identified as a factor that could get in the way of delivering services effectively	Typical

Note: Power is embedded in organizations and thus, also in the narratives of participants. Power, therefore, was not isolated as its own category, but is diffused throughout multiple categories. General = all or all but one of the cases, Typical = more than half the cases, Variant = half or less than half the cases.

Appendix H

Memo Examples

Sarah #10

Culture → came up consistently. Not just about individualizing help; but making a part of the organization. A part of!

Receptivity → important in culture. Heavily influenced by staff and players. Need trust. Takes education and role clarity.

Roles → typical mental skills education organization supported

Philosophy → not changed, but evolving continuously

- awareness at base for teaching
- easily built into setting of baseball

working alliance → Clients: open, trusting, willing
→ MPCs: trustworthy, confidential, listener.
outgoing, kind

→ relationship: trust, player led, humor

building & maintaining: face time, privacy, accessibility
on field; avoid office traveling

Femate

- navigated implicitly; wasn't conscious about changing, but did and it was her type of person she is.

- Resonates with Schneider (1987)

- people are attracted to organization that resonates w/ them. part of personality. Personality matches that of org so it is represented in her behavior.

Phil #913

Goals: be in the organization but not a part of fabric. maintain separation w/ coaches and players. Goal is to maintain trust and confidentiality.

Influences: coaches, management, players. Have to have their support in order to do good work and have continued work. Management is very supportive to allow MPC to develop plan.

Role clarity: distinguishing self from therapy, destigmatizing; educating players and coaches what he does and how he does it

Receptivity: most on board but has to fight misperceptions and negative past exp.

Philosophy → evolved in baseball; works in baseball

Trust is essential. must maintain confidentiality. Care about the player.

- Difference at the big leagues

- in how services are used, openness of coaches and players.

power to demote & shoring

Vita

Matthew S. Jones was born on February 10, 1991 in Ambon, Maluku. Prior to attending the University of Tennessee, he completed a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (Indiana, Pennsylvania) and a Master of Education degree in Kinesiology with a specialization in Sport and Exercise Psychology at Bowling Green State University (Bowling Green, Ohio). In May 2020 he received his Doctor of Philosophy degree in Kinesiology and Sport Studies with a Specialization in Sport Psychology and Motor Behavior.