1   Practitioners' use of motivational interviewing in sport: A qualitative enquiry

2

3   Submission date: 21/11/2019

4   Resubmission date: 01/07/2020

5   Resubmission date: 04/08/2020

6   Final submission date: 21/08/2020

7

8

9   Please review under Professional Practice

10   **Abstract**

11   The purpose of this study was to explore the use of motivational interviewing (MI) in

12   sport contexts by experts in that approach. Specifically, to understand which aspects

13   of the MI approach are deemed valuable for working in sport, and begin to

14   understand how these aspects are best applied. Nine practitioners participated in

15   semi-structured interviews, and thematic analysis identified themes related to core

16   and sub-components of MI (e.g., relational spirit, technical microskills, applied tools

17   and the MI communication styles continuum). Additional themes relate to integrating

18   MI with other interventions, challenges of working with athletes (e.g., mandated

19   attendance, ambivalence about change) and unique aspects of working in sport

20   contexts (e.g., frequency, duration and location of contact points). Participants also

21   outlined essential ingredients for an MI training curriculum for practitioners in sport.

22   This counseling approach appears to have valuable relational and technical

23   components to facilitate the building of the therapeutic alliance, enhance athlete

24   readiness for change, and support delivery of action-orientated interventions in

25   applied sport psychology.

26   Key words: *motivational interviewing; applied sport psychology; therapeutic*

27   *alliance; ambivalence; integration*

Introduction

28

29   The relationship between sport psychology practitioners and their athlete

30   clients is consistently recognised as very important for the outcomes of sport

31   psychology consultancy, (e.g., Andersen & Speed, 2010; Petitpas, Giges, & Danish,

32   1999; Sharp, Hodge, & Danish, 2015). Nevertheless, what is required in the

33   discipline is greater clarity on how to cultivate and maintain these working alliances,

34   beyond broad descriptions of rapport building and verbal and non-verbal

35   communication. In this regard, repeated recommendations have been made for sport

36   psychology to learn from wider disciplines within psychology (Andersen & Speed,

37   2010; Petitpas, Giges, & Danish, 1999), with limited sources delineating specific

38   relational and technical communication skills for sport psychologists (e.g., Katz &

39   Hemmings, 2009; Longstaff & Gervis, 2016; Murphy & Murphy, 2010; Watson,

40   Hilliard, & Way, 2017).

41   One approach which seeks to maximise the working alliance, and is starting

42   to receive attention in applied sport psychology (Mack, Breckon, Butt, & Maynard,

43   2017; Mack, Breckon, O'Halloran, & Butt, 2019; Turner et al., 2019, Wood, Mack, &

44   Turner, 2020), is motivational interviewing (MI; Miller & Rollnick, 2013). MI is a

45   counseling therapy which was founded on the principles of client-centred

46   psychotherapy of Carl Rogers (1959), yet is different to traditional Rogerian

47   counseling, in that it is intentionally directional (Markland, Ryan, Tobin, & Rollnick,

48   2005). Guided by its underlying 'spirit', MI primarily facilitates the building of an

49   interpersonal relationship between practitioner and client, and aims to resolve

50   ambivalence towards behavioral change. Initially applied as a pre-treatment to

51   action-orientated intervention work on substance addictions (Miller, 1983), MI was

52   conceived not from testing empirically-driven hypotheses, but phenomenologically

53 from intuitive clinical practice, as an alternative to the more confrontational styles of

54 therapy which were prominent at the time (Miller & Rose, 2009).

55   Breckon (2015) offers an extensive description of the core elements of MI: the

56 relational component (spirit) which consists of partnership, acceptance, compassion

57 and evocation; the technical component (microskills) which mobilises the spirit,

58 known by the acronym OARS - open-ended questions, affirmations, reflections,

59 summaries; the four+ processes (engaging, focussing, evoking, planning,

60 maintaining) within which the relational and technical components are actualized;

61 and the language of behavior change (change talk, sustain talk).

62   Psychotherapy research has repeatedly concluded that therapists who form

63 stronger alliances with their patients show better treatment outcomes than therapists

64 who form weaker alliances (e.g., Baldwin et al., 2007; Horvath & Symonds, 1991;

65 Martin, Garske, & Davis, 2000; Wilmots, Midgley, Thackeray, Reynolds, & Loades,

66 2019). MI acknowledges conceptual differences between relational and technical

67 components, and offers a philosophy of professional relationship development and

68 maintenance, and techniques to achieve those aims, in keeping with working alliance

69 theory (see Hatcher & Barends, 2006). Many of the therapist attributes and

70 techniques associated with strong alliances reported by Ackerman and Hilsenroth

71 (e.g., exploring, reflecting, providing accurate interpretations, and affirming; 2003)

72 can be found within the MI approach (e.g., Miller & Moyers, 2015, Table 1, p. 408;

73 Miller & Rollnick, 2013), not least the value of empathy and engagement with clients

74 (Miller & Rose, 2009). Similar attributes and techniques have been repeatedly

75 outlined as ideal for sport psychology practitioners (e.g., Sharp, Hodge, & Danish,

76 2015). What appears to be sparse in applied sport psychology literature is not the

77 importance of demonstrating engagement, forming working alliances and

78   communicating effectively with athletes (e.g., Sharp & Hodge, 2015), but explanation

79   of the fundamental processes or mechanics of achieving these things, i.e., the *how*

80   of alliance building and intervention delivery. This is a gap that MI can fill potentially,

81   particularly for students and neophyte practitioners in sport and exercise psychology.

82   One further contribution that MI may make to applied sport psychology could be a

83   framework to underpin the action-orientated approaches, such as cognitive-

84   behavioral therapies and strategies, which are dominant in the discipline. This

85   integration was, in fact, the purpose of MI upon its conception, with the MI spirit

86   (ways of *being*) supporting the techniques (ways of *doing*) of other approaches

87   (Miller & Rose, 2009). An MI-CBT integration is becoming understood in other areas

88   of psychology (e.g., Naar & Safren, 2017), and this is perhaps where sport

89   psychology could seek guidance on how to effectively integrate these complimentary

90   approaches on a common factors, assimilative or theoretical level, as opposed to

91   eclectically combining tools and techniques from multiple approaches with little

92   regard for their underpinning theories (Norcross, Karpiak, & Lister, 2005).

93   Mack and colleagues (2017) identified a limited use and understanding of

94   core elements of MI by applied sport psychologists, but a significant role for MI in

95   sport psychologists' work - including the use of MI as a stand-alone or an integration

96   with other approaches. Subsequently, Mack et al. (2019) shared a single session

97   case study outlining the use of MI with one professional athlete. Therefore, the aims

98   of the current study were to provide an in-depth exploration of which components of

99   the MI approach underpin expert practitioners' work in sport, and to begin the

100   process of understanding the application of these components, for example to

101   enhance verbal communication, facilitate alliance formation and maintenance,

102   increase athlete readiness for intervention, or in conjunction with other

103   psychotherapeutic approaches.

Method

Participants and sampling

106   Nine practitioners took part in data collection. To qualify for inclusion,

107   participants were required to have extensive knowledge of, and experience in

108   applying MI, and be doing so in a sporting context. The Motivational Interviewing

109   Network of Trainers (MINT; www.motivationalinterviewing.org) provides training

110   internationally for practitioners wishing to become trainers in MI, and determines the

111   content and curriculum for MI training globally. MINT has a rigorous application

112   process for new members, and membership of MINT was therefore used as an

113   indication of knowledge and experience in MI, and was deemed essential for

114   inclusion in this study.

115   A purposeful sample (Patton, 2002) of 16 MI practitioners known within the

116   research team's network, and thought to be using MI in a sporting context, were

117   contacted via email to participate voluntarily in this study. Further, four practitioners

118   responded to a public message broadcast on the MINT eForum (self-recruited

119   sampling; Gomm, 2008) and six practitioners were recommended to the primary

120   researcher by practitioners from the initial round of sampling (snowball sampling;

121   Patton, 2002). This represents an exhaustive initial sample, on a global scale, of

122   practitioners thought to be applying MI in a sporting context. Of these 26

123   practitioners, 17 were eliminated due to failing to satisfy inclusion criteria, or being

124   unresponsive to repeated requests to participate. This gave a final sample size of

125   nine participants, based around the world (two in Australia; five in the U.S.A.; two in

126   mainland Europe). Participants came from a range of educational and training

127   backgrounds, including clinical psychology (n=1), health psychology (n=1), sport

128   psychology (n=3), counseling (n=2) and sport coaching (n=2). All participants were

129   members of chartered societies and governing bodies of their relevant fields (e.g.,

130   Australian Psychological Society; Southern Association for Counselor Education and

131   Supervision; National Association of Social Workers). Finally, all participants were

132   applying MI in a sporting context, in roles such as head coach, sport psychologist,

133   addictions counselor, and MI trainer. The sample comprised of seven males and two

134   females, aged between 32 and 53 years (41.2 ± 6 years). Participants had between

135   4 and 23 years of experience (13.2 ± 6.9 years) in their respective fields. Finally,

136   participants were working with a range of athletes, including amateur (e.g., club, high

137   school), college (e.g., National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)), professional

138   (e.g., National Football League (NFL); Major League Baseball (MLB); Australian

139   Football League (AFL)), and Olympic level.

140   **Procedure**

141   Those recruited were sent participant information, participant consent forms

142   and a demographics questionnaire prior to their interviews. Voluntary, written,

143   informed consent was received from all participants. Ethical approval was provided

144   by the governing institution of the research team (HWB-2016-17-S&E-13, Sheffield

145   Hallam University). Data were collected in the form of semi-structured qualitative

146   interviews, which were conducted by the principal researcher. The semi-structured

147   nature of the interviews permitted the interviewer to deviate from the interview guide,

148   to explore novel concepts as and when they arose (Patton, 2002). Interviews were

149   conducted using internet-based conferencing software (Zoom; https://zoom.us/), as

150   this was a sample of international participants. All interviews were audio recorded on

151   a manual Dictaphone. Audio recordings were then transcribed (converted to written

152   form) verbatim, which initiates immersion in, familiarity with and reflection on the

153   collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2019), and can mark the beginning of the data

154   analysis process (Emerson & Frosch, 2004).

155   **Interview guide**

156   The interview guide was designed deductively, in that it was informed by

157   existing MI theory, but with flexibility to ask spontaneous, probing questions. Each

158   member of the research team contributed to the development of the final interview

159   guide. Questions in the interview guide focused on key aspects of the application of

160   MI, including the application and relevance (to sport contexts) of MI spirit, MI

161   technical skills, MI processes, eliciting change talk, managing ambivalence and

162   discord, and integrating MI with other approaches.

163   **Data analysis**

164   As latter participant interviews were being conducted, and former interviews

165   were being transcribed verbatim from audio recordings, the primary researcher

166   began to suspect that data saturation (e.g., Saunders et al., 2018) had been reached.

167   This was due to a repetition of responses given by participants in earlier interviews.

168   Therefore, additional participants were not initially sought prior to commencement of

169   data analysis. This impression of data saturation was strengthened as interview

170   transcription was completed, and after performing several initial sweeps of the

171   transcriptions to become familiar with the data, though without being pre-emptive

172   regarding what would eventually constitute themes (Saunders et al., 2018). Data

173   saturation was subsequently discussed and agreed upon within the research team

174   as data analysis progressed.

175   In order to gain a clear understanding of how MI is being applied in sport, a

176   deductive to inductive thematic analysis of the data was conducted in two phases

177   (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2019) by the primary researcher. In line with

178   the deductively-designed, a priori interview questions determined by broad MI core

179   components and language (e.g., Miller & Rollnick, 2013) an initial deductive sweep

180   of the data was performed. The purpose of this was to identify responses related to

181   the MI core components of spirit (e.g., partnership, empathy), microskills (e.g.,

182   reflections, affirmations), four+ processes (e.g., engaging, focussing) and language

183   of change (e.g., change talk, sustain talk). In the second phase, transcripts were

184   analysed inductively to identify, analyse and report novel themes from the data

185   (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013) which did not fall immediately within the MI

186   core components, such as communication styles and traps to avoid, and applied

187   tools of MI.

188   The primary researcher extracted codes consisting of discrete, original

189   participant responses from interview transcripts, and grouped codes of similar

190   meaning to create sub-themes, using spreadsheet software (Microsoft Excel). A

191   similar process was executed on a sample of interview transcripts by other members

192   of the research team. Sub-themes were discussed, discrepancies were addressed

193   and codes were re-grouped within the research team, until consensus was reached

194   that the shared meaning of codes within each sub-theme was consistent, and had

195   been labelled appropriately (Braun & Clarke, 2019). A similar process took place to

196   group sub-themes in order to construct themes, and to label themes in ways which

197   both accurately captured theme content and would be most meaningful for the

198   reader. The research team included two practitioners who are trained in MI, and two

199   who are not, whose analysis of interview transcripts was therefore not lead by prior

200   MI knowledge. This assisted with reducing researcher bias in the data analysis.

201   Throughout the analysis, MI-specific language has been used where possible

202   to label themes and subthemes, to maintain clarity and consistency with existing MI

203   literature, and the MI practitioner training process. Novel themes which were

204   constructed were labelled accordingly with new terminology. In keeping with previous

205   articles (e.g., Sharp, Hodge, & Danish, 2019) themes and sub-themes are presented

206   briefly in Tables 1-4, in conjunction with thick descriptive quotes from participants to

207   provide detail and context for the reader. Quotes were chosen based on how

208   accurately they captured the shared meaning of the theme or sub-theme they

209   represent, and those which would provide the most meaning, context and clarity for

210   the reader. Consideration was given to the eight criteria for excellence in qualitative

211   research (worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant

212   contribution, ethics, meaningful coherence) in the design, implementation, analysis

213   and reporting of this research (Tracy, 2010). To give one example of this, to

214   represent the perspectives and contributions of the entire sample, quotations from all

215   nine participants, rather than a select few individuals, were chosen to add detail and

216   context to the themes for the reader (multivocality, contained within credibility; Tracy,

217   2010). Participants have been identified with a label in accordance with their

218   professional role (e.g., Psychologist 1).

219   **Results**

220   Participants highlighted numerous aspects of the MI approach which feature

221   prominently in their applied work in sport, including the four core components of MI,

222   the applied tools of MI, sharing information and expertise with athletes in an MI-

223   consistent manner, relational and technical traps to avoid, and the MI verbal

224   communication styles continuum. Participants also described their consideration of

225   structure and processes of integrating MI with other approaches or interventions, and

226 several aspects of the MI approach which are relevant to working with athletes in

227 brief contact, or as a team. A number of challenges associated with working in sport

228 settings, and unique aspects of the sport environment, which give rise to

229 opportunities for implementing the MI approach, were also described. Finally,

230 participants shared insights on what are considered to be essential ingredients and

231 structure of MI training for sport psychologists.

232 **Core components of MI (Table 1)**

233 All nine participants commented on the four core components of MI (spirit;

234 technical skills; four processes; language of change; see Table 1), indicating that

235 these are paramount in their work with athletes, and felt these would be relevant

236 regardless of the context of their work. A summary of these can be seen in Table 1.

237 All participants indicated that the spirit of MI was essential to their work with athletes,

238 was something which drew them to the MI approach and something upon which they

239 placed great value. For example, Psychologist 2 said, "I use a lot of MI with athletes,

240 but one thing I always, always use is the spirit. To me, that's the most critical

241 component."

242 Participants spoke of the importance of each of the technical skills, primarily complex

243 reflections and affirmations:

244 *I think what the MI training did for me was really help me sharpen my use of*

245 *reflections, in particular complex reflections. I've really noticed a difference*

246 *when I've been working with clients in terms of how much quicker it is to*

247 *engage with the client now, and how we're getting better results than I was*

248 *previously.* [Psychologist 2]

249 Psychologist 1 described affirmations as "something that is specific and that you're

250 observing that's positive about an internal quality that they have." All participants

251   reported their use of the original four processes model (engage, focus, evoke, plan)

252   and several spoke of a phase of maintenance or troubleshooting, which has been

253   proposed elsewhere for addition to the original model as a fifth process (maintain),

254   known as the four+ processes (Breckon, 2015). Participants were asked to elaborate

255   on how they specifically apply these processes with athletes. Two points in particular

256   were clear and recurring; firstly, that engaging is something which is ever-present,

257   regardless of the stage in the relationship or the intervention. And secondly, that the

258   processes do not take place in a linear, stepwise manner, but rather in a fluid,

259   flexible, non-linear manner:

260   *Let's say suddenly the athlete comes up with some kind of sustain talk that*

261   *gives us a hint that maybe we are too far now in the process, do we really*

262   *have the right focus here, since here comes a lot of sustain talk? Should we*

263   *proceed to help this person resolve ambivalence, or should we maybe take it*

264   *a bit slower and just do a big mapping of the athlete's whole situation and see*

265   *what's the most important focus right now? Maybe we were a bit too quick*

266   *when we tried to move further on… it's not a step by step process.*

267   [Psychologist 4]

268   Regarding the language of change, participants referred specifically to change talk

269   (athlete language in favour of behavior change), sustain talk (athlete language

270   against behavior change), ambivalence (athlete language which indicates mixed

271   feelings about behavior change) and resistance (athlete language which indicates a

272   lack of readiness for behavior change). All participants stated that they are

273   constantly listening to the language being used by their athletes regarding behavior

274   change, and become more attuned to this the more they practise MI. Participants are

275   consciously trying to evoke change talk from their athletes, as well as trying to

276 reinforce it upon hearing it. Several participants indicated that they are deliberate

277 and selective in their responses to athlete sustain talk, opting to stay strengths-

278 orientated and frame their responses in a way that will evoke change talk rather than

279 reinforce sustain talk. It was acknowledged that change talk in particular tends to

280 come primarily in the form of 'preparatory' language:

281 *The form that I hear the most in terms of change talk is usually more of that*

282 *preparatory change talk, that desire to change, or 'I need to change' or 'I*

283 *should change', 'I should study more at night', 'I know I shouldn't be partying',*

284 *'I know I should go talk to the trainer about this injury', it's a lot of that.*

285 [Counselor 1]

286 Participants generally stated that their work with athletes is primarily about applying

287 MI in sport as they would in other settings, as opposed to a sport-specific version of

288 MI being required. For example, Coach 2 would ask themselves, "'how effective is

289 this, how can I use MI, the techniques or the spirit, how can MI help this conversation,

290 this coaching session be better?'" Nevertheless, participants indicated that an

291 intimate understanding of elite sport environments and challenges is essential, as

292 well as athlete cultures, norms, pressures, risks and rewards. It was felt that

293 adaptations to the MI approach may have to be made in order to fit with these, and

294 opportunities to apply MI in sport settings may have to be actively sought. Another

295 participant described MI as "home base", and stated, "…if I'm confused at where we

296 are, or where we're going, I always just go back to MI" [Counselor 2]. To that end,

297 participants commented further on how MI enhances their work in sport settings,

298 including applied tools, sharing information and expertise, traps to avoid, challenges

299 of working with athletes, unique aspects of the sport context, brief MI interactions,

300   the communication styles continuum, using MI with teams, integrating MI with sport

301   interventions, and MI training.

MI Applied tools (Table 2)

303   Participants referred to several tools from the MI approach, the most common

304   of which were scaling rulers, agenda setting, and elicit-provide (with permission) -

305   elicit (E-P-E; see discussion for description).

306   *I think that* [collaborative agenda setting] *does a couple of really useful*

307   *things… you're getting a sense of what is most important for the athlete, and*

308   *often we make assumptions about 'ah yes they'd like to work on this first', or*

309   *'this is most important', but by agenda setting, we're essentially asking them*

310   *'ok what's most important for you right now?', and they're then giving us that*

311   *feedback which is really valuable.* [Psychologist 2]

MI-consistent sharing information and expertise (Table 2)

313   Participants reflected that the E-P-E format is a valuable and efficient tool for

314   sharing key information with athletes in a respectful and collaborative manner, and

315   that it can be used in conjunction with more instructional or educational approaches,

316   to share information in an MI-adherent manner:

317   *I think that it's much more effective if you offer it in that MI-consistent way, that*

318   *E-P-E, asking what they know about imagery, cognitive rehearsal, asking if*

319   *they've used it before and getting some input about that. Then saying 'would*

320   *you like to hear more about it' if they don't have much knowledge about it and*

321   *how it can work, then asking if it would be useful for them and in what way.*

322   *When you do that, you get greater buy-in.* [Psychologist 2]

323   **Relational and technical traps to avoid (Table 2)**

324   Participants spoke of 'traps to avoid' from the MI approach, including the

325   'expert trap' (and associated 'righting reflex') and the 'premature focus trap'.

326   One participant gave a specific example of conflicting feelings and concerns

327   between them and an athlete who was playing through a potentially career-ending

328   injury, and highlights how priorities can be completely different between stakeholders.

329   This example contains the expert trap and righting reflex, sustain talk, acceptance

330   and equipoise (Miller & Rollnick, 2013):

331   *I had this gut feeling of 'oh my gosh, I just want this guy to get an MRI, I want*

332   *this guy to get healthy so he can dominate at the next level' but he really felt*

333   *so much like 'if I go through this and tell my coach that I'm hurt, I'm losing*

334   *eligibility, I'm afraid I'm going to miss out on being drafted, if I rehab I may not*

335   *get the velocity on my fastball that I had before', so it's hard for me in those*

336   *instances when I feel like 'I know what's best for you', and I need to leave that*

337   *feeling at the door and be willing to sit with that sustain talk, sit with some of*

338   *that resistance to change, and honour it some, rather than push and go*

339   *'you've really got to get this fixed, you need to figure this out, you need to be*

340   *honest with your coach' because I'm not in his shoes, I'm so removed from*

341   *being there.* [Counselor 1]

342   Participants also described differences between praising (i.e., attaching value or

343   making judgements about behavioral or performance outcomes) and affirming (i.e.,

344   enhancing self-efficacy, self-exploration and autonomy), and spoke generally of

345   always striving to affirm rather than praise. Nevertheless, one participant explained

346   being conscious of using both praise and affirmation in their role as a coach:

347   *I use praise as a coach, and I think most coaches do, 'nice hitting, nice job*

348   *there', but one thing that motivational interviewing has caused me to do is ask*

349   *a question like 'how do you think that went?' and I go into MI from there, so an*

350   *affirmation that I'll give them would be along the lines of 'you're thinking about*

351   *this more deeply' or 'you're taking this more seriously'…* [Coach 2]

352   **MI communication styles continuum (Table 2)**

353   Two participants, both of whom are coaches, commented on the directing-

354   guiding-following continuum of communication, and how they attempt to stay mostly

355   in the guiding style. The first of these participants acknowledged that this is openly

356   discussed between coaches during their coaching sessions:

357   *I think it's important to have a guiding style, like 95% of the time… And I talk to*

358   *my colleagues about this as well, 'we have to be more guiding now', 'now is*

359   *time to be more directive'. Often if we have been directive we have to go*

360   *quickly back to the guiding style.* [Coach 1]

361   The other participant acknowledged that there are times when they have to be

362   directive in their role, but limit this to when necessary, and described a conscious

363   process of "slipping in and out" of the MI approach [Coach 2].

364   **Brief contact MI interactions (Table 2)**

365   The unique settings and circumstances of sport contexts (see Table 3) give

366   rise to conversations which participants stated could last as little as 30 seconds. This

367   has led participants to recognise the need to be able to interact with athletes in a

368   carefully considered way in these very brief moments:

369   *Sometimes these conversations are two minutes long, but starting with that*

370   *open-ended question, 'what were you thinking here, what was the plan?', or if*

371   *I go out to the mound with a pitcher who is struggling, it's really trying to*

372   *understand better, instead of saying 'this is what you need to do, here's what*

373   *you should be doing'.* [Coach 2]

374   **Using MI with teams (Table 2)**

375   Several participants acknowledged that this was perhaps an area to which

376   they should give more consideration. Nevertheless, two participants were able to

377   give specific examples of their use of MI with teams. Psychologist 5 spoke in detail of

378   their use of MI during team sessions, for example a session to resolve conflict

379   between players and a coach:

380   *… this team meeting, I spent 90% of it reflecting back to them. A lot of it was,*

381   *'so you don't feel like the coach is listening to you; it's frustrating that he's not*

382   *asking you all what you think and just telling you what to do; so he's frustrating*

383   *you because he's moving you to new positions and he's not telling you why',*

384   *those kinds of things. And it built engagement like I haven't seen.*

385   [Psychologist 5]

386   **Integrating MI with other interventions in sport (Table 2)**

387   The suitability of MI for integrating with other approaches or interventions in

388   sport was highlighted by all participants, who felt that as a minimum, the spirit, the

389   technical skills and listening for change talk would probably be relevant in any

390   circumstance:

391   *I haven't really come across any mainstream approach that's incompatible*

392   *with motivational interviewing. People can find some way to weave it in there*

393   *in some form or fashion.* [Psychologist 3]

394   When it comes to the process of integrating MI into one's applied work, what appears

395   to be essential is having an in-depth understanding of the different approaches being

396   integrated:

397   *No matter what intervention style I'm doing, I always have motivational*

398   *interviewing running in the background, and I was trained in person-centred*

399   *therapy and existential psychotherapy and then moved into the more CBT-ish*

400   *kind of stuff, and it* [MI] *just fits really well.* [Psychologist 3]

401   This participant also spoke of two options for integrating MI with an approach like

402   CBT or interpersonal therapy, either as preparation for another intervention, or

403   applied extemporarily when faced with, for example, ambivalence:

404   *One is you just kind of do it as a precursor to CBT and then the other one is*

405   *you look at the common elements and you blend them together and I think*

406   *you could take a utilitarian approach.* [Psychologist 3]

407   Three participants shared more details of how they would integrate MI with another

408   approach for the duration of an intervention. Psychologist 2 described a framework

409   for underpinning action-orientated intervention work such as cognitive-behavioral

410   strategies:

411   *I see MI as the kind of framework for working with the athlete, and then*

412   *cognitive behavioral strategies might be some of the tools that you use within*

413   *that framework, so your mindset of working with the athlete is very much*

414   *about the spirit of MI, you're using some of the techniques of MI and so forth,*

415   *and then you're using the CB strategies, and you're delivering them within that*

416   *framework.* [Psychologist 2]

417   Psychologist 4 described how their work was 'topped and tailed' with more MI-

418   specific work, and how MI was used to support a middle phase of intervention

419   delivery:

420   *… I think I always start from MI in my approach, to explore the situation and*

421   *the goal and so on… Then I'm combining my work with strategies from*

422   *cognitive behavioral coaching, for example using mindfulness… MI is always*

423   *helpful to strengthen the readiness and to strengthen the feeling of how*

424   *important this is, and to strengthen confidence also… I always have a follow-*

425   *up session two or three months after the last session, and in that follow-up*

426   *session of course a lot of MI is the focus.* [Psychologist 4]

427   Counselor 2 indicated both an MI-intensive period at commencement of the

428   relationship, and the ever-present nature of MI in their work:

429   *I tend to be heavy on MI in the beginning, because I think the spirit is what*

430   *really creates the most fruitful relationship… after five or six sessions, we're*

431   *moving into mindfulness strategies or CBT, or for some a lot of traumatic*

432   *experiences come up, so we'll move into strategies to work through that.* [MI]

433   *is always interwoven, especially if emotions get high and an athlete needs a*

434   *break, I'll go right back to just basic reflections, that's 'home base'.* [Counselor

435   2]

436   **Challenges of working with athletes (Table 3)**

437   Several participants spoke of the challenges of working with athletes,

438   including mandated attendance, coaches wanting to know the content of sessions,

439   stigma attached to mental health and psychology, athletes not being used to

440   answering questions or having opinions, and athletes being mistrusting of 'outsiders'.

441   The MI core components of spirt and technical skills were repeatedly highlighted as

442   primary strategies in overcoming many of these challenges.

443   *I have found that I have to lay a lot more groundwork in terms of establishing*

444   *rapport and trust with athletes than I do with most of my other clients… they're*

445   *so consumed with their responsibilities to the team that I'm like an outsider… it*

446   *takes time to inspire trust.* [Counselor 2]

447   **Unique aspects of the sport context (Table 3)**

448   Several participants acknowledged that interactions in sport take place in

449   settings which are very different to other contexts (e.g., healthcare), including locker

450   rooms, training grounds, gyms and corridors. Additionally, participants acknowledged

451   that contact with athletes can occur with reduced frequency and significantly reduced

452   duration compared with other settings. Examples of these include half time, time-

453   outs and in-game situations, such as visiting a pitcher's mound during a baseball

454   game. Psychologist 4 labelled these conversations as "MI on the go". Participant 9

455   highlighted how most MI work takes place 'out of the moment', for example treatment

456   for alcohol addiction, but working in sport can involve working 'in the moment', in

457   situations which have literally just taken place, referred to here as 'hot' issues:

458   *… in baseball we're doing it often right in the moment… sometimes it's not*

459   *even after, it's in the midst of it, if it's a pitcher and I've visited the mound to*

460   *talk to him and he's struggling through something, and you're right in the*

461   *middle of it… we use this metaphor it's 'hot', it's a hot issue and they're feeling*

462   *it.* [Coach 2]

463   **MI training for sport psychologists (Table 4)**

464   Participants cited several aspects of the approach as being essential for

465   training curricula for practitioners. Firstly, there was consensus from all participants

466   that the MI core components and their constituent parts were paramount, and would

467   need to be covered and understood in depth. Auxiliary components of the approach

468   which were mentioned include the righting reflex, elicit-provide-elicit, demonstrating

469   accurate empathy, maintaining practitioner equipoise (consciously deciding not to

470   use professional expertise to influence an athlete's decision in a direction the

471   practitioner views as optimal), and how to integrate MI with other strategies.

472   Practitioners indicated that this should be achieved through a combination of

473   context-specific methods, including experiential exercises, case studies, and video

474   samples. Further, Psychologist 2 commented on the sequence of training in MI and

475   other more action-orientated approaches, which potentially has implications for

476   training pathways:

477   *And then once you have that pure understanding of how this framework* [MI]

478   *might work, then it'd be introducing the cognitive behavioral strategies,*

479   *because I think if you do them first, I think that people would often just jump*

480   *into suggesting those, and not within the framework. So my preference*

481   *would be to build the MI before the* [CB] *strategies.* [Psychologist 2]

Discussion

483   The purpose of the current study was to explore the components of MI which

484   expert practitioners are applying in sport contexts, and begin to describe the

485   application of these with athletes. Findings revealed ways in which MI can enhance

486   the work of practitioners working in different roles in sport (e.g., psychologist,

487   counselor, coach). Participants have confirmed that the four core components of MI

488   (spirit; technical skills; four processes; language of change) are as pertinent to

489   working in sport as they are to working in any other setting, something which has

490   been questioned in previous research (Mack et al., 2017). Significant overlap can be

491   seen between sub-components of the MI spirit (see Table 1) and components of the

492   'real relationship' in sport psychology as outlined by Longstaff and Gervis (2016),

493   indicating that MI is one way for students, neophyte and established practitioners to

494   develop and maintain these relational aspects of their practice.

495   The MI technical skills mobilise this spirit, helping practitioners to build

496   engagement and demonstrate empathy (which are key predictors to success in

497   talking therapies; Miller & Rose, 2009), by showing that the practitioner is listening to

498   what the athlete is saying, doing their best to understand the athlete's perspective,

499   and prompting a raised consciousness of the actual words they are using, their

500   meaning and the potential directions of the conversation. In psychotherapy, empathy

501   is consistently shown to be correlated with client satisfaction and compliance with

502   treatment, and positive outcomes of treatment, and this was recently shown also to

503   be the case for athletic trainers working with NCAA athletes (David & Larson, 2018).

504   Sub-components of the MI technical skills (Table 1) are clearly linked with 'general

505   counseling skills' for developing relationships with athletes identified by Longstaff

506   and Gervis (2016). The MI four processes can provide practitioners with a conscious

507   structure for everything from a single consultancy or coaching session to long-term,

508   ongoing support, as has previously been suggested (Mack et al., 2019). It was also

509   highlighted that practitioners are considering a period of maintenance following the

510   action/intervention phase, which may constitute a fifth process (maintenance and

511   managing relapse) as proposed by Breckon (2015), and it may benefit practitioners

512   in sport to be cognizant of maintenance and lapse response when implementing

513   psychological interventions.

514   Practitioners spoke of constantly listening for opportunities to evoke,

515   acknowledge or strengthen change talk from their athletes, to increase momentum

516   towards change. The finding that athletes' change talk is usually preparatory (client

517   language which expresses perceived desire, ability, reasons or need for behavior

518   change) rather than mobilizing (client speech which indicates intention, obligation or

519   steps taken to change behavior; Miller & Rollnick, 2013) shows support for previous

520   findings on a lack of athlete readiness for change (Massey, Gnacinski, & Meyer,

521   2015) and that athlete resistance is a crucial but neglected aspect of sport

522   psychology consultancy which should be receiving greater attention (Gardner, 2017).

523   Barriers to 'gaining entry' to athletes and teams were identified a number of years

524   ago (Ravizza, 1988), and today there are still factors which can influence an athlete's

525   attitudes and openness to engaging with sport psychology (e.g., gender, previous

526   experience, stigma tolerance - see Martin, Zakrajsek, and Wrisberg (2012) for a

527   summary). Taken together, these findings indicate that sport psychology

528   practitioners need to be prepared to work with athletes who present initially as

529   ambivalent or discordant, and to work with this as it arises, responding to sustain talk

530   and ambivalence in a non-confrontational way (Apodaca et al., 2016). This has

531   previously been identified as something which is perhaps missing in applied sport

532   psychology in the UK (Mack et al., 2017), and may begin with a recognition that

533   sustain talk and ambivalence towards change are naturally-occurring aspects of the

534   change process (Miller & Rollnick, 2013; Miller & Rose, 2009). Athlete reluctance to

535   engage with sport psychology support has been acknowledged for at least 30 years

536   (e.g., Orlick, 1989), and yet strategies for overcoming this are yet to be widely

537   acknowledged and implemented within the discipline. The initial assumption can

538   often be that the 'blame' for a lack of engagement or motivation lies with the athlete

539   (Gardner, 2017), and practitioners are instead encouraged to examine their own

540   approach and behaviors to determine if they might be contributing to athlete

541   resistance (Tod, Hardy, Lavallee, Eubank, & Ronkainen, 2019). Such self-

542   examination was described in a recent case study regarding an MI-rational emotive

543   behavior therapy (REBT) intervention with an athlete (Wood et al., 2020). Athlete

544   ambivalence and scepticism about sport psychology support arose after several

545   consultancy sessions, when the practitioner introduced the REBT phase of work

546   before client allegiance (Tod et al., 2019) had been achieved. Relational and

547   technical aspects of MI, combined with the practitioner's awareness of their role in

548   inducing athlete resistance, proved effective for addressing these issues, and

549   progressing the athlete to the point of readiness for intervention work. It has recently

550   been suggested that strategies for working with athlete resistance should be factored

551   into intervention guidelines (Latinjak, Hernando-Gimeno, Lorido-Méndez, & Hardy,

552   2019), which presents on way in which MI may support intervention delivery.

553   Participants commented on many other aspects of the MI approach beyond

554   the four core components. The need to share information or advice in an MI-

555   consistent way (viewing the athlete as resourceful and knowledgeable; being mindful

556   of collaborating and supporting athlete autonomy) was highlighted repeatedly, with a

557   need to avoid the 'expert trap' and its inherent 'righting reflex' essential to forming

558   successful relationships. One tool for doing so which was often mentioned was the

559   elicit-provide-elicit (E-P-E) framework, which facilitates practitioners in gathering

560   information held by the athlete on a certain topic, then gaining permission to fill any

561   gaps in this knowledge, and finally checking with the athlete so see how they

562   understand this new knowledge, and what they might do with it (Miller & Rollnick,

563   2013). The E-P-E framework has previously been approximated in applied sport

564   psychology literature; Petitpas et al. (1999) discuss the need for psychologists to

565   collaboratively solve problems with their athletes, by first taking time to understand

566   the athlete's issues, and then checking to see firstly whether the athlete will accept

567   information from the practitioner, and secondly if the athlete understands this

568   information once it is provided. Sachs (1999) extends this idea by suggesting an

569   additional step which takes into account the athlete's ideas for what might work for

570   them, or even strategies which they have previously (perhaps unsuccessfully)

571   attempted. The EPE framework can add value to sport psychology consultancy,

572   when applied in a skilled, considered manner.

573   The differences between praising and affirming (practitioner statements which

574   value a client positive attribute or behavior, and build self-efficacy; Miller & Rollnick,

575   2013) were discussed. Participants stated that where possible they seek to affirm

576   rather than praise, but occasionally (particularly in the role of a coach), there is a

577   need to step away from this MI-adherent strategy and offer praise which may help to

578   teach or reinforce the performance of a skill, or congratulate an athlete on their

579   performance. This ability to consciously 'slip in and out of' the MI approach also

580   appears relevant to the 'directing-guiding-following' continuum of communication

581   styles (Rollnick, Miller, & Butler, 2008), which was cited here as giving participants a

582   consciousness of which style they were adopting, and their reasons for this, and

583   helped them determine when it was appropriate to switch from the coach or expert-

584   like style of directing back to the MI-consistent style of guiding. Being conscious of

585   affirming rather than praising, and of the flow of communication styles within a

586   conversation, appears beneficial for practitioners and has recently been further

587   supported elsewhere (Wood et al., 2020).

588   Participants' comments on integrating MI with other approaches have

589   significant implications for applied practice in sport psychology. It was stated that at

590   the very least, the MI spirit, technical skills and an awareness of athlete change talk

591   are valuable in any circumstance and regardless of other approaches being used.

592   This indicates that training in MI is a route to developing and maintaining one's

593   professional philosophy, communication strategies and self-reflection in striving to

594   cultivate meaningful professional relationships with athletes, and generate

595   momentum towards athlete behavioral change. It is likely for this reason that MI was

596   described by participants in this study as 'home base'. It is noteworthy that all nine

597   participants spoke of having at least one other approach that they applied regularly

598   in their work with athletes, so MI was by no means regarded as a universal remedy

599   (cf. Miller & Rollnick, 2002).

600   Several ways of integrating MI with other approaches were indicated,

601   including: a precursor to an intervention deemed appropriate for the athlete's issues

602   or concerns; a strategy for working with ambivalence or discord, should these arise;

603   or a framework which can be used to underpin and facilitate the delivery of an

604   intervention or ongoing support from beginning to end. Regarding the latter, this is

605   likely a period of MI-intensive work at commencement of the relationship, followed by

606   delivery of the appropriate action-orientated intervention supported with relevant core

607   components from MI, and concluded with a second period of MI-intensive work for

608   review, maintenance, or possibly to assist reassessment and reformulation

609   processes. This comprehensive knowledge of the MI approach, and conscious

610   consideration of the steps for integrating MI into applied sport psychology with other

611   relevant and compatible approaches, represents a level of integration at least akin to

612   'assimilative integration', potentially even 'theoretical integration'. This is a step up

613   from 'technical eclecticism' (Norcross, Karpiak, & Lister, 2005), or a 'cherry picking'

614   or "scattergun" (Cecil & Barker, 2016, p. 63) approach, which has been proscribed

615   by the British Psychological Society as an unsuitable approach for trainee

616   practitioners (BPS, 2018). These deeper levels of integration can only be achieved

617   through greater understanding of the theories, common factors and techniques of

618   multiple approaches (Boswell, 2016), and are perhaps what practitioners in applied

619   sport psychology should be striving for. Research has already begun to describe

620   such integrations of MI with different cognitive behavioral therapies in applied sport

621   psychology (e.g., Turner et al., 2019; Wood et al., 2020).

622   Practitioners highlighted aspects of the sport context which create challenges

623   when working with athletes (Table 3). Several of these were in keeping with

624   previously identified factors which may prevent athletes from taking up or engaging

625   fully in sport psychology support (e.g., Mack et al., 2019; Martin, Zakrajsek, &

626   Wrisberg, 2012). MI appears to have several valuable tenets to assist practitioners in

627   navigating these challenges. The dynamic and unpredictable nature of consultancy

628   in the sport context also appears to create some unusual opportunities for contact

629   with athletes, often outside pre-set appointment times and in non-clinical locations

630   which would be typical of other contexts where MI has traditionally been applied.

631   These contact points can also be extremely brief, perhaps a passing conversation in

632   a corridor or changing room, and even in-game situations lasting as little as 30-60

633   seconds, when issues are 'hot' and performance may or may not be going according

634   to plan. This is absolutely the briefest of brief contact consultancy, and participants

635   were adamant that MI has a role here, by being conscious of embodying elements of

636   the MI spirit (e.g., evocation) and focusing on the MI communication microskills (e.g.,

637   asking, reflecting, affirming).

638   **Implications for training in MI**

639   Participants indicated aspects of the MI approach which would be essential

640   for a training curriculum for practitioners working in sport settings (Table 4). The

641   general consensus that practitioners are applying MI in the context of sport, as

642   opposed to a sport-specific version of MI, indicates that a grounding in broad MI

643   theory and training (i.e., Tables 1 and 2) is a suitable initiation for any practitioner

644   wishing to add MI to their applied work in sport. It was proposed by one participant

645   that students of sport psychology should be taught an approach like MI, with

646   relational and technical aspects to form the therapeutic alliance, *before* action-

647   orientated interventions. This could minimise the risk of neophyte practitioners

648   prematurely applying the only intervention strategies they have learned so far,

649   regardless of athlete resources or readiness and without developing a sound alliance,

650   assessment and formulation (e.g., Cecil & Barker, 2016). This is perhaps something

651   for professional bodies, universities and supervisors of trainees to consider.

Implications for future research

653   The training of practitioners in the MI approach opens avenues of possible

654   further research. It is of course important to investigate the impact of this training on

655   their applied practice, in terms of MI-consistency, professional relationship

656   development (from both practitioner and athlete perspectives), and impact on

657   desired outcomes, such as intervention goals and sport performance. But, only once

658   competence and consistency in applying the MI approach has been achieved,

659   reported and evidenced, can its impact in sport be truly measured. Such an

660   investigation would likely further inform best practice guidelines, help to identify

661   sport-specific adaptations of the approach (e.g., MI with teams; brief-contact MI with

662   athletes), and contribute to the development of a model for integrating MI with other

663   interventions in sport.

Strengths and limitations

665   Several sampling methods were employed to ensure the search for

666   participants for this study was as exhaustive as possible, producing a global sample

667   of practitioners who are a) working regularly in sport with amateur, international and

668   professional athletes, and b) proficient in the MI approach, as indicated by their

669   membership of MINT. The research team has attempted to show rather than tell

670   (Tracy, 2010) the reader participants' responses, using their own words and the

671   established language of the MI approach.

672   There are limitations to this study, which also need to be acknowledged. It is

673   debatable if this study has identified specific adaptations to the MI approach for use

674   in sport psychology, for example during moments of brief contact with athletes. It is

675   possible that this may only be achieved through action research or case studies, to

676   identify the nuances of adapting this approach to this specific context. Additionally,

677   the participants in this study have not provided evidence of their competence in

678   using MI, nor their fidelity to the approach. Their comments are based on their recall

679   and their self-assessment of their applied work. This opens their testimonies to

680   questions of bias and accuracy, as is the case with any qualitative research of this

681   nature. Recent research on an MI-based intervention in sport (Wood et al., 2020)

682   has begun to address this limitation by audio recording practitioner-athlete

683   consultations, assessing for practitioner MI competence and fidelity, and providing

684   verbatim extracts to support practitioner assertions and reflections.

685   **Conclusion**

686   This study has offered the most in-depth exploration to date of the

687   components of MI being applied by MI-proficient practitioners in sport settings, and

688   determined that the approach has much to offer psychologists, coaches, and other

689   practitioners working in the sport context, for whom the practitioner-athlete

690   relationship is fundamental to their role and the success of their work. This includes

691   the MI core components and tools, communication styles, traps to avoid and

692   integrating MI with action-orientated interventions. More research is needed on

693   sport-specific adaptations to the approach, including working with teams and brief

694   contact interactions. MI is a viable option for neophyte and established practitioners

695   to develop their professional philosophies, sharpen relational and communication

696   skills for building and maintaining working alliances, and enhancing their self-

697   reflection.

698   **References**

699   Ackerman, S. J., & Hilsenroth, M. J. (2003). A review of therapist characteristics and

700   techniques positively impacting the therapeutic alliance. *Clinical Psychology*

701   *Review*, *23*, 1–33.

702   Andersen, M. B., & Speed, H. D. (2010). Therapeutic relationships in applied sport

703   psychology. In S. J. Hanrahan & M. B. Andersen (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of*

704   *Applied Sport Psychology* (pp. 3–11). London: Routledge.

705   http://doi.org/10.4324/9780203851043.ch1

706   Apodaca, T. R., Jackson, K. M., Borsari, B., Magill, M., Longabaugh, R., Mastroleo,

707   N. R., & Barnett, N. P. (2016). Which individual therapist behaviors elicit client

708   change talk and sustain talk in motivational interviewing? *Journal of Substance*

709   *Abuse Treatment*, *61*, 60–65. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsat.2015.09.001

710   Baldwin, S. A., Wampold, B. E., & Imel, Z. E. (2007). Untangling the alliance-

711   outcome correlation: Exploring the relative importance of therapist and patient

712   variability in the alliance. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *75*(6),

713   842–852. http://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.75.6.842

714   Bien, T. H., Miller, W. R., & Tonigan, J. S. (1993). Brief interventions for alcohol

715   problems: a review. *Addiction*, *88*, 315–336. http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1360-

716   0443.1993.tb00820.x

717   Bordin, E. S. (1979). The generalizability of the psychoanalytic concept of the

718   working alliance. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, *16*(3),

719   252–260.

720   Boswell, J. F. (2016). A perspective on integrative psychotherapy training. *The*

721   *Integrative Therapist*, *2*(2), 5–6.

722   Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative*

723   *Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101.

724   http://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

725   Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative*

726   *Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, *11*(4), 589–597.

727   http://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806

728   Breckon, J. D. (2015). Motivational interviewing, exercise, and nutrition counseling.

729   In M. B. Andersen & S. J. Hanrahan (Eds.), *Doing Exercise Psychology* (pp. 75–

730   100). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

731   British Psychological Society. (2018). Qualification in sport and exercise psychology

732   (stage 2) candidate handbook. Retrieved from

733   https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/bps.org.uk/files/Qualifications/Sport and

734   Exercise/QSEP %28Stage 2%29 Candidate Handbook Jan 2018.pdf

735   Cecil, S., & Barker, J. (2016). Special issue: Professional training in sport and

736   exercise psychology. *Sport & Exercise Psychology Review*, *12*(2), 62–63.

737   David, S., & Larson, M. (2018). Athletes' perception of athletic trainer empathy: How

738   important is it? *Journal of Sport Rehabilitation*, *27*(1), 8–15.

739   http://doi.org/10.1123/jsr.2016-0085

740   Emerson, P., & Frosch, S. (2004). *Critical narrative analysis in psychology: A guide*

741   *to practice.* London, England: Palgrave Macmillan.

742   Gardner, F. L. (2017). Overcoming resistance from clients and stakeholders. In R.

743   Schinke & D. Hackfort (Eds.), *Psychology in Professional Sports and the*

744   *Performing Arts* (pp. 38–50). New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor & Francis.

745   Giges, B., & Petitpas, A. (2000). Brief contact interventions. *The Sport Psychologist*,

746   *14*, 176–187.

747   Gomm, R. (2008). *Social research methodology: A critical introduction*. Macmillan

748   International Higher Education.

749   Hatcher, R. L., & Barends, A. W. (2006). How a return to theory could help alliance

750   research. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, *43*(3), 292–299.

751   http://doi.org/10.1037/0033-3204.43.3.292

752   Horvath, A. O., & Symonds, B. D. (1991). Relationship between working alliance and

753   outcome in psychotherapy: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*,

754   *38*, 139–149.

755   Katz, J., & Hemmings, B. (2009). *Counselling Skills Handbook For The Sport*

756   *Psychologist*. The British Psychological Society.

757   Latinjak, A. T., Hernando-Gimeno, C., Lorido-Méndez, L., & Hardy, J. (2019).

758   Endorsement and constructive criticism of an innovative online reflexive self-talk

759   intervention. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *10*(1819).

760   http://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01819

761   Longstaff, F., & Gervis, M. (2016). The use of counseling principles and skills to

762   develop practitioner-athlete relationships by practitioners who provide sport

763   psychology support. *The Sport Psychologist*, *30*(3), 276–289.

764   http://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2015-0029

765   Mack, R., Breckon, J., Butt, J., & Maynard, I. (2017). Exploring the Understanding

766   and Application of Motivational Interviewing in Applied Sport Psychology. *The*

767   *Sport Psychologist*, (31), 396–409. http://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2016-0125

768   Mack, R. J., Breckon, J. D., O'Halloran, P. D., & Butt, J. (2019). Enhancing athlete

769   engagement in sport psychology interventions using motivational interviewing: A

770   case study. *The Sport Psychologist*, *33*(2), 159–168.

771   http://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2018-0053

772   Markland, D., Ryan, R. M., Tobin, V. J., & Rollnick, S. (2005). Motivational

773   interviewing and self-determination theory. *Journal of Social and Clinical*

774   *Psychology*, *24*(6), 811–831.

775   Martin, D. J., Garske, J. P., & Davis, M. K. (2000). Relation of the therapeutic

776   alliance with outcome and other variables: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of*

777   *Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *68*(3), 438–450.

778   Martin, S. B., Zakrajsek, R. A., & Wrisberg, C. A. (2012). Attitudes toward sport

779   psychology and seeking assistance: Key factors and a proposed model. In C. D.

780   Logan & M. I. Hodges (Eds.), *Psychology of Attitudes* (pp. 1–33). Hauppage, NY:

781   Nova Science Publishers, Inc.

782   Massey, W. V., Gnacinski, S. L., & Meyer, B. B. (2015). Psychological skills training

783   in ncaa division i athletics: Are athletes ready for change? *Journal of Clinical*

784   *Sport Psychology*, *9*(4), 317–334. http://doi.org/10.1123/jcsp.2014-0042

785   Miller, W. R. (1983). Motivational interviewing with problem drinkers. *Behavioural*

786   *Psychotherapy*, *11*(2), 147–172. http://doi.org/10.1017/S0141347300006583

787   Miller, W. R., & Moyers, T. B. (2006). Eight stages in learning motivational

788   interviewing. *Journal of Teaching in the Addictions*, *5*(1), 3–17.

789   http://doi.org/10.1300/J188v05n01

790   Miller, W. R., & Moyers, T. B. (2015). The forest and the trees: Relational and

791   specific factors in addiction treatment. *Addiction*, *110*(3), 401–413.

792   http://doi.org/10.1111/add.12693

793   Miller, W. R., & Rollnick, S. (2002). *Motivational interviewing: Preparing people for*

794   *change*. London, England: Guilford Press.

795   Miller, W. R., & Rollnick, S. (2013). *Motivational interviewing: Helping people change*.

796   London, England: Guilford Press.

797   Miller, W. R., & Rose, G. S. (2009). Toward a theory of motivational interviewing.

798   *American Psychologist*, *64*(6), 527–537. http://doi.org/10.1037/a0016830

799   Miller, W. R., & Sanchez, V. C. (1993). Motivating young adults for treatment and

800   lifestyle change. In G. S. Howard & P. E. Nathan (Eds.), *Alcohol use and misuse*

801   *by young adults* (pp. 55–81). Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

802   Murphy, S. M., & Murphy, A. J. (2010). Attending and listening. In J. Hanrahan & M.

803   B. Andersen (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Applied Sport Psychology* (pp. 12–

804   20). Oxford: Routledge.

805   Naar, S., & Safren, S. A. (2017). *Motivational interviewing and CBT: Combining*

806   *strategies for maximum effectiveness*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

807   Naar-King, S., Earnshaw, P., & Breckon, J. (2013). Toward a universal maintenance

808   intervention: Integrating cognitive-behavioral treatment with motivational

809   interviewing for maintenance of behavior change. Journal of Cognitive

810   Psychotherapy, 27(2), 126–137.

811   Norcross, J. C., Karpiak, C. P., & Lister, K. M. (2005). What's an integrationist? A

812   study of self-identified integrative and (occasionally) eclectic psychologists.

813   Journal of Clinical Psychology, 61(12), 1587–1594.

814   http://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20203

815   Orlick, T. (1989). Reflections on sportpsych consulting with individual and team sport

816   athletes at summer and winter Olympic Games. The Sport Psychologist, 3, 358–

817   365. http://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.3.4.358

818   Patton, M. Q. (2002). Qualitative research and evaluation methods (2nd ed.). London:

819   Sage.

820   Petitpas, A. J., Giges, B., & Danish, S. J. (1999). The sport psychologist-athlete

821   relationship: Implications for training. The Sport Psychologist, 13(3), 344–357.

822   http://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.13.3.344

823   Pitt, T., Thomas, O., Lindsay, P., Hanton, S., & Bawden, M. (2015). Doing sport

824   psychology briefly? A critical review of single session therapeutic approaches

825   and their relevance to sport psychology. International Review of Sport and

826   Exercise Psychology, 8(1), 125–155.

827   http://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2015.1027719

828   Ravizza, K. (1988). Gaining entry with athletic personnel for season-long consulting.

829   The Sport Psychologist, 2, 243–254. http://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2.3.243

830   Rogers, C. R. (1959). A theory of therapy, personality, and interpersonal

831   relationships, as developed in the client-centered framework client-centered

832   framework. In S. Koch (Ed.), *Psychology: A Study of a Science. Study 1, Volume*

833   *3: Formulations of the Person and the Social Context* (pp. 184–256). New York,

834   NY: McGraw-Hill.

835   Rollnick, S., Miller, W. R., & Butler, C. C. (2008). *Motivational interviewing in health*

836   *care: Helping patients change behavior*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

837   Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., … Jinks,

838   C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: Exploring its conceptualization and

839   operationalization. *Quality and Quantity*, *52*, 1893–1907.

840   http://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0574-8

841   Sharp, L.-A., Hodge, K., & Danish, S. (2015). Ultimately it comes down to the

842   relationship: Experienced consultants views of effective sport psychology

843   consulting. *The Sport Psychologist*, *29*(4), 358–370.

844   http://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2014-0130

845   Sharp, L.-A., Hodge, K., & Danish, S. (2019). "I wouldn't want to operate without it":

846   The ethical challenges faced by experienced sport psychology consultant's and

847   their engagement with supervision. Journal of Applied Sport Psychology.

848   http://doi.org/10.1080/10413200.2019.1646838

849   Tod, D., Hardy, J., Lavallee, D., Eubank, M., & Ronkainen, N. (2019). Practitioners'

850   narratives regarding active ingredients in service delivery: Collaboration-based

851   problem solving. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *43*, 350–358.

852   http://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2019.04.009

853   Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative

854   research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *16*(10), 837–851.

855   http://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410383121

856   Turner, M. J., Aspin, G., Didymus, F. F., Mack, R., Olusoga, P., Wood, A. G., &

857   Bennett, R. (2019). One case, four approaches - The application of

858   psychotherapeutic approaches in sport psychology. The Sport Psychologist.

859   Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., & Bondas, T. (2013). Content analysis and thematic

860   analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. *Nursing &*

861   *Health Sciences*, *15*(3), 398–405. http://doi.org/10.1111/nhs.12048

862   Wagner, C. C., & Ingersoll, K. S. (2012). *Motivational interviewing in groups*. New

863   York, NY: Guilford Press.

864   Watson, J., Hilliard, R., & Way, W. (2017). Counseling and communication skills in

865   sport and performance psychology. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of*

866   *Psychology*, 1–23. http://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190236557.013.140

867   Wilmots, E., Midgley, N., Thackeray, L., Reynolds, S., & Loades, M. (2019). The

868   therapeutic relationship in cognitive behaviour therapy with depressed

869   adolescents: A qualitative study of good-outcome cases. *Psychology and*

870   *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*.

871   http://doi.org/10.1111/papt.12232

872   Wood, A. G., Mack, R. J., & Turner, M. J. (2020). Developing self-determined

873   motivation and performance with an elite athlete: Integrating motivational

874   interviewing with rational emotive behavior therapy. Journal of Rational-Emotive

875   & Cognitive-Behavior Therapy. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10942-020-00351-6

876   **Table Titles**

877   **Table 1**

878   *Core Components and Sub-Components of MI Being Applied in Sport*

879   **Table 2**

880   *Auxiliary Aspects of MI Being Applied in Sport*

881   **Table 3**

882   *Sport Context Which Enables Opportunities for the Application of MI*

883   **Table 4**

884   *Essential Ingredients for MI Training in Sport Context*

885   **Table 1**

886   *Core Components and Sub-Components of MI Being Applied in Sport*

Core Components of MI	Sub-components
Spirit	Partnership
	Build athlete autonomy
	Acceptance
	Unconditional regard
	Evocation
	Compassion
	Accurate empathy
	Equipoise
Microskills	Open Questions
	Affirmations
	Reflections (simple and complex)
	Summarising
Language of change	Preparatory change talk
	Mobilising change talk
	Sustain talk
Four+ Processes	Engage
	Focus
	Evoke
	Plan
	Maintain

887

888

889   **Table 2**

890   *Auxiliary Aspects of MI Being Applied in Sport*

Theme	Sub-themes
MI applied tools	Elicit-Provide-Elicit
	Agenda mapping
	Values sort
	Scaling rulers (importance; confidence; readiness)
	Goal setting
MI-consistent sharing information and expertise	Consider the therapeutic alliance
	Dialogue not monologue
	Collaboration
	Athlete autonomy
	Athlete as expert
	MI-adherent
	Elicit-Provide-Elicit
Relational and technical traps to avoid	Expert trap
	Righting reflex
	Premature focus trap
	Affirming not praising
MI communication styles continuum	Directing
	Guiding
	Following
Brief contact MI interactions	MI spirit is essential
	MI is adaptable to brief contact
	Short, intentional interactions
	Moment-to-moment scenarios
	Know when to direct/instruct
Using MI with teams	MI processes
	Reflections
	'Global' affirmations
	Accurate empathy
Integrating MI with other interventions in sport	Spirit
	Microskills
	Change talk
	'Home base'
	Precursor
	Common factors
	Underpinning framework
	Follow-up
	Cognitive behavioral strategies

891

892

893   **Table 3**

894   *Sport Context Which Enables Opportunities for the Application of MI*

Theme	Sub-themes
Challenges of working with athletes	Mandated attendance
	Confidentiality
	Stigma towards psychology support
	Heteronomy (athletes are unaccustomed to being asked for their opinions/answers)
	Athlete mistrust of 'outsiders'
	'Quick fix' mentality within sport
	Performance-driven environment
	Deficit view of athlete issues
	Practitioner equipoise towards athlete change
	Managing discord in the relationship
	Athlete ambivalence towards change
Unique aspects of sport context	Reduced frequency of contact
	Limited duration of contact
	Non-clinical locations
	'In the moment' contact
	'Hot' issues

895

896

897   **Table 4**

898   *Essential Ingredients for MI Training in Sport Context*

Theme	Sub-themes
MI training content	Core components of MI
	Traps to avoid
	Elicit-Provide-Elicit
	Accurate empathy
	Equipoise
	MI integration with other approaches
	Sport culture, norms, pressures
MI training design	Multi-method
	Experiential
	Sport-specific materials

899