

Acquiring Valuable Consulting Experiences as Graduate Students: Insights of Two Young Professionals

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Abstract

One of the world's largest sport psychology association, the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP), advocates student attendance and participation at its annual conference for continued personal growth and career development. Yet, it is surprising that so few articles in our journals have focused on different areas pertaining to the career development of sport psychology graduate students. It is probably fair to say that currently, students in our field acquire most of their information through their courses, by reading and exchanging ideas with peers and professionals, and by attending conferences. While there have been a few publications outlining potential academic training and career options offered by different graduate programs, there does not appear to be any information on ways to acquire applied consulting experiences as graduate students. This article will attempt to shed some light on this topic and encourage readers to reflect upon their own experiences to help young professionals gain some valuable applied work in the early stages of their career. Based on the literature and our own personal experiences, we will present information on the development of knowledge and skills for high quality consulting, gaining entry and trust, and building effective relationships with athletes and coaches.

Introduction

The importance of acquiring applied consulting experiences early in one's career has been echoed over the years by both professionals and graduate students. Many students enter the field of sport psychology with the desire to do some applied work with athletes and/or coaches as early as possible in their program. Oftentimes, it is what motivates them to develop skills in this domain because they are eager to apply what they learn from theory. We can both certainly attest to this.

While most young academics receive ample amounts of theoretical and practical training concerning the proper ways of conducting research and teaching, many have been disappointed in the actual applied, "on the field" training they have received. It is noteworthy that this issue has been raised during several workshops, student meetings, and discussions at previous AAASP conferences. This issue was also discussed at length in a recent article by Silva, Conroy and Zizzi (1999). They stated that applied