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Positive Organizational Psychology in Sport: An Ethnography of Organizational Functioning in a National Sport Organization

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The 9-month ethnography reported here investigated the critical factors underpinning organizational functioning in a national sport organization. The findings illustrate the pivotal importance of interpersonal relationships and highlight the emergence of emotion-related abilities as highly influential in successful person-organization dynamics. Specifically, these related to managing conflict, communicating emotion, managing and expressing emotion for the psychological contract, contagious emotion regulation, and emotion regulation for building strong relationships. Individuals better able to monitor and manage their own emotions and those of others were able to develop and maintain more successful interpersonal relationships during a period of organizational change.

Over the past decade or so, elite sport has witnessed the rapid development of sport organizations that has had far-reaching psychosocial implications for those operating within the athletic domain. Fletcher and Wagstaff (2009) recently argued that it is, therefore, essential for sport psychology researchers and practitioners to better understand organizational influences on athletic performance. In support of their premise, they reviewed six lines of inquiry pointing to the salience of organizational issues in elite sport: factors affecting Olympic performance (see, for a review, Gould & Maynard, 2009), organizational stress (see, for a review, Fletcher, Hanton, & Mellalieu, 2006), perceptions of roles (see, e.g., Reid, Stewart, & Thorne, 2004), organizational success factors (see, e.g., Weinberg & McDermott, 2002), performance environments in elite sport (see, e.g., Pain & Harwood, 2008), and organizational citizenship behavior (see Aoyagi, Cox, & McGuire, 2008). The study reported here aims to advance our understanding of organizational psychology in elite sport via the exploration of

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the relationships that exist between organizational and individual functioning in a national sport organization (NSO).

The field of sport psychology has dedicated considerable attention to factors surrounding athletic excellence (see Gould, 2002, MacNamara, Button, & Collins, 2010), coach-athlete dyad relationships (see Rhind & Jowett, 2010), and group dynamics (see Beauchamp & Eys, 2007). For example, recent research has explored the psychological characteristics that have contributed to the development of consistent world-class performers (MacNamara et al., 2010) and perceptions of the strategies used to maintain relationship quality in the coach-athlete dyad (Rhind & Jowett, 2010). However, only limited research attention (e.g., Aoyagi, Cox, & McGuire, 2008; Weinberg & McDermott, 2002) has been paid to factors associated with optimal organizational functioning or excellence. Organizational functioning refers to how the different goals of an organization are integrated and performed on a day-to-day basis. It incorporates the efficacy, efficiency, and effectiveness of relational dynamics (processes), resource acquisition (inputs), and goal attainment (outcomes). Therefore, we define organizational functioning as a group of individuals operating together in a manner that exemplifies an optimal range of human functioning within an organization aimed at achieving organizational goals (adapted from Keyes, 2002). This may be characterized at the individual level by growth, flow, and resilience and at the team or organizational level by creativity, prosocial behavior, and resilience. Thus, if sport psychologists are to determine the level of functioning of a given organization, they may wish consider the psychosocial factors that allow individuals to flourish and grow.

Interestingly, industrial, work, and organizational (IWO) psychologists have also highlighted the importance of psychology for organizational functioning. Weinberg and Cooper (2007) recently argued that perhaps more than ever before, adopting a psychological approach is required to provide a more complete picture of organizational functioning and individual well-being. Other organizational researchers, such as Sparrow and West (2002), have also asserted the importance of interpersonal factors for organizational functioning:

> Organizations are not simply buildings or products or cultures or traditions. They are all of those things of course. But most fundamentally, they are groupings of human beings working together (more or less) to achieve often overlapping and sometimes shared goals. It is the management of their human needs, the release of their creativity, the co-ordination of their efforts and the creation of co-operative and effective communities that determines the productivity of organizations (pp. 35-36).

Thus, organizations are complex entities whose functioning depends on an array of interconnected factors, where, "no one person has a complete overview of what happens, and efficiency and effectiveness, where it is had at all, requires an army of interconnected brains, hands, and artifacts to accomplish" (Lakomski, 2005, p. vii).

Although sport psychologists have not specifically explored the role of positive interpersonal dynamics in the context of organizational functioning, IWO psychologists have asserted the importance of such factors for some time (e.g., Katz & Kahn, 1978; Schein, 1965). More recently, researchers in this domain have explored a number of positive factors associated with organizational outcomes. Fredrickson and Dutton (2008) suggested that micro changes in positive meanings, positive emotions, and positive relationships can ripple through an entire organization to produce macro-effects at the collective level. Dutton and Glynn (2007) described such "positive deviation-amplifying cycles" as the fuel of positive organizing. Other researchers have labeled similar processes within individuals as "upward spirals" (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002); although, Fredrickson and Dutton (2008) suggest that, "positive spirals do

not simply spring upward. They spring outward as well, infusing, connecting, and energizing whole networks, communities, and organizations" (p. 1).

One area of interest to IWO researchers has been the development and maintenance of social capital (Baker, 2000). This is the presence of positive interpersonal relationships within an organization, and has been linked with organizational performance (Adler & Kwon, 2002). In line with the search for such positive outcomes, an increasing amount of attention has also been given to prosocial behaviors (McNeely & Meligno, 1994), also referred to organizational citizenship behaviors (see Aoyagi et al., 2008), in organizations. These refer to helping behaviors designed to provide assistance or benefit to others that are pursued in spite of not being associated with formal organizational rewards (Bolino, Turnley, & Bloodgood, 2000).

As a new approach to understanding psychosocial preparation for elite sport, the concept of positive organizational psychology in sport (POPS; Wagstaff, Fletcher, & Hanton, 2011) may be of interest to both researchers and practitioners. POPS is inspired by the confluence of positive psychology (see Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), performance excellence (see Gould, 2002), and organizational psychology in elite sport (see Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009) with their collective focus on individual and organizational flourishing. Thus, POPS encapsulates organizational-related factors that influence individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and those factors that enhance organizational, team and individual functioning. It urges a focusing of the research lens on building organizations as sites of psychological strengths and capabilities, rather than overcoming weakness or illness. To build on the existing understanding of this area, it is our belief that POPS offers an intellectual paradigm to better understand organizational functioning in elite sport. The purpose of this study was to better understand the psychosocial factors associated with good practice in a NSO.

METHOD

Ethnographic Inquiry

The present study was conducted using an ethnographic approach. This refers to the process of collecting information about a specific group or culture, and the product that draws together events, understandings, and behaviors into a meaningful portrait (cf., Krane & Baird, 2005). During the ethnographic process, extensive fieldwork informs the production of a historically and contextually bound interpretation of environments, and therefore, interpersonal transactions. To do so, efforts are made to grasp the "natives' point of view" (Malinowski, 1922, p. 25). This is done in the hope that applied knowledge may be gleaned that, "is grounded in the experiences and beliefs of the social group members, enhancing the likelihood of generating successful solutions and interventions" (Krane & Baird, 2005, p. 88).

Ethnography remains a relatively novel method in sport psychology and there has been a recent call for its greater use (Krane & Baird, 2005). This has been supported by a steady increase in research illustrating the benefits of ethnography for exploring group dynamics (Holt & Sparkes, 2001), coach-athlete relationships (Poczwardowski, Barott, & Henschen, 2002), and coach roles (Gilbert & Trudel, 2004). Indeed, according to Krane and Baird (2005), ethnography has untapped potential to enhance our knowledge in countless ways and, "enrich our understanding of sport culture and concomitant behaviors" (p. 102). The ethnographer has the unique vantage point to observe, experience, and engage in dialogue with immediacy as events unfold, allowing penetrative insight into the affective and behavioral underpinnings of interpersonal dynamics in sport organizations. Although underused in sport psychology, IWO ethnography is well-established and offers further support for exploring psychosocial

dynamics in sport organizations. Perhaps the most resounding affirmation comes from Smith (2001):

> In short, ethnographers of work, like ethnographers writ large, have problemized what we often take for granted. By highlighting the complex in the routine and the routine in the complex . . . they have made enduring and unique contributions to the social science understanding of the dynamic nature of workplaces. These insights would not otherwise be available from study methods that cannot go deeply into organizations and occupations, study process, experience relationships and events firsthand, listen for voices, hesitations and silences, unpack and interpret meaning, and account for the effects of historical context. (p. 225).

Ethnography has been employed to establish broad social, behavioral, or emotional understanding from understudied organizations by shedding light on daily experiences and interactions. Interestingly, anthropologists (Tedlock, 2000) have noted the scarcity of attention to affect in the study of human relations, leaving them incomplete and half-meaningful. Furthermore, researchers have extolled the benefits of ethnographies that include affective phenomena due to their ability to offer insights into the strategic use of emotion (Fineman, 2000) and the behavioral and emotional consequences of workers required to "labor and perform, not so much physically, but interpersonally and emotionally" (Smith, 2001, p. 224).

Participants and Organization

The study was undertaken in the national governing body (NGB) of a British Olympic sport. Invitation e-mails were sent to performance directors within six Summer Olympic organizations because they were the perceived "gatekeepers" (Krane & Baird, 2005) associated with access. These organizations were selected based on their successful performance at the previous Olympic Games. A 50% positive response rate was received, from which the studied organization was selected based on its positive reputation for good practice. After follow-up inquiries, two organizations explained that they were considering no scientific research projects until after the next Olympic Games (18 months away) and efforts to contact the final organization were unsuccessful. A meeting with the chief executive officer (CEO) ensued and, following agreement for access to the organization, the first author was introduced by the CEO to all full-time employees in person. Participants were provided with a verbal and written briefing about the study rationale, methods, and potential uses of data. They were informed that the research aimed to identify the positive factors that underpinned the optimal functioning of the organization and all data would remain confidential and anonymous in other discussions and reproduction. All individuals agreed to participate, providing full written informed consent prior to data collection. In turn, full access was given to all areas of the organization by the gatekeepers (i.e., CEO and performance director), which proved to be critical to the effectiveness of data collection.

The organization was wholly responsible for development, performance, structure, and commercial strategy within its country, with government funding based upon the perceived effectiveness of these aspects. The organization was one of four national bodies within the United Kingdom, and thus, competed as an independent country at more minor international competitions (e.g., the Commonwealth Games). In the 12 months prior to the study, a significant amount of change had occurred in the organization. This involved the transformation from an amateur ethos with full-time staff numbers more than doubling to around 20 (80% male), requiring a number of structural and personnel changes to senior and middle management to promote the likelihood of organizational success during the next Olympic cycle. This also instigated a change in efforts within the organization from mostly promoting mass participation

toward a more balanced focus on participation maximization and performance excellence (signaling the creation of new jobs). The organization comprised circa 100 clubs, with over 5,000 performer or athlete members and 2,000 associate members. Fifty-one people from all levels of the organization were observed and interviewed during the study and included staff, volunteers, and performers (international or those on the national talent development program) from every level of the organization.

Ethnographic Techniques

To maximize the legitimacy of findings, specific research questions were not predetermined prior to immersion within the field. Instead, the researcher began with foreshadowed problems (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) and scholarly curiosity (Krane & Baird, 2005) about the research area. Thus, the researcher entered the field with an open mind about the path the research might take. As the researcher became more familiar with interactions and dynamics within the organization, formative thoughts about issues of importance relating to the optimal functioning of the organization were zoomed in upon (Silk, 2005), facilitating an ongoing, iterative process between data collection, analysis, and interpretation. It should be noted that the first author's previous life experiences and understanding of extant literature on organizational dynamics in sport (see Aoyagi et al., 2008; Weinberg & McDermott, 2002) influenced these thoughts. The research lens was narrowed on key themes relating to the broad area of interest until saturation (Silk, 2005) was deemed to be reached. To reach saturation, four methodological approaches were employed to collect data: observation, field notes, reflexive diaries, and interviews during a time spanning both the peak competitive season and off-season.

Observation

Most of the data collection period was spent in observation and informal conversation with participants, and ranged between 2 and 9 hr per day, 1 to 3 days per week, for 9 months. Observations were conducted at training and rehabilitation sites, head office, the high performance center, club, team, department, inter-department and organizational-level meetings, in pubs, parking lots, cafeterias and restaurants, public events, competitions, and staff outings. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) have advised against trying to be an all-hearing, all-seeing, or intrusive ethnographer, which may impact negatively upon the information that one is exposed to. Thus, identifying optimal times for observation, while ensuring a variation of observation times, participants, and sites, was an important part of the procedure development. Furthermore, in light of the potential sensitivity of the topic area, the observer-as-participant role was considered most appropriate, allowing the researcher to interact casually and non-directly, without fully committing himself to values or goals shared by participants (Agrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000). Such roles have also been termed "marginal native" or "professional stranger," and require greater effort to build rapport. Nevertheless, there were a number of factors that facilitated understanding of the participants' perspectives and the development of rapport. As a White male in my mid-twenties and ex-performer (10 years retired), I was of a similar age, sex, and cultural background to approximately half of the organization's professional staff and the majority of athletes observed. Consequently, my appearance, speech and behaviors were perceived to be acceptable to the participants (Holt & Sparkes, 2001). To build upon this initial acceptance, I occasionally became a helping-hand and chipped in where appropriate in day-to-day operations, for example, assisting with photocopying, mail-outs, or setting up equipment in practice sessions. Many such tasks were not enjoyed by participants, and the support created a bond between participant and researcher. This was similar to the development of a partnership between observer and participant discussed by Holt and Sparkes

(2001). I also used a number of skills including subtle eavesdropping, asking questions, and engaging in dialogue with participants. This required conscientious observation of seemingly mundane social interactions, norms, conversations, and events (Krane & Baird, 2005), allowing me to see the complex in the routine and routine in the complex (Smith, 2001).

Field Notes and Reflexive Diary

Extensive field notes were recorded providing primary information about the setting, environment, behaviors, outcomes, and key themes, and were transcribed and organized into more coherent stories each evening and resulted in more than 180 pages of double-spaced text. Simultaneously, to maintain analytical distance, a reflexive journal was kept. This recorded evaluations of successes and pitfalls and encouraged the researcher to critically examine his assumptions and own emotions in a self-aware manner (Holt & Sparkes, 2001). Such reflexivity allowed me to remain conscientious about my own behaviors and influence on the direction the study took, as the central instrument of analysis (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), and resulted in 86 pages of double-spaced text. The use of audio diaries was essential to summarize formative thoughts, questions and arising issues for later reflection, consideration, or action. These data were supplemented by studying documentary and archived materials, such as initiative and campaign documents, performer and club handbooks, training guides, mission statements, and structure development plans.

Interviews and Informal Communications

This was a core technique as it allowed participants to attach meaning to observed transactions in their own words (Krane & Baird, 2005). Three interview methods were used: unstructured (to gain descriptive information), semi-structured (to probe and gain richer information), and informal conversations (to allow new topics to emerge). These ethnographic conversations were used to understand different sides of a story or obtain different stakeholder perceptions. Through confirmation, elaboration, or discussion of an individual's perceptions, feelings and reasoning behind behavior, these conversations provided insight into the cognitive and emotional underpinnings for behavior. All participants were interviewed formally on a minimum of one occasion for approximately 1 hr, with many being interviewed informally many times over the data collection period, providing an extensive amount of interview data. Participants based at the head office (e.g., CEO, performance director, key administrators) and high performance center (e.g., national coaches, elite performers), as well as those not employed by the organization but with regular involvement at meetings or competitions (e.g., senior volunteers and committee members), were interviewed most frequently due to the ease of access to these stakeholders.

Analysis and Ethnographic Product

In accordance with previous ethnographic inquiry in sport psychology, a number of study-specific criteria were selected to improve trustworthiness (Krane & Baird, 2005). First, the researcher engaged in a prolonged immersion in the field to allow opportunity to observe transactions and understand their meaning within a broader historical and personal context. Second, it was deemed essential to maintain a strong rapport with participants in order for them to transact naturally and discuss affective content. This rapport was monitored via the reflexive journal, critical friends, and member checking. Third, in line with the suggestions of Faulkner and Sparkes (1999), the coauthors acted as critical friends throughout the study, asking thought-provoking questions about observations and interpretations. In addition, 10 participants provided affirmation of the researchers' interpretations of the data through member

checks and post-informed consent. Finally, interview transcripts, field notes, and the reflexive diary were content analyzed and continually reflected on from an empathetic stance through an ongoing posture of indwelling (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) to allow the participants' stories to emerge. These are presented as what has been termed a realist tale (Van Maanen, 1988) and first-person narrative. That is, findings are told through the participants' own voices with rich in-depth quotations, supplemented by researcher reflections to give a pen-portrait of the factors that promote positive interpersonal and psychosocial operations in the sport organization. Pseudonyms have been used to maintain anonymity.

RESULTS

The following ethnography highlights the importance of interpersonal relationships for positive organizational operations. Interestingly, rather than a cluster of behaviors, emotionally inherent skills emerged as the major contributing factor to successful relationships. These skills were contingent on the ability to process affective information and express emotions to guide interpersonal transactions, build and manage relationships, and regulate participants' own and others' emotions in cognitively complex ways. The abilities provide an ongoing thread in the following vignettes which relate to critical areas of importance for the organization. Table 1 provides a summary of the key findings and pertinent applied implications.

The Importance of Relationships

"Working relationships are not static, they are ongoing and dynamic," Scott, an administrative manager, said to me one morning in the early phase of the immersion. My ears perked up. This was interesting to me and seemed to encapsulate the direction my thinking had been taking in the past month or so since my entrance into the field. Scott's comment was a passing one in an unprompted monologue, but characteristically one which he seemed to have devoted considerable thought to since my last visit a few days before. He was a thinker, so to speak, and, as it transpired, was to often contribute insightful comments about how people interacted with each other. At that visit to the head office, I had spoken with Rob, the CEO, about how important he felt relationships were to the running of his organization. The organization was "a sea of relationships," complex and vast, and thus, it was not just good relationships that were important, but great relationships that were essential, as viewed by Rob. "They must be set in stone and then become your building blocks to effectiveness," he told me as he outlined his views on organizational success. But I wanted to know what it was about relationships that made them so important. Rob continued:

> It's interesting really. You start thinking about words like culture and values and vision, and all those things bring you back to the first principles that we need to re-establish around here [relationships]. And I don't think they have been embraced in terms of setting those stones in place so that they become part of everything you do, particularly in terms of the values, and certainly in how we engage with people as [organization] whatever that relationship may be about.

My own experiences with effective practice in sport when entering the organization were of endless chalkboard sessions where buzz words, such as communication and time management or organization skills, would be presented and bandied about rather haphazardly. It would be fair to say I was cynical about the application of such largely undefined concepts for the emotional cauldrons that are sport organizations. Hence, I was not surprised when, in an

Table 1
A Summary of Key Factors Relating to Organizational Functioning in Sport

Key factors	Description of finding	Applied implications
The importance of relationships	Findings suggest that interpersonal relationships are critically important to optimal organizational functioning. By engendering positive psychological behaviors associated with increased engagement and positive social relationships individuals within sport organizations were able to enhance "psychosocial capital" in their organization.	By working harder at developing internal and external relationships, organizations may garner greater psychosocial capital which appears to be the glue that holds organizational structures together. This may have particular application where intra-organizational groups exist with conflicting philosophies or goals.
Managing conflict	Some individuals appear better able to manage their own and others' emotions during conflict, particularly between internal stakeholder groups with conflicting visions, philosophies or goals.	During conflict, consider others' emotional investment and, where possible, ensure that communication reflects an attempt to identify and understand other stakeholders' vision and desires.
Understanding emotions in organizational transactions	Those better able to understanding the emotions present in a given situation appeared to be more likely to forge and maintain successful relationships.	By deploying attention to and attempting to decipher the meaning of underlying emotions in transactions, individuals may select more appropriate behaviors.
Communicating emotion	Individuals exemplified varying abilities to communicate emotion and this may have a buffering or amplifying quality in organizational transactions.	Developing an ability communicate with (e.g., selecting appropriate emotions) and about (e.g., talking about thoughts and feelings) emotion may enhance transaction quality or buffer against strain in relationships.
Managing and expressing emotion for the psychological contract	Emotional expressions were guided by unwritten and implicit expectations about reciprocal behaviors in relationships. The absence of such abilities appeared to put a strain on interpersonal relationships and reduce individuals' social standing.	Sport psychologists and organizations must be cognizant of the expectations, norms, and routines that are present within an organization regarding the management and expression of emotion.
Contagious emotion regulation	Individuals were able to infect others with emotions, and in doing so created positive environments where others flourished. Indeed, participants regularly caught emotions from those they transacted with in close proximity.	An informed awareness of how one's emotional expressions and verbal and non-verbal communication influence those around them may promote more effective management of transactions, relationships and the organizational environment.
Emotion regulation for building strong relationships	In addition to infecting others with emotion, individuals strategically attempted to regulate the emotions of those they transacted with for positive organizational outcomes.	The ability to change others' emotions reactively *in situ* or *a priori via* planning is likely to promote the likelihood of developing strong relationships in sport organizations.

emptying car park after a team meeting that had discussed the importance of such concepts, Dan, a performance manager, voiced what he thought had more application:

> We will develop a formal plan, and that formal plan will say that we need to build good relationships with [the sporting body] and central government, but how you do it is less easy to define, you know, there's a meeting in the diary but the emotional side of it is the important bit really, it really sets the value of that relationship.

Some days later, in a meeting, Rob spoke about emotions, and how they are inherent in every organizational transaction and relationship. Moreover, what was paramount was processing affective information and using this information skillfully within these relationships:

> You can go into a room and be told how to adopt certain behaviors in certain situations, but ultimately it comes down to the individuals . . . it's not just about being open, it's about being receptive to change, and just being aware of the bigger world, you know, all those things help you to develop a style which you then apply to other things, whether it's leading an organization or delivering a project, it's all relevant to how you work as an individual.

The thought of being aware and adapting your style in certain situations stuck in my mind as he added:

> In a way, yes, we have a huge structured organization and there is all that, which is like the bricks, but then the mortar, they are the soft elements which turn you from good to great, aren't they? It's almost like you've got to have reminders up all the time about behavior, because I believe, you know I truly believe, that these things can make a huge, huge difference.

Something was emerging here. Disguised under his humor was a conviction that individuals needed to monitor their behavior to go from good to great. I made a note in the margin to find out more about how people built and maintained relationships and if they used any skills like behavior monitoring to do so.

Managing Conflict

Due to the rapid modernization of the organization, many staff stated the need and desire to be seen as more professional. For these individuals, this had as much to do with dissociating the current structure from the amateur association and its ineffective connotations as being viewed as professional for commercial and nationalistic reasons. Allied with the ongoing professionalization of the organization were a number of changes to the structure, personnel, and value system. These changes influenced every level of the organization, and thus, regularly required constitutional agreement before implementation. This process was often characterized by a political tug-of-war between professionally employed staff and an influential core of volunteer administrators during meetings, at training venues, and personal discussions at competitions. One fundamental issue concerned the group's perceptions of effectiveness. After observing a regional committee meeting which had unspoken undercurrents of conflict, Alex, a development manager, told me midway through immersion:

> I think there can be a tendency for professional staff to sometimes be dismissive towards volunteers, and there's been a sort of stand-off like, "We know what we are doing. We are paid to do it, and you're just volunteers," but then the volunteers saying, "You're not listening to what we've done for the last fifty years and you're not listening to any of our experience, so why should we speak to you?"

As my observations continued, it became apparent that conflicts and communication breakdowns between stakeholders were not due to the constitutional underpinnings of volunteerism or professionalism per se, but a lack of understanding about the emotional investment of other stakeholders. No innate dislike or conflict existed between these individuals, yet conflicting visions often overflowed into a highly personal bureaucratic fight for power. For example, those aligned with one vision or approach to running the organization would often refute cynically

or obstruct progress given initiatives and ideas by those aligned with an alternative vision or try to dismiss these individuals as having questionable motives (e.g., power-obsessed) or misinformed (e.g., out of the loop or old school). Thus, the conflict present was a manifestation of how individuals in one group of stakeholders communicated and treated individuals in another. Debilitative incidents of conflict were caused by a failure to distinguish between and employ appropriate types of communication. Moreover, many individuals took criticism to heart or took it personally, as Dan told me. A volunteer, Mark, could understand both sides and his words from an informal conversation provide a depiction:

> Initially, when it all came out, the one thing that was very clear was the resentment towards the professional staff. Now, this came up the other day and somebody actually corrected themselves and said, "I won't call them the paid staff, because I am a professional and yet I don't get paid." Now, it was clear resentment towards these people, but it's not as if this person hasn't had an opportunity to be involved.

Speaking to Mark towards the end of the immersion, after efforts had been made to reconcile differences and reduce the personal stuff, I asked how this situation was progressing:

> Now it is everything we are about. We have moved on, people have shown where they are at. We have moved to a place where people can actually see that things are being done correctly and relationships have moved on very well because of that. I bite my tongue sometimes in situations because we really feel the need that we have got to push on, things have got to be decided.

Interestingly, this act of biting one's tongue as not to express one's thoughts or feelings appeared to have positive outcomes for relationships. Furthermore, when discussing the need to be professional, a number of employed staff indicated this need to manage one's behavior and emotional expressions for more successful transactions. Sam, a director intimated to me toward the end of fieldwork:

> It's hard really [to elicit change], you need relationships in an organization especially when you are trying to get people in the right places, to fulfill the right roles, in terms of their responsibilities and accountability, you really need those sensitivities, those delicate skills, when you are dealing with those people. You are dealing with people's feelings, more than just what they have done in the past for the organization, it is more than just their role, it is their investment, and their emotions, and their feelings that they have given.

I had another insightful discussion with Rob during one of our progress meetings. This time, he was experiencing some apprehension about how he was best going to convince the Board of major structural and responsibility changes to their own roles. "It's like turkeys voting for Christmas," he joked, although changing the tone and volume of his voice to convey his concern for the difficult emotional implications of his proposed actions:

> It's fostering a behavioral culture I think . . . if I think about my biggest stresses [sic] now, they are about relationships with some of the [volunteer] directors, where we are just miles apart; it's always that sort of thing isn't it? The things you worry about most are to do with relationships and their influence on getting people round to your way of thinking, especially with so much change in the organization at the moment.

Rob had sat down and strategically planned a meeting with each member of the board, taking each individual's personality, motivations, and investment in the organization into account. This informed how he would approach each difficult negotiation on neutral soil. Interestingly, he spoke about taking a transactional analysis approach (something he had learned on a training course previously) to how he would communicate his views (i.e., as a parent-child or adult-adult). This observation was supplemented by my reflexive diary entry later that day:

> It seems there are no problems where the employees use their interpersonal skills to get volunteers "on board" or "inside the tent" to foster some kind of psycho-social capital and guide them into new roles, making them most effective for the organization. Those who feel fully communicated to and involved in the change process appear generally content with the change. Although, I think the others feel that the change is being done to them, rather than with them.

I had begun to forge my own relationships within the organization, perceiving a good rapport with professional and volunteer participants alike who appeared happy that someone would listen to their story. I was invited to attend the Christmas staff party. As celebrations flowed, I was approached by Matt who had been present at a recent regional meeting where there had been a standoff between stakeholders, and who admitted the following:

> Often, I think the important thing is not to forget the amount of time and effort that these people have put in before we have got to where we are now. You cannot just shut the door and say, "we are totally done with the way that was" . . . In order to go forward you have got to make sure people are onboard because otherwise you just stay in status quo, and status quo in any organization and you are in a bad way.

This consideration for volunteers' emotions was often difficult for some professional staff as their jobs were predominantly results-based, and thus, they desired quick and efficient change. There appeared to be a fine line between being professional and mechanical bureaucracy. Employed staff appeared to struggle with their own values and emotional guilt of taking a hard line against volunteers, while also wanting to take a purely professional and non-emotional line. It appeared to me that great care and emotional skill was required when dealing with such situations. Indeed, the following diary excerpt illustrated my thoughts after discussing with Sam how he had developed skills to deal with such issues when rising up the organization's ladder:

> Sam talked about how he viewed his role within the organization, this was very much as a facilitator, going round putting out fires (such as tensions at committees) and being visible to people outside of the core professional office. Understanding individual's emotional investment . . . he uses what he refers to as the "softer skills" to be a sort of social fire-fighter for the organization. On the other hand, this approach seems to have a shelf life as it is inefficient to "put out fires" with individuals when longer-term cultural change is needed.

Although differences in stakeholder perceptions could be difficult to resolve in the short-term due to their paradoxical nature, the facilitation of an understanding of other stakeholders' values, motivations, and perceptions was essential to the future of relationships and social capital.

Understanding Emotions in Organizational Transactions

One of the key emotion skills appeared to relate to the ability to perceive and think rationally about emotional undercurrents in a given situation. Indeed, instances of conflict where this rationality was present could be an opportunity for understanding, progression, and development, particularly for perceptions of effectiveness or change, as Scott informed me during the second month of engagement with the organization:

> I think it depends what the confrontation is about, because with the organization, like any sport organization, it is so diverse, so you find yourself being dealt with and having to deal with things and people in a very different manner. Again, it's case-by-case. There are ways to do it, sit down with key people, put all the angst on the table, and say, "okay, what are we going to do about it"? And in doing that you have to give options, rather than say, "it's my way or the highway" . . . I think it depends on the personal abilities of people as well, you know, some people handle things totally differently; some people just have no skills or anything, "up top" in these situations.

Later in the data collection period, Jo, a volunteer administrator, was discussing the pros and cons of the selection meeting we had just attended. She was frustrated with the strength of the team, the committee opting to give young, below-par athletes' international honors rather than save budget money and ensure a better team performance. She told me a story in which she had used skills to convince an athlete who had vehemently refused to compete internationally again to return to competition and later the international arena. I asked her if she thought her actions were emotionally skilled:

> I think that if you know more about it [emotion information] you are not always able to do it, but you will probably increase the probability that you're acting in an effective way . . . So if you don't have any awareness you are more likely to step into problems or you could be really talented as a coach, or a leader, or whatever. But those are very few, and if they teach themselves they're going to be very skilled.

Tim also outlined to me how this awareness and understanding of emotions is present in top athletes as well as coaches, suggesting that greater skill in understanding emotions could be associated with better performance standards during a formal interview:

> When I see those colleagues who you think have something really good, they have something more than just teaching the game, they are delivering something more than that. They make you feel better. They make you grow as a person, not just as an athlete. And that is what you hear when you talk to the really, really high athletes, they are not unaware of what they are doing; they actually manage themselves. That, in combination with a great coach who makes them aware of their emotions . . . the really talented athletes have that understanding about their emotions.

Thus, it appeared that an awareness and understanding of emotions in organizational transactions was very important for developing and maintaining high-functioning relationships. However, it occurred to me after speaking with Tim that awareness and understanding alone were not enough, and that the ability to communicate with emotion was also important.

Communicating Emotion

The meaning attached to another's communication dramatically affected the ongoing quality of relationships. I observed and discussed situations with individuals where they exemplified varying abilities to decipher the meaning of communication and thus, their feelings about it. Specifically, although the ability to perceive different types of conflict was important for individuals' awareness about the situations they encountered, the ability to use this information and select appropriate emotion strategies in a given situation further enhanced social capital. Charlie, a development manager, was discussing the development of athletes in schools:

> I think there are several levels of skill that are important. They are present in a great deal of relationships, not least the committees in this organization. And I think they are people skills, aren't they? And they are social, or even emotional skills in particular . . . athletes are far more intelligent than they have reading skills for . . . When you get into sport and a wider peer group, if you don't have personal and social skills it inhibits your movement within them.

As indicated above, a number of developable layers of psychosocial and emotional skills were required by stakeholders. However, the layering of these was seemingly complex and situation-specific. After a few weeks, I was able to see a pattern forming as abilities became more explicit. Tim, a national coach, told me during one of our conversations, "it is not actually what you say to people or do to them that is important, it is how you make them feel that is important." After the national championships in which his athletes had competed, I inquired with Tim what skills he thought were important to building strong relationships with his athletes. As Tim spoke, I was impressed with his grasp of psychological knowledge, quoting the authors of a research paper on personality. He leaned forward and made eye contact to reinforce his point:

> The good people in these situations don't attach other things around the situation to them and actually see what's happening. "Is this is a professional argument we are having, or is it more of a friendship argument we are having?" Athletes can teach each other these emotion skills . . . I'm not a big fan of Briggs and Myers [*sic*] and stuff that is kind of pushing you into a corner and saying, "oh you are that kind of type, that is why you are acting like that" and so on. But having multiple strategies to handle the emotions in the situation, you can find out what kind of person you are and what kind of working environment you are in and find a smarter way.

Thus, it appears that developing the ability to think rationally about emotion may facilitate an understanding about interchangeable strategies for coping with potentially stressful situations and also aid our approaches for helping others to regulate their emotions in sport organizations. This was confirmed during member checks with Rob:

> A lot of this is coming up, and a lot of that has been about behavior. I've spoken to a lot of people already about how important that is, the language you use and approaches you take to situations, and not reacting and all that sort of stuff.

Although, framed to avoid reacting to negative stuff for relational betterment, this affirmed my thoughts about the need to manage emotional expression for organizational outcomes.

Managing and Expressing Emotion for the Psychological Contract

Individuals in the organization did not have a job description decreeing that they must be motivated, positive, or interested in the role they acted out. However, every transaction I

observed was guided by unwritten and implicit expectations about the reciprocal behaviors to be expressed in that relationship. These have been labeled elsewhere a psychological contract (Argyris, 1960). To elaborate, although individuals had an obligation to act out certain roles because of their position within the organization, other behaviors were actively displayed to be in accordance with the display rules or norms about experiencing and expressing emotions. Isobel, an international athlete and national champion, explained we spoke informally at a major championship:

> If everyone was working towards the same rules which are defined, and realizing that your behavior does impact upon others, and they should be aware of it. It is almost like an understanding or awareness of yourself. And I think there are these unwritten rules or expectations when people come in here to the organization about how they should behave. I think this is something that I have thought a lot about and something that over the last few years I've become more aware of.

Participants went to great lengths to abide by these unwritten rules, and yet largely underestimated the actions they took to manage and regulate their emotions to do so. For example, Dan reported observing others, "constantly walking on eggshells" to manage their emotions to avoid conflict with a high-profile elite athlete, but later stated that these actions were "just a necessary part of the job" which were "needed to 'grease the wheels.'" As such, these boundaries were intensely protected and signaled a major threat to relationships if broken. In more successful relationships there was a strong understanding of the psychological contract, which required individuals to have a high level of awareness and understanding about the emotional underpinnings in a given situation, as illustrated by Tim in a relaxed discussion:

> I think if you are going to be really, really effective in what you do then relationships are crucial, but then you need to define what kind of relationship we are going to have. It's like the relationship you have with your partner; you have one relationship with that person and a different type of relationship with the people you work with. I think it needs to be clear what your role is within the relationship, and if we have that we can be successful, but if we are not totally clear what type of relationship and our behavior within it we are going to find it hard to be successful.

Rob conveyed to me the importance of organization-wide understanding of the psychosocial rules and norms which guided it, "if this isn't assimilated throughout the organization then you might as well forget it, it's alright thinking it, but if everyone else in this organization is not behaving according to these rules, it's pointless."

The display rules about emotional expression seemed to guide all forms of communication, to the point where individuals were observed taking significant amounts of time planning their approach to mundane correspondence. This was particularly important when communicating via email due to the absence of meta-communication (e.g., tone, emphasis). Although participants clearly understood what they wanted the content to be (i.e., what they wanted to say), skill was needed in selecting how they could (i.e., psychological contract permitting) and would (i.e., what emotion they would select to employ) communicate it for the optimal outcome. Those who were more successful in managing relationships more often understood the emotions (or potential emotions) of the recipient, used information to select the most appropriate emotion strategy, and implemented this to communicate optimally. Indicating to others that one's expressed emotions were authentic was important here, and relied upon an

awareness of one's own expressions and feedback received from their target. After a national championship where difficult selection decisions had to be communicated, Tim told me:

> You have to have interpersonal skills which enable you to attach to other people. Instead of just sending the message, you need to understand that if I send them this message then it could affect them and have consequences and that the responsibility for that is yours. So being able to handle that and know something about that; I think that is important. Also being aware that I need to send this message because it is part of my job, but I can also choose how I do that; I can do it in a blunt way and send an email or if it is a not a nice decision should I contact them more personally . . . It is very easy to send a text or e-mail. You can deliver a very hard message and potentially make someone feel okay about it or make them feel really bad about it. And they will remember that the rest of their life; they don't change their view. Or you or you could have done the right thing but have made them feel useless.

To further illustrate, as expected in any organization there were instances where the emotional display rules were broken by individuals. Sue, a manager who worked in a shared office offered these insights after we had observed another worker express frustration about an administrative obstacle. During the situation I observed Sue's facial expressions instinctively display a mix of anger and frustration with her colleague. However, this was directed at her friend so it could not be detected by the expressive colleague, to whom Sue and her friend expressed empathy after they had held an elongated gaze of mutual synchronicity of frustration:

> I just think that [individuals] have fallen a little bit out of the day-to-day interactions which make things work so much better. The other ones, they want to do well and don't want to complain, they just want to talk positively, whereas [individual] talks a lot more negatively and tends to think, "oh that could go wrong, and this is going wrong, and so many complaints etc." I think if they would have a more positive outlook and keep it in a bit more—like the others do—I think that we would have more of a team. Especially when it's kind of an unwritten rule that you are not like that . . . it's that everyone else isn't like that and we all kind of buy into that attitude.

This action of withholding emotions and buying in to social norms is one example of the ways in which individuals managed emotions. Another example is provided by Matt, who contrasted his earlier dissatisfaction in a previous role with his current one after a training session:

> [colleague] always saw problems, but instead of confronting him you needed to say, "your idea is good." So you need to modify yourself and keep going with what you are doing and just shut yourself down to enable yourself to stay alive in the environment. So you need to behave in a way which allows you to just survive in that environment, you can enjoy it and like it but there are itching parts of it that you need to block out to operate. In that case I tried to think about feelings and motivations, I try to understand the person, but if they aren't modifiable and they don't want to change and they think they know best, then you need to think about what you are doing in a different light. I think there are times when you need to be diplomatic or push in the right direction when you need to. In terms of being diplomatic, it is knowing when to pick a fight. That is an important skill also.

This strategic picking of fights was apparent across the organization and often required high levels of understanding and consideration of emotion expressions. This was illustrated to me following a competition by Jo, who was concerned about key volunteers becoming preoccupied with maintaining their power after organizational change had threatened their positions:

> We need to think about what messages we are sending, inside and outside, and how we direct those messages. Who are the people we need to bring on side to influence people. Who are the strong people who we can influence? I think that kind of strategic thinking could be great to have. To be aware of these processes.

Amy, a performance manager, also told me about the emotion regulation skills she had utilized when transacting with development program performers later on during the period of fieldwork:

> It is not acting upon an impulse straight away but choosing a time when you are cooler and not full of emotions. I think that is a very good strategy to use. Most of the time you want to get it out immediately, but I think that it's a really good strategy to just wait, and then when you feel calmer you approach the situation better. And it is like that with the athletes, I've learned the hard way that when you are upset as an athlete about results perhaps it is better to just let you be, then you come to me when you are ready, and then we can talk about that, instead of trying to go in there and make an athlete feel better.

Contagious Emotion Regulation

I observed many incidents where participants were able to infect others with emotions, and in doing so create positive environments where performers blossomed. Indeed, participants regularly caught emotions from those they transacted with in close proximity. Thus, it was not surprising that the new CEO, Rob, having learned his leadership skills from a successful career in business, endeavored to generate a culture where emotions were not just left at the door, but brought inside and invested in the operations of the organization. I use his words to illustrate:

> In terms of understanding why people behave in certain ways, it's not taking the emotion out of it, it is bringing the emotion to the forefront. You can't, "leave emotion at the door," it's understanding the reasons for the emotions that people have. You could almost set out a five-year plan and start to look at priorities, the culture of the staff and how they behave, look at the board and how they work as a team. Then you can start to cascade down through the organization; are there other hotspots?

Indeed, by strategically promoting a pride and passion for success among the professional staff, a positive contagion began to influence those involved with the organization, with many participants praising the cultural change the new CEO had brought to the organization. However, Rob was not simply the leader, but also the catalyst for change the organization required, to establish integrity, loyalty, commitment and passion. His ability to perceive and select appropriate emotions and behavior was critical to infecting others with emotion to create a positive organizational culture, and in turn, increase psychosocial capital.

Emotion Regulation for Building Strong Relationships

In addition to infecting others with emotion, participants also strategically attempted to regulate the emotions of those they transacted with for positive organizational outcomes, as indicated by the following diary extract six months into immersion:

> Thinking about emotions, the more time goes on it is these individuals who are the more competent emotionally and socially, they seem to be able to regulate and manage the emotions of others in these tough situations but also seem to be able to manage their own emotions and not let them take over their behavior.

Shortly after, I spoke with Tim and asked him whether he thought there were times when he felt he should manage his and others' emotions in the organization. Quite taken aback, he answered "of course, why shouldn't I, you can't just be a blank canvas to those around you, in good or bad times." This shocked me. It was a perspective I had not considered. Tim added that he felt it was his responsibility to those around him to manage his own and their emotions. This seemed to go beyond abiding by the psychological contract. I asked him to elaborate:

> The other day, one athlete was very upset and expressing that. She is a very good athlete but was very low. So that told me in that situation, "okay it's time to take a walk now," we went for half an hour and we discussed some things, you know. There was a very nice lake there and the two of us walked and talked about things and that started to change her perception of things. And the next day she was able to improve her performance because she felt better about herself. So it's being aware of your emotions . . . because quite fast you see the impact of these negative emotions. And I think that as a coach you need to slowly build an awareness of that, you can't change people but you can make them aware. You need to be a fast learner about your emotions and how you respond and react towards things.

At this point, I revert back to Rob and his experiences. He was making progress in his getting others to buy in to his vision regarding sensitive governance structure changes. Below he describes a conversation with a member of the board after some vacation, during which he had reflected on the potential emotional implications of reorganizing the board structure:

> I think I approached that situation in a much calmer way than I think I would normally do. I was much more tactful about the approach I took, knowing what people might think or feel about what I was planning. I just took a far more cautious approach to talk through issues which I thought could upset people or the balance. And at the end of it [chairperson] turned round and said "we should have more conversations like this" . . . it just shows you, if you take a right and measured approach, you know, modify your behavior to suit the circumstances, you get the results you want; it's classic. In saying that, you have to behave differently in different situations and change what behaviors you express to suit the situation; it's different when you start a relationship to when you have one established.

Rob's measured approach to perceiving emotions provided him with information for selecting more appropriate emotion strategies to manage many difficult meetings in the coming months. Often one-on-one situations saved a negative outcome for an individual's emotional well-being, psychosocial capital and likelihood of exhibiting prosocial behaviors. Indeed, it appeared that interpersonal expertise was arguably more important than technical expertise in these scenarios:

> When I first started, I was quite aware of Michael [a volunteer], knowing that he was a stickler for statistics and precision. So I took it upon myself, being wary of this, and aware that the annual meeting was on the horizon and that there were aspects which he could take exception to. I went round to his house and spent two or three hours talking to him about the changes, my ideas and my vision for the organization. I did this really to gauge him and, how do they say, keep him "in inside the tent."

It was quite clear that, by fostering his relationship with Michael, Rob was able to gain support and mutual understanding about the vision Rob had for the organization. The effect of getting Michael inside the tent was huge. Not only did he not raise any of the pedantic issues at the AGM, which Rob was concerned about, he also become a major driving force in

a newly created sub-committee; a role at which he excelled. He was, as one volunteer said, "a completely different person." In the early stages of immersion, Michael had told me that he was stepping away from his many volunteer responsibilities. However, after this insightful and intelligent intervention from Rob, Michael, who was of retirement age, appeared to be reinvigorated with enthusiasm for new organizational horizons. A diary excerpt about this situation as it unfolded indicates my own thoughts about these actions:

> Essentially what Rob is doing is building and building his approach dependent upon the emotional underpinnings of other people's perspectives and their desires. He is building a strategic approach to how he is going to gain his change or the behavior that he wants. This guy is so clued up and perceptive about emotions. He seems to have forged strong relationships on both sides of the professional-volunteer divide during this time of change.

DISCUSSION

This study found interpersonal relationships to be critically important in the optimal functioning of a British NSO. Moreover, individuals better able to monitor and manage their emotions were more likely to forge and maintain successful relationships. By deploying attention to and processing the underlying emotions in transactions, and using this to select appropriate emotion responses, individuals were able to guide transactions more effectively. This, in turn, increased what we have termed "psychosocial capital" and displays of prosocial behavior. To elaborate, psychosocial capital appears to be a more appropriate label than "social capital" for the process identified here relating to the engendering of both positive psychological behaviors associated with increased engagement and positive social relationships among individuals within the organization (e.g., getting others on the same page or infecting others with positive emotion).

The psychological contract appeared to influence emotional expressions in the organization and provides further support for the importance of interpersonal relationships for organizational functioning. Participants' emotional awareness and regulation skills also appeared to influence their ability to express appropriate emotions to navigate transactions, and thus, their ability to abide by their psychological contract. Conversely, the absence of such abilities appeared to put a strain on interpersonal relationships and reduce individuals' social standing. Such relationships then became a vehicle for competing values and power struggles, occasionally stalling organizational progression.

The present findings advance sport psychologists' understanding of organizational functioning in sport. Specifically, the importance of emotion abilities and skills found here provide valuable insight into the factors that underpin the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships in sport organizations. Interestingly, such findings are supported by research in IWO psychology which have asserted the importance of affect-based concepts. The identification of individuals behaving in accordance with expectations and norms regarding behavior and the expression of emotion are supported by the work of Hochschild on emotional labor. Hochschild (1983) coined the term emotional labor to illustrate the actions workers took when guided by strict emotion display rules by their role in the workplace. Similarly, the skills associated with the regulation of emotions of others through infection and one's positive behavior are akin to the concept of emotional contagion (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1996). Support for the present findings also comes from the sport psychology literature. LaVoi (2007) suggested that variations in relational expertise, "the capacity to create good connections and affect the well-being of others in a positive way" (p. 38) can yield mutual

growth in the coach-athlete relationship. Additionally, strong links between the present study and the concept of emotional intelligence are evident. Mayer and Salovey (1997) define this as, "the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (p. 5). This concept has recently received attention in sport psychology (see Meyer & Fletcher, 2007) and appears to support the present findings relating to the understanding and regulating of emotions. Indeed, it is possible that emotional intelligence is an overarching construct which incorporates the skills observed here.

This study allowed the researchers to gain valuable insights into the minutiae details of transactions in sport organizations and to dissect these with participants' help in an ongoing reflexive manner. That is, the first author could discuss the cognitions, emotions, and motivations underpinning participants' behavior to a depth few methods could achieve. Such methods overcome limitations associated with retrospective interviews and critical incident techniques; where there is potential bias through social desirability and the recall of affective events and self-appraisals. Furthermore, although the first author worked hard to maintain a strong rapport with participants, which yielded many inner thoughts and feelings due to the positive and non-threatening nature of the research question, he was also consistently aware of the risks of "going native" and a number of procedures were undertaken to maintain the trustworthiness of the data. However, it would be remiss to suggest that his introduction and immersion did not influence the organizational environment in any way and it is hoped that the presentation of his role in the situations depicted and ensuing interpretation are sufficient to provide a trustworthy pen portrait of the studied organization.

Affect has traditionally been viewed as the antithesis of rationality (see Damasio, 1994); however, the data reported here suggest that affect permeates virtually every aspect of transactions in sport organizations. Thus, it would appear that the role of emotion abilities has been underestimated in organizational life. In the present study, emotion was inherent in the participants' experiences and behaviors, integral to their functioning within their environment, and therefore, an inseparable part of everyday organizational life (cf., Barsade & Gibson, 2007). Thus, it could be argued that emotions are shrouded in the cloak of human awareness, which allows us to manage interactions with others and may influence organizational processes (Weinberg & Cooper, 2007). Indeed, emotions might be considered the life-blood of organizations (Weinberg & Cooper, 2007); how those emotions are utilized or harnessed is likely to be the key to their impact upon the success of organizational transactions. Thus, the present findings imply that those who can learn to utilize emotion skills may enhance their functioning within sport organizations. In light of such findings, the authors do not suggest a cessation of identifying optimal structures, chasing commercial opportunities, or foregoing of key performance indicators. Instead, the application of such findings should be in working harder at relationships to garner psychosocial capital; this is likely to be the glue that holds these structures together. In turn, it is tentatively suggested that emotion skills may act as buffering or amplifying qualities by promoting organizational excellence in their own right. We view sport organizations as a sea of relationships, the tranquility and utility of which is underpinned by its actors' emotion skills. It is likely that sport organizations could benefit by considering psychosocial and emotion abilities during selection, training and evaluation procedures. Such applications may be of particular interest to NSOs who have a duty of care for managing the well-being of their employees and members. From a training and development perspective, it could be argued that applied sport psychologists would benefit by incorporating techniques and approaches commonly employed by organizational psychologists (e.g., organizational development and appreciative inquiry), which may better equip them for working in elite sport. Moreover, although organizational psychologists commonly consult in the business domain

regarding optimal performance, we question whether sport psychologists are currently adequately equipped to provide advice or consultancy at this level in the sporting domain. Hence, this study supports the recommendations made by Fletcher and Wagstaff (2009) regarding the training and development of sport psychologists.

In view of these findings, a number of questions remain for future research to investigate: (a) what impact does emotion regulation has on performance, psychosocial capital, and well-being? (b) are emotion abilities an extension of personality or a conceptual capacity in their own right? (c) does the concept and utility of emotional intelligence increase the success of emotion skills to build and maintain positive relationships within and between sport organizations? The benefits of these abilities and their possible development should be explored, together with their perceived potential to promote organizational excellence via intervention studies. Indeed, although the subjective data from the present study imply that the organization made significant advances toward achieving its performance goals at the next Commonwealth and Olympic Games by successfully implementing the change processes described, future research should endeavor to collect objective data relating to the performance goals of organizations. The key message for sport organizations is that the development of strong interpersonal relationships is inherent in the emotionally laden activities we partake in on a day-to-day basis. We see flourishing in and of organizations as emerging through the interplay of a set of positive cognitive, behavioral, emotional and relational mechanisms (cf. Dutton & Glynn, 2007). Operating in conjunction, these mechanisms allow for the discovery, emergence, or creation of individual and team resources (e.g., respect, optimism, information sharing), which, in turn, promote organizational flourishing. The findings point to the continued exploration of POPS to establish factors that cultivate organizations and encourage their personnel to flourish.

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