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Developing Emotion Abilities and Regulation Strategies in a Sport Organization:

An Action Research Intervention

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Abstract

Objectives: This study aimed to improve the practice of individuals operating in a sport organization by providing an intervention to develop emotion abilities and strategies. **Design:** A two-phase action research approach was adopted to facilitate the objective and to assess the intervention's effectiveness.

Method: In the first phase of the intervention, 25 individuals fulfilling a range of roles (i.e., board of directors, chief executive officer, heads of performance and development, staff, administrators, national coaches and team managers, club coaches, national talent academy athletes) attended educational workshops over a 6 month period. In the second phase, three pivotal operators (i.e., national managers) received one-to-one coaching for a further 3 months. Data were collected using a range of self-report and performance measures, participant daily diaries, a researcher's log, and social validation interviews.

Results: Following social validation procedures the findings suggest that both phases were effective at improving the practice of participants, with significant improvements in regulation strategy use, perceptions of relationship quality, and closeness. However, only participants receiving the extended one-to-one coaching showed improvement in emotional intelligence ability scores.

Conclusions: The findings indicate that short-term generic interventions to promote the use of adaptive emotion regulation strategies may be effective in sport organizations, but the purposive development of emotional intelligence may require more longitudinal and idiographic approaches.

Keywords: coaching, emotional intelligence, emotion regulation, msceit, positive organizational psychology in sport, workshops.

Developing Emotion Abilities and Regulation Strategies in a Sport Organization:
An Action Research Intervention

Scholars exploring social and psychological dynamics in sport have devoted increasing attention to the role of interpersonal relationships in attaining positive outcomes such as performance success (e.g., Antonini Philippe & Seiler, 2006). Recent reviews have also pointed to the importance of organizational psychology in sport (e.g., Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009; Wagstaff, Fletcher, & Hanton, 2012-a). Indeed, there is a growing body of research (see Wagstaff, Fletcher, & Hanton, 2012-b; 2012-c) that indicates that high-functioning relationships in sport organizations are underpinned by intra- and inter-personal emotion abilities (i.e., the ability to monitor and manage one's own and others' emotions) and regulation strategies (i.e., the strategies we use to regulate our own and others' emotions). Despite the growing evidence linking emotion abilities and organizational-level outcomes, no research has been conducted evaluating the effectiveness of emotion ability or emotion regulation interventions in sport. Moreover, despite a growing body of literature highlighting the importance of organizational issues in sport (see, for reviews, Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009; Wagstaff et al., 2012-a), no organizational-level interventions have been conducted in this domain. The present study reports the findings from a 9 month intervention within a National Sport Organization (NSO), the purpose of which was to improve participants' day-to-day functioning by developing emotion abilities and teaching adaptive emotion regulation strategies.

There is a growing body of research linking emotions (e.g., Keltner & Haidt, 2001) and emotion-related abilities (e.g., Brackett, Rivers, Shiffman, Learner, & Salovey, 2006) with a range of psychosocial outcomes, including functioning in social interaction (e.g., Lopes et al., 2004) and small work groups (e.g., Jordan & Troth, 2004). Moreover, recent findings from the sporting domain have highlighted the importance of emotion-related abilities, with individuals better able to monitor and manage their own emotions and those of others developing and maintaining more successful interpersonal relationships during a period of organizational change (see Wagstaff et al., 2012-b; 2012-c). Subsequently, Wagstaff et al. (2012-b) extended

these findings with a sample of individuals operating at various levels of performance, governance and management from a range of sport organizations. Specifically, they found three emotion abilities (i.e., identifying, processing and comprehending, and managing emotions) to be associated with the regulation (e.g., forward-tracking or “what ifs”, back-tracking or “making sense of situation”, reappraisal, suppression, and impulse control) of one’s own and others’ experience and expression of emotion.

The emotion abilities identified by Wagstaff et al. (2012-b; 2012-c) are consistent with Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) “branches” of emotional intelligence, which they defined as the “ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotion knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (p. 10). The concept of emotional intelligence has received growing interest in the field of sport psychology, with the publication of a number of recent book chapters outlining its potential value in sport (e.g., Latimer, Rench, & Brackett, 2007; Meyer & Fletcher, 2007). However, research examining the value of emotional intelligence in sport is scant, with only a handful of correlational studies testing the link between self-reported emotional intelligence and performance outcomes. Generally, the literature supports the use of self-report emotional intelligence for better understanding the emotion process that guides athletic performance (e.g., Lane Devonport, Soos, Leibinger, & Hamar, 2010; Pearlini & Halveson, 2006; Zizzi, Deaner, & Hirschhorn, 2003) and coach efficacy (e.g., Thelwell, Lane, Weston, & Greenless, 2008) in sport.

In addition to emotion abilities, Wagstaff et al. (2012-b; 2012-c) highlighted the importance of emotion regulation for optimal intra- and inter-personal outcomes in sport. Emotion regulation has been conceived as both an outcome to be pursued and a component of the emotion process (see Thompson, 1994). To elaborate, an outcome or goal perspective proposes that individuals are, “capable of keeping emotions under sufficient control to allow for interpersonal relatedness and sociability, prosocial initiatives when appropriate, sympathy

toward others, personal assertiveness when needed, and/or other indices of successful functioning” (Thompson, 1994, p. 45-46). Emotion regulation may also refer to the process which leads to such outcomes through, “the enlistment of strategies that permit flexibility, quick reappraisals of emotionally provoking situations, access to a broad range of emotions, and efficient goal directedness” (p. 46). The literature on such emotion processes (see Augustine & Hemenover, 2009; Grandey, 2000; Gross & Thompson, 2007) has generally distinguished between two forms of regulation strategy and their effects: reappraisal and expressive suppression. Reappraisal strategies aim to alter one’s emotion experience by changing thoughts, while expressive suppression is a response-focused strategy where outward displays of emotion are inhibited. Interestingly, the habitual use of these strategies may have implications for well-being. For example, reappraisal strategies have been associated with more adaptive coping and well-being outcomes, with suppression appearing to consume more cognitive resources and relate to poorer social and psychological functioning (van Middendorp, Geenen, Sorbi, van Doornen, & Bijlsma, 2005).

Given the attention paid to aspects of emotional intelligence and regulation in the field of psychology, it is surprising that there have been so few interventions aimed at developing such emotion-based strengths. Indeed, the majority of published information appears to be anecdotal in nature and widely spread across academic books, professional websites, consultancy literature, and trade magazines. Groves, McEnrue, and Shen (2008) identified three problematic issues within this literature. The first relates to confusion or mismatch between conceptual models of emotional intelligence and the tools employed to measure it, or where no psychometric properties are reported. As a result, evaluating the value of such interventions is difficult due to a lack of measurement validity and reliability. The second issue is the lack of information about the content and duration of interventions. This may be due to the highly-contextualized nature of regulation strategies and the success of teaching emotion abilities being dependent on sociocultural influences and cues (Jordan & Troth, 2004; see also Wagstaff et al., 2012-c). In light of these problems interventions aimed at enhancing emotional abilities or

strategies should give careful consideration to both theory and individual/organizational characteristics and needs. The third issue is that researchers have generally not utilized control groups to study change over time in intervention studies. However, caveats also accompany the use of control groups in affect regulation, with researchers questioning the validity of using such conditions for comparison (e.g., Augustine & Hemenover, 2009). Moreover, using organizations as control groups is complex due to their unique structures, climate and culture. Further, access to and data collection in elite performance domains without providing any intervention may be perceived unfavorably by the gatekeepers (e.g., performance directors, coaches) providing access to such populations.

Despite the issues outlined above, a small body of research has provided insight into potential value of emotional intelligence interventions in non-sport organizations. Slaski and Cartwright (2003) assessed the effectiveness of a controlled four-day mixed-model emotional intelligence workshop intervention for a sample of sixty managers from a large retail chain. They found a significant increase in emotional intelligence, well-being and health after 6-months. Although there were no quantitative performance improvements, qualitative data suggested that some participants perceived a noticeable improvement. More recently, Groves et al. (2008) employed an 11-week intensive treatment-control design with 135 business students. The findings indicated that emotional intelligence could be developed intentionally, with the treatment group demonstrating significant gains across all dimensions compared to the control group. Collectively, the research suggests that emotional intelligence and regulation strategies *may* be developed; however, there have been no evaluations of such interventions in sport. Thus, the purpose of this study was to improve the practice of individuals operating in a sport organization by providing an intervention to promote emotion abilities and strategies. In line with extant research (e.g., Wagstaff et al., 2012-b; 2012-c) which has highlighted the links between individual, relational and organizational functioning, these parameters were a pivotal metric of the evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention.

Method

Action Research

We adopted a two-phase, mixed-method, positive psychology approach to enhance functioning using an action research design. Positive psychology approaches attempt to develop human functioning and psychological capacities rather than treat mental illness or problems and have received growing attention in sport under the rubric of positive organizational psychology in sport (see Wagstaff et al., 2012-a; 2012-b; 2012-c) and non-sport organizations (see Meyers, van Woerkom, & Bakker, in press). According to Meyers et al. (in press), a positive psychology intervention may be understood as any activity intended to cultivate valued subjective experiences or positive individual traits, civic virtue or positive institutions.

The aim of action research is to generate practical knowledge that can contribute to the development of new knowledge or the resolution of specific practical problems within an organization or community. Most commonly employed in organizational and educational fields, Berg (2004) describes action research as a collaborative approach to research that involves strategic action and critical reflection and provides participants with the means to produce solutions to practical problems or improvements in practice based on individual and organizational needs. It involves researchers being immersed within a systematic and cyclic process of planning, implementing, monitoring, reflecting and evaluating to facilitate better practice by encouraging reflection on practice (Tinning, 1992). Due to its focus on improving lives through knowledge and action, action research provides an ideal framework for positive psychology interventions aimed at facilitating human growth and functioning within organizations. It is also well suited to organizational settings where researchers act as change agents (see Jackson, 1995) whilst also aiming to empower those operating within the organization by promoting participants' ownership of the change process. Such uses of action research are also consistent with the notion of "scholarly consultancy" approaches to organizational change in other performance domains. Hodgkinson & Herriot (2002) argued that scholarly consultancy interventions are, "valid *and* actionable; they are both generalizable *and* applicable to the specific case. They are produced in real-world situations and the ultimate

criterion for their validity is that they work for those involved in their production and implementation” (p. 54). Indeed, it is hoped that such strengths may go some way to overcoming the issues with previous emotion-based organizational interventions (i.e., conceptual confusion, intervention details, and difficulties of using control groups in organizational research).

Organization and Participants

A NSO was purposefully selected for three reasons: the first author had an in-depth knowledge of the organization and its climatic norms, having previously conducted ethnographic research within its sphere of influence (see Wagstaff et al., 2012-b), a strong rapport had already been established between the first author and gatekeepers; and, as a result, the gatekeepers were interested in the potential for improving practice and organizational functioning. Subsequently, in phase 1 of the study 100 key members of the organization from four geographically-defined regions were invited to attend three educational workshops. These individuals were identified by the chief executive officer (CEO) and senior management team as being essential to successful change and/or the future of the organization. They were selected from three tiers of governance and management: higher (i.e., board of directors, CEO, heads of performance and development); middle (i.e., staff, administrators, national coaches and team managers); and lower (i.e., club coaches, national talent academy athletes). From the original pool of 100 participants, 36 individuals agreed to participate in the study and completed all pre-intervention measures. Of the 36, 25 attended all three workshops and completed the pre-/post-assessments. To elaborate, seven participants were excluded from analysis due to incomplete data and four were unable to complete the final workshop due to sporting obligations abroad.

During the workshops, the researchers perceived three individuals to be pivotal to the optimal functioning of the three levels of governance and, to a large extent the organization as a whole. These individuals fulfilled the roles of national managers operating at the middle level of governance with responsibilities which required key relationships at each level of governance within the organization. Their functioning was dependent on sustaining relationships with

superiors (e.g., executive board, head of department), peers (e.g., headquarter staff, administrators), and subordinates (e.g., science and medicine staff, coaches, parents, athletes).

Due to the importance of these managers for the high-functioning of the organization, they were approached to receive one-to-one coaching. This one-to-one coaching formed the basis of phase 2 of the intervention.

Data Collection

A range of techniques were used to monitor and assess the effectiveness of the intervention, including questionnaires to assess any pre-/post-intervention effects, participant diaries to document experiences throughout the intervention, and a researcher log to detail field notes and record observations. Formal and informal semi-structured interviews conducted with all participants during and after both intervention phases provided information on its effectiveness and assisted with social validation procedures. The pre-/post-intervention questionnaires and ongoing use of diaries and logs were central to optimizing the cyclical action research processes of planning, implementation, monitoring and reflection. In total, six self-report and performance measures were selected for their validity, availability, and conceptual appropriateness for answering the research question.

Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT). The MSCEIT (Version 2.0; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002), is a 141-item measure of four dimensions or “branches” of ability to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions. One of the few performance-based measures of emotional intelligence, the MSCEIT differs from many alternative self-report tests by measuring actual abilities (see Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2009). Indeed, using self-report questionnaires to measure emotional intelligence has been criticized for numerous perceptual and social desirability bias concerns (e.g., Zeidner et al., 2009) and were deemed inappropriate here. That is, they evaluate participants' responses according to a criterion of correctness (e.g., identifying face emotions in pictures) rather than relying on a self judgment. MSCEIT scores are tested against norm scores for age and gender from a sample of the general public (n = 5, 000). Ranges for the measure are from 50-150, with

the mean score being 100 ($SD = 15$). The test publisher does not permit reproduction of test items. Confirmatory factor analysis has supported the factor structure of the measure ($\alpha = .79 - .93$) (see, for a comprehensive review, Zeidner et al., 2009).

Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ). The ERQ (Gross & John, 2003) is a measure of the habitual frequency of use of two forms of regulation strategy: reappraisal and expressive suppression. The questionnaire consists of ten questions, four of which measure suppression (e.g., “I control my emotions by not expressing them.”), and six reappraisal (e.g., “When I want to feel more positive emotion (such as joy or amusement), I change what I’m thinking about.”). Higher scores on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree) indicate more frequent use of each strategy. Therefore, subscale scores can range between 4-28 and 6-42 for suppression and reappraisal respectively. Phillips et al. (2009) reported an alpha of .88 for both reappraisal and suppression.

Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ). The CERQ (Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2002) is a 36-item multidimensional self-report measure of the cognitive strategies an individual generally uses to regulate emotions when encountering negative or threatening situations. The CERQ distinguishes nine different strategies: self-blame, acceptance, rumination, positive refocusing, refocus on planning, positive reappraisal, putting into perspective, catastrophizing, and other-blame. Items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). Individual subscale scores are obtained by summing the scores for each subscale (ranging from 4 to 20). In contrast to alternatives, it differentiates explicitly between an individual’s cognitive strategies and their actions following an event. For example, self-blame (e.g., “I feel that I am the one to blame for it”) relates to an individual’s cognitions regarding their experience rather than the behavioral actions they employ in response to it. The questionnaire has been reported to have satisfactory factorial validity and reliabilities ($\alpha = .75$ and $.87$) (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2007).

Berkley Expressivity Questionnaire (BEQ). The BEQ (Gross & John, 1997) is a 16-item self-report questionnaire assessing individual differences in dispositional emotional

expressivity. Measured on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), it provides total emotional expressivity and three sub-scale dimension scores: negative expressivity (e.g., “It is difficult for me to hide my fear”), positive expressivity (e.g., “When I’m happy, my feelings show”), and impulse strength (e.g., “My body reacts very strongly to emotional situations”). Possible BEQ total scores range from 16-112, with higher scores indicating greater expressivity. Subscale mean scores range from 1-4 (negative expressivity) and 1-6 (positive expressivity and impulse strength). Alphas of .86 have been reported for total BEQ, and .70 to .80 for the three subscales (Gross & John, 1997).

Perceived Relationship Quality Components (PRQC) Inventory. The PRQC (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000) is an 18 item scale assessing six interrelated components of close-relationship using a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely). To better reflect the organizational focus of relationships in this study, items were reworded to add the suffix “within the organization”. The items measure satisfaction (e.g., “How satisfied are you with your relationships within the organization”), commitment (e.g., “How dedicated are you to your relationships within the organization”), intimacy (e.g., “How connected are you to those you operate with within the organization”), and trust (e.g., “How dependable are those you operate with within the organization”). Two scales (love and passion) were not used in the present study because they measure intimate and love relationships, and were therefore unrelated to the research question. The mean scores of the 12 items formed a global index of relationship quality, with higher scores indicating greater perceived quality. Thus, scores for the modified questionnaire could range from 2-14, with a score between 2-5 considered low, 6-9 medium, and 10-14 high. Acceptable internal reliability ($\alpha = .88$) have been reported for the PRQC (Fletcher et al., 2000).

Relationship Quality (RELQUAL). The RELQUAL (Lages, Lages, & Lages, 2005) was used to measure operators’ perception of the relationship they perceived to be most important for the effective functioning of their role. It employs a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always) to assess 14 items which reflect four dimensions of

relationship quality. The dimensions are: amount of information sharing in the relationship (e.g., “This individual frequently discusses strategic issues with me”), communication quality of the relationship (e.g., “Strategies, objectives, and goals are communicated clearly to all involved and concerned parties by this person”), long-term relationship orientation (e.g., “Maintaining a long-term relationship with this individual is important to me”), and satisfaction with the relationship (e.g., “My association with this individual has been a highly successful one”). Total relationship quality scores range from 14-70. Satisfactory internal reliabilities for each subscale have been reported (Lages et al., 2005) for information sharing ($\alpha = .75$), communication quality ($\alpha = .86$), long-term relationship orientation ($\alpha = .81$), and relationship satisfaction ($\alpha = .83$).

Diary. A daily diary was completed by the coaching participants in phase 2 to provide an ongoing reflective account of the impact of the intervention for them and how they used the techniques learnt during coaching sessions in their day-to-day transactions. It also allowed them to more actively participate in their own personal and professional growth. Participants chose the content they reflected on but were encouraged to include personal observations and insights into their behaviors, interactions, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, fears, obstacles, failures and successes. Diaries were returned on a weekly basis to the researchers and discussed during coaching sessions to help participants develop self-awareness and achieve deeper levels of critical reflection. Participants were also encouraged to reflect on times during which they observed or helped others regulate emotions. The intention of this reflection was to encourage vicarious learning and promote social awareness. Diary methods have been successfully used to address a range of research questions within the domain of organizational psychology in sport (e.g., Wagstaff et al., 2012-b).

Field notes, reflexive journal and research log. Personal notes and written memos were completed by the first author in the field to provide a descriptive account of daily activity. These provided primary information about the setting, environment, behaviors, outcomes, and central themes relating to the intervention process. In addition to field notes, immediately after

each workshop and coaching session a brief audio diary was completed using an electronic voice recorder. This process allowed the research team to maintain an accurate account of relating to reflections on each session throughout the research process. Collectively, these data sources ‘from the field’ were written-up into more coherent stories each evening and recorded in a research log. Simultaneously, in order to maintain analytical distance, a reflexive journal was kept by the first author. The journal provided recorded evaluations of successes and pitfalls and encouraged critical examination of researcher assumptions, actions and own emotions in a self-conscious and self-aware manner. The maintenance of the field notes, reflexive journal and research log provided a critical source of data at each phase of the action research cycle by informing intervention decisions and were a key instrument in subsequent analysis.

Social Validation. In line with recommendations for social validation procedures (Page & Thelwell, 2012), frequent informal and formal semi-structured interviews were used during and after the intervention to ascertain how participants perceived, made sense of, and attached meaning to intervention content. Informal interviews allowed an insight into the ‘real-world’ value and effect participants perceived the intervention to have. Formal interviews were conducted after each phase of the intervention in order to elucidate *how* perceived pre-post changes actually impacted upon practice and functioning. Finally, a short evaluation survey was developed to assess the effectiveness of the workshop phase of the intervention. It was completed by all workshop attendees immediately following each session. The survey provided timely feedback on the perceived appropriateness of the workshop content, level, and length and success of the intervention. Participants were also invited to identify topics they would like to receive more information on and to provide any additional comments or suggestions relating to the workshop format and design.

Procedures

Phase 1: Educational workshops. Three progressive workshops were designed, based on the findings from Wagstaff et al. (2012-b; 2012-c) and other relevant non-sport literature (e.g., Groves et al., 2008). In constructing the workshops there was also extensive

collaboration in the initial stages of workshop design and implementation with the CEO of the organization, who made suggestions regarding time-frames for the intervention, workshop-length, time of day, venue and facilities. The feedback from workshop participants and researcher reflections also assisted the action research processes of monitoring and evaluating. A total of three workshops were delivered in each region lasting between 2-3 hours resulting in a total of 8 hours of workshop time per participant. The workshops were purposefully spaced 6 weeks apart to allow participants time to practice and reflect on the strategies and skills taught during workshops. Each workshop utilized a number of short video and audio clips and provided handouts to facilitate learning. All supporting materials are available from the first author. The timeline for procedures is shown in Figure 1. Workshop 1 focused on the ability to identify emotions internally in the self and externally in others. Its purpose was to: improve individuals' understanding of emotional intelligence; enhance their self- and social-awareness; facilitate an understanding of the importance of expressive regulation (i.e., using self control to avoid acting on impulse, expressing an emotion you think you should, and faking emotions) in sport organizations; and improve participants' ability to spot fake emotions in non-verbal communication and vocal tone. Workshop 2 focused on the ability to use information to assist decision-making and gain influence. Specifically, it aimed to teach the strategies of emotion experience regulation (i.e., backtracking or "making sense of situation", forwardtracking or "what ifs", blocking out/ignoring undesirable emotions). Workshop 3 focused on improving participants' ability to manage and regulate emotions. Based on Wagstaff et al.'s (2012-c) socio-cognitive model of emotion ability, regulation and inter- and intra-personal outcomes, the third workshop provided participants with an emotional blueprint and a six-step plan for building and maintaining effective relationships in their sport organization. Participants were also taught a number of discrete regulation strategies including: systematic desensitization, disengaging from and engagement in emotions, and changing emotional 'gears'. As part of the action research cycle, all workshops aimed to combine emotion ability theory with current organizational issues and allow for discussion of participants' experiences of implementing the

emotion skills covered. Further information in relation to the structure and content of the sessions is available on request from the first author.

Phase 2: One-to-one coaching. Although one-to-one coaching was planned as part of the design of the intervention, the content and participants included within phase 2 was decided during data collection in an attempt to maximize the impact of the coaching and participant involvement in the action research process. The first author approached the three participants during the final workshop session and provided an outline of the expectations of this phase of the intervention. All agreed to participate in the one-to-one coaching endeavor. Diaries were completed from the following week and were sent to the first author at the end of each week thereafter. The participants met individually with the first author every 10-14 days depending on schedules. Each participant had 6 coaching sessions lasting between 45 and 150 minutes ($M = 87$ minutes). The sessions were designed to improve understanding of emotional intelligence and improve the ability to use emotion abilities to promote optimal functioning. Coaching sessions were supplemented by daily communication via email, phone, or text. These communications included the first author confirming meeting details and encouraging participants to reflect in their diaries or via a short email on any instances in which they used the abilities and strategies covered during workshops or coaching sessions.

Dialogue regarding diary entries informed the initial part of one-to-one sessions to assist reflection on the content and ongoing issues the participants perceived to be important. They allowed the first author to pose reflective questions relating to the expressed, experienced, desired, and planned behaviors and emotions discussed. Thus, sessions guided participants through the experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984) which encourages deliberate reflection on concrete experiences, the conception of possible new behaviors, and experimentation with these. In doing so, it was hoped that participants would learn emotion regulation strategies and employ them in a real-time, experiential and ecologically valid setting.

Data analysis

Quantitative analysis. Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to compare pre- and post questionnaire scores. This test was selected for three reasons: the researchers were interested in the change in questionnaire scores in two related conditions; to minimize the likelihood of type I error due to the small sample size, lack of confidence in a normal distribution, and the high number of dependent variables and ;the data were at the ordinal level.

Qualitative analysis. The analysis of the qualitative data from phase 1 and 2 involved the researchers becoming immersed within participants' experiences of the intervention by linking the various data sources through triangulation. Specifically, the data analysis process for both phases composed three cyclical stages. First, the diary entries (phase 2 only), research log, and interview transcripts were read and re-read to promote a high level of familiarity with each individual's intervention experience. Second, data were inductively analyzed by repeatedly moving between the multiple sources to extract quotations (Silverman, 2006). Third, recurring themes within these extracts were contextualized and presented as a realist tale (see Schwandt, 2007) from the first author's perspective. That is, findings are reported through the participants' quotations and supplemented by the first author's reflections.

Trustworthiness and quality. A potential danger of adopting any predefined criteria for trustworthiness, regardless of inclusivity, is to wittingly or unwittingly use it in an exclusionary manner to produce a closed system of judgment of trustworthiness. Indeed, by its very nature, action research may depart from criteriology. Hence, in order to strike a balance between criteriologist and relativist paradigms, the methods used to intervene and assess the effectiveness of the intervention aimed to satisfy the eight markers for quality research outlined by Tracey (2010), but also acknowledge the necessary conditions outlined for action research in sport (see Evans, Fleming, & Hardy 2000). Indeed, this research might be judged regarding the extent to which it: (a) examines a worthy topic, (b) demonstrates the rigorous collection and analysis of rich data, (c) provides a sincere representation of data, acknowledges biases and researcher foibles, (d) offers a plausible and credible expression of reality, (e) presents meaningful data that resonate with the audience, (f) provides a significant contribution to the

literature, (g) demonstrates adherence to procedural, relational, and reasonable ethical considerations, and (h) attentively interconnects extant literature with research foci, methods, and findings through meaningful coherence. When interpreting data from organizational settings it is important to consider issues of level of measurement and focus. To elaborate, scholars conducting organizational research risk a cross-level fallacy unless they can logically assume that concepts have a functional equivalence across levels (Rousseau, 1985). For example, the authors were careful not to assume that changes measured at the individual level (i.e., emotion abilities) necessarily led to changes at the organizational level (i.e., organizational functioning). In an attempt to avoid such “surrogating” of data, descriptive findings are presented for only the workshop phase instead of amalgamated statistics for both phases.

Results

The findings from all data sources, including the social validation procedures are presented across four sections: Educational workshop quantitative findings; Educational workshop qualitative findings; One-to-one coaching quantitative findings; One-to-one qualitative findings. Finally, a summary of the qualitative and quantitative (see Table 1) findings for both phases is provided after the findings from the respective phases. For confidentiality reasons, those receiving the one-to-one coaching were given pseudonyms.

Intervention Phase 1: Educational Workshops - Quantitative Findings

Emotional intelligence. Non-significant pre-post intervention increases were found for the branches of emotional intelligence (perceiving emotions $Z = 1.53, p = .127$; using emotions $Z = 1.17, p = .242$; understanding emotions $Z = .49, p = .626$; managing emotions $Z = .68, p = .495$), area ability scores (experiencing emotion $Z = 1.75, p = .080$; emotional reasoning $Z = 1.01, p = .314$) and total emotional intelligence ($Z = 2.11, p = .053$) on the MSCEIT.

Emotional expressivity and regulation. Participants who attended the educational workshops reported pre-post intervention increases in negative expressivity ($Z = 2.32, p = .008$) but no significant differences were found for impulse strength ($Z = .725, p = .469$), positive ($Z = .472, p = .637$) or total ($Z = 1.83, p = .067$) expressivity on the BEQ. Participants reported a

significant increase in the use of reappraisal strategies (ERQ; $Z = 3.13, p = .002$) and significant decrease in the use of suppression strategies (ERQ; $Z = -2.47, p = .014$). Further, analysis of the CERQ showed significant pre-post intervention increases in the adaptive regulation strategies of acceptance ($Z = 2.59, p = .009$), positive refocusing ($Z = 3.84, p = .00$), refocus on planning ($Z = 2.88, p = .004$), positive reappraisal ($Z = 2.72, p = .006$), putting into perspective ($Z = 2.90, p = .004$), and significant decreases in the maladaptive strategies of rumination ($Z = -3.41, p = .001$), catastrophizing ($Z = -2.54, p = .011$), and blaming others ($Z = -2.97, p = .003$). No significant difference was found for self-blame ($Z = -1.43, p = .152$) on the ERQ.

Perceptions of relationships. Following the intervention participants reported significantly higher perceptions of quality in the relationship they believed to be most important for their optimal functioning (PRQC; $Z = 3.37, p = .001$). Analyses also demonstrated a significant increase in perceptions of general relationship closeness (RELQUAL; $Z = 3.25, p = .001$) within the organization.

Intervention Phase 1: Educational Workshops - Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings derived from social validation revealed that all of the participants perceived the educational workshops to positively impact their behavior and relationships within the organization. The primary area of benefit was an increase in emotional awareness and the use of emotion regulation strategies. Participants reported the workshops to have improved their “awareness of emotions in situations”, “understanding of regulation strategies”, “impulse control”, and “type and quality of communication”. In turn, participants perceived the development of these abilities to impact the “efficacy”, “productivity” and functioning of “relationships”, as the following quotation from a manager suggest:

I am more aware of other people’s emotions and this has helped in personal situations as well as the ones to do with the organization. I also think that I have a better understanding of various elements of the [NSO] environment on one hand, and coaching on another. I think I have better control over my impulsive behavior and feel more efficiency in my role because I can deal with ineffective evaluations better.

Emails were, on occasion, received from participants detailing situations where they had used their newly-learned strategies to facilitate stronger relationships, deal with conflict, and promote optimal performance. The following quotations provide examples of such emails:

I've found myself being less self-critical by using the emotion and thought change techniques. I am definitely thinking more positively and rising to more challenges as this continues. As a coach, I have an increased ability to think like a current athlete does by considering the [emotional intelligence] framework. This has begun to enhance our coach-athlete relationships with improved communication and increased opportunities.

The following excerpt is from an email received from an athlete reporting the perceptions of others after the third workshop:

I have learned to show my emotions better and I feel more secure with my coach now than before the workshops. My parents have noticed that I seem happier at training; I think it shows in my body language that we have a better relationship now. It has improved the communication we have, the type of communication, and the quality of it.

The administrator in the following quotation was trying to improve her relationship with an influential official, whom she felt was central to the success of a coaching initiative:

He spoke to me very aggressively... I tracked his emotions as well as my own throughout to make sure I was influencing the situation in the best way. I eventually got him to understand... If I hadn't learned the skills you taught me about emotional intelligence I wouldn't have dealt with my feelings and the situation in the same way.

Whilst many of the participants reported perceived benefits of attending the workshops, several individuals indicated that more individualized, one-to-one sessions would benefit them further:

I'd like to be able to improve my understanding and performance using the techniques I have learned, perhaps in a one-on-one setting where I can talk more openly which I don't always feel comfortable doing in front of others... I think I'd benefit more by discussing more of the situations I am going through.

Intervention phase 2: One-to-one Coaching - Quantitative Findings

Given the purposefully-selected small sample in the present study no amalgamated statistical findings are presented for the one-to-one coaching phase of the intervention. Table 1 summarizes the quantitative findings which indicate an increase in the scores reported for total emotional intelligence from ‘consider developing’ to ‘competent’ for Harry (80.52- 90.65), Isaac (82.10-92.51), and Joe (87.86-100.27) pre-post the one-to-one coaching intervention. The analyses show an increase in branch scores of perceiving and managing emotion for all three participants. Harry and Joe both showed an increase in using emotion, but a decrease for understanding emotion. Isaac showed an increase in understanding emotion, but not using emotion to facilitate thought.

For emotion regulation, there was an increase in reported use of reappraisal and decrease in suppression regulation strategies on the ERQ for all participants. Further, CERQ scores showed increased use of acceptance, positive refocusing, refocus on planning, positive reappraisal, putting into perspective and a decrease in the use of self-blame, rumination, catastrophizing, and other-blame. Only Isaac reported a decrease in the use of acceptance. The data also suggested that all three participants were generally more emotionally expressive, expressed more positive and fewer negative emotions, whilst reporting better perceptions of relationship quality and closeness when compared to pre-intervention data.

Intervention phase 2: One-to-one Coaching – Qualitative Findings

Coaching participant 1: Harry. Effective functioning in Harry’s role relied on gaining the trust and influence of top-level coaches and national academy athletes for national-level initiatives and coaching programs. He discussed the difficulty he had influencing senior coaches, whom he perceived to be “stuck in their ways” and “didn’t buy into new training ideas” that impeded this functioning. Therefore, following discussion with Harry, our early sessions focused on reinforcing the importance of emotion regulation for relationships (see Wagstaff et al., 2012-b; 2012-c). I (the first author) encouraged Harry to reflect on others’ emotional investment and goals and defined roles to find common ground as a starting point for strengthening relationships. We agreed that he would spend the next week practicing strategies

we had discussed and organized a meeting with a coach he identified as central to the solution of an ongoing issue. The following diary extract illustrates his reflections:

Difficult meeting with [coach]... so I thought about what he wanted out of it... he gave me the info I wanted but I also found myself asking questions about the process. [It was frustrating trying to put across my thoughts, but I got a satisfactory outcome.

Harry was concerned about the need he perceived to express fake emotions and the way it was impacting how he was perceived by others like the coach, stating, "It comes across as lip-service to some people". I encouraged him to reflect upon the ways he regulated his emotions during transactions but maintained a primary focus on strategies that would aid relationship building. We came up with a forwardtracking (Wagstaff et al., 2012-c) approach for upcoming transactions and discussed contingency planning for individuals' possible emotional and behavioral reactions. A week later, he wrote in his diary:

One of the real challenging situations I have already used forward-tracking for is where ...one of these coaches has the characteristics to be quite volatile, so that's one where I'll need to monitor and manage things. I've begun to think how I can get them to understand the processes involved and that things aren't black and white. If they can understand that, I think there will be a positive outcome with a motivated athlete.

By our fourth session Harry stated in his diary that he felt he had made "progress" in the way he was managing (i.e., suppressing) his felt emotions, writing, "I have found new ways to unleash the frustrations of not always being able to give people answers". He spoke positively about an ongoing situation with an elite coach, suggesting a growing awareness of the emotional dynamics central to optimal functioning in his role:

I was frustrated, but, I know that this is just part of the game now. A negative situation can have a positive outcome. I am much more comfortable with these situations now, before I would have fed the coach a line about the athlete's performance not being good enough and put them on the defensive about performance, which was a poorer outcome for all; they don't respect you and you get an athlete who has less faith in the system.

Later, during a social validation interview I asked Harry to describe how the intervention had influenced his practice most. His reply was informative:

Last week the most anti-[organization] coach I deal with wanted me to look at his athlete as he thought he was ready for the national talent academy. I observed a training session and disagreed that the athlete was ready. I used my emotion strategies to appreciate that it was his view and to better understand his investment in the athlete, but that we had different approaches and opinions. This was an awkward situation as he really thought this athlete was ready... I varied my questions and approach to try and influence him, not to change his opinion, but to help him understand my reasoning. I've invited the coach and athlete to our next academy workshops and they agreed to come. Now this is the most important part, 6 months ago, I'd have led that meeting from the front thinking that I had to show authority. I'd have asked more direct questions and taken a scientific and factual approach to judging the athlete. They would not have even considered my invitation 6 months ago. Now I feel more balanced, more optimistic, open, and I feel more engaged with people like that coach and athlete... I've used my regulation skills and strategies to build up a broader network of relationships which could benefit me on a personal level and allow me to fulfill my role more effectively.

Coaching participant 2: Isaac. During the intervention Isaac worked directly with athletes as a development manager before being promoted to be the national manager. Thus, optimal functioning was characterized by coordinating initiatives and development programs for volunteers, officials, and coaches and required strong psychosocial and interpersonal skills.

In our first session Isaac expressed, "I am concerned about barriers amongst [group] with this new initiative, it is the same people 9 times out of 10 implementing these initiatives, so you can't afford to p*** anyone off". I encouraged him to forward-track to consider how he might influence key stakeholders and we discussed the importance of distinguishing opinions from content during conflict regarding new initiatives. In a social validation interview, Isaac recalled this session as a "turning point", where he could "see things much clearer" adding:

I look at situations in isolation, the problems came when the old guard wouldn't change their opinions... I've begun to realize that you can break things down early on, slowly, and exert influence using emotion strategies. I've definitely begun to ask different questions and using these strategies is far less prescriptive and more democratic.

Indeed, Isaac's diary entries indicated that he was implementing new regulation strategies in his day-to-day routines and confirmed this in our next session, when discussing a transaction:

I was careful of how I went about it... I wouldn't necessarily have tried to be so tactful before these sessions. Now I always try to take things on board... I thought I did before, but now I am a little more aware of why people might be acting in certain ways, or what they might want out of a situation, and how that impacts upon their behavior.

Isaac often used the first part of sessions for unloading salient emotions and experiences. At these times I altered my approach to best serve the client's most pressing needs. During one session he spoke about an initiative that he viewed as central to the organization's functioning, "as it hasn't been done smartly we have to update people with little information, and then the rumor mill begins. They go back to their club and report their cynical opinions of it". Using recent findings (e.g., Wagstaff et al., 2012-b; 2012-c) regarding emotional contagion (see Hatfield, Caccioppo, & Rapson, 1994) as a guide, I urged Isaac to forward-track to consider how to prevent emotions being "caught" by others. He explained:

I thought about what you said and approached one coach calmly after the meeting... Now I have opened a dialogue with him to steer his thought processes in a one-to-one situation away from the group... I am actually really enjoying the process now. I knew that when we got to the next meeting last week that I wouldn't have to fight fires against the whole group, because I'd spoken to each of them individually and they understood the reasoning behind my proposals. Throughout, I have been able to influence the process by seeing things from their perspective emotionally and allowing them to feel as if they have ownership. I might not have done that before; I probably couldn't see past the outcome I wanted to force through, but now I can distinguish positions and interests.

I felt I was making a difference to Isaac's practice, reflecting later, "he appears happier in his role and the politics and relationships that had previously troubled him seemingly appear to be processed in a more measured way". In his penultimate session, Isaac recalled a situation the previous day, when he had "fallen off the wagon" by failing to control his emotional impulse:

I knew as soon as I was out of the door that I'd handled it badly and taken it out on the wrong person. I have been doing so well to understand issues and take perspective before acting upon my emotions, you know, how and when to best unleash them [he smiled]. And also taking their perspective and reappraising. I think now, after reflecting about it, that next time I'll gather what I'm thinking, control my impulse, and then go [to the other person] later when I am in the right frame of mind. I guess it is a learning curve and that this stuff takes time to embed.

I related what he said to Wagstaff et al.'s (2012-c) socio-cognitive model of emotion ability, regulation and inter- and intra-personal outcomes. We made a plan of action in which he would monitor his expression of emotions inside and outside of the organization.

During the social validation interview Isaac said, "looking ahead to the future I can see a number of potential issues where there will be conflicts with people that I will have to manage, where regulating my emotions and using the reappraisal strategies will be key!". A week later he emailed regarding his advice to an athlete who was having a difficult time with his manager:

Literally after we had spoken, he went and spoke to the manager, he used the strategies I suggested and they have begun to repair their relationship. If I hadn't of used the regulation advice you taught me, I don't think he would have competed because the relationship with the manager was so bad. In the end, he competed and performed really well. It is amazing what a bit of perspective does to make you successful.

Coaching participant 3: Joe. During my first two sessions with Joe, I encountered some of the emotion awareness-management transference obstacles which were evident when initially working with Isaac. Specifically, he often framed his use of emotion regulation in terms of the stressors he perceived within the organization, being aware of the emotions present in

situations, but unable to optimally manage them. Not surprisingly, in line with the aims of the intervention, Joe appeared to be more aware of such issues than prior to the intervention, “Being more aware means you have more information available to you about your own behavior and other people’s. But now I know this stuff, sometimes I find it *more* frustrating when others aren’t aware”. Joe was using his emotion abilities to influence others people’s emotion regulation and facilitate positive outcomes. However, whilst very aware of others’ emotions, he was less aware of the impact his own emotions were having on his functioning. I reflected:

I am concerned that our sessions are more a chance for Joe to be introspective and self-critical about each little lapse in success in his emotion regulation. I hope that the sessions are not *increasing* his stress levels as a result.

During our next session, I asked Joe if he felt our sessions were having an impact in any way.

His answer filled me with renewed confidence in my approach:

I think you’re always good to speak to and get a handle on things because you see things slightly differently, which I don’t have the competencies and skills to do all the time yet; I am aware of it, but I am still not always setting time aside to think “ah yeah, this is what I should do”. But just talking to you helps me remember things or ‘get’ triggers a lot quicker and it is better for me to talk about it and get a different perspective.

Around this time there appeared to be a “turning point”, where Joe began to be more self-aware.

Joe began to report increasingly more regulation strategy use and awareness of the emotional intelligence framework and less descriptive information regarding situations and feelings. He finished the week’s diary by summarizing:

This week, I have perhaps learnt to look internally at my attitudes and approaches to situations as well as realizing that these may/do have an effect on those that I am around. I think that “reframing” is particularly useful in a great deal of situations.

Joe’s diary the following week also suggested that he was making continued progress,

“definitely taking some of the thoughts and ideas away from these sessions and will look to

implement them in my own goals for the future”, “I am trying hard to balance performance factors with reality checking”.

In a similar manner to Harry and Isaac, Joe initially found it difficult to change his attitude about expressing false emotions, but adapted as sessions continued, stating, “found myself biting my lip on a number of occasions. I still think this is not right, but now I get that it is part of the job”. This indicated that Joe was using suppression as a regulation strategy. I discussed this with him and reinforced the theoretical view that such strategies may be helpful in the short term but could lead to negative outcomes if used chronically. In light of this discussion, we practiced some reappraisal strategies which are more aligned with positive well-being outcomes (Gross & Thompson, 2007). Reading Joe’s diary a week later indicated that this was beginning to have the desired impact, as he wrote, “I feel that the rationalizing and restructuring strategy systems have been particularly useful, not only with my own feelings, but also when helping others close to me”. Over the next three weeks (the last of the intervention), Joe stated further improvements in applying his emotion abilities in his diary, “begun to practice transferring from suppression- to reappraisal-based strategies when operating within the organization... I am becoming more experienced/ accomplished at understanding and using the regulation strategies”. During the social validation interview, Joe reflected on the effect the coaching sessions had for his practice:

I have really noticed that I am thinking a lot more about how I interact with others in the office and in training... It really gets you thinking, and if there is one impact these sessions have had, it is to make me more reflective about the things that you can change, in what context you can best do that, and when not to.

The Effectiveness of the Intervention for Enhancing Organizational Functioning

Participants in both phases of the intervention perceived benefits in their day-to-day functioning through enhanced interpersonal dynamics inside and outside of the organization. One of the educational workshop participants offered the following during social validation:

My wife thinks I am able to see problems in a different light. She thinks that I have a greater understanding of others' emotions and greater control of my own. I, myself, do feel more confident during any approaching conflict in a range of situations and think I can help others deal with situations better too. I am much more aware of my own emotions and how to control them. I feel a little more secure and connected to athletes, more approachable. The feedback from the other people I work with has also surprised me; I think my relations in the organization have definitely been enhanced, and my performance and productivity improved thanks to being more reflective about my emotional appraisals and the regulation strategies I use (some good, some bad). I reckon that these skills would be valuable for any kind of relationship in any organization.

This perceived enhanced emotional affectivity at an individual level also appeared to improve the internal climate of the organization, as a senior manager suggested during social validation:

The last few months have been among the toughest we've had in the organization. Because of funding cuts and the recession, we have been hit pretty hard and after a period of massive growth staff-wise, had to cut jobs. This was a real hammer blow to morale. I don't think your intervention could have improved things to stop that, and I don't think it changed the way everyone felt; that uncertainty. But what it did do was bring some positivity to the staff and buffer against some of the pressure we have been under. It has strengthened relationships which were at breaking point because people have identified that they needed to work on those relationships. And in that way, I think the intervention has had a massive impact upon how effective we are as an organization.

Others were ambiguous about the impact of the workshops on their practice but acknowledged its benefit for relationship enhancement and strategy learning, as one athlete summarized:

I now look back and evaluate all of my actions and see that my behavior, attitude and approach have changed. I don't know whether the impact of me changing will reverberate up the hierarchy and influence performance at [major games], but I know in my little pocket of the organization we have all bounced off each other and things have

improved. I can see a definite change in the way athletes from the workshops interact with each other and our coaches now. I think we are loads better at changing negative thoughts and emotions into positive ones and I am better at handling nerves or bad calls in competition. I think we are getting there with using triggers to stop ourselves saying something when we shouldn't and I that makes us more effective as a group in training. This trend of improved relationships at an individual- or group-level seemed to be prevalent. Perhaps the clearest indicator of effectiveness for organizational functioning came from Joe:

The skills you taught us have made us all feel so much more comfortable with conflict, seeing how it can help in some situations. Before, we used to get on with stuff and not want to cause a fuss... but we didn't know then what it was doing to our relationships. As a result, we had more cliques and more talking behind people's backs. Now, not everything is brought up and there will always be closer relationships between some, but people are far more open with each other and aware of how they approach issues. Before, we didn't share any information with each other, everyone just got on with their piece of the pie. But now we have stronger relationships that are more natural and less rigid; we get that we are not all fighting for the same resources now. That improved communication has made us far more effective in terms of what we *can* do.

Discussion

Using an action research approach, we evaluated the effectiveness of an emotion ability and regulation strategy intervention for improving individual and organizational functioning in an NSO. Quantitative analyses indicate pre-post educational workshop improvements in the use of emotion reappraisal strategies, relationship closeness, and relationship quality. A significant decrease in the use of emotion suppression strategies was also found. Moreover, the findings indicated that the workshops were perceived to be effective at promoting the use of more adaptive and less maladaptive emotion regulation strategies, with significant differences found in the use of all but one (self blame) of the CERQ subscales. An important finding was the self-reported post-intervention increase in negative emotional expression on the BEQ. Thus,

participants in both phases of the intervention reported a post-intervention decrease in suppression strategy use and increase in negative emotion expression, yet perceptions of greater relationship quality and closeness. The absence of negative relational outcomes despite increases in negative expression may be explained in several ways. First, the qualitative findings indicate that the intervention was perceived to lead to improvements in participants' relationships which provided a buffer against organizational stressors (i.e., the stronger relationships withstood negative expressions). Second, those expressing negative emotion used taught skills to avoid or resolve conflict following negative expression (e.g., apologizing to those infected by negative expressions). Third, those infected by negative emotions may have employed the emotion skills taught to manage their own emotional response to negative expressions (e.g., putting emotions into perspective and not blaming others). Interestingly, however, no differences in emotional intelligence ability scores were found for the participants only receiving the educational workshop phase of the intervention. Despite this result, the social validation data supported these general findings, with participants perceiving the workshops to be effective in teaching emotion regulation strategies, improving relationships, and enhancing both individual and organizational functioning.

The one-to-one coaching phase of the intervention aimed to move beyond education to promote extensive implementation of emotion regulation strategies and improvements in emotion ability in an ecologically-valid practical context. The findings suggest that this phase was effective in increasing all three individuals' emotional intelligence ability scores (total and the perceiving and managing branches) and changing their emotion regulation strategy use. When added to the wealth of qualitative data presented, the combined evidence suggested that the one-to-one coaching intervention phase was effective in improving organizational relationship closeness and quality, in addition to perceptions of organizational functioning. An important finding was that all three participants who received one-to-one coaching initially struggled to express unfelt or false emotions, seemingly experiencing heightened emotional consequences in light of their efforts. That is, although participants became more aware and

accepting of the *necessity* of expressing false emotions - known as emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983) - the actual *implementation* of these strategies was more difficult and often triggered further emotional responses that required coping efforts. This intricate balancing and interweaving of emotion abilities and social norms regarding emotional expression was critical to the effectiveness of the coaching phase. Such findings support Wagstaff et al.'s (2012-c) socio-cognitive model of emotion ability and regulation and indicate that practitioners should consider the psycho-socio-emotional parameters of environments when providing interventions at an organizational level. They also offer support for the wider self-regulation literature (see for a review, Hagger, Wood, Stiff, & Chatzisarantis, 2010) which generally suggests that humans regularly engage in the effortful control of one's emotions, behavior, and desires in order to obtain rewards or avoid punishment in their environment. Indeed, the exploration of self regulation and emotional labor warrants further attention in sport organizations. Another finding worthy of note in the coaching phase was the seeming importance of reflexivity *in* and reflection *on* action for learning and behavior change. As highlighted by the social validation data, the combination of intervention content (i.e., emotion awareness coaching) and methods employed (i.e., participant diaries) facilitated more reflexivity *in* transactions requiring emotion regulation and reflection *on* the successes and failures of these efforts. The findings highlight the potential overlap between the present findings and reflective practice (e.g., Schön, 1983) and provide support for the use of diary and coaching methods for future emotion interventions.

The overall findings here indicate that the intervention was effective in promoting individual and organizational functioning in the NSO. The data suggest that emotional intelligence can be trained, relationship quality and closeness can be improved, and emotion regulation strategies taught and changed across each level of sport organizations through interventions of this kind. To elaborate, emotion regulation strategy use may be improved using a workshop approach, however developing actual abilities (i.e., emotional intelligence) to perceive and regulate emotions optimally in a real-life setting may require a more longitudinal (i.e., longer than 6 months) or idiosyncratic (i.e., one-to-one coaching) approach. Indeed, future

research might examine the long term benefits of such interventions. The research log and diaries indicated a threshold around the fourth coaching session, or 8-month stage (i.e., 6 months of workshops, 8 weeks of coaching), where participants reported much more autonomy, success, and confidence with their emotion skills. Hence, whilst one-day seminars or workshops may be effective in raising awareness of regulation strategies, they are unlikely to provide the depth required for improvement in emotional intelligence. Alternatively, if practitioners merely seek to teach emotion regulation strategies, which had a similarly positive effect on relationships and practice, then a shortened approach may be equally effective. The findings support suggestions that emotional intelligence (see Meyer & Fletcher, 2007) and emotion regulation (e.g., Uphill, McCarthy, & Jones, 2009) may be valuable lines of inquiry for sport psychologists. Further, the findings support previous assertions that reappraisal is associated with more adaptive coping and well-being outcomes than suppression strategies, with the latter related to poorer social and psychological functioning (cf. van Middendorp et al., 2005). However, future research across various environmental contexts and performance domains is required to support these findings. Indeed, given the dearth of extant intervention research on these emotion-related concepts for comparison, the value of the present study might be judged in terms of its contribution to psychologists' knowledge of these concepts.

To the authors' knowledge, this is the first intervention to directly measure pre- and post- emotional intelligence and emotion regulation changes in any performance domain or demonstrate their effect on individual, relational and organizational functioning. Moreover, we aimed to adhere to guidelines for high-quality emotional intelligence interventions (e.g., Groves et al., 2008) by: selecting a measurement tool (i.e., the MSCEIT) with strong psychometric properties that aligned with our conceptualization of emotional intelligence as an ability; providing greater detailed information about the intervention content and duration; and employing a mixed-method approach to data collection. Indeed, we believe that the mixed-method action research approach adopted and the presentation of multiple data sources here allowed for a balanced yet rigorous and meaningful insight into the effectiveness of the

intervention through real-time and retrospective feedback in a naturalistic setting; which satisfies Tracey's (2010) guidelines for high-quality research.

Further to the judgments of quality in the present study, there are a number of applied implications in light of the findings. Due to the apparent importance of participants' attitudes toward using emotional labor, psychologists should be proactive in identifying and monitoring participants' strategy use and their appraisals and responses to engaging in such efforts. If an individual uses maladaptive strategies associated with negative well-being (e.g., expressive suppression), then practitioners may benefit by devoting attention to breaking down strategy selection processes and rebuilding more adaptive ones. Such outcomes might be achieved using laboratory-based manipulations or diaries to establish a dialogic approach to exploring emotional labor and regulation in sport organizations. Future research is also required to consider temporal factors in the development of individual or organizational functioning using an emotion ability approach. Specifically, researchers should clearly articulate the variables of focus (e.g., abilities or strategies) which, in turn, may inform the intervention's temporal design. Efforts should also be made to provide objective causality between individual-level improvements in intra- (i.e., emotion abilities and regulation) and inter-personal (i.e., relationship quality and closeness) constructs and organizational functioning. Researcher might also evaluate such intervention's impact on other psychosocial variables such as well-being, optimism resilience, hope, and self-efficacy (cf. Meyers et al., in press).

In conclusion, psychologists have, until now, overlooked the role of emotion abilities and regulation in organizational functioning in sport. The present findings indicate that both emotional intelligence and emotion regulation can be enhanced and seem to contribute to improvements in individual, relational and organizational functioning, particularly using a coaching framework. There is much to be done to advance our conceptual and methodological understanding in this area; however, the present findings provide further support for the exploration of positive phenomena under the rubric of positive organizational psychology in sport (Wagstaff et al., 2012-a). Indeed, these findings offer practitioners an insight into the

potential value of such interventions, yet we urge caution regarding the design of emotion ability-based interventions. To elaborate, practitioners must resist the temptation of repackaging their services (e.g., emotional intelligence workshops) as all-encompassing approaches to organizational excellence. Instead, they should provide tailored interventions to promote individual and organizational learning by orchestrating multiple visions, values and goals into coherent organizational plans. Such approaches may allow for the identification of psychosocio-emotional areas for political or organizational development and growth that will facilitate sustainable individual, group, and organizational flourishing.

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Table 1. Pre- and Post-Intervention Questionnaire Scores for One-to-One Coaching and Workshop Participants

Measure	Dimension	Harry		Isaac		Joe		Workshop
		Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre-post (Z)
MSCEIT	Total Emotional Intelligence	80.52	90.65	82.10	92.51	87.86	100.27	2.11
	Experiencing Emotion Area	77.34	92.77	88.93	97.17	89.96	112.93	1.75
	Reasoning Area	90.19	90.06	84.76	91.23	91.16	90.28	1.01
	Perceiving Branch	79.76	87.62	83.66	97.20	87.36	107.71	1.53
	Using Branch	83.16	101.79	100.05	96.40	95.67	111.23	1.17
	Understanding Branch	103.13	91.79	88.50	98.37	103.33	96.82	.49
	Managing Branch	85.07	90.96	85.40	89.49	86.75	88.36	.68
ERQ	Reappraisal	35	36	29	40	29	35	3.26**
	Suppression	17	10	17	12	26	19	-2.47*
CERQ	Acceptance	10	12	14	11	14	19	2.59**
	Positive refocusing	11	14	10	12	7	13	3.84**
	Refocus on planning	15	13	13	19	17	20	2.88**
	Positive reappraisal	15	18	15	16	11	19	2.72**
	Putting into perspective	14	17	18	20	16	20	2.90**
	Self-blame	11	15	13	10	13	11	-1.43
	Rumination	12	10	13	11	19	11	-3.41**
	Catastrophizing	8	7	9	5	12	11	-2.54*
	Other-blame	10	7	12	9	14	11	-2.97**
BEQ	Total Expressivity	3.97	5.31	2.96	4.42	2.89	3.69	1.83
	Positive expressivity	4.75	6.75	4.75	5.75	3.0	4.25	.47
	Negative expressivity	4	3.5	3.3	3	2.67	3.5	2.32**
	Impulse strength	3.16	5.66	4	4.5	3.0	3.3	.73
PRQC	Relationship closeness	7.2	7.5	6	7.3	6.17	8.7	3.37**
REQUAL	Relationship quality	48	52	42	58	38	53	3.25**

Note. *p < .05, **p < .01

Figure 1. Timeline for the study

Intervention phase	Phase 1: Educational workshops						Phase 2: One-to-one coaching			
Intervention content	Educational workshop 1	6 week break for application and reflection	Educational workshop 2	6 week break for application and reflection	Educational workshop 3	6 week break for application and reflection	One-to-one coaching session every 10-14 days			
Action research process	Intervention material developed in collaboration with participants using informal interviews, daily diaries, email, phone or text as well as observations during workshops or coaching sessions. Field notes, reflexive journal entries, the research log and the extant research also informed workshop and coaching session content									
Quantitative data collection	Pre-workshop phase questionnaires completed							Post-workshop phase questionnaires completed		Post-coaching phase questionnaires completed
Qualitative data collection		Informal interviews with workshop participants		Informal interviews with workshop participants		Informal interviews with workshop participants	Formal social validation interviews with workshop participants			Formal social validation interviews with one-to-one coaching participants
								Daily diaries completed by coaching participants (emailed to first author each week)		
Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10