Partner Organizations: Sparking off each other – science in the wild

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Partner Organizations Workshop, 24 July
Making yourself visible

The prehistory of our project was crucial: before the partnership.

- From 2004-2010 we found new research directions, and began to collaborate for the first time on skilled movement in applied contexts which drew on our life experience, interests, contacts.
- Work on sport, yoga, music, dance, theatre, and psychotherapy connected to our prior basic research on embodied emotion and embodied cognition.
- We were just doing what we liked to do and finding lucky new research leads, eg a surprising call for papers for a special issue here, an invited public talk there, finding new networks along the way both in academia and elsewhere.
Keeping faith in your interests

**Internal funding** was vital in this early phase, building a team and setting up new basic conceptual work. Our first joint grant, an MQRDG (2006-2008), enabled a range of pilot projects.

- We built on a long history of research-led teaching, with students in Doris’s two 300-level Psych units (on personality and on psycho-analysis), and our Grad Dip and Honours students.
- Our current core team includes postdocs and PhD students who have come all the way through from undergrad with us.
- We are inspired and hugely assisted by our students and RAs, and we include them centrally eg on publications.
- We missed out on ARC-Discovery grants but did vital work on Safety Net funding, leading to key publications 2006-2008.
- We presented our work at every opportunity: on radio (eg ABC Philosophers’ Zone), conferences, and especially public talks.
Getting started

- We were founder members of the Faculty research centre CEPET (Centre for Elite Performance, Expertise, & Training) with Bill Thompson & Mark Wiggins in 2010.

- We finally got our interdisciplinary ARC-Discovery Project up in 2012 for 2013-2015: this has been vital to give us confidence and time for working with external partners (eg teaching relief).

- We got on well with Glenn Warry, non-academic member of CEPET who runs MQ Sports Scholars program and has contacts across the world of professional sport. Glenn got us working with the Matildas (Australian women’s football team) and our applied work started standing on a freezing touchline in Wollongong at training, meeting participants with very different aims and styles.

- Glenn then introduced us to Ben Smith from the ACA in mid-2012.
The Australian Cricket Association (ACA) is the professional cricketers’ union: deal with welfare, support, employment conditions

- Their new industrial agreement with the employer Cricket Australia (CA) included money earmarked for research – they wanted us!
- From early meetings, the partner had clear aims for research as we specified the project together and sought a common language
- Their existing ACA Development & Wellbeing Strategy set out themes:
  - Balanced lives: whole player approach
  - Playing career as springboard to future success
  - Links between wellbeing and performance
  - Empower players: develop and apply their own strategies
  - Understand and foster individual learning styles
  - Key concerns: foster players’ independent thinking; avoid homogenizing of player personalities
Sustaining Elite Performance
What they want linked to Our Background

- Again, we were lucky: our skills (including some we didn’t know we had) matched the partner organization’s needs.

- Project topic is cricket: **One of us is a cricket nut**

- Key themes: What they want: **our interests**
  - Balanced lives: **work/life balance already a research interest**
  - Wellbeing & social support – **already have research tools**
  - Links between wellbeing and performance – **NOT YET KNOWN**
  - **Perfect for personality approach**
    - Players develop individual strategies:
    - Understand and foster individual learning styles
    - avoid homogenizing of player personalities

- There is little experience-near data: **Qualitative research expertise**

- Major mental health issues in professional cricket
Partnership grant project 2013-2014

Sustaining Elite Performance: emotional skills and resilience in Australian professional cricketers

- We could go straight to Enterprise Partnership Scheme (EPS) as partner already had funding and commitment
- We received outstanding grant process support (Colm Halbert and Lisa Elliott): identify research support staff to act as your case manager
- Getting started
  - Developing budget, schedule, and research aims
  - Setting agenda, plan, and timeline
  - Widening partner contacts: gaining broader support as well as our one key contact person in the partner organization
  - Communication – we hosted them at MQ to meet our team and put detailed flesh on the research proposal
- Significant delay with finalizing contract and IP agreement: do it early!
Next step was doing the research

- 4x33 interviews with professional cricketers from every state around the country, with our team
- Psychometric surveys completed by 84 cricketers, end of 2013-14 season

Working with a unique population – not like academics!

- Challenges to build and maintain participants’ interest and motivation
- Though many participants are famous and rich, they liked being rewarded with iTunes vouchers for committing their time and energy to the research
- Where online surveys would be convenient for us, we got much higher completion rates from hard-copy sessions with a pencil
- Travel around the country to some unusual places for research brings both perks and heavy demands on the research team

Wider network of research support staff around the state organizations, through their Player Development Managers and psychologists

Presentations at some extraordinary conferences
Sustaining Elite Performance: Overview of Interview Data

Major themes
- Cricket as work
- Individual: life outside cricket
- Teams
- Challenges of cricket
- Dealing with emotions

Many positive reports: the game, friendships, revelling in the challenges

Many difficulties in dealing with the ideal of “the level rollercoaster”.
One of our major obsessions: Components of the Experience of Emotion

Conscious Mental experience

Manner of attending

Appraisal of meaning

Bodily Clout: Somato-sensory stimulation

Lambie & Marcel 2002; McIlwain 2006
Working together: challenges, drawbacks, features

- How are you going to do the work?
  - Takes over your (working) life: partner organization has different patterns
  - Adjusting to partner collaboration and needs.
  - Integration with other projects (related and unrelated).
  - Kinds of writing & other outputs: reports need to be non-jargony!

- Teams, people, relationships, attention to detail.

- Knock-on things
  - Range of unanticipated outcomes eg fit with new MQ resilience research theme
  - Ongoing adjustment and communication between partner organization, research participants, and our research team: attitude to progress and project
  - Who’d’a’thunk’it? Doris sitting next to Australian cricket coach Darren Lehmann at the Cricket Australia High Performance conference dinner, July 2014. This was not the way we thought our research careers would go. Embrace it?
Sustaining Elite Performance: emotional skills and resilience in Australian professional cricketers

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Some sample papers relating to our work on this project: email us if you’d like a copy of any of these.
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