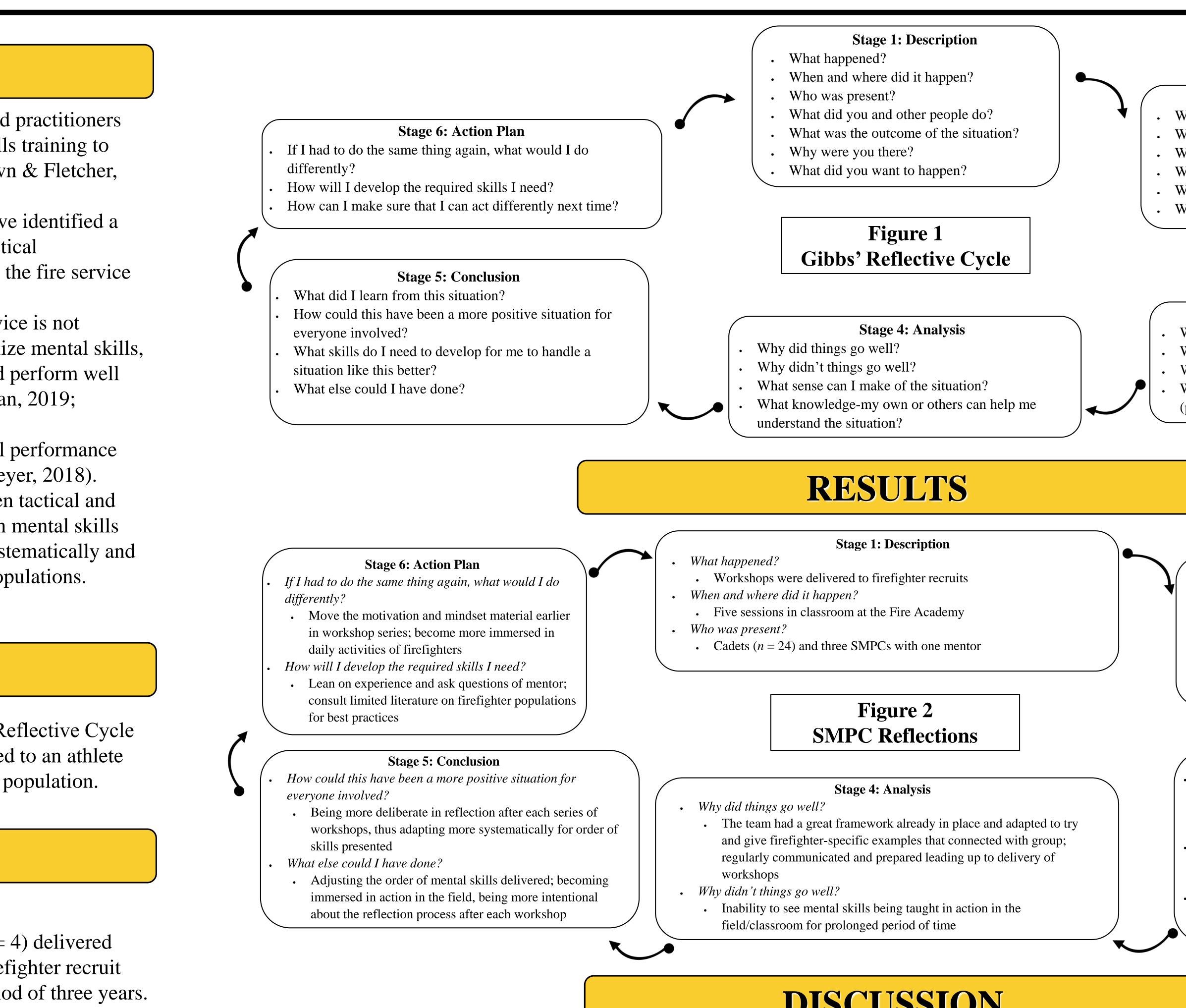
## Gibbs' Reflective Cycle: Adapting athlete mental skills workshops to firefighters UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN UMMILWAUKEE Landon M. Braun<sup>1</sup>, Chloe M.Ouellet-Pizer<sup>1</sup>, Elizabeth M. Menden<sup>1</sup>, Kyle T. Ebersole<sup>2</sup>, & Barbara B. Meyer<sup>1</sup> ----<sup>1</sup>College of Health Professions & Sciences-School of Rehabilitation Sciences & Technology-Laboratory for Sport Psychology & Performance Excellence <sup>2</sup>College of Health Professions & Sciences-School of Rehabilitation Sciences & Technology-Human Performance & Sport Physiology Laboratory **Stage 1: Description** • What happened? **INTRODUCTION** • When and where did it happen? Who was present? **Stage 2: Feeling** • What did you and other people do? What were you feeling during the situation? • Historically, performance psychology researchers and practitioners Stage 6: Action Plan • What was the outcome of the situation? What were you feeling before and after the situation? have focused their attention on the use of mental skills training to If I had to do the same thing again, what would I do • Why were you there? What do you think other people were feeling during the situation? facilitate the performance of sport populations (Brown & Fletcher, differently? What did you want to happen? What do you think other people think about the situation now? How will I develop the required skills I need? What were you thinking about during the situation? 2017). How can I make sure that I can act differently next time? What do people think about the situation now? • More recently, researchers and practitioners alike have identified a Figure 1 growing demand for mental skills training within tactical **Gibbs' Reflective Cycle** organizations such as the military (Raabe, 2021) and the fire service **Stage 5: Conclusion** (Raabe, 2021; Weir, 2018). What did I learn from this situation? How could this have been a more positive situation for **Stage 3: Evaluation** • The call for mental skills training within the fire service is not Stage 4: Analysis What was good and bad about the experience? everyone involved? surprising as firefighters, like elite athletes, must utilize mental skills, Why did things go well? What skills do I need to develop for me to handle a What went well? Why didn't things go well? What didn't go so well? situation like this better? depend on effective leadership (Wheldon, 2019), and perform well What sense can I make of the situation? What did you and other people contribute to the situation What else could I have done? amid significant work-related stress (Payne & Kinman, 2019; What knowledge-my own or others can help me (positively or negatively)? understand the situation? Sawhney et al., 2018). • Similarly, firefighters share many of the same mental performance characteristics as athletes (Gnacinski et al., 2015; Meyer, 2018). RESULTS • Given the known overlap in mental skills use between tactical and sport populations, coupled with a growing demand in mental skills **Stage 1: Description** training in non-sport populations, a need exists to systematically and *What happened?* Stage 6: Action Plan **Stage 2: Feeling** effectively adapt athlete workshops to non-athlete populations. • Workshops were delivered to firefighter recruits If I had to do the same thing again, what would I do What were you feeling during the situation? When and where did it happen? differently? • Invigorated to teach the mental skills • Five sessions in classroom at the Fire Academy • Move the motivation and mindset material earlier What were you feeling before and after the situation? • Who was present? in workshop series; become more immersed in • Nervous and unsettled about how the approach would be received • Cadets (n = 24) and three SMPCs with one mentor daily activities of firefighters What do you think other people were feeling during the situation? PURPOSE How will I develop the required skills I need? • Some were confident while others had trepidation about teaching • Lean on experience and ask questions of mentor; various mental skills week-to-week consult limited literature on firefighter populations Figure 2 for best practices • The purpose of the current project was to use Gibbs' Reflective Cycle **SMPC Reflections** (Gibbs, 1988) to demonstrate how workshops delivered to an athlete **Stage 3: Evaluation Stage 5: Conclusion** What was good and bad about the experience? How could this have been a more positive situation for population can be adapted for delivery to a firefighter population. **Stage 4: Analysis** everyone involved? • Good: Relatively low-stake opportunity to deliver mental skills Why did things go well? • Being more deliberate in reflection after each series of • The team had a great framework already in place and adapted to try workshops, thus adapting more systematically for order of month workshops and give firefighter-specific examples that connected with group; What went well? skills presented **METHODS** regularly communicated and prepared leading up to delivery of What else could I have done? workshops • Adjusting the order of mental skills delivered; becoming the application of mental skills being taught • Why didn't things go well? What didn't go so well? immersed in action in the field, being more intentional Inability to see mental skills being taught in action in the about the reflection process after each workshop **Participants** field/classroom for prolonged period of time workshop series • Student Mental Performance Consultants (SMPCs; n = 4) delivered

- workshops as part of a training curriculum to three firefighter recruit cohorts from a Midwestern fire department over a period of three years.
- Procedure
- Informed by previous scholarly work in various domains (e.g., education [Markkanen et al., 2020]; medicine [Tawanwongrsi & Phenwan, 2019]; sport psychology [Whitehead et al., 2016]), Gibbs' Reflective Cycle was used to deliberately and critically evaluate the delivery of mental training workshops within a Fire Academy curriculum. See Figure 1 for Gibbs' Cycle and guiding questions.
- SMPCs used Gibbs' guiding questions to reflect on workshop delivery and modifications. See Figure 2 for abbreviated reflections drawn by SMPCs.



- athletes into workshops delivered to firefighter recruits.

## **Implications for professional practice**

## DISCUSSION

• Gibbs' Reflective Cycle was used intermittently and non-systematically throughout the three-year process of adapting workshops initially delivered to

• Two primary themes emerged when SMPCs engaged in the reflective practice outlined by Gibbs during the adaptation and delivery of workshops. • Engagement with the firefighters in both the workshop setting and the fireground enabled SMPCs to better understand their daily activities and training, and concurrently conveyed SMPC investment in the development of the whole firefighter.

• Modification of the order in which mental skills were discussed (i.e., aligned with the Fire Academy training calendar) enhanced workshop activities and application to fireground where recruits were learning new skills that are high stakes in many ways.

• When adapting workshops to new populations, practitioners should have ongoing communication with stakeholders about desired deliverables and the contextual factors that need to be considered in designing and delivering the workshops.

• Gibbs' Reflective Cycle should be used deliberately and proactively between iterations of a workshop to different client groups and within a workshop series to the same client group. A purposeful approach to reflection will improve workshop delivery, and effectiveness of the product as a whole.

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- workshop; Bad: less frequent contact with cadets outside of once per
- The activities went well because they were interactive and challenged
- Some of material and activities could be better suited earlier in the