The Australian Psychological Society Ltd

Interest Group in Coaching Psychology

The British Psychological Society

Special Group in Coaching Psychology

International Coaching Psychology Review

Volume 5 No. 2 September 2010

ISSN: 1750-2764

International Coaching Psychology Review

Subscriptions
International Coaching Psychology Review (ICPR) is published in March and September. It is distributed free of charge to members of the British Psychological Society Special Group in Coaching Psychology and the Australian Psychological Society Interest Group in Coaching Psychology members. It is available to non-members (Individuals £50 per volume; Institutions £60 per volume; single copies £25) from: The British Psychological Society, SGCP, St. Andrews House, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7DR. UK.

Abstracting and indexing: The *ICPR* is abstracted in psycINFO, Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts and Google Scholar. The *ICPR* is included Cabell's *Directory of Publishing Opportunities in Educational Psychology and Administration* and Cabell's *Directory of Publishing Opportunities in Educational Curriculum and Methods.*

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Continued on inside back cover.

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Special Group in Coaching Psychology

The British Psychological Society

1st International Congress of Coaching Psychology:

UK Event Hosted by Special Group in Coaching Psychology

Invited Speakers include:

Dr David Drake (USA), **Dr Andrew Armastas** (Greece), **Hugh O'Donovan** (Ireland), **Peter Zarris** (Australia), **Prof Alex Linley, Dr Kristina Gyllensten** (Sweden), **Dr Jonathan Passmore, Dr Almuth McDowall, Julie Allan, Dr Alison Whybrow, Paul Olson** (Norway), **Dr Ho Law, Prof Stephen Palmer, Alanna O'Broin, Prof David Lane, Pauline Willis, Dr Siobhain O'Riordan....**

This two day event includes keynotes, half day masterclasses, skills workshops, research papers, and posters across both days

For more details and to register go to:
www.sgcp.org.uk

Details of all congress partners and future events can be found at:
www.coachingpsychologycongress.org

CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

14th and 15th December 2010 – City University, London, UK

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Editorial

Stephen Palmer & Michael Cavanagh

WELCOME to the *International Coaching Psychology Review*. Since our last issue plans for the 1st International Congress of Coaching Psychology are moving forward at a good pace. Currently eight coaching psychology bodies from around the globe are collaborating on this joint project. Each participating society has an entry on the central congress website where you can find details about their aims and purpose as a society, and details about their congress event. See: www.coaching-psychologycongress.org/

The British Psychological Society Special Group in Coaching Psychology (SGCP) have now invited well-known keynote speakers to give their papers and run masterclasses at their December 2010 congress event to be held in London at City University. Plans are also developing to hold congress events in Ireland and Scandinavia. The Australian Psychological Society Interest Group in Coaching Psychology (IGCP) is teaming up with psychology and coaching psychology groups in the southern hemisphere. Peter Zarris discusses these exciting developments further in his IGCP news update.

This issue has an eclectic mix of papers. Our first paper, by Kristina Gyllensten, Stephen Palmer, Eva-Karin Nilsson, Agneta Meland Regnér and Ann Frodi, is a qualitative study that focuses on participants' experiences of cognitive coaching. It is noted that since the study was first undertaken, in Sweden the approach would now be referred to as cognitive-behavioural coaching. It is interesting to see how coaching develops differently around the world. The main theme discussed in this paper relates to 'new cognitive and emotional knowledge' with the two sub-themes of 'working with thoughts' and 'regulate emotions'.

Erik de Haan, Colin Bertie, Andrew Day and Charlotte Sills research into critical moments of clients and executive coaches by using a direct-comparison study. Eighty-six critical-moments descriptions were collected by independent researchers from measurements straight after independent coaching conversations. The authors conclude that coaches need to be prepared for quite different circumstances in 'run-of-the-mill' coaching and in the presence of exceptional tensions and ruptures.

In the third paper, Dusan Stojnov and Jelena Pavlovic consider the shift from personal construct therapy to personal construct coaching. Their main argument is that Personal Construct Psychology stood for a coaching psychology long before the term 'coaching' gained popularity. They cover the main principles of Personal Construct Coaching which are elaborated and a general framework for practitioners is provided.

In the following paper, Mark Duffy and Jonathan Passmore explore the process of ethical decision making in coaching psychology and they develop a model for use within coaching psychology which may complement existing codes of practice. The study used a semi-structured interview design within a qualitative approach and a focus group. Their ACTION ethical decision making framework could be used to assist coaching psychologists in making decisions of ethical concern and in solving ethical dilemmas.

Reinhard Stelter and Ho Law provide a theoretical foundation and formulation of practice for narrative coaching. They suggest that coaching as narrative-collaborative practice should form the new wave (third generation) of coaching practice and encourage coaching and coaching psychology communities to engage in its practice and research. This paper takes a detailed look at the topic and has a cultural

dimension. It provides an interesting perspective on narrative coaching.

Our final paper is by P. Alex Linley, Nicky Garcea, Jonathan Hill, Gurpal Minhas, Emma Trenier and Janet Willars. They note that many coaching psychologists use strengths approaches in their practice. Their research focused on developing and validating a Strengthspotting Scale that could be used by researchers, and also by practitioners for the self-assessment of their own strengthspotting preferences and capabilities. An online survey was used to collect data on the newly-developed Strengthspotting Scale. Analyses used included exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation, correlation analysis and multivariate analysis of variance. They conclude that a reliable and valid Strengthspotting Scale was developed.

In the last section, Ho Law and Peter Zarris bring us up-to-date with SGCP and IGCP news.

We hope to see you at one or more of the International Congress events. The Congress promises to be an historic occasion for the developing field of coaching psychology. We both hope to be attending a number of the events and will be happy to provide guidance about the submission of articles to the *International Coaching Psychology Review*. We invite the Congress speakers to consider submitting their papers to this publication.

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Experiences of cognitive coaching: A qualitative study

Kristina Gyllensten, Stephen Palmer, Eva-Karin Nilsson, Agneta Meland Regnér & Ann Frodi

Objectives: *Cognitive coaching and cognitive behavioural coaching are approaches practiced by many coaching psychologists (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007). However, there is a lack of qualitative studies evaluating these approaches. The main objective of/with the present study was to investigate a number of participants' experiences of cognitive coaching.*

Design: *As the study aimed to explore individuals' experiences of cognitive coaching, a qualitative design was used. In particular, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2003) was used to analyse the data.*

Methods: *The study took place in Sweden and 10 individuals, who had participated in cognitive coaching in the workplace, were interviewed. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data.*

Results: *Four main themes emerged from the analysis, and one of these 'new cognitive and emotional knowledge' will be discussed in this article. This main theme had two sub-themes, 'working with thoughts' and 'regulate emotions'.*

Conclusions: *The study found that cognitive coaching helped participants to change unhelpful thinking and regulate difficult emotions, and these findings support the continuing development of cognitive/cognitive behavioural coaching.*

Keywords: *Cognitive coaching; cognitive behavioural coaching; new cognitive and emotional knowledge; qualitative research; IPA.*

THERE ARE many different theories of coaching within the filed of coaching psychology. Cognitive coaching aims to stimulate and develop a person's thoughts, emotions, and behaviours and offer methods and strategies that the person can use when the coach is no longer around (Oestrich & Johansen, 2005). Cognitive behavioural coaching has been defined in a similar manner. Palmer and Szymanska (2007, p.86) describe cognitive behavioural coaching as 'an integrative approach which combines the use of cognitive, behavioural, imaginal and problem-solving techniques and strategies within a cognitive behavioural framework to enable coaches to achieve realistic goals'[1]. Annual surveys of coaching psychologists' views and experiences have been conducted in the UK since 2003. In a recent survey it was found that over 40 per cent used a cognitive approach and 61 per cent used a cognitive behavioural approach (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007). As described previously, cognitive coaching and cognitive behavioural coaching focuses on the relationship between a client's cognitions, emotions, behaviour and physiological reactions. In addition, the social context is also

[1] In the current study the term cognitive coaching has been used rather than the term cognitive behavioural coaching. This was the case because in Sweden the latter term has been used for what could be described as behavioural coaching. However, since the study was conducted, cognitive behavioural coaching has become more integrated and today the term cognitive behavioural coaching would have been used to describe the coaching used in the study. Nevertheless, as the questions in the study referred to cognitive coaching, this term will be used when describing the study. Moreover, it is important to note that this article does not refer to Cognitive Coaching℠ developed in the US by Costa and Garmston (Palmer & Szymanska, 2007).

important to consider. Specific situations, that illustrate what the coachee wants to improve, are analysed using these five factors (cognitions, emotions, behaviour, physiology, social context) (Palmer & Gyllensten, in press). A number of techniques are used to help the coachee reach their goals. The techniques can be cognitive (i.e. focusing on thoughts and images), behavioural, or focusing on emotions or physiology. Examples of cognitive techniques include identifying PITS (performance interfering thoughts) and PETS (performance enhancing thoughts) or imagery exercises. Behavioural techniques can include time management strategies, assertion training, and behavioural experiments (Palmer & Szymanska, 2007). Techniques regulating emotion and physiology include psychoeducation, exposure, and relaxation.

There is an increase in research into coaching psychology. However, more studies are needed that specifically investigate the effectiveness of cognitive or cognitive behavioural coaching. Nevertheless, a number of studies have been conducted, for example, a study by Grant (2001) investigated the effects of cognitive, behavioural, and cognitive behavioural coaching approaches in a sample of students. Grant found that all three coaching approaches significantly reduced test anxiety. Depression, anxiety and stress were also measured in the study and only the cognitive coaching was found to significantly reduce levels of depression and anxiety. Another study by Grant (2003) found that a life coaching group programme based on a cognitive behavioural and solution focused approach reduced participants' levels of depression, anxiety, and stress following the coaching. Interestingly, the coaching did not target mental health specifically. In a similar study, Green, Oades and Grant (2006) investigated the effects of a cognitive-behavioural, solution-focused life coaching group programme. Participation in the life coaching group programme was associated with significant increases in goal striving, well-being, and hope. The effects of a stress self-help manual based on a cognitive behavioural self-coaching approach were investigated by Grbcic and Palmer (2006). The participants, middle managers, were randomly assigned to the coaching or control group. It was found that post-coaching levels of psychological problems and symptoms had decreased significantly in the coaching group. Interestingly the intervention appeared effective regardless of the fact that frequency of work stressors and lack of organisational support remained unchanged. Kearns, Forbes and Gardiner (2007) investigated the effectiveness of cognitive behavioural coaching in reducing levels of perfectionism and self-handicapping in a group of research higher degree students. It was found that levels of perfectionism had fallen significantly after the coaching intervention and that levels of self-handicapping had fallen significantly by the follow-up. A further study randomly allocated students to cognitive behavioural and solution focused coaching or to a wait-list control group. It was found that the coaching was associated with significant increases in levels of cognitive hardiness and hope, and significant decreases in levels of depression (Green, Grant & Rynsaardt, 2007). Another study by Grant (2008) investigated the effects of cognitive behavioural and solution focused coaching, on student coaches. Grant found that participation in coaching reduced anxiety, increased goal attainment, and enhanced cognitive hardiness. Finally, Grant, Curtayne and Burton (2009) conducted a randomised controlled study where once again a cognitive behavioural solution focused coaching approach was investigated. This study used both a quantitative and qualitative approach and the participants were 41 executives in a public health agency. In the quantitative part of the study it was found that the coaching intervention enhanced goal attainment, resilience, workplace well-being and reduced depression and stress. According to the qualitative data the coaching had helped the

participants to increase personal insight, self-confidence, improve management skills and handle organisational change. These studies reported positive results for coaching, based on/partly based on cognitive and behavioural approaches. However, these are almost all quantitative studies, apart from the last one by Grant et al. (2009), which are unable to get rich descriptions of the coachees' experiences of cognitive coaching.

In the emerging field of coaching research there are a limited number of qualitative studies published, especially using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) that was the method of analysis in the current study. However, we have previously published two studies investigating the coachee's experience of coaching using IPA (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2006; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007). A limitation of these two studies was that they did not investigate a specific coaching approach and the aim of the current qualitative study was to investigate the participants' experience of cognitive coaching.

Methods

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The present study used IPA to analyse the data from the semi-structured interviews. IPA is a qualitative methodology developed for psychology and the aim of IPA is to explore and understand meanings of experiences of the participants (Smith & Osborn, 2004). IPA has been used extensively in health psychology research investigating varying topics such as experiences of chronic pain, addiction and pregnancy. According to Smith and Osborn (2004) IPA could be appropriate for a number of topics if the aim of the study is to explore individuals' experiences and the meaning of these experiences. Phenomenology relates to the person's individual view of an event rather than an objective statement about the event (Smith, 1996). Consequently, IPA attempts to explore the participant's perceptions and insider views of an event. Via interpretation of the data the researcher takes an active role in attempting to get an insider's perspective of the participant's experience. However, it is recognised that it is impossible for the researcher to get a complete insiders perspective (Smith & Osborn, 2003). In contrast to some other qualitative approaches IPA assumes that there is a link between what participants say and what they think and feel. Nevertheless, it is recognised that the relationship is complicated and participants could find it difficult to verbalise their experiences or they may not want to do so (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Participants

Studies using IPA often involve small numbers of participants as the goal is to present a detailed picture of the participants' individual experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2004). IPA studies do not attempt to obtain a random sample of participants rather, IPA researchers aim to find a homogenous sample of participants that are suitable for the research question (Smith & Osborn, 2004). Consequently, the participants (N=10) in the current study were selected on the basis of having participated in cognitive coaching at the workplace and thereby being able to contribute to the research question. All were recruited via personal contacts of the researchers. The participants were in management positions ranging from middle to senior management. The participants had not received cognitive coaching prior to the coaching investigated in the study. Each participant had volunteered to attend coaching in the workplace and the reasons for doing so varied. It was up to the participants to decide the focus and goals of their coaching. Examples of areas the participants had worked on in coaching included improving confidence in board meetings, learning to prioritise work tasks, improving communication with more senior staff and employees, improving ability to handle pressure. Idiosyncratic measures of goal attainment were allowed, as goal attainment was not the particular focus of this study. Moreover, goal attainment data was not being collected in a systematic fashion.

Table 1: Demographics of the participants.

Gender	
Men	4
Women	6
Age	
Mean	43
Range	31-53
Sector	
Private company	3
Government body	2
School	5
Levels of management	
Middle management	3
Senior management	2
School principals	5
Number of coaching sessions*	
One participant	4 sessions
One participant	4–5 sessions
Two participants	5 sessions
One participant	5–6 sessions
Two participants	6–7 sessions
Two participants	10 sessions
One participant	10–15 sessions

*As some of the participants only gave an approximate number no mean value is presented.

Coachees and their coaches determined how best to measure goal attainment. Quantitative goal attainment data is not reported in this paper. All the coaching sessions were face-to-face and varied in length.

The coaches and coaching

Four different coaches had met the participants and all had experience of working with coaching in the workplace and had extensive training in cognitive therapy. At this point in time there were no longer-term training courses in cognitive coaching in Sweden so the coaches did not have any official coaching qualifications, but they had attended cognitive coaching workshops and had over two years experience of working with coaching in industry and also had experience from organisational consultancy work. All coaches received supervision in cognitive therapy but not coaching. The coaches took particular care to ensure that the coaching conversation stayed focused on coaching rather than therapeutic issues. All contracts between the coachees and coaches stated that the participants should receive coaching, thus the coachees were buying coaching and not therapy. Moreover, reading the interviews it became clear that the participants had received coaching and not therapy. The coaching was goal-directed, based on cognitive principles and used a variety cognitive and behavioural techniques including modifying un-helpful thoughts, visualisation, time-management techniques, relaxation and behavioural experiments.

Interview schedule

It is useful to prepare an interview schedule prior to the interview as this helps the researcher to have a loose agenda for the interview (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The interview schedule (Appendix) was developed on the basis on the main research question. The main research question was 'How did you experience cognitive coaching'? Smith and Osborn (2003) suggest that the schedule should consist of a number of topics, with possible prompts, that will help to answer, the often abstract, research question. The main topics included in the schedule were, the coaching process, effectiveness, and the alliance between the coach and the coachee. Several prompts were included in the schedule. The interviews were carried out by three of the authors (K.G, A-K.N, A.M.R) at the participants' offices or homes and were tape recorded and transcribed in their entirety. Lines in the transcripts were numbered for ease of reference and participants were assigned a number from 1 to 10 in the transcripts.

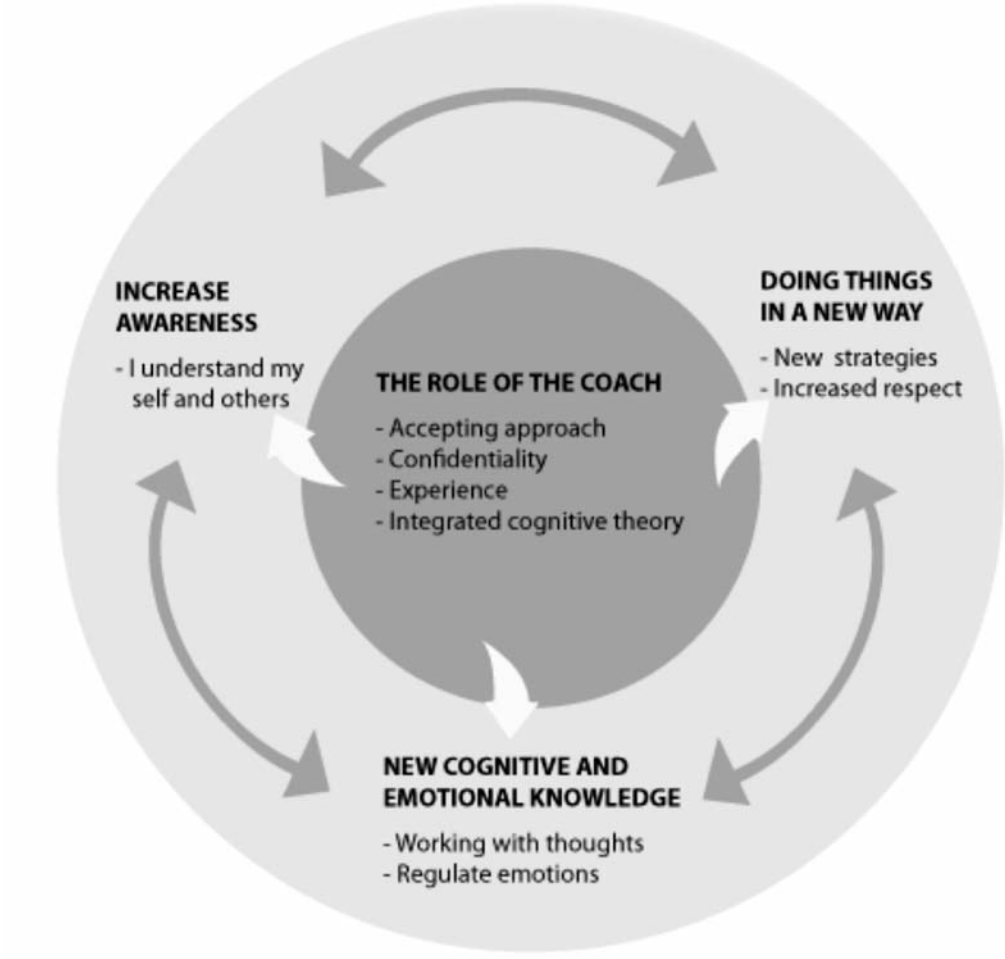
Analysis

The analysis followed Smith and Osborn's (2003) step-by step approach to doing IPA. As suggested by Smith and Osborn (2003) an ideographic approach to analysis was used, this means that the analysis begins with a detailed investigation of specific cases before the other cases are incorporated and a more general categorisation emerges. The analysis was carried out by three of the authors (K.G, A-K.N, A.M.R) and two of the researchers analysed three cases each and one analysed four cases. Each transcript was read a number of times and notes of anything significant or interesting were made in the left-hand margin. In the next step of the analysis the transcript was read again and possible theme titles were recorded in the right-hand margin. A higher level of abstraction and psychological terminology is introduced in the analysis at this stage (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The emerging themes were listed and connections between themes and superodinate concepts were noted. Number of the line on the page, page number and keyword were recorded indicating where examples of the theme could be found in the transcript. Finally, the themes were ordered coherently and a table of themes was produced. This process of analysis was repeated for each of the transcripts, thus a table of themes were produced for each participant. During this process the researchers met a number of times to discuss the emerging themes. Thus, all researchers read all transcripts but only conducted the analysis on three or four of the transcripts. But all three researchers had to come to an agreement of all the themes for all the transcripts. Once all transcripts had been analysed the researchers met to create a final table of superordinate themes for the whole group. This meant looking for connections between the themes and creating new general themes that better represented the data. It is important to note that this lengthy process involved reduction and prioritising of the data and themes were selected on the basis of several factors such as richness of text, ability to explain aspects of the interviews, and prevalence in the data (Smith, Jaraman & Osborn, 1999). Overall the researchers met eight times to check the emerging analysis of each interview and to create an overall analysis. Finally four main themes with related subthemes were identified in the study. The four main themes were the role of the coach, increased awareness, increased cognitive and emotional knowledge, and doing things in a new way. The list of main themes was consequently translated into a narrative account with quotes to support the analysis. However, due to the large amount of data for each theme the current article will focus on one of the main themes – increased cognitive and emotional knowledge.

Results

Four main themes were found in the analysis, these being: the role of the coach, increased awareness, increased cognitive and emotional knowledge, and doing things in a new way. In addition, the main themes

Figure 1: Experiences of cognitive coaching.



consisted of a number of sub-themes. These main themes and sub-themes are presented in Figure 1 'Experiences of cognitive coaching'. The figure illustrates that the role of the coach is important in order for the coachee to benefit from the coaching. Benefits include increased awareness, increased cognitive and emotional knowledge, and doing things in a new way. Importantly, the model highlights how the different themes influence each other. For example, increased awareness helpful thinking and increased ability to handle emotions helped participants to act in work situations where they had been previously passive, to prioritise work better, and to be more assertive with superiors. This article will focus on the main theme 'New cognitive and emotional knowledge'. Only one of the main themes has been selected due to the large amount of data for each theme. It was judged that this main theme would be interesting to present as it highlights the process of cognitive and emotional change in cognitive coaching.

New cognitive and emotional knowledge

The main theme cognitive and emotional knowledge consisted of two sub-themes. These were working with thoughts and regulate emotions. These two themes highlighted how the clients were able to identify and modify both unhelpful thoughts and difficult emotions. Examples of verbatim will be presented in order to illustrate and support the theme and sub-themes. The numbers in brackets after every quote refer to the participants, who were each assigned a number in the transcripts, and line numbers from the interviews.

Working with thoughts

To identify and to modify cognitions are two important facets of cognitive coaching. The participants reported that the coaching had helped them to revise unhelpful thinking. In cognitive coaching it is useful to identify cognitive distortions/thinking errors (Beck, 1976; Palmer, Cooper & Thomas, 2003). Several of the participants reported that they had become better at challenging cognitive distortions and think more realistically. The following quote illustrates how a participant got insight into his/her tendency to 'catastrophise'.

I had a way of imagining the worst-case scenario, now the whole world is falling down, but that was just my own image, no one else's image. It is useful to get some insight into how I think. (8: 104–106)

'Mind reading' was another cognitive distortion that participants became aware of in coaching.

You can never know what someone else is thinking, although you think that you know, and you let that idea control your thoughts. It is better to find out what the other person is thinking before you react. It is so obvious when you think about it. (8: 37–41)

The coaching also helped some participants to identify that they were using the distortion 'personalisation' (a tendency to take things personally). This insight had helped them to think in a different way and thereby decrease their stress levels.

I am better at viewing things from a different perspective and not take everything personally, and that is one way of decreasing stress. To not take everything personally is a responsibility. (3: 147–150)

Another effect of the coaching was the increased ability to challenge 'musts'. A consequence of this was an increased ability to save some tasks until tomorrow and feel ok about it.

My ability to handle 'musts' have probably increased, there are levels of 'musts' and some things would have been good to get done today, but it is ok to wait until tomorrow. (6: 147–148)

Another example of a change in thinking was an increased ability to stop rumination. Being able to do this had a positive effect on the ability to relax and thereby become more effective.

I carefully think through everything back and forth, and remind myself that I can let go. Your brain does not have to work all the time, you can relax once in a while. Perhaps you will not save any time doing this, but you will save your energy and that helps you to become more effective. (9: 226–229)

Identifying and modifying unhelpful thinking was a central part of the coaching as described above. But participants also reported that once they had identified a more helpful way of thinking it was important to continue to practise the new thinking in order to maintain it.

It is like a football team, you got to practise. It is not always about physical training or improving project management, it is about taking care of your mind, that is where it begins. (8: 359–362)

Regulate emotions

In addition to changing thoughts, the coaching appeared to help the participants to identify, accept and modify difficult emotions. One of the participants expressed this ability in the following manner.

Not to deny the emotion, 'ok you feel this way, don't deny it try to find out what it is about and how serious it is and don't over interpret'. This may help to decrease this intense feeling. (6: 176–179)

Similarly, the following quote highlights how the coaching helped a participant to control his/her emotions when someone was having a different opinion.

When someone says something I don't like during a meeting I can now take it in, a controlled manner and not let my emotions run wild. (1: 262–264)

The participant described how they learned to recognise it when they were entering an emotional state and also understand what that emotion meant in that situation. This ability, to reason with oneself, made the situation easier to accept.

When I can feel that emotion in the body I say to myself 'now you start, now you end up in an emotional state, now you are that little boy who cannot handle being questioned'. You have to have a dialogue with yourself and then it is easier to accept'. (1: 266–268)

Being able to analyse difficult emotions helped the participants to evaluate the situation and make a decision about whether to take action or not.

It was last week when something did not go my way and then I felt …'what do I do now?' And instead of just pushing it away I thought 'ok, this is how it feels, accept it and try to analyse why it feels this way, what is the effect, can I live with it, do I have to do something else'. (6: 169–172)

The coaching appeared to have helped to increase the ability to take a step back and reason, instead of reacting directly.

… I show more clearly who I am and what I think, and I try to think before I react. (7:218)

It appeared that the increased ability to regulate emotions had different consequences. One of the participants reported that an increased ability to control emotions increased their self-acceptance and self-respect.

…I have also learned to notice when that emotion starts to rise which means I have to kill it in time. This has helped me to accept myself, and respect myself. (2: 279–280)

Discussion

One of the main themes in the study, 'new cognitive and emotional knowledge', was outlined in the results section. This main theme had two sub-themes – 'working with thoughts' and 'regulate emotions'. Under the theme 'working with thoughts' participants reported that the coaching had helped them to identify and challenge cognitive distortions, let go of rumination, and practice their new way of thinking. Under the sub-theme 'regulate emotions' it was described how the participants became aware of their emotions and how they became better at regulating emotions in situations they previously found this difficult to do. These changes were linked to behavioural changes as highlighted in Figure 1. For example, the participants explained that they had become better at prioritising work tasks, been more active, and more assertive with superiors.

As highlighted in the introduction there are few studies investigating cognitive/cognitive behavioural coaching. However, the findings from the studies that have been conducted are in accordance with the findings of the current study. A finding in the current study was that cognitive coaching appeared to increase the participants' ability

to modify their thinking which in some cases helped to decrease stress. This is similar to the findings reported by Grbcic and Palmer (2006) who found that self-help cognitive behavioural coaching significantly decreased stress. Furthermore, Grant (2001) found that cognitive coaching significantly reduced test anxiety, and depression, and anxiety (not test related). Similarly, a later study by Grant (2003), with coaching based on cognitive behavioural and solution focused approach, found that levels of depression, anxiety, and stress significantly decreased after the coaching. Moreover, the study by Grant et al. (2009) also found that the coaching intervention reduced depression and stress.

The findings in the current study, relating to regulating emotion, fit well with model of emotional intelligence presented by Salovey and Mayer (1990). In this model the authors state that emotional intelligence *'… involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions'* (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p.189). It is further suggested that individuals with emotional intelligence can said to have a form of positive mental health. They are open to positive and negative internal experiences and are aware both of their own and other peoples' feelings. They can label and regulate their own feelings and communicate them when needed. Similarly, in the current study the participants explained that they had become better at both recognising and regulating their emotions. This change appeared to have had a positive effect on the participants.

There are several limitations with the current study. The participants reported very positive experiences of coaching, although they were asked about negative experiences as well. It is possible that the participants felt uncomfortable talking about negative experiences of their coaching as they knew that the interviewer had some contact with their coach. In order to minimise this risk the interviewers emphasised the confidentiality and the fact that their responses would not have an effect on any future coaching. Moreover, Chapman (2002) pointed out that there is a risk of selection bias in small studies. Indeed, it is possible that individuals with more negative experiences of coaching were not recommended for the study. However, the researchers were aware of this risk and asked for participants that had not necessarily hade a positive experience of the coaching. Another limitation was that the analysis was not checked by an independent audit as suggested by, for example, Baker, Pistrang and Elliot (2002). However, the researchers discussed the analysis in different stages during eight occasions and it was judged that this was a sufficient method to check the analysis. A further issue that needs to be discussed is the generalisability of the results. The qualitative analysis is a subjective process and different researchers may have arrived at different conclusions. Indeed, In IPA the researcher's personal frame of reference influences the analysis (Golsworthy & Coyle, 2001). Regarding generalisablity and IPA it has been suggested that it should be possible to say a great deal about the actual group of participants and it should be possible to say something about the wider group represented by the participants in IPA research (Smith & Osborn, 2004). Thus it is possible that the study has helped to highlight some of the changes that can occur in cognitive coaching.

Regarding future research larger quantitative studies could compare cognitive coaching with other approaches. Such studies could also look at specific problems or issues like stress or procrastination, etc. Follow-up studies would also be very interesting. Future qualitative studies could focus more specifically on the themes we found, for instance regulate emotions. In summary the current study found that cognitive coaching helped participants to change unhelpful thinking and regulate difficult emotions. This is only a small qualitative study but it supports the continuing development of cognitive/cognitive behavioural coaching.

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Critical moments of clients and coaches: A direct-comparison study

Erik de Haan, Colin Bertie, Andrew Day & Charlotte Sills

'I don't understand. I just don't understand. (…)
I don't understand it at all. I just don't understand.'
'What's wrong? What don't you understand?'
'I've never heard such a strange story.'
'Why don't you tell me about it?'
Opening lines of *Rashomon* (1950), Akira Kurosawa.

Purpose: *In this study descriptions of critical moments of coaching as experienced by both executive coaches and their clients are analysed and compared, to find out more about what works in coaching conversations.*
Design/Methodology: *This is a real-time direct-comparison study of coaches' and clients' critical-moment experiences with data collected straight after mutual coaching conversations. Eighty-six critical-moments descriptions were collected by independent researchers (not the authors) from measurements straight after independent coaching conversations (not with the authors). Exactly half of these descriptions were taken from clients and the other half from their coaches. They are analysed with reference to the full dataset of 352 critical-moment descriptions (102 by clients and 250 by executive coaches).*
Results: *Both coaches and clients report new realisations and insights as most critical in their direct experience of coaching, and they are also in substantial agreement about the specific moments that were critical in the sessions and why. Hence we find no evidence for the so-called 'Rashomon experience' in executive coaching. Differences with earlier coach data which showed a completely different picture could be explained by drawing attention to the fact that those earlier data were biased towards moments of exceptional tension experienced by the coach, verging on 'ruptures' within the coaching relationship.*
Conclusions: *This study has produced both a confirmation of earlier work when studying critical moments in executive coaching as well as a connection between the various diverging results hitherto found. The findings help us to understand better: (1) why clients' and coaches' descriptions in earlier studies were so different; and (2) how descriptions from clients and coaches coming out of coaching sessions can be extremely similar, as was the case here. The main conclusion is that coaches need to be prepared for quite different circumstances in 'run-of-the-mill' coaching and in the presence of exceptional tensions and ruptures.*

EXECUTIVE COACHING – the professional development of executives through one-to-one conversations with a qualified coach – is a discipline within the broader field of organisation development (OD) which is comparatively amenable to research. Executive coaching conversations are usually explicitly contracted, and bounded in both time and space (fixed duration, similar intervals, quiet and dependable space, away from the client's organisation, etc.). Most coaching manuals suggest keeping the space for conversation as much as possible neutral, uncluttered and comfortable, without interference or distraction (Hawkins & Smith, 2006; Starr, 2003). Coach and client may spend some 10 to 20 hours in this same environment, in addition to sporadic email and telephone exchanges. The executive coach does not normally have a lot of contact with others in the client's organisation, unless there are additional coaching clients in that organisation or the coaching is part of a larger-scale consulting

intervention. This relative simplicity and the underlying unities of space, time, action and actors, create a relatively bounded *laboratory* in which consulting interventions can be studied. This is what makes executive coaching particularly exciting to investigate.

In order to understand the impact and contribution of executive coaching and other organisational consulting interventions, it is not enough to just understand general effectiveness or outcome. One also has to inquire into and create an understanding of the underlying coaching processes themselves, from the perspectives of both clients and coaches. The executive coaching profession is still young and although there are several studies on coaching outcome (e.g. Ragins, Cotton & Miller, 2000; Smither et al., 2003; Evers, Brouwers & Tomic, 2006), all rigorous quantitative research papers can probably be counted on the fingers of one hand. For recent overview studies that together cover some 20 serious coaching outcome research papers, see Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson (2001), Feldman and Lankau (2005) and Greif (2007). However, much pioneering work has been done in recent years, there is really no comparison with the related but much more established field of psychotherapy which boasts many hundreds of solid research papers (for an overview of outcome research in psychotherapy see Wampold, 2001).

Outcome or effectiveness research reduces the whole of the coaching intervention to only one number, or perhaps a set of numbers, for example, averages of psychometric instruments or client ratings. Outcome research has to be silent on what happens *within* a coaching relationship: the many gestures, speech acts and attempts at sense-making that make up the whole of the intervention. At best it can tell us in a statistical manner how the full sum of all those conversations taken together may contribute to a digit on a Likert scale, at worst it may not even tell us that. What interests us in this study is how outcomes are achieved *within* the coaching intervention, i.e. within and between individual coaching conversations. This is the realm of so-called *suboutcome* (Rice & Greenberg, 1984): outcome achieved in moments or sessions of coaching.

Research into coaching *process* is not as straightforward as research into coaching *outcome*. Whilst reducing the whole of a coaching relationship to one or a few quantifiable 'outcomes' (e.g. a rating by the coach, the client, the client's boss, an independent observer, etc.) allows a clear-cut and specific definition of that variable, when it comes to process one has to deal with manifold 'suboutcomes' (Rice & Greenberg, 1984). Moreover, studying an ongoing process will influence that process, which makes it harder to study.

Notwithstanding the difficulties with process research, it is of vital importance for coaching practitioners to understand better what happens in their conversations, what both partners in the conversations pay attention to and what they think is achieved through engaging in conversation. This article sets out to find some preliminary answers to the following main research questions:

1. What is the nature of 'key moments' that clients and coaches report immediately after their session together?
2. In what ways and to what degree are the reports by coaches and their clients different?
3. How do the results obtained with this new sample of real-time 'key moments' compare with findings from earlier studies?

Although to the best of our knowledge of the executive coaching literature, comparison studies into coaches' and clients' experiences of coaching have not been undertaken before, they are not without important precursors in psychotherapy. Admittedly, psychotherapy has distinctive professional qualifications, different ways of working and a different knowledge base (Spinelli, 2008). However, there is enough similarity in terms of one-to-one conversations with a profes-

sional helper to be interested in similar research findings from that field. Yalom and Elkin (1974) famously wrote up their two-year therapy journey, so that for some 75 sessions we have a first-person account from both therapist and client written up independently and shortly after each session. For an overview of more quantitative studies it seems appropriate to start with Feifel and Eells' early (1964) account of therapy outcomes as reported by both patients and therapists. They report 'a thought-provoking contrast in the patients' accent on insight changes compared with those of symptom relief and behaviours by therapists' (Feifel & Eells, 1964, p.317). In a more extensive study where patient and therapist reports after single sessions were compared (Orlinsky & Howard, 1975), 'patients and therapists agreed in rating insight and problem-resolution as the dominant goal of the patients, with relief as a prominent although secondary, goal' (p.66). Stiles (1980) did a direct-comparison study of sessions, by comparing clients' and therapists' ratings of sessions that they had together. By correlating ratings, he was able to show that clients' positive feelings after sessions were strongly associated with perceived 'smoothness/ease' of the sessions, whilst therapists' positive feelings were associated with 'depth/value' of the sessions. Broadly, clients and therapists tended to agree in their characterisations of sessions. Caskey, Barker and Elliott (1984) have compared patients' and therapists' perceptions of preselected individual therapist responses and they found reasonable agreement between patients and therapists on therapists' impact and intentions, as well.

Particularly relevant from the perspective of this inquiry is the direct-comparison study of *key moments* of therapy by Llewelyn (1988). She interviewed 40 patient-therapist pairs and collected 1076 'critical events' (both helpful and unhelpful) from 399 sessions (an average of 2.7 per session). She found highly significant differences between the selection and description of the events by therapists and by patients. These differences turned out to be greater when the outcome of the psychotherapy was relatively less helpful. Llewelyn used Elliott's (1985) taxonomy to classify the events, and found that:

- Patients valued 'reassurance/relief' and 'problem solutions' more highly, whilst
- Therapists valued 'gaining of cognitive/affective insight' highest, whilst
- Both patients and therapists valued 'personal contact' highly.

Llewelyn (1988) concludes that patients seem to be more concerned with solutions to their problems, and that they place higher value on advice and solutions, provided they feel free to reject them. Therapists, on the other hand, seem more concerned with the aetiology of the problems and potential transformation through the patient's insight.

Earlier research of critical moments of coaching conversations followed a narrative and retrospective approach. De Haan and associates (2008a, 2008b, 2010) and Day and associates (2008) asked three groups of coaches and one group of clients of executive coaches to describe briefly one critical moment (an exciting, tense, or significant moment) from their coaching journeys. See Table 1 for a brief overview of all five inquiries into critical moments of executive coaching from 2002.

The studies to date have found quite divergent material with coaches and clients clearly submitting different descriptions and also placing a different emphasis within the descriptions (see De Haan et al., 2010). The results of previous investigations prompted the present direct-comparison study as a way to explore and clarify some of the differences and also to test the conclusions from earlier papers, with the help of a new dataset. Direct-comparison in real-time is of course not possible without seriously interfering with the executive-coaching sessions themselves. In order to minimise interference, coach and client were interviewed only once and directly after a session. Other than logistical issues, potential relational difficulties were anticipated as the research would

Table 1.

The five datasets of Critical Moments Descriptions that we have gathered over the years 2002–2009. Please note that the number of critical moments in the first study (De Haan, 2008a) is lower (56). This is because we have extended this dataset beyond the work for that publication.

Dataset	Who has provided the the descriptions?	Number of critical-moment descriptions	Main conclusions	Publication
1	Inexperienced executive coaches: approximately 75 per cent were (internal and external) consultants who had recently completed a full-year programme in management consulting and about 25% independent coaches.	80	All critical moments could be expressed as *doubts* of coaches. Critical moments were seen as important sources of information and potential breakthrough moments.	De Haan (2008a)
2	Experienced executive coaches: at least eight years' experience.	78	All critical moments could be expressed as *anxieties* of coaches. Experienced coaches grapple with recurring struggles in their client work.	De Haan (2008b)
3	New sample of very experienced executive coaches (on average 11.3 years' experience) who were interviewed in depth.	49	An experienced *rupture* in the relationship (e.g. misunderstanding, anger, re-contracting and referral, withdrawal and termination) was found around every critical moment. Critical to the outcome of that process was whether continued and shared reflection was possible after the critical moment.	Day et al. (2008)
4	Clients of executive coaching.	59	What clients report as most helpful from their experience of coaching are new realisations and insights.	De Haan et al. (2010)
5	Direct comparison of experienced coaches with their clients.	86	Both coaches and clients report new realisations and insights as most critical in their direct experience of coaching, and they are also in substantial agreement about the specific moments that were critical in the sessions and why.	This study.

impinge on very sensitive, private and confidential relationships. To quote Elton Wilson and Syme's (2006) pertinent book *Objectives and Outcomes* (p.82): 'Asking clients for their opinion is a process fraught with controversy, with many therapists asserting the possibility of harm to the therapeutic alliance or, conversely, affecting the transference. In addition, clients may wish to please or praise their therapists or even to covertly attack their therapist. Unfortunately, a practitioner's own observations may be laden with assumption and a defensive need to prove their own worth or the effectiveness of their own theoretical and methodological approach.' The same can very well be true for asking coaches and their clients about their findings whilst they are still engaged in a long-term coaching intervention. One would expect the reports of key moments from their recent conversation to be influenced by what they think of the over-all quality of the work and the relationship, by what they expect us as researchers to be looking for, or even by their relationships with us and our institution.

Following De Haan and associates (2010), the main hypothesis for this study was that the perspectives of clients and coaches will be significantly different, as is also the case for critical-event studies in psycho-therapy (see, for example, Caskey et al., 1984; Llewelyn, 1988). We were expecting not only substantial differences in the moments that were selected for recall, but also in terms of the emphasis within the moment descriptions. To our surprise we actually found that clients' and coaches' data in this study were very similar, that in more than 50 per cent of cases the same moment, event or topic was described, and that there were substantial similarities in emphases between the coaches and their clients.

Method

Since 2002, we have opted for the study of so-called 'critical-moment descriptions' as a way of understanding the impact of executive coaching engagements, following similar methods as pioneered by Flannagan (1954), Elliott and associates (1985) and Llewelyn (1988). Critical moments are remembered as exciting, tense, and/or significant moments after coaching conversations. They can be assumed to be a reflection of change through executive coaching as it happens in conversation. Descriptions allow pattern analysis, both qualitatively and quantitatively, and they afford comparison procedures between different datasets. As a comparison with the previous research on critical moments in executive coaching conversations, a setting was devised that allows as much as possible to directly compare clients' and coaches' perceptions of key moments in their sessions, in such a way that the distortions of memory (Goodman et al., 2006) would be minimised by gathering the critical moment descriptions as quickly after the session as possible. We contacted directly and personally about 20 executive coaches of our acquaintance and agreed with 14 to work with us on this research programme. Each of these coaches agreed to be interviewed and selected a client who would also be interviewed straight after the coaching session they had together, for a maximum of 30 minutes. Two of the 14 coaches contributed two client sessions, and one contributed seven client sessions (all different clients). The coach who contributed seven sessions with seven clients, did not pre-select and just offered us data from all her clients within one particular organisation. All interviews were recorded, and in one case the recording equipment did not work so that this data had to be discarded. All in all, the sample size was 21 coaching conversations, yielding 42 recorded interviews.

Of the 14 coaches participating in this inquiry, two were Ashridge staff, five Ashridge associated coaches who do a lot of executive coaching work for Ashridge, three belonged to a wider network and four were in the second year of their MSc in Executive Coaching at Ashridge. Nine of the coaches had been accredited by Ashridge, and all

had over two years' experience as an executive coach, with an average experience level of more than 10 years. The coaches selected client, coaching conversation and interview day – the researchers worked as much as possible around their requirements and preferences. Three of the participating coaches were male and 11 were female. Of the 21 participating clients six were female and 15 were male. Most clients and coaches were white and British/Irish; there was one Israeli and one Australian coach and one South African client. The average number of sessions that coach and client had already had with each other was 5.4 – with a minimum of two and a maximum of 15. On average coach and client had worked with each other for almost 10 months.

As the authors have developed their thinking about critical moments in executive coaching over the years, they decided not to participate in the study as coaches, or as clients, or even as interviewers. Two MSc-students in Organisational Behaviour at Birkbeck University, Heather Reekie and Monica Stroink, were willing to run all the interviews, as they collected material for their own Masters dissertations. All interviews were conducted in private rooms, mostly close to the location where the coaching had taken place. Some interviews were over the telephone. The interviews with client and coach were done as much as possible by both students to avoid potential biases. Logistically, this was not possible in three cases as the client and coach were promised an interview straight after the coaching session so there would be least memory loss. Also, in four (~10 per cent) of the client interviews a member of the author group stepped in and conducted the interview.

Unexpected logistical challenges occurred because for every pair of interviews two different researchers had to travel to the right location or telephone in at the right time. This sometimes meant hiring a second consulting room. Even with the logistics under control, the interviewees were subjected to detailed questioning having just come out of presumably intensive and exhausting coaching encounters. Nevertheless, 42 interviews with clients and coaches took place shortly after their sessions, which generated 86 descriptions of key moments of interest.

All interviews had the same structure and they were all transcribed (except one). The core questions about the critical moments were as follows:

1. Looking back on the session, what seems to be the important or key or critical moment(s) of your time together? What happened? Please can you provide a brief description of the moment(s).
2. What tells you that this was a critical moment?
3. What was your role in that moment?
4. What was your partner's role in that moment?
5. How do you think this moment will impact on the future (i.e. the future of these conversations or what you take from the coaching)?

In this way the interviewers were able to obtain 86 critical moments from 21 sessions, i.e. an average of just over two per interview and 4.1 per coaching session. Exactly 43 of these moments were obtained from clients and another 43 were obtained from coaches. This article reports on the descriptions of key moments as they are found in the transcripts, i.e. mainly answers to questions 1 and 2 above, and occasionally more data were taken from answers to the other questions, when this yielded additional clarity.

From this dataset the inquiry proceeded as follows:

1. Using grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) we came up with 30 short codes describing critical aspects in the critical moment descriptions.
2. Five in the research team (the four authors and one MSc-student) coded the dataset using as many of these codes as they wanted per critical moment. The four codings were correlated for inter-rater consistency and first conclusions were drawn from the frequencies of codes.

3. The same method of grounded theory was again followed to come up with a much smaller code set, containing only 12 more disparate and mutually exclusive codes, which could be used for this dataset but also for all four previous datasets (De Haan 2008a, 2008b; Day et al., 2008; De Haan et al., 2010).
4. All five sets of critical moments, totalling 352 critical moments, were coded on the new codes using a sort method (exclusive coding of only one code per critical moment), by two of the authors (CB and EH) and by one outsider, a colleague not previously introduced to this research (AC).

Results

First impressions on reading through the dataset

The following features of this new dataset, some of which clearly different from earlier research data, stand out:

- Both clients and coaches found it easy to come up with critical or key moments. Contrary to earlier research into the experiences of clients of coaching (De Haan et al., 2010) there were no 'no' responses. In fact, there was at least one critical-moment description from every interview and the total amount of key moment descriptions volunteered by clients exactly equals the number of those volunteered by coaches (43, i.e. on average 2.05 key moment descriptions per interview). There is, however, one client who says 'There's nothing really that sticks out, obviously it's always a very casual conversation – I think that the biggest thing is that it's always very thought provoking, it makes you look at yourself quite a lot', but he then continues to volunteer one key moment.
- There was a clear and sustained focus on the client throughout the descriptions: only one of the 43 coach descriptions referred exclusively to the coach's internal process (this one description still referred three times briefly to the client, by name) and only one of the client described exclusively what the coach was doing. Fifty-three per cent of coaches' descriptions referred to themselves and their interventions, and 44 per cent of clients' descriptions referred explicitly to the coach and to what the coach had done.
- The coding of the content of the critical moments with 30 codes similar to those in De Haan and associates (2010) showed that the most prevalent codes were again those about personal realisations (both about issues and about self) and those that are about specific behaviours of the coach (both directive and facilitative interventions). Together these four of the 30 codes make up almost 50 per cent of the coded content. When client and coach descriptions are compared there are two clusters of codes which are strongly skewed towards the coach critical-moment descriptions: (1) the coach's emotional reactions which made up five codes but only six per cent of the content; and (2) physiological reactions of the client (such as skin tone, agitation and breathing), a single code which covered two per cent of the content.
- A lot of clients and coaches comment on the same moment or situation, and they talk about those moments and situations in similar terms. In fact 46 of the 86 key moment descriptions (53 per cent) were clearly about the same moment or event (examples below are the pairs 3co9 and 3cl10 and 14co51 and 14cl52).
- The descriptions are narrative in nature, and seemed to all four authors less exciting or engaging compared with the previous research. They seem to be lower risk and of less immediate impact. At the same time they can be seen as an illustration of the straightforward, helpful and practice-based character of our own experience of 'everyday coaching'.
- The nature of the descriptions is broadly positive and constructive; there was only one moment approximating a rupture in the relationship (see key moment 4co13,

below, and compare with Day et al., 2008, which found evidence of ruptures in the relationship in most critical-moment descriptions). So, in summary with the previous conclusion, there seems to be an absence of tension, struggle and strong emotion. There are three occasions where clients express interest in their coaches, see, for example, critical moment 8cl30 below. We assumed this was partly because of an implicit psychological contract between the participants, and between the participants and us, to be appreciative and gentle towards one another, which in turn may be due to the pre-selection and the ongoing nature of all relationships.

- The only differences initially found between clients' and coaches' accounts were that coaches place more emphasis on their own actions and they use more jargon and psychological terms to describe what went on compared with their clients. This reminded us of Yalom's (Yalom & Elkin, 1974, p.79) statement that his own observations seemed more sophomoric than his client's writing.
- There was a high number of references by coaches (17 out of 43 moments) to clients' physiological responses (frowning, posture, note taking, agitation, breathing, etc.), see, for example, vignettes 3co9 and 5co17, below), whilst clients never referred to these matters.

Vignettes of the 86 real-life critical moments

To help the reader gain a better connection with the full dataset we have chosen 17 vignettes from the 86 key moment descriptions. We have chosen this dataset purposefully, to give an indication of the range of data and also to show two occasions where coach and client comment on the same moment in the session (the pairs 3co9 and 3cl10 and 4co51 and 4cl52). Rather than showing a random selection here, we have deliberately chosen a more meaningful and engaging range of vignettes. The numbering of these vignettes follows the chronological order of the interviews, i.e. conversation number, 'co' for 'coach moment' and 'cl' for 'client moment', and then key moment number. We have not edited these fragments. These are just 1285 words. The full dataset is over 27,000 words long.

[1cl2] 'I suppose really for me it's through the process of discussion it's the realisation on my part that there's something that I have to do. So it's the sort of the processes of opening my eyes to you know, ooh hang on there's something I need to do here that you know wouldn't otherwise. So the you know it's the what helps me realise is the point that I get the light bulbs going off to like, hey hang on why haven't I thought about this?'

[1cl4] 'So the feeling for me is really say its sort of a … it's a point that I recognise that there's something that's needed. It's sort of highlighting it. So it's almost a feeling of surprise and realisation around there's something there that I'm able to see it's just that I haven't previously been able to.'

[3co9] 'And that was the tipping point I think, when he recognised that he could use one thing to do the other, he thinks in a very linear way. And he was thinking about I've got to do the projects, I've got to be more approachable but really by linking the two together he was able to see that … I think he recognised that actually I can do both of these together and one will help the other. And that was the … that was the … the key I think. It was partly his erm … he was clearly doing some visualising sitting there in thought, looking up at the ceiling. So erm … And a period of silence after when he said 'erm yeah I hadn't thought of looking at it like that.' Erm what else did he say? 'I think I've crossed a bridge,' that's what he said.'

[3cl10] 'I'd written it down as an action to do, which is kind of respective of my style. It's because it's … I describe it as opening my eyes to a blind spot really it's easy with hind-

sight to say that's a good way of approaching it but prior to the conversation or prior to today I would not have thought of trying to do the project in that particular direction. So it's a change in direction to what I would have done otherwise.'

[4co13] 'He was asking me to raise an issue outside of the coaching relationship. Erm you know to show I was sort of agreeing with him a form of words that he was … that he would be happy with, for me to sort of try and get something fed back into the organisation that he thought was important. So that was quite an important … err an interesting part of the conversation. Erm well this was an issue about the person's boss … erm and the person's boss is being coached by erm one of my colleagues … so is it was a sort of a 'can you use your influence with the other Coach?"

[5co17] 'Er, he started to make notes … actually he started to make notes and started to get more animated in how he was talking about it.'

[5co19] 'That he began drawing on my pad. And the adult to adult was his meeting. The meetings that he controlled. That was his meeting. The big circle was his meeting.'

[6co23] 'He sat back and thought about it rather than being accused by it.'

[8cl30] 'I think the key moment might have been that I asked him what he felt about the work we'd been doing and he said that he was pleased that the report he'd done had led to substantial change and efficiencies and he seemed to take some pleasure in it. (…) I think it was good to hear that he'd taken some pleasure from it himself and felt that … taken some pleasure out of the fact that he'd been effective.'

[9cl32] 'It's basically stating the obvious, but I didn't see it, it was staring me right in the face.'

[11cl40] 'Not a lot of other people know about it – I have a limited amount of contact with people to let them know about it and not feel bad and embarrassed about it. It felt like the right thing to do rather than waffle around the edges.'

[13cl50] 'Organising our future sessions that definitely was and also you know another bit was maybe time to talk about some other issues you know that are going around you know what we do and I had an opportunity to talk to someone who's not involved as well. So that was probably the important part of it.'

[14co51] 'It was a bit odd the way that we started off because he thought that he'd sent me some information and I…I'm perfect you see … I knew that I was thinking, I did check all of my e-mails but I don't recollect what you've sent me you know and I looked through I'm sure I printed everything off that folk had sent me. So we had a kind of a 20-minute forage around whether we could find this information. So it's kind of like erm, it felt like a weird start to the session and I did say to him given that we haven't got the information can you talk to me about what was important to you and what you'd written through and we can cover it here and now. (…) So it's really important to him about appearances and again being professional, doing the right thing, you know doing what he says he's going to do. So it was a real … I was really noticing how I was getting hooked into, well I haven't got the information you know we're looking on computers, I was searching my Blackberry thinking this is bizarre really because we don't need it. So it was this bizarre start to him (…) It really linked into how he wants to get things done and wants to get things right and look good to other people. That's really, really important to him. Erm, so links from that.'

[14cl52] 'It's important that we got sorted today, the mix up we had at the beginning so we knew where we were going. That was

important and I must say within two or three minutes we had it sorted. We realised there'd been a mistake and agreed appropriate action and it got resolved very easily. It wasn't confrontational in any way, don't think that, just a mix up but a few negotiation skills on both our parts we could resolve it, so we didn't lose anything out of those five minutes of the hour-and-a-half session, so it was very important that we could speak our way round it to recover the situation.'

[21cl83] 'It was really the characterisation. It was just kind of that makes perfect sense to me. I've been thinking, reflecting about this at various levels for a long time. Occasionally you have those moments of realisation, you forget them and then when you're reminded it not only provides clarity it provides comfort to the person who's being coached.'

[21co84] 'My hunch is it's probably more important to my client than it was to me. He can tell you for himself but my hunch was that was new and interesting information that he was quite intrigued by.'

[21co86] 'I was surprised. So I suppose I was monitoring my own reactions and my own reactions were well that feels like something important and new so I guess it felt like it meant something. Whether it's just because I was worried I missed it I don't know but it was something about this is new and feels significant. My client was very animated in talking about it.'

Content-analysis of the critical moments

All critical-moment descriptions were coded to identify recurrent themes, with similar codes as in our previous research (see, for example, De Haan et al., 2010). The coding did not show a large or consistent difference between coach and client moment descriptions, and it showed less consistency among markers than before (Cohen's Kappa was only 0.34 on average), which can be explained by the fact that the fragments are longer (on average 316 words per description) so there is more information conveyed in every key moment description. Because of the failure of the existing set of codes to divulge distinctive patterns in the dataset, and because of the striking differences with earlier datasets, a new more succinct set of codes was drawn up and tested, which would capture all critical aspects across all five datasets. There were four broad categories in these 12 codes: a moment of learning (codes 1 and 2), a moment of relational change (codes 3 and 4), a moment of significant action (codes 5 and 6) and a moment of significant emotional experience (codes 7 to 12). To provide help with the emotional codes (7 to 12) a table with the full range of emotions, based on a tree structure built on six primary emotions (three positive and three negative) by Parrot (2001) was provided to the coders. For brief descriptions of the 12 codes, see Table 2.

Two of the authors (EH and CB) and one colleague who was not an executive coach (AC) coded the full dataset of 352 critical moments with these codes. All codes were at least used three times by every coder, though there were four codes that were used for less than three per cent of the dataset: 6, 7, 8, 11. We had anticipated this when drawing up the set of 12 codes, but we kept these codes in to keep a balanced and structurally complete set. Figure 1 shows the frequency of use of the codes, for all three observers and the full dataset of 352 moments.

To determine inter-rater reliability, Cohen's Kappa (Cohen, 1960) was computed between all coders and found an average Kappa of 0.44 which seems a reasonable figure given the number of codes: it is more than thirty times chance level. In any case, the coding of individual moment descriptions will not be reported: all conclusions will be based only on the totals of codes used for each of five datasets – see Table 1. These sets of totals correlate 0.77 on average between the three coders. High reliability between raters of 'helpful events' was also reported in psychotherapy research (Llewelyn, 1988; Elliott et al., 1985).

Table 2.
The 12 codes that have been used to analyse all five datasets in Table 1.

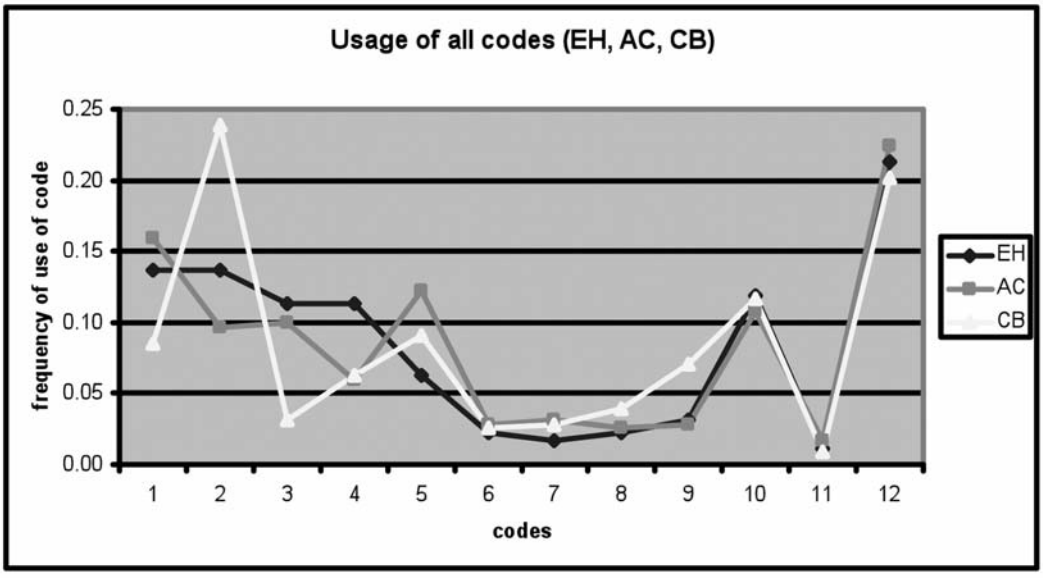
Code number	Short description of the code
1	A moment of learning: a moment in which new insight was created for coach and – particularly – client.
2	A moment of learning: a moment of working through, reflecting, gaining new perspectives and/or making sense of existing material.
3	A change in the relationship in the moment (positive).
4	A change in the relationship in the moment (negative).
5	Significant action in the moment (coach-led): applying oneself to a unique scripted process such as drawing, visualisation, role-play, GROW, ...
6	Significant action in the moment (client-led): organising future sessions, negotiating the session, taking away action points, making notes, ...
7	Significant emotional experience in the moment: joy (client); heightened positive emotion.
8	Significant emotional experience in the moment: joy (coach); heightened positive emotion.
9	Significant emotional experience in the moment: anxiety (client); heightened negative emotion.
10	Significant emotional experience in the moment: anxiety (coach); heightened negative emotion.
11	Significant emotional experience in the moment: doubt (client); fundamental not-knowing, often a starting point for reflection.
12	Significant emotional experience in the moment: doubt (coach); fundamental not-knowing, often a starting point for reflection.

Biases between the three coders were small (see Figure 1). EH codes more negative changes in the relationship (code 4; 40 in total against 21/22 for the other coders) and AC codes more coach-led significance in doing (code 5; 43 in total against 22 for EH), whilst CB codes more anxieties of clients (code 9; 25 in total against 10/11 for the other coders). The only boundary between codes which seems to have been interpreted differently is the one between codes 1 and 2, which are both 'moments of learning' – code 1 describes a sudden realisation and code 2 a more reflective working through. In truth, these forms of learning probably do not have a sharp boundary anyway. All coders use codes 1 and 2 in just over a quarter of their coding (mainly in datasets 4 and 5), but AC uses code 1 in 62 per cent of those and CB uses code 1 in only 26 per cent of those, with EH in the middle: 50 per cent.

Figure 2 shows an overview of the coding of all datasets, by one of the coders (CB). From the figure, the following conclusions are immediately apparent:

- Dataset 1 (critical moments of less experienced coaches) contains a disproportionate amount of 'doubts of coaches' (code 12) and 'negative changes in the relationship' (code 4). This confirms the main conclusions of De Haan (2008a).
- Datasets 2 and 3 (critical moments of experienced coaches) share with Dataset 1 a high proportion of 'anxieties of coaches' (code 10) whilst they contain

Figure 1: An overview of the frequency of the use of all codes by all three coders, for the full dataset of 352 critical moment descriptions from coaching conversations. For the definition of the 12 codes, see Table 2.



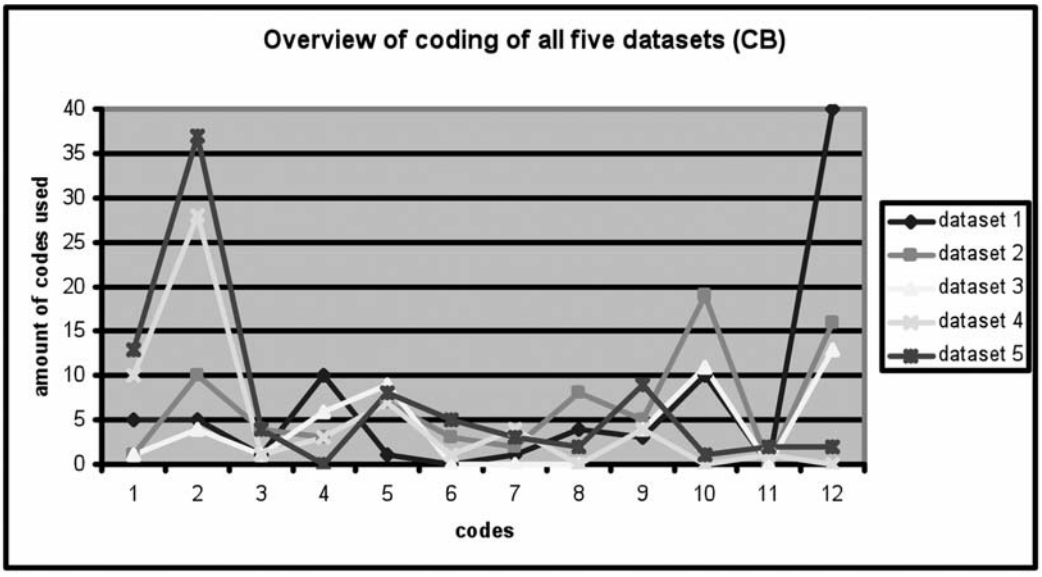
significantly less 'doubts of coaches'. This confirms the main conclusions of De Haan (2008b) and Day and associates (2008).

- Dataset 4 (critical moments of clients of coaching) shows an altogether different profile, with a much higher proportion of 'moments of learning' (codes 1 and 2). This confirms the main conclusions of De Haan and associates (2010).
- Dataset 5 (critical moments of coaches and clients, directly compared) is overall much more similar to Dataset 4 than to any of the three datasets of executive coaches.
- From Datasets 1 to 4 one can observe that both clients and coaches report more on their own emotions and sensations than on their counterparts' emotions and sensations, i.e. descriptions from coaches (Datasets 1, 2 and 3) lead to more perceived codes 8, 10 and 12 (coaches' emotions and doubts) than the equivalent 7, 9 and 11 (clients' emotions and doubts) and this is reversed in the clients' descriptions (Dataset 4). This was also reported in De Haan and associates (2010).

A more in-depth comparison between the five datasets, distinguishing between the 43 'client moments' and the 43 'coach moments' in Dataset 5, yields the following:

- The clients' critical-moment Dataset 4 and the new clients' critical moment descriptions in Dataset 5 follow a very similar pattern (see Figure 3 in the case of coder AC), both having a very high proportion of 'moments of learning' (codes 1 and 2). On average the correlation between the coding of Dataset 4 and of the client moments in Dataset 5 of AC, CB and EH was 0.92, which is remarkably high and gives a strong confirmation of the conclusions from a rather disparate set of client moment descriptions in De Haan and associates (2010).
- Surprisingly, there is also a high correlation between Dataset 4 and the coach moments in Dataset 5 (see again Figure 3, for coder AC). On average this correlation is 0.58 among the three

Figure 2: A graph showing the distribution of codes selected by coder CB for all five datasets. 1: less experienced coaches; 2: experienced coaches; 3: very experienced coaches (phone interviews); 4: clients of coaching; 5: coaches and clients direct comparison (interviews). For the definition of the 12 codes, see Table 2.



coders, whereas the correlations between Datasets 1, 2 and 3 and the coach moments in Dataset 5 is 0.003: negligible. We will come back to this surprising finding in the Discussion section.

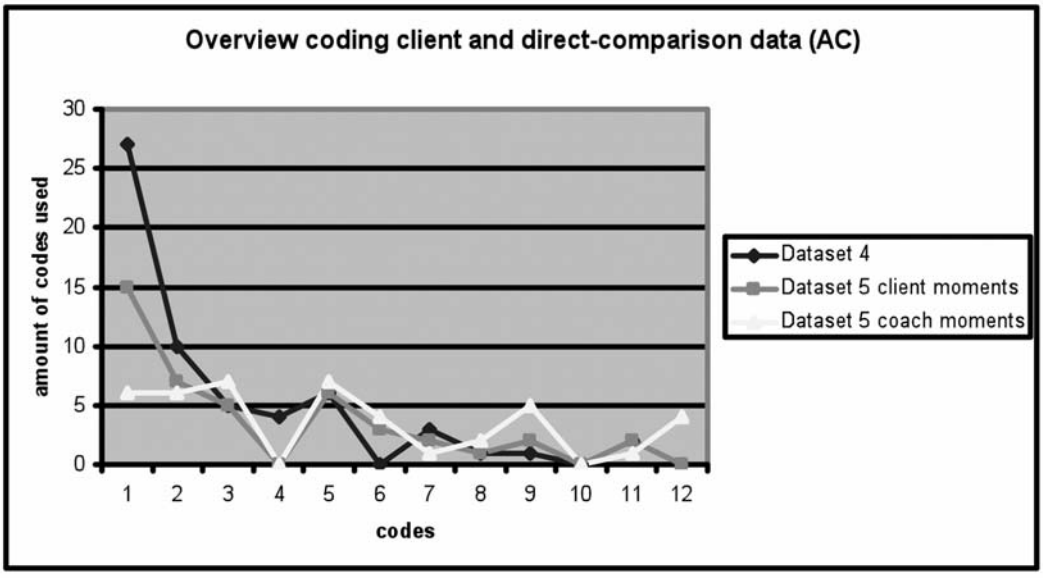
- The coders found an absence of negative changes in the relationship (code 4) in Dataset 5, confirming what was concluded more informally at the beginning of the Results section, above, namely that descriptions in the new dataset seem positive and constructive, as if celebrating or protecting the ongoing relationships.
- Remarkably in Dataset 5 we have for the first time a higher occurrence of one's partner's emotions than one's own: coaches in Dataset 5 come up with more anxieties of the client (code 9; see Figure 3 for coder AC) than of themselves.
- Coaches still report a significant number of doubts (code 12), consistent with earlier research (De Haan 2008a, 2000b; Day et al., 2008).

These conclusions are true for all three coders.

Finally, having this rather unique Dataset 5 which allows a direct comparison of coaches' and their clients' views on the same coaching conversation, also affords the analysis of those descriptions where coach and client seem to be speaking about the very same moment or event within the coaching conversation. Surprisingly, there are 46 key moment descriptions, more than half of the dataset, which are obviously relating to the same event or moment within the conversations. Bear in mind that the duration of these conversations was on average, about two hours.

The usage of codes on these particular descriptions were analysed by computing Cohen's Kappa (Cohen, 1960) for this new dataset, Kappa being the standard measure for correlations between independent coding processes. Cohen's Kappas were computed for the coder's choice of code for the 'coach moment' compared with the coder's choice of code for the corresponding 'client moment'. It is a relatively small dataset of only 23 measurements, but Kappas

Figure 3: A graph showing the distribution of codes selected by coder AC for Dataset 4 and for the coaches' and clients' descriptions of critical moments in the comparison study, separately. For the definition of the 12 codes, see Table 2.



can be reliably computed. Cohen's Kappas were: 0.29 (AC), 0.38 (CB) and 0.47 (EH), each much higher than chance levels which are around 0.02. With the caveat that this conclusion is based only on a small dataset of 46 codes, we can provisionally conclude that these coaches and clients did not only agree in more than 50 per cent of key moments on the particular event or subject matter they described, but they also seem to agree on the nature of those events, which seems a strong agreement between the two partners, particularly if one takes into account the low agreement sometimes reported in psychotherapy (e.g. Tallman & Bohart, 1999; however, Weiss, Rabinowitz & Spiro, 1996, report variability in the agreement between clients' and therapists' qualitative reports).

Discussion

In summary, the direct comparison data contributed by coaches and clients of coaching (Dataset 5) suggests the following:

- Clients' and coaches' experiences of coaching conversations are not as different as would have been thought, based on the earlier studies, neither in the nature of selected events (coaches' and clients' descriptions are coded in similar distributions across a fixed set of 12 codes) nor in their specific choice of events (46 of 86 descriptions refer to an event also described by the partner in conversation), nor even in the emphases within their event descriptions (those 46 'shared event' descriptions were coded in a manner correlating about 20 times chance level, for all three observers).
- Clients and coaches use similar language and apart from one reported rupture in the relationship all 86 descriptions were broadly positive and indicated learning, progress, accomplishment. Partly this may be due to the fact that for 14 of the 21 sessions the client and conversation was chosen by the coach and they will have chosen positive client relationships as they had to invite their client to the research.

Comparing this dataset explicitly with all of the earlier datasets of clients' and coaches' descriptions of critical moments of executive coaching led to the following results:

- Overall a strong endorsement of the main conclusions in the earlier articles. Although the new dataset correlates strongly only with Dataset 4, the new dataset does also replicate some of the trends found in the other previous datasets. Sixty-two per cent of clients' moments in the Dataset 5 were coded as 1 or 2 ('moments of learning'), and 40 per cent of coaches' moments; in Datasets 1 to 4 these numbers had been 59 per cent for clients' moments and nine per cent for coaches' moments. Another interesting example is the occurrence of coaches' doubts: 56 per cent for inexperienced coaches (Dataset 1), 18 per cent/27 per cent for experienced coaches (Dataset 2/Dataset 3 respectively), nought per cent for clients of coaching (Dataset 4) and now in Dataset 5: nought per cent for clients and five per cent for coaches.
- A high correlation between the coding of these direct-comparison client data and the earlier client critical-moments dataset (Dataset 4, correlations consistently over 0.90).
- No correlation at all between the coding of the new dataset (Dataset 5) and the earlier coach data (Datasets 1, 2 and 3), to the extent that the average correlation between the coaches' descriptions from Datasets 1 to 3 and from Dataset 5 was exactly zero.

We think that these findings can be understood best from the realisation that this direct-comparison study contains a fair representation of straightforward, 'run-of-the-mill', successful and everyday executive coaching, with client and coach being in broad agreement, not only about the goals and outcomes of their sessions but also about their coaching process and coaching relationship. We can assume that this type of 'run-of-the-mill' coaching is exactly what the clients in Dataset 4 also reported on, as many studies have shown executive coaching to be satisfactory and successful in most cases (see, for example, McGovern et al., 2001; De Haan, Culpin & Curd, in press). On the other hand, Datasets 1, 2 and 3 were drawn from a much broader and deeper experience of executive coaching and have probably included rarer and more extreme examples of transformation, resistance or ruptures in the working alliance. In other words, whilst Datasets 4 and 5 focus on the everyday learning that takes place in generally positive coaching relationships, Dataset 1, 2 and 3 take their inspiration from special occurrences in coaching, moments and events that may occur only a few times in the lifetime of an executive coach – and in particular at the beginning of a coaches' career when there are still great insecurities and doubts (De Haan, 2008a).

We cannot rule out the possibility that there are other qualitative differences between what coaches and clients associate with the term 'critical moment' when it applies to the session they have just had today (Dataset 5), as compared to when 'critical moment' applies to a whole coaching relationship (Dataset 4) or to a career of coaching experience, however short in some cases (Datasets 1, 2 and 3). It may well be that the term 'critical moment' does not apply in the same way to the past hour as to a lifetime of work.

Both run-of-the-mill and exceptional circumstances are part of coaching practice, so all various datasets have something to teach executive coaching practitioners. Studies like these can provide crucial information for the training and development of executive coaches, whilst they may also help to inform and manage the expectations of clients of executive coaching. Here is a short summary of what we believe these data can teach us:

- Datasets 1, 2 and 3 give an indication that in the careers of most executive coaches there are such things as exceptional moments where the relationship is tested or ruptured and where coaches experience strong doubts and anxieties. Generally, the levels of anxiety of coaches in such events remain high, whilst the degree of doubting abates over time (De Haan, 2008b).

- Datasets 4 and 5 give an indication that what clients are most looking for in coaching conversations are moments of realisation and emerging insight, i.e. learning of some form that they can bring to use in their own practice. Coaches can and do work in such a way that they seem in agreement with their clients about which are the events that matter and the nature of those events. Under exceptional circumstances a different picture may emerge, where disruptions to the relationship between coach and client become more figural, and then we are back in the realm of Datasets 1, 2 and 3.

In summary, more agreement than disagreement was found between clients and coaches:

- Forty-six of 86 moments or events were selected by both clients and coaches (53 per cent);
- The critical-moment descriptions from clients and coaches were similar (see Figure 3) and they use similar language apart from a few occurrences of jargon in the language of the executive coaches.
- Clients and coaches place similar emphases within their description of those events, witnessed by the substantial correlations between the coding of these pairs of moments.
- For the first time one can even notice that the anxieties that both partners in the conversation attend to are in a way similar: they are predominantly the anxieties of the client (see Figure 3), as one would hope in executive coaching.

In psychotherapy research there are some indications that clients and therapists are looking for quite different events and moments, and that they have incommensurate memories of the sessions themselves (Elliott, 1983, 1990; Llewelyn 1988; Rennie, 1990; Elliott & Shapiro, 1992; Tallman & Bohart, 1999); however, one review study investigating all publications to date on agreement between clients and therapists found a high variability (Weiss et al., 1996). One interpretation worth noting is that therapists will address perceived weaknesses more than coaches, and will, therefore, have more emphasis on challenging, disruptive and even corrective interventions, which may result in less agreement between therapist and client than between coach and client.

Conclusion

This direct-comparison study of coaches' and clients' critical moment descriptions that were gathered straight after mutual executive-coaching conversations, has produced both a confirmation of earlier conclusions when studying critical moments in executive coaching and a linkage between the various disparate studies hitherto undertaken. We think we now understand better why clients' and coaches' descriptions in earlier studies were so different, and we are beginning to understand how descriptions from clients and coaches coming out of coaching sessions can also be extremely similar, as was the case here.

Interestingly, the results of this direct-comparison study connect with an old debate in psychotherapy process research (Mintz et al., 1973) which seeks to clarify to what degree the experiences and accounts of both parties in helping conversations are similar versus different. On the one hand, coach and client are essentially similar being both 21st century professionals with an interest in leadership and development. Moreover, during the conversation they attend to the same 'reality' of the conversation as it emerges between them. On the other hand one can argue they take up entirely different and complementary roles in the same conversation, with one focusing on own issues and the other focusing on the progress and development of the partner in conversation. So clearly, in the accounts of coaching one would expect *both* a reasonable consensus *and* the 'Rashomon experience' named after Akira Kurosawa's classic 1950 Japanese movie *Rashomon*, where four partic-

ipants re-tell a single event and come up with equally plausible but totally different and incompatible accounts. Most process research in psychotherapy has confirmed the 'Rashomon-side' of the debate, showing that clients and therapists do indeed place an entirely different emphasis in recall, selection and interpretation of significant events of therapy (Mintz et al., 1973, Weiss et al., 1996). Here is how Yalom (Yalom & Elkin, 1974; p.222) formulates that side of the argument: 'I am struck by (…) the obvious discrepancies in perspective between Ginny and me. Often she values one part of the hour, I another. I press home an interpretation with much determination and pride. To humour me and to hasten our move to more important areas she 'accepts' the interpretation. To permit us to move to 'work areas', I on the other hand humour her by granting her silent requests for advice, suggestions, exhortations, or admonitions. I value my thoughtful clarifications; with one masterful stroke I make sense out of a number of disparate, seemingly unrelated facts. She rarely ever acknowledges, much less values my labours, and instead seems to profit from my simple human acts: I chuckle at her satire, I notice her clothes, I call her buxom, I tease her when we role play.' These present results seem to favour the other side of the debate, with a surprising degree of overlap between coach and client accounts, both in their recall/selection and in their emphasis/interpretation. However, given the originality of the design and the limited scope of the dataset, it may be too early to argue that coach-client pairs have more in common than therapist-patient pairs.

From the point of view of education and professional development for coaches, the following recommendations can be drawn from this research:

1. Coaches need to be prepared for quite different circumstances in run-of-the-mill coaching and in the presence of real dramatic moments and ruptures. In ordinary coaching they need to keep the focus with what clients are interested in most: realisations, emerging insight, and reflection. In extraordinary conversations, they need to be able to deal with their own substantive doubt and anxiety, and also with strong emotions in their clients.
2. More effort can be put into preparing coaches for what they can expect in ordinary, successful conversations. The results of this inquiry have shown that coaches need to help clients to look beyond their current solutions and mindset, to achieve new realisations and insight. They need to remain focused on new learning and how they can support their clients to achieve that. Epiphanies are not necessarily what is needed. Sometimes creating a sense of support and reflection is adequate. As concluded before (De Haan et al., 2010), coaches need awareness of the fact that clients seem to be focused on changing their thoughts and reflections – rather than on pure space for reflection, reassurance or new actions. Coaches should ensure they have the skills to facilitate the emergence of new learning, reflection, realisation and insight.
3. When teaching the important findings of outcome research, for example, the so-called *common factors* that in psychotherapy have so often been shown to be significantly related to outcome and which teach us the importance of the relationship, expectancy and personality when it comes to effectiveness (Wampold 2001), it is important to consider also what *suboutcome* research (Rice & Greenberg, 1984) may teach in terms of, for example, what a practicing coach can expect in terms of their own doubts and anxieties, or clients' expectations of session-by-session learning outcomes (realisations, changing perspectives, etc.).

When aspects such as the above find their way into coach training and development programmes, this would help in making a more clear-cut case for executive coaching for the benefit of purchasers of coaching,

including more information on expected benefits and limitations of working with an executive coach.

We would suggest there is a great need for further investigation in this area, particularly in the following domains:

1. Critical moments research, if only to assemble larger datasets upon which firmer conclusions can be based. A larger dataset can also be used to (dis-)confirm the more tentative conclusions in both this and other articles.
2. Direct-comparison studies such as the present one should be extended into longitudinal studies of coach-client relationships, which could study the progress of the intervention through the evolving reported critical moments. In such research, more care should be taken to minimise interference with the coaching intervention as a whole.
3. We would be most interested in finding out about critical moments and the coaching process from the perspective of the oft-neglected (indirect) clients of coaching which are the direct colleagues, managers and reports of the coaching client within the organisation of the client. It would be fascinating to investigate what they believe were the critical moments of their colleague's coaching journey.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the coaches and their clients who generously gave accounts of their experiences. We are also grateful to Monica Stroink and Heather Reekie for doing most of the interviews, to Andy Copeland for helping us with the coding of the moments, and to Shirine Voller who has co-ordinated this research programme from the Ashridge Centre for Coaching.

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An invitation to personal construct coaching: From personal construct therapy to personal construct coaching

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Strong efforts have recently been made in various therapeutic approaches to adapt their clinical procedures and become more suitable for working with healthy and high achieving persons. The main argument of this paper is that Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) stood for a coaching psychology long before the term 'coaching' gained popularity. Therefore, a move from Personal Construct Therapy (PCT) to Personal Construct Coaching (PCC) represents a move towards its roots, rather than adaptation to new market demands. In this paper, the main principles of PCC are elaborated and a general framework for practitioners is provided. The paper includes a discussion on key metaphors of the role of the coach and the coachee, the coaching relationship and the reconstruction as a coaching goal. Stages with supporting techniques in PCC are proposed as procedures for reconstruction of personal and organisational stories. In concluding reflections we contemplate upon the benefits of a personal construct psychology framework for coaching.

THE EMERGENCE of coaching as a social practice has been shaped by ideas from divergent sources – sport, business, psychology, psychotherapy and education (Walker, 2004; Stelter, 2009). Sport and business discourses directed coaching towards the goal of performance enhancement; psychotherapeutic discourse offered technologies of change and development, while educational discourse provided insights into adult learning. Due to these interdisciplinary influences, reaching a consensual definition of coaching that would integrate and appreciate different backgrounds, strategies, goals and techniques, is not an easy task. In relatively inclusive definitions of coaching three aspects are usually tackled: *performance*, *learning* and *development* (Parsloe & Wray, 2000; Whitmore, 1996; Ives, 2008). Therefore, a general definition of coaching may be articulated as 'the art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another' (Downey, 1999, p.15).

In this paper we offer a personal construct perspective of coaching as experimentation with clients' personal theories. In the first part of the paper, we briefly present the ideas of personal construct theory and suggest that it had been based on principles of coaching psychology even before the term 'coaching' gained wider attention. The second part of the paper elaborates the main metaphors, underlying the personal construct coaching. We discuss reconstruction, or change in personal theories, as a goal of personal construct coaching in the third part of the paper. Furthermore, stages with supporting techniques in PCC are proposed as procedures for reconstruction of personal and organisational stories. Concluding reflections are offered concerning the benefits of approaching the personal construct psychology framework for coaching.

*This article is a result of the project 'Education for knowledge-based society' No 149001 (2006-2010), financially supported by the Ministry for Science and Environmental Protection, Republic of Serbia.

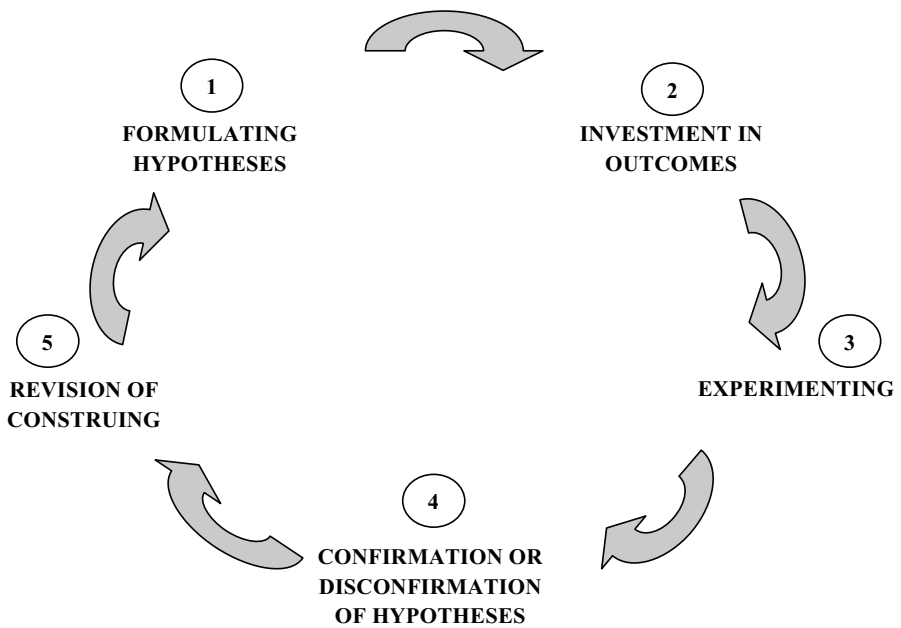
From personal construct therapy to personal construct coaching: A step back or a step forth?

Personal construct theory emerged in the 1950s (Kelly, 1955) as a psychological framework for understanding persons and facilitating a desirable and sustainable change in their outlooks. In his *Psychology of Personal Constructs* (1955), Kelly proposed a metaphor of the *person as scientist*. This metaphor was based on the notion that the best way of understanding people was to regard them as scientists who continually seek to make meaning of their experiences. Kelly saw *all* persons as scientists – not meaning that they are working in laboratories, wearing thick glasses and being interminably dull in their discourses – but meaning that they formulate hypotheses which govern their behaviour in future. These hypotheses and personal theories are continually created and recreated throughout the life in various experiments persons undertake. Therefore, in personal construct terms, *all behaviour is an experiment* (Kelly, 1977; Bannister & Fransella, 1989). Persons test various hypotheses in their behaviour, which is seen as some sort of an 'independent variable'. All kinds of hypotheses about the self and others are being created, tested and revised in behavioural experiments we undertake (Figure 1).

If behaviour is an experiment, then producing change in personal outlooks boils down to exploring personal hypotheses and theories persons create, as well as improving them through innovative and fruitful experiments. Successful functioning is based on one's ability to exercise this form of self-renewal.

However, sometimes persons may fail to revise their personal theories for various reasons. For example, persons may hesitate to verbalise their hypotheses because of the fear of their behavioural implications; or

Figure 1: The cycle of experience (Kelly, 1977).

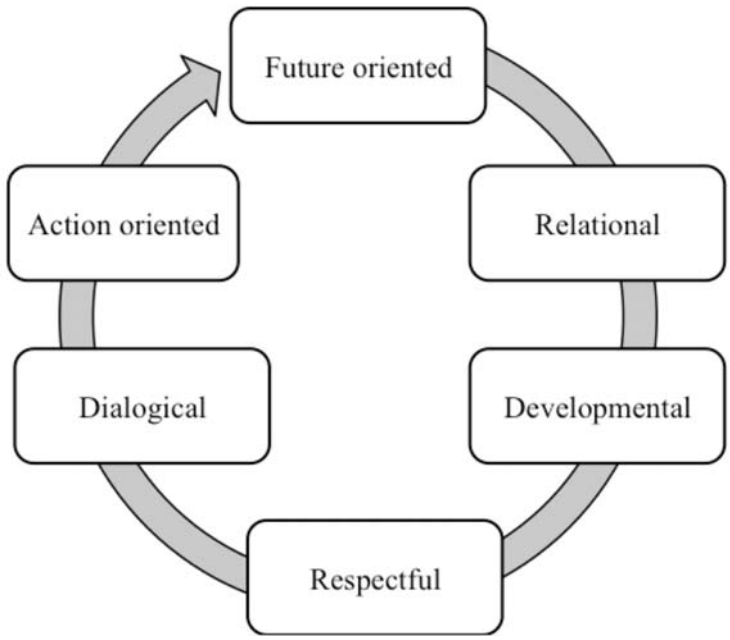


they may be 'stuck' in the testing phase because they dread to face the consequences; or they just fail to integrate the results of their experiments into a coherent narrative. Personal construct theory aims to help persons increase the mobility in the triangle of hypotheses *formulation – testing – revising*.

A personal construct view of the person and the accompanying technology of change may be linked to Dewey's (Dewey, 1910) ideas about learning through reflection and experimentation. According to Dewey (1910), reflection includes exactly the subprocesses of hesitation and doubt, acts of search or investigation directed towards corroborating or nullifying certain beliefs. Dewey (1910) saw the nature of reflection as troublesome because it involves overcoming inertia and willingness to endure in a condition of mental unrest or disturbance – a theme which Kelly (1955) also elaborated in his writing. These ideas have made a profound impact on Kolb's theory of experiential learning (Kolb et al., 2000) and Schön's theory of reflective practice (Schön, 2002). However, in our view, PCP has offered not only the most comprehensive theoretical framework, but also the most elaborated and empirically grounded technology of change.

A PCP approach to change is based on several principles (Figure 2). First, PCP as a framework is *future oriented*. Hypotheses we create govern our behaviour in future and promoting change in personal outlooks lays ground for testing hypotheses about future events, that can be influenced, as opposed to the events based on hypothesising from the past. Second, hypotheses are not the product of an inner psychological 'essence', but are formed *relationally*. Person the scientist has at disposal a social laboratory to test and revise various theories about the self and the others. What one becomes is the product of these social experiments and their consequential 'findings'. The *developmental*

Figure 2: Principles of personal construct theory.



principle is built into the idea that personal scientists are not 'psychological givens'. Instead, they upgrade and elaborate their personal theories throughout their lives. Furthermore, metaphor of the person as scientist invites a *respectful* approach to persons. From a personal construct viewpoint, persons as scientists are not objects of knowledge, research or cure – but co-researchers who collaborate in creating their own welfare (Kelly, 1969). As such, people create meanings that should not be ignored, but shared and appreciated in a dialogue, which is well illustrated by Kelly's quote: *'If you do not know what is wrong with a person, ask him or her; he or she may tell you'* (Kelly, 1955, p.322). Finally, the spirit of experimentation implied an active orientation of PCP. Although the verbalisation and the narrative are seen as necessary tools, PCP invites us to test them in a well designed behavioural experiment.

Due to this kind of theoretical grounding, PCP has never been a uniquely clinical framework for diagnosis and psychotherapy, but a general psychological framework with the great potential to offer support in various contexts – educational, organisational, sport psychology, etc. Moreover, PCP has been positioned as some sort of an 'orphan' in the clinical context. From its mere beginning, no stigmatising diagnostic categories were used in PCP, it was not targeted exhaustively towards 'clinical populations' and it was not based on the metaphor of 'curing' or 'repairing'. What PCP offered instead was appreciative understanding and an approach towards optimising resources of a wider community. It shared the humanist values in its endeavor to empower, emancipate and liberate.

It may be argued that PCP has from its beginning been both a *theory of learning* and a *theory of change* – two main ingredients of fostering and sustaining optimal functioning. Although, clinical implications of PCP have been most explored, we argue that PCP had been based on coaching principles even before the term 'coaching' gained wider attention. Therefore, an invitation to move from personal construct therapy (PCT) to personal construct coaching (PCC) is not much of a step forward, but rather a step back. A framework for personal construct coaching offered in this paper is one of the many potential readings of personal construct theory. This framework is based not only on Kelly's initial theory, but also on the pioneering work of many colleagues who have upgraded his ideas and transferred them to organisational contexts (Brophy, 2007; Brophy, Fransella & Reed, 2003; Frances, 2007; Waldock & Kelly-Rawat, 2004).

Metaphors in PCC

If we extend the metaphor of persons as scientists who create and revise their hypotheses and personal theories to the coaching context, we may find some interesting implications. In a PCC framework, the *coachee as a personal scientist* is invited to experiment with his or her hypotheses and personal theories. The *coach as a research consultant* is there to offer 'methodological support' in designing better experiments and facilitating creation of new personal theories. In line with this metaphor, the coaching relationship may be conceived as a *collaborative research project* with the aim to create new hypotheses and personal theories (Table 1).

No matter whether the client[1] aims to improve the workplace performance or some aspects of personal relationships, the research metaphor encourages the spirit of experimentation and curiosity about the self and others. As in a sort of a research project, the client is invited to formulate the research question: *What is it that I want of myself; in which domains do my personal theories work well and in which domains do they need some revising; what would be the consequences of these revisions; how do I abandon my old theories and start*

[1] We use the word *client* to denote both individual and organisational clients.

Table 1: Overview of the main metaphors in PCC.

Metaphor of coachee/client	'Personal scientist'/'researcher'
Metaphor of coach	'Research consultant'
Metaphor of the coaching process	'Collaborative research process' – experimentation with personal theories
Metaphor of the coaching relationship	'Credulous conversations'

looking through a new lens, etc. All these questions (and many others) are elaborated into a sort of a research design, specifying the research methods and procedures, aims and goals, as well as the appropriate 'samples'. For example, the client may start with the research question how to be both *people oriented* and *task oriented*. The coach may facilitate creation of the research design wherein personal theory of being *people oriented* as opposed to being *task oriented* will be elaborated. Furthermore, the coach may help revise the theory, so that these two opposites are reconciled. As in all fruitful research projects, this too requires successful integration of creativity and rigor, imagination and systematic guidance, innovation and stability.

Coach as a 'research consultant' helps determine the appropriate sample of persons or situations where new hypotheses are being tested. Furthermore, coach – as experienced 'researcher' – adds his or her perspective to the process. This may include help with data interpretation and integrating results with the previous theories of self and others, for example. This kind of a change technology provokes a certain degree of anxiety, but also puts agency back into the person. As the client begins to adopt the self-as-researcher perspective, the world may start turning into a more controllable place.

Metaphorically speaking, the coach should maintain a kind of a *credulous approach* towards whatever the client says. As an effective way to put the respectful dimension of PCC to practice, the coach shall never discard information given by the client because it does not conform to what appear to be the facts. According to Kelly, *'the client – like the proverbial customer – is always right'* (Kelly, 1955, p.241). In other words, in PCC clients' words and symbolic behaviour possess some sort of an 'intrinsic truth' which should not be ignored. A perceptive coach always accepts the content of a client's words as one of the perspectives the joint research project should expand on. This also goes for the client's 'lies', 'negations', 'rationalisations' and similar behaviours. As opposed to the majority of mainstream psychology that occasionally recommended dismissing a client's words on the basis of their irrationality or falseness, personal construct perspective stood as a forerunner of postmodern approaches to facilitating the change – including narrative coaching, appreciative inquiry and social constructionist framework (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Brockbank & McGil, 2006; Orem, Blinkert & Clancy, 2007).

Reconstruction as a goal in PCC

The research metaphor underlying PCC invites both the coach and the client to experiment with personal theories. This experimental attitude implies abandoning the idea that we are a manifestation of some sort of a psychological 'cloth', reaching out for the best possible versions of ourselves. In PCC the client is invited to transcend the obvious, enter into the unknown and to turn to the question of *What can I make out of myself?* In other words, PCC does not guide the client towards a state of ultimate happiness, but it stimulates mobility of mind. It aims at helping persons and organisations develop a creative Self, capable of its own reinvention. In personal construct terms,

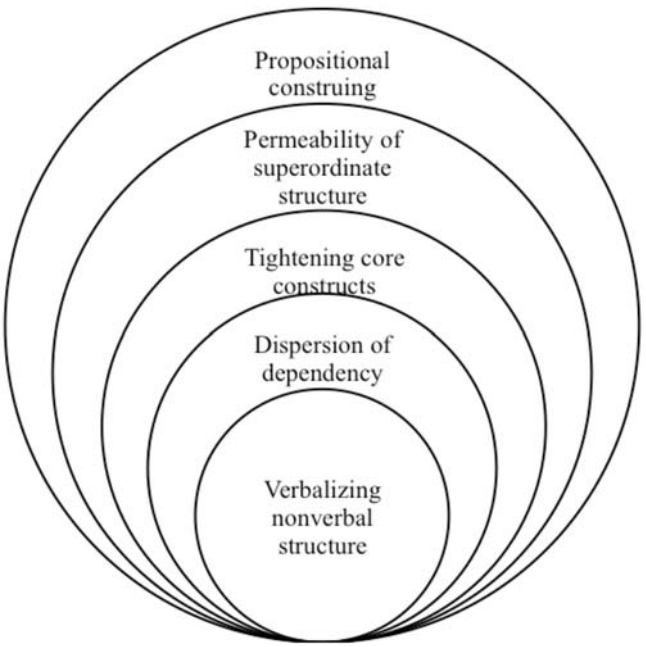
this process of redesigning the self by means of experimentation is referred to as *reconstruction.*

According to Kelly (Kelly, 1955, p.265), *'there is nothing in the world which is not subject to some form of reconstruction.'* Through the process of reconstruction, we revise our personal theories or even accomplish personal paradigm shifts. In other words, reconstruction is a way of escaping from getting stuck with outdated maps of the self in the world. There are several conditions on which the reconstruction process in PCC is based (Figure 3).

One of the first preconditions of the reconstruction process is *verbalising nonverbal meaning structures*, or putting current hypotheses and personal theories into words. Sometimes clients may live their lives on the basis of hypotheses which are not clearly articulated. In organisations too, there often exists 'tacit knowledge', or important matters which are left unspoken. Well articulated hypotheses and personal theories represent the basis for successful design of new experiments.

Another principle of reconstruction is what Kelly (1955) termed *dispersion of dependency.* In personal construct terms, all persons are interdependent. Moreover, successful functioning is defined not as independence, but as smart distribution of personal dependencies. The client may have a theory that being a good manager means being a 'superperson', who does everything on his or her own. Rather than becoming a 'do it all yourself person', this person may articulate all the tasks or needs which are dependent on others. Once these dependencies are mapped, the client is invited to reflect on how to distribute them wisely to other persons. During this process, trust and the ability to rely on others might be on test. However, without such risks the client may be left to the anxieties of his or her 'superperson' theories and never actually get a clear picture of on whom to depend for what.

Figure 3. Conditions of reconstruction.



Behind the principle of *tightening core constructs* lies something organisations often know very well – the importance of clear definitions of their visions and missions. In PCC both organisations and individuals are urged to define their visions and mission around some of the core dimensions of their organisational or personal identity. Rather than have only a loose idea of who they are and what they want to accomplish, the coach facilitates positioning identity in a web of personal/organisational theories and hypotheses.

Defining personal or organisational identity in terms of core dimensions does not mean 'locking' personal or organisational identity into these dimensions. On the contrary, PCC encourages keeping our personal theories open to new events. The coach aims to *increase the permeability of the client's theories*, so he or she can embrace a range of new events, even those which are neither predictable, nor desirable. What this principle implies is encouraging the client to un-learn the 'only if' attitude. Managers may be imprisoned by their personal theories which rigidly define a set of 'only if' hypotheses, for example: *if and only if everyone likes me, I am a good manager; only if my organisation is the number one market player, should my staff get a decent treatment; only if sitting on top of everything, I can have control in my company*, and so on.

Finally, the principle of *encouraging propositional construing* boils down to inviting alternative readings of personal/organisational theories. The personal construct coach strengthens personal and organisational capacity to look at issues from multiple perspectives. The coach also facilitates unlearning the 'nothing but' attitude. Managers may as well be imprisoned by this sort of a rigid and inflexible approach. For example, an interpersonal conflict at work may be perceived as nothing but an intolerable outburst of a colleague's anger. By adopting the 'nothing but' perspective, the manager may fail to understand his or her own contribution to the conflict, the colleague's family circumstances that caused that or even a general organisational background of that conflict. Capacity to look at events from different angles is a necessary precondition to the process of reconstruction. Only when multiperspectivism in evaluation of personal theories is encouraged, a stage is set for updating old theories.

Stages and techniques in PCC

The process of reconstruction in PCC can be outlined in several stages: (1) negotiating goals; (2) exploring personal and organisational theories; (3) facilitating elaborative conversations; (4) experimentation; and (5) evaluation. These stages do not have to follow a linear order, instead they often overlap and create a circular process.

At the beginning, the coach has to negotiate goals of the coaching process. In PCC, we do that by exploring clients' preferred and not preferred perspectives and social realities. Personal construct coaching adds value to usual explorations of what people want to achieve, by turning to the question of *what they want to leave behind*. For example, if a person says that she wants to make a better balance between personal and professional life, we may explore what is the opposite of that balance. We may find that what a person wants to leave behind is the lack of any personal life whatsoever. A wide range of qualitative and quantitative techniques can be used to facilitate negotiating goals in the first stage. Only once we understand both preferred and not preferred realities, can we proceed to the next stage.

After goals are negotiated, the personal construct coach tries to put these goals in a wider perspective. In other words, in PCC the coach and the client do not proceed to achieving the goals before understanding the implications of that change. The coach explores how the negotiated goals fit into the general framework of the client's personal/organisational theories. The coach and the client commit to a task to understand what it means for the person, or organisation, to move in the proposed direction,

as well as what consequences – desired and undesired – that change would imply. For example, a discovery may pop up that *making a better balance between personal and professional life* faces a client not only with benefits of the change, but also with significant 'costs'. These 'costs' may include profound anxieties about future performance at work, fears that working less would be inappropriate and unacceptable in the particular working environment, as well as the problem of how to start developing the personal side if it has been neglected for years or decades.

In the next stage, the personal construct coach prepares the terrain for experimentation. Through the process of 'fine tuning' of anticipations, the client is invited to explore his or her future projects. For example, we may propose writing a fictional view of self as a person who has achieved the balance between working and private life. Through 'as if' conversations and enactments we may further elaborate this new version of the self and its impact on the important others in the client's ecological niche. This phase of work also deals with anxieties as unavoidable escorts of the learning process. Adequate preparation for the experiments is crucial not only for the successful outcomes, but also for the client's general adoption of the 'experimental attitude'. Questions that may facilitate the preparation for the experiment include the following:

- *What could be done differently in the particular situation?*
- *Can you imagine a scenario where you would act differently?*
- *What would happen if you behaved differently?*
- *What stops you from doing it?*
- *What are the risks associated with the experimental behaviour?*
- *How could these risks be managed?*
- *How would you know that the experiment had a successful outcome?*
- *What would the persons in your social environment say about the experiment?*
- *What would you think about yourself after the experiment?*

When the anticipations are articulated and new hypotheses and personal theories outlined, the client and the coach move to the next phase – experimentation. As opposed to a cognitive-behavioural approach to coaching (Neenan, 2008), the personal construct coach does not prescribe specific actions to achieve the desired change. On the contrary, in PCC a person is invited to experiment with the new version of the self. Initial experimentation should occur in test tube proportions and in the safety of the coaching room. After getting some encouragement and validation, a person is invited to widen the scope of experimentation. A particularly useful tool at this stage is the fixed role technique (Kelly, 1955; Neimeyer et al., 2003). This technique implies that a person 'tries on for size' a different version of the self created during the previous stages. This version of self does not have to be ideal – just different enough to allow new experiences. For example, this powerful procedure may enable the client to experiment with being a person who prioritises both professional and personal issues, takes a more active attitude towards its goals and knows that something has to be left behind. As a part of this experiment the client may manage to take a 30-minute break at work for the first time after years. Although this may seem as an everyday practice for the majority of people, the person may be overwhelmed with positive, but also negative experiences. Anxiety and guilt may pop up with a series of questions: *what would others think; will the colleagues think she/he has changed in some unpredictable manner; will the boss think she/he is lazy; will the staff think that she/he is not reliable any more*, etc.

These questions unequivocally point that experimentation is not only a cognitive effort. When someone makes a change, he or she needs to let go of something before achieving something else. Clients may use various metaphors to depict the risks associated with experimentation: metaphor of an artist on a trapeze; metaphor of a ship leaving the safe harbor for example. The client from the previous example will have to

go through an act of daring and face envisioned anxieties and fears, to learn that she is capable of much more than she thought in the first place. This sort of a cost-benefit analysis may be carried out for each experimentation endeavor, outlining what we need to let go of to gain a new sense of self. The personal construct coach normalises anxiety and fears as experiences accompanying the learning process. Moreover, the coach encourages the client to consider an inquiring stance towards their emotional responses. This might include looking at their own emotions as important 'data' obtained during the personal research project, that should be reflected upon and integrated into the revised hypotheses and theories of the self. Finally, resistance in personal coaching is seen as something to be explored and understood, rather than overcome. The coach looks at 'resistance' as an indicator of the client's uneasiness at the face of risks associated with a change.

At the end of every coaching process the client and the coach reflect on the results achieved. The personal construct coach tries to look at the evaluation not only in administrative terms, but as an opportunity to open a complex and demanding process of reflection. If the client says that she/he has moved from two to five on an imaginary scale of 'work life balance', the coach may open up a dialogue on: *how this new self suits her/him; is it comfortable; in what situation and context is not comfortable; is there a price to be paid for the transition; what changes does it bring to the anticipated future.* In other words, personal construct coaching ends with a series of questions that stimulate reflection on the coaching process and its effects. For this purpose, a variety of techniques can be used, such as re-administering grids, or some of the qualitative assessment techniques (Pope & Denicolo, 2005; Stojnov, 2003).

Final reflections on PCC

The framework proposed for personal construct coaching may be summarised in a form of main messages. These messages include the following:

1. ***Putting agency back into the person.***
   PCC abandons the behaviourist approach to motivation which, suggests that behaviour is caused by some extrinsic factors. Dismissing the metaphor of 'persons as snooker balls', PCC offers the metaphor of 'persons as comets' in constant movement all the way to dissipation. In this view, persons are forms of motion themselves – agents capable and responsible for their actions.
2. ***Empowering persons and organisations by opening the dialogical space.***
   Although all coaching approaches emphasise the importance of dialogue, in PCC the real expert is the client. As 'personal scientists', clients have a PhD on themselves. This means that they establish their goals, set the pace of change and have the power to validate achievements.
3. ***Promoting 'trading discourse' and meaning negotiation.***
   Instead of opting for an 'all or nothing' approach to life, PCC offers a view in which we constantly participate in the process of negotiating and trading meanings. A PCC client has to constantly keep in mind that getting something also means loosing something else. Instead of achieving 'all that life can offer' PCC promotes reasonable trading in which both the coach and the client are aware that nothing comes for free. People are prompted to take what they can, reach for now and watch for what will happen in the future.
4. ***Inviting personal and organisational creativity.***
   PCC requires both the coach and the client to mobilise all of their creative resources. This means not only looking at things as they are, but also having the capacity to look at them as they might become. Often, the capacity for change is reflected in the creative transcending the obvious, changing perspectives and seeing new shades of the things to come. This includes creating and identifying

new metaphors, new versions of selves, new roles, new ways of interpreting experiences and new ways of being in the future.

5. ***Facilitating personal and organisational transitions.***
   Although change is not an easy task, it is not impossible. People do not change just because they were told to do so, or just because they want to. Change implies hard emotional work (both for the coach and the client) as well as a sophisticated technology which builds bridges between the old self and the emerging self.
6. ***Neither persons, nor organisations have to be victims of their circumstances.***
   PCC encourages persons and organisations to explore not what they really are, but what they dare to become. People do not have to dig out their 'true' selves – whatever this may mean – but make an act of daring, step into the unknown and become what they have not been. Instead of actualising their authentic self, PCC asks the clients to reinvent themselves and became what they are not.

Conclusion

At the onset of the 20th century, psychotherapy was promoted as an important new technology of self in society. However, nowadays it seems that society demands new technologies. In contemporary 'learning societies', learning is turning into a lifelong task and the change is becoming more complex than ever. Coaching in general is recognised as an important technology of the learning society, which demands all its participants to continuously update their personal and professional selves, knowledge and skills. This all-inclusive approach to learning, requires a metaphor shift from 'repairing' to 'reconstructing'. Moreover, fulfilment of this ambitious shift requires unification of theories of learning and theories of change. In the recent trend of 'flee from the theory', coaching is especially vulnerable because of insufficiently developed theoretical ground – learning and change theories notwithstanding. Coaching theories may prove to be vulnerable as artificial translations of clinical theory into the learning context, or too fragmented bits and pieces of organisational theories, insufficiently complex to help create a sustainable change. Therefore, a comprehensive coaching framework requires not only a successful merger of the change and the learning theories, but also an elaborated theory of persons in relations. We strongly believe that personal construct coaching provides all of that in one frame of reference.

Acknowledgement

The authors wish to thank to the reviewers, Dr Mary Watts and Dr Helen Jones, for their kind assistance in revising this paper. Their assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

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Ethics in coaching: An ethical decision making framework for coaching psychologists

Mark Duffy & Jonathan Passmore

Objectives: *This paper explores the process of ethical decision making in coaching psychology. The paper seeks to develop a suitable model for application in coaching psychology to complement existing codes of practice. The model of course can be adjusted for use by coaching practitioners.*

Design: *The study used a semi-structured interview design within a qualitative approach, which was complemented by a focus group.*

Methods: *Grounded theory was employed to analyse interview transcripts and to build a series of descriptive and conceptual codes. The model was discussed and further developed through a focus group of experienced coaching psychologists.*

Results: *The study identified the key elements used by coaching psychologists in making decisions which include ethical principles such as those presented in professional codes and relevant literature, personal ethics and moral values, duty to society, standards of practice, the law, conversations with others such as supervisors, experience, respected others' views, implicit and explicit contract with clients along with boundaries and implications involved with a situation. These elements were used to build firstly descriptive and later conceptual codes and from these a decision making framework was developed and tested on coaching psychologists. This model offers a sequential but non-linear model to decision making with six core stages. In addition, the research identified the value in building ethical maturity. Ethical maturity is the capacity to make ethical decisions. This can be enhanced by engaging in regular supervision in which hypothetical testing of dilemmas can be utilised, by recurrent ethical thinking, engaging in activities associated with coach training and pursuing wider continual professional development.*

Conclusions: *The study offers a model for ethical decision making in coaching for use by coaching psychologists and in coach training.*

Keywords: *Coaching; coaching psychology; ethics; reflective practice; grounded theory study; ethical decision making; ethical maturity; ethical decision model.*

'THE JOB OF A COACH is to help employees understand how their behaviours may be going out of bounds and to illuminate appropriate alternative behaviours' (Clegg et al., 2005). We would argue that ethics offer a similar role for coaches, and specifically to prevent dangerous practice from harming clients, the public, or the coach. In formal terms, ethics is defined as the systematic study of the nature and science of morality (Bailey & Schwartzberg, 1995). In short, ethics is the practice that determines good or bad, right or wrong, in social relations (de Jong, 2006).

The first person to use the term 'professional ethics' was Thomas Percival (1740–1804), who produced the prototype of all codes of medical ethics (Tribe & Morrissey, 2005). This marked a significant change in how ethics were viewed and implemented and has contributed to ethics codes which guide the work of psychologists such as the American Psychological Association and British Psychological Society codes.

Although there are a small number of decision making models in psychology (e.g. Kitchener, 1984; Carroll, 2010; Forester-Miller & Davis, 1996) the literature on ethical decision making in psychology is

limited (Passmore & Mortimer, in press). Academic literature on coaching also remains limited, despite a growth in coaching research over the past decade (Grant et al., 2010). Much of the literature on ethics in coaching focuses on the published professional codes and their use in respect of core themes such as confidentiality, boundaries and consent (examples include Peltier, 2001; Brennan & Wildflower, 2010). Ethical frameworks for coaching, like scaffolding, offer support to, without controlling every aspect of, the profession (Bond, 2000). However, such codes, while useful and important in helping coaches understand the high level principles of ethical conduct, fail to offer practical guidance for coaching psychologists in resolving the everyday ethical dilemmas which practitioners face working with organisations and clients. Given the limited research on coaching ethics, it seems reasonable to turn to other disciplines to review how these domains have sought to build suitable decision making models.

Sport coaching, like business coaching, shares a concern for goal attainment and performance (Passmore, 2009). There exist codes of conduct for sport coaches. One such code, the *Code of Ethics and Conduct for Sports Coaches*, outlines a number of ethical standards with which sports coaches are expected to comply. The code offers guidance in the areas of competence, safety, abuse of privilege, confidentiality, advertising, integrity, co-operation, commitment, relationships and humanity. This gives sports coaches a very clear set of statements with regard to what is right or wrong. However, dangers of such codes offering a higher detailed framework are that they may close down options and such standards cannot cover all eventualities. In a study of Canadian sports coaches Haney, Long and Howell-Jones obtained coaches' concerns from descriptions of first-hand experiences (Haney et al., 1998). With this it was possible to establish the extent to which these concerns were addressed by the standards and principles of the Canadian Professional Coaching Association (CPCA). They noted that while the code covered many of the concerns, they failed to cover all of the issues which emerged during their research with coaches.

Like psychology, medicine has very strict ethical guidelines and associated legal obligations. No universal code has been established for medical practice, but four main principles most commonly arise in the clinical literature; justice, autonomy, non-malfeasance and beneficence. Justice refers to the impartial and fair treatment of clients; autonomy to respect for client's right to self-determination; non-maleficence to the avoidance of harm to the client; and beneficence to the promotion of the client's best interests.

The study of ethical concepts in counselling illustrates a further problem with codes of practice – discrepancies. The British Association for Counselling (BAC), the Confederation of Scottish Counselling Agencies (COSCA) (both of which exclusively deal with counselling), the British Psychological Society (BPS), and the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) (both of which include counselling as one of many positions) all offer codes of practice and many counsellors belong to more than one body. In reviewing these codes Bond notes that the BAC prioritises the principle of autonomy, with the exception of possible situations of self or public harm. The BPS gives priority to fidelity, whereas UKCP and COSCA give precedence to the principle of beneficence (Bond, 2000). This leads potentially to confusion and differences in power relations experienced by the client. A greater prominence placed on the respect for client autonomy is likely to result in the sharing of power, whereas a more controlling relationship exists when beneficence is exercised. These discrepancies between bodies are hardly ideal and reflect the difficulties when codes are used as the sole means of resolving ethical dilemmas.

To deal with these discrepancies, we would argue that practitioners must devise a strategy for ethical decision making. Forester-Miller and Davis (1996) attempted to do this for counselling by incorporating the work of Sileo and Kopala (1993), Forester-Miller and Rubenstein (1992), Haas and Malouf (1983), Stadler (1986), Kitchener (1984) and Van Hoose and Paradise (1979) to create a seven-step model of ethical decision making for counsellors. According to Forester-Miller and Davis' model, ethical decisions may be made if one follows these steps sequentially. The first step involves problem identification; the second involves reviewing the codes; step three involves determining the scope and nature of the problem; step four entails generating prospective courses of action; followed by determining the course of action; step six involves reviewing the course of action; and the final step is of implementation.

Although useful to assist one in remembering all steps, a sequential linear series of steps greatly oversimplifies the complex process of solving an ethical dilemma and has its own weaknesses. Such an approach is in danger of seeing dilemmas as simple decisions in contrast with complex or chaotic issues (Snowden & Boone, 2007). Snowden and Boone offer a four-zone model to guide decision makers in resolving decisions.

They suggests that organisations often see problems as either simple, with a direct link between cause and effect, or complicated, where the relation between cause and effect can be identified with extra help. In coaching this help maybe the guidance of a supervisor. However, real dilemmas have the features which are akin to complex or chaotic spaces in Snowden's model. Complex problems are ones in which the relationship between cause and effect can only be perceived in retrospect and as a result the practitioner needs to use emergent practice to test the impact of their decisions and be able to step back into the problem to identify a different course of action. Chaotic problems, in contrast, are ones where there is no relationship between cause and effect. Human behaviour, particularly of those who maybe unwell or suffering mental illness, may fall into this category and the consequences of actions can be impossible to accurately judge.

Carroll (2010) too devised a framework for use in counselling. This has very similar stages. Stage one involves creating ethical sensitivity. Stage two involves formulating an ethical course of action. Stage three entails implementing an ethical decision and stage four involves living with the ambiguities after making a decision.

As with Forester-Miller and Rubenstein's model, Carroll's model offers a linear approach. The implication is that dilemmas are simple problems solved through the application of a series of ingredients, or through external input as a complicated problem. We would, however, view ethical dilemmas as complex problems, where the relationship between cause and effect is often difficult to identify.

As psychologists, both counseling and coaching psychologists are bound by strict legal and ethical obligations, which arguably have been enhanced since the registration of psychologists in the UK through the HPC. However, while operating within this framework it is important to remember that coaching is a distinct field with its own challenges and complexity (Passmore, 2009a). One distinction is the series of dyadic relationships that exist between a business coach and stakeholders of the coaching relationship such as the coachee, director, senior manager, etc. Law (2005a) outlines the kinds of ethical issues the coach may be faced with as a result. These include the need to establish who the clients are, which stakeholders have priority, whose interests the coach should be serving, ethical duties, how different values and interests may be managed, issues of confidentiality, the potential for abuse of power, and implications of vicarious liability (Law, 2005a). Further, coaching psychology is an emerging discipline and to establish itself, it needs to develop its own theories and models which

are grounded in coaching practice and coaching research, as opposed to borrowing models from counselling or business. Svaleng and Grant (2010) note that coaching still has some way to go before coaching can consider itself a mature profession.

In addition, business coaching is unique in that it is required of the coach to have a working knowledge of the business in which he/she coaches (Passmore, 2008). Such business knowledge is now becoming more widely accepted, as the coaching market matures, as one of the key differentials which mark the excellent coach from the competent coach (Marsden & Passmore, unpublished). Furthermore, coaching psychology rightly places importance on confidentiality, however in other domains such as sports coaching, this is less of an issue.

We have argued that codes may assist the coaching psychologist in their work, but are far from infallible. Codes may not cover all important concerns (Haney et al., 1998), may be seen as overly prescriptive (Passmore, 2009b), display discrepancies between professional bodies (Bond, 2000), are valid in a limited number of situations and certain principles contradict each other when applied to certain dilemmas (e.g. one may not be able to always uphold confidentiality if trying to ensure the safety of others). In addition, one may not be a member of any professional body with which these codes are published, however, this, one may argue, is in itself unethical, as clients have no independent body to refer complaints. One way forward is to supplement codes of practice with frameworks to aid practitioners in making ethical decisions in the moment.

Ethical decision making is an extremely complicated process that becomes more intricate when one considers issues with duty of care (Spence et al., 2006), human rights legislation (Law, 2005b), legal matters (Katter, 1999), overlap between fields such as coaching and counselling (Summerfield, 2006; Spence et al., 2006), the series of dyadic relationships between the coach and stakeholders in an organisation (Law, 2005a), and sources of ethical thinking, such as moral thinking (Bond, 2000), which change over time.

This study sought to explore how experienced coaching psychologists resolved dilemmas they had encountered and from this to build a model specifically for coaching psychology.

Method

A grounded theory qualitative methodology was used to explore data gathered from participants using a semi structured interview. Grounded theory is an inductive approach to research by which coding the qualitative data into categories, and higher order categories, the theory emerges from the data. The objective was to ascertain the experiences and ethical practices of experienced coaches. Grounded theory was used due to its dual role of ascertaining the grounded individual experiences and encouragement of the researcher to actively engage with the data. As it was a small sample, it was thought an ideal qualitative method to use (Charmaz, 2006). While a number of alternative methods have been offered, the present study followed the original methodology offered by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as a framework.

Participants

All participants were experienced coaching psychologists, with at least 10 years' work experience and all but one had some experience as supervisors. In total, five coaching psychologists were used to collect the original data; three females and two males, four white European and one Asian. The age range of participants was from 40 to 55. All were academics (teaching and researching) in the field of coaching psychology and all except for one also acted as coaching supervisors.

In the second phase of the study a focus group was used. This consisted of six practicing coaching psychologists five women and one man, all were white European, and were experienced coaches.

Data collection

In the first phase a semi-structured approach was used as it enabled the building of rapport, facilitated flexibility and allowed the researcher to probe novel areas with the intention of acquiring rich data.

The final protocol for the interview centred on these six themes:

- Background in coaching.
- The perception of meaning and impact of ethics in coaching.
- Resolving dilemmas presented in practice.
- Impact of decisions on self regard.
- Helping to resolve dilemmas presented by peers or subordinates.
- Advisory ethical practices.

The method of transcription drew upon the Jefferson system (Jefferson, 1985) and a detailed coding system was used to interpret this information. Data collection, coding and analysis were conducted concurrently, necessary for theoretical sampling. In this way, data collection was controlled by the emergent theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In the second phase using the focus group, notes were taken of the discussion relating to comments on the outline framework and the groups suggested changes or additions.

Data analysis

To ensure a thorough and detailed interaction with the data and full saturation, themes were created manually instead of using coding software. A six stage process was used.

The first stage involved the collection and storage of data from which the initial codes were generated. The second stage involved reviewing and altering the descriptive codes. This involved memo writing, identifying links between items and refining the coding system. The third stage entailed grouping the descriptive codes into conceptual codes and revising these such that they composed a conceptual theory. The fourth stage concerned designing a framework based on the revised coding structure. It was important to the researcher that this analysis was interpretative rather than descriptive and that the final framework may be easily understood and thought to coaches. Thus, for the fifth stage, the provisional model was compared with findings from the relevant literature before being arranged into easily understandable and rememberable chunks. This was reviewed by an independent researcher. The final stage entailed building a conceptual diagram based on this framework.

This was an iterative process as data collection, coding and analysis were conducted jointly with the purpose of seeking and collecting pertinent data to elaborate and refine categories in the emergent theory, a requisite of theoretical sampling. A fuller statement of the approach is described in Passmore and McGoldrick (2009), including a diagramatical representation of the method.

Results

In this section the results from the semi-structured interviews are considered and presented in initial descriptive clusters.

Sources of dilemmas

The first focus of the study was on the sources of ethical dilemmas in coaching. Participants suggested that dilemmas stemmed from four areas; issues with the coachee, issues with the coach, boundary issues and issues stemming from multiple dyadic relationships. However, when a dilemma presents itself it is likely to cross between different source categories.

(i) Issues with coachee and stakeholders

These may be emotional, personality or behavioural issues. Each of which may be a precursor to the client being a danger to oneself, those around them and the organisation within which they work. When this is the case a coach must decide how to act upon it, if at all. Emotional issues of the client may happen when the client may not necessarily have a disposition, as with personality issues, but may experience distress etc due to their environment. This was found to be a

common source, particularly in areas where work hours and task demands are great.

'I met the client who was very very stressed and not sleeping and he was very concerned at the time and that, in the process of having some sort of breakdown.' (B36).

'And in that case, and in those cases, I can think of at least three times it has happened…' (B40).

Coaches often find these particular instances difficult to deal with.

'I find those instances quite difficult.' (D42).

Often the coach is presented with the dilemma of how to act upon a coachee behaving in a damaging manner.

'…because I felt it was potentially very damaging, not only for the organisation but for himself.' (B25i).

(ii) Issues with coach

These may be personal, emotional or behavioural. The coach may have the personal problem of finding it difficult to cease coaching when it seems it may be the correct step to take.

'I find it very hard to break up in that way…' (A39).

Through their actions they may bring the profession into disrepute. Behavioural activities of the coach that may lead to a dilemma are endless and are usually because they cross a certain boundary.

(iii) Boundary issues

Boundaries may be crossed by anyone in the coaching relationship or by activities while conducting research. These boundaries may be written explicitly in the form of professional codes or may be presented as standards of practice implicit within coaching. The dilemmas faced as a result of someone crossing certain boundaries are further exacerbated by the fact that there is a large degree of uncertainty in the new field of coaching. Guidelines often prove inadequate and regulations are weak.

'…some of them are… kind of give doubt in the here and now in the supervision session.' (C11i).

'Because all the regulations which are currently there are relatively weak…' (C35i).

(iv) Multiple-dyadic and dual relationships

These dilemmas present themselves as a result of the coach working for many individuals/bodies at the same time.

'…and there are so many nuances like working for organisations and individuals at the same time…' (C9).

The coach may also be put in a position where they are expected to have more than one relationship with a client.

'I have an example of a coach, who was working in a dual role in relation to a coachee…' (A30).

Often, as was found in this study, the coach may be asked to partake in something ethically questionable by favouring one particular stakeholder.

Ethical decision making

Following a detailed analysis of transcripts it was possible to decipher the elements which inform a coach's ethical decision making. This encompasses ethical principles such as those presented in professional codes and relevant literature, personal ethics and moral values, duty to society, standards of practice, the law, conversations with others such as supervisors, experience, respected others' views, implicit and explicit contract with clients along with boundaries and implications involved with a situation.

(i) Ethical awareness

The capacity to make ethical decisions may be further developed by engaging in hypothetical testing of dilemmas, recurrent ethical thinking and engaging in activities associated with continual professional development. Participants believed that coaches should immerse themselves in the field and engage in continuous professional development activities. Such immersion will help the coach become more ethically aware. As one participant points out, ethical mindfulness is essential for the operation of ethics. This can be achieved by joining professional organisa-

tions and for members to be aware of the professional codes that these organisations set for coaching practice.

> *'…they need to join and belong to a particular, relevant, professional organisation or society…' (E57).*

All of these organisations publish their own professional codes which members must abide by in order to retain member. Coaches need to read and consider these codes and how they relate to their practice in general and in specific cases.

> *'I will look at and take on the BPS Code of Ethics and standards which has a number of ethical principles.' (E33).*

In parallel with awareness about the professional bodies' ethical codes, participants highlighted the importance of being aware of one's own ethical code and how personal values and beliefs can be used as a guide to informing ethical decisions.

> *'To expose themselves regularly to lots of ideas around the ethics of coaching which are in books, papers conferences and so on…' (A60).*
>
> *'I would drive them to spend some time exploring their own ethical principles.' (A57).*

A further sub-theme was the value in exploring ethical dilemmas during training or CPD. This may be accomplished by reading literature on ethical dilemmas, by asking ethical questions of oneself, by foreseeing ethical dilemmas, thinking about dilemmas past, asking about dilemmas others have faced and engaging in the hypothetical testing of such dilemmas.

> *'…what difficulties do you foresee if you take on this particular assignment?' (C27).*
>
> *'…they should ask themselves those questions that really explore how they are made up ethically.' (A58).*
>
> *'…explore from a number of ethical dilemmas so they would begin to fine tune their ethical thinking.' (A58).*
>
> *'…so to have tested somebody in your own mind if not in practice.' (B49).*

Not surprisingly supervision was also seen as a useful aid in developing a stronger ethical awareness.

> *'And, of course, I would advise them to have a very good supervisor themselves.' (A59).*

One participant suggested that change needed to happen at the very start of coaching education. This could be achieved by a greater debate during teaching and supervision, but may widen into a wider public debate about ethics in the professions.

> *'I think we should do it through our teaching in our courses because that's what we should do, not just to feed information to our students but to raise awareness, to discuss the most difficult issues, to expose ourselves as we teach them and how difficult the dilemmas are. That's one area, in training. Another important area, of course, supervision, and a third area because I think it should be down to public debate and should be down to conferences, through journals, academic journals in particular, not just magazines which tend to be a little bit superficial but proper discussion with people who have something to say and openly prepared to debate this issue.' (D54–57).*

(ii) A personal ethical code

Participants in the previous section highlighted the importance of awareness. They moved on to note that this needed to be captured in some way, with coaching psychologists developing their own principles by mapping their own values and beliefs onto the ethical codes and published literature.

> *'…mapping upon explicit principles out there.' (E50).*

This may be carried out by assessing the principles in the codes and identifying which principles take precedence and in what situations. If his work is done in advance of an issue arising the coach is in a stronger place to consider the ethical matter in question.

(iii) Particulars of situation to be identified

It is impossible to understand a dilemma without factoring in all contextual matters. The exact same labeled dilemma may necessitate a different resolution depending upon the context; such as the organisation, indi-

viduals involved and where the work is taking place. A thorough identification of situation particulars is necessary. One must identify the client and other stakeholders. In addition, legal matters, boundaries/standards involved, the coaching contract agreed at the start and the tacit contract, implicit in the coaching relationship.

> *'…and also what would have been implied, for example, I agree confidentiality explicitly but I think even when that hasn't happened coachees behave as if there were confidentiality so I don't think it would be an adequate defense to say 'I never promised that it was confidential'…' (A21).*

Other factors may include the rights, responsibilities, welfare and mental or emotional state of the clients and stakeholders.

> *'…an individual who it became clear that he had some very profound personality problems such that he became subject to emotional distress…' (A10).*

(iv) Peer coaching, supervision and consulting significant others

Participants identified the important role played by significant others, such as supervisors and peers, in helping coaches resolve dilemmas.

> *'…to talk about the boundaries around the work she had done with the other individual in the group.' (B59).*
>
> *'…explore it with the supervisor or suitable person who is in a position to help.' (C37).*

Peers, supervisors and significant others may assist with discussing options, the implications/consequences of each option and how to act.

> *'…first of all is to identify all the potential implications of the action or the decision made by the coach of what to do and how to act'. (C39).*

This resource may necessitate revisiting as new queries arise.

(v) Reflection and journal entry

Ethical decision making is a cognitive process. It is important that the coach find time to reflect on the situation. Participants suggested that reflection and thinking were an important part of the process, to avoid hasty or rushed decisions which had not been thought through.

> *'Because it seems to me that ethical thinking and ethical decision making is really a cognitive process'. (E25).*
>
> *'Then, also I don't like to make an immediate decision, I like to spend some time thinking about it.' (B51)*
>
> *'Well the main thing is to have a bit of time to think about it if you can…' (D29).*

This may be carried out with the assistance of a coach/supervisor.

> *'…maybe reflect in supervision and so on.' (D30).*

(vi) Assess options

As in all good decision making models, including coaching models such as GROW, participants highlighted the value of exploring options and the risks and benefits associated with each course of action. In doing so the coach provides themselves with the opportunity to become more choiceful in the course of action.

> *'…What are the options?' (E28).*
>
> *'…What are the causes or responses and actions?' (E28).*
>
> *'There would be a whole range of possible actions in response to a particular situation which, usually, are quite complex.' (E28).*

One may assess the consequences and implications of each and examine where boundaries lie.

> *'Then I tend to think about what the pros are, what the cons are, what are the consequences of doing something and doing nothing are…' (B49).*
>
> *'and what lines you're overstepping by doing something and doing nothing.' (B50).*

Weigh up the benefits against the cost of each option.

(vii) Evaluate process and outcome

Participants highlighted evaluation as an important part of the process and involves assessing, and learning from the entire process undertaken and the consequences

of one's actions, feeding back into the process of continual professional development. Some participants reported learning aspects about themselves.

> *'…I have always been stronger on the nurturing side that the discipline side but I realised that it was quite such a strong aspect of my personality.' (A42)*

Iterative process

Participants noted that the process of making a decision needed not to be linear, but to be iterative. The iterative process allows for the coach to step back and forward between stages, which in reality is what happens as new information or deeper reflection occurs.

> *'Well it's not so much step by step, really, because if you look around at the professional societies, about ethics … and codes of ethics and conduct or standards of practice, very rarely, you will find that they will provide you with any step by step of situations.' (E23).*

Discussion

With a series of conceptual codes the aim was to take the data and review this against the literature and from this to build a framework which could be used in coaching psychology to help practitioners, particularly novices, improve the way in which they managed ethical decisions.

The aim was to build a short process which could guide ethical decisions of practitioners, and which could also be taught to coaching psychologists as a useful heuristic to guide ethical considerations when dilemmas arose in their work. An initial model was tested on practitioners and subsequently refined to the model which is presented below.

Drawing on the descriptive themes in the data, a conceptual model was built which consisted of six stages. In contrast to previous models which have been largely linear, the model aims to both offer iteration and also flexibility for coaches to incorporate their own values and beliefs as part of the decision process and for the coach to be able to step back and forth through the model. The six stages of the ACTION model is set are set out in Figure 1. The stages are summarised below.

Stage 1: ***Awareness***. The process starts with awareness of the ethical code of the professional body that the coach is affiliated with. This is likely to be the BPS code for coaching psychologists in the UK, or the APA for American psychologists; however for other practitioners it may include other non-psychological trade bodies such as the International Coaching Federation (ICF) or Association for Coaching (AC). Secondly, it involves awareness of one's own personal values and beliefs. Thirdly, reflection on how these different codes fit together is necessary.

Stage 2: ***Classify***. This stage involves the identification of the issue as it emerges in practice and the ability to classify the issue as a 'dilemma'. Key issues within this will be the individuals, organisations and context in which the issue is emerging.

Stage 3: ***Time for reflection, support and advice***. At this stage the coach takes time to personally reflect on the issue. During this period, which maybe a few seconds, but is better if this is several hours or days if the situation allows, the coach may draw on a combination of experience, peer support networks, their supervisor and previous personal reflections in learning journals and diaries. We recognise that different coaches will use different approaches to suit their own personal styles and needs, and the selection of methods will also depend on the stage of development of the coach. One difference is the route taken by experienced coaches versus novices or coaches in training. The experienced coach is likely to have a wide network of support; they may have a co-coaching relationship in place or be a member of a peer network. For the novice coach, and those in training, the role of the supervisor is more important and the coach

is likely to discuss the issue with their supervisor as part of their training.

Stage 4: ***Initiate.*** During this stage the coach will build a number of solution options to the ethical dilemma.

Stage 5: ***Option evaluation.*** With each option the coach will consider the risks and benefits associated with them and how each option may fit with personal and professional codes, as well as legal requirements and contracts. The coach may discuss these further with their peers, supervisor or others before selecting a final course of action to implement.

Stage 6: ***Novate.*** Once the appropriate course of action has been selected, the coach will incorporate this new approach into their ethical journal/experiences. It may also be prudent to share such a scenario (in a confidential manner), with those within one's own network or coaching body, so that colleagues can benefit from the situation and the learning associated with real dilemmas.

The framework offered is a starting point. As ethical dilemmas come from a diverse range of sources, with no two situations being exactly the same, this necessitates different methods of intervention. It is easily put to use and can easily be applied by novices. However, ideally a custom-made framework should be created by each coach to reflect their own personal ethical position and the values of the professional bodies to which they belong.

Conclusions

This is a small-scale study, drawn from a sample of UK coaching psychologists. With the use of grounded theory research methods, the key elements used by coaching psychologists in ethical decision making were identified. These were used to design an ethical decision making framework, the ACTION model, and a conceptual diagram based on this framework was devised (see Figue 1). The paper offers a practical conceptual diagram that is easily understood and taught to others. It may be used to assist coaching psychologists, particularly novices, in making decisions of ethical concern and in solving ethical dilemmas. It may provide more structure or a starting point to an otherwise unfeasible task. Importantly, it may augment training courses and assist novice coaches in becoming more effective ethical thinkers. Further research is required to test the value of the model in real decision making scenarios and compare its value with other models which have been developed in parallel domains such as counseling, sports or business.

There is a general absence of rigorous evaluation of ethical decision making models in the literature and more work is required to deepen our understanding (Passmore & Mortimer, in press).

A further area for development is the need for a greater debate about the role of ethics in coaching psychology. Such a debate should not be the preserve of a few, but draw those engaged in coaching work in the variety of different contexts which coaching psychology has spread. In addition, although coaching is largely unregulated, coaching psychologists must adhere to strict legal obligations as psychologists. Perhaps a debate in the wider field of coaching is needed as to the value of regulation, although the diverse voices and vested interests in the sector may make this a difficult process. Further, we would argue that coaching ethics needs to form an important part of all coach training.

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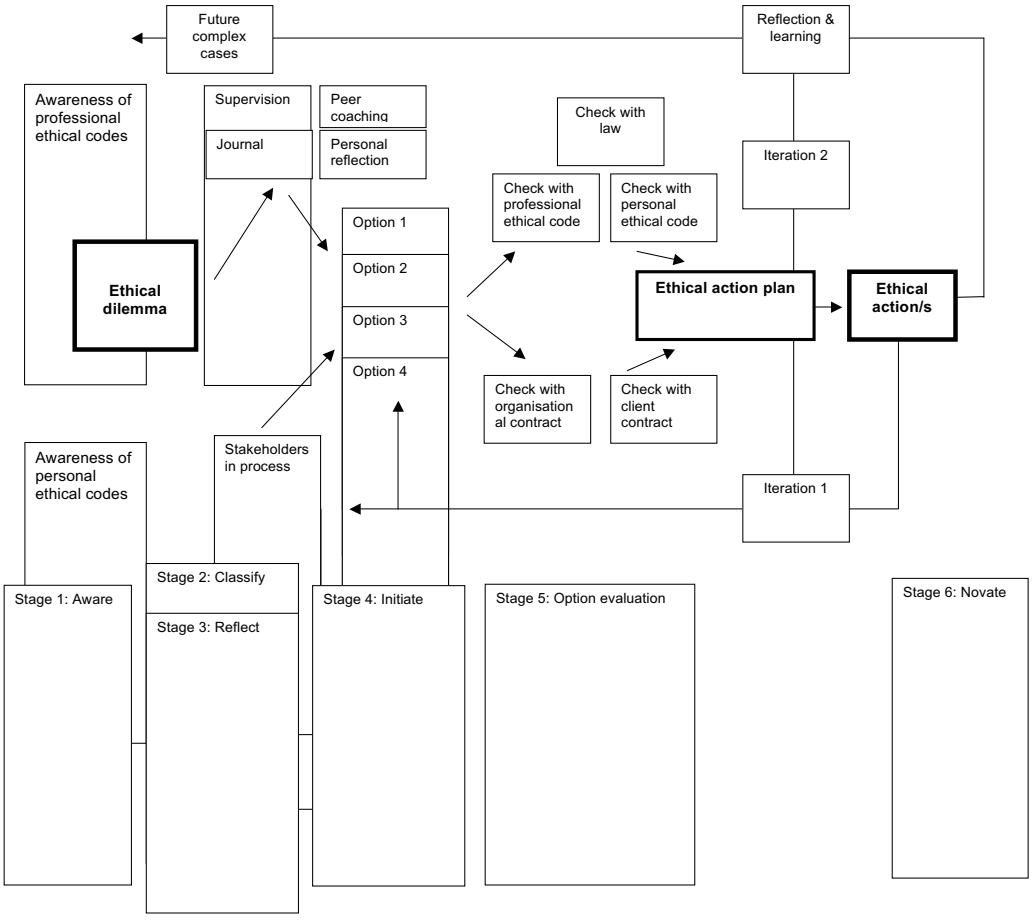
Figure 1: ACTION ethical decision making model for coaching.



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Coaching – narrative-collaborative practice

Reinhard Stelter & Ho Law

Purpose: *This paper aims to provide both the theoretical foundation and formulation of practice for narrative coaching. We advocate that coaching as narrative-collaborative practice should form the new wave (third generation) of coaching practice and encourage coaching and coaching psychology communities to engage in its practice and research.*

Methods: *In providing the theoretical foundation for coaching as narrative-collaborative practice, we first draw on its societal and cultural foundation. We argue that narrative coaching can support self-created and reflective leadership, provide continuous development of coaching methodology as it focuses on values, gives opportunities for meaning-making and provides a reflective space for the unfolding of narratives in terms of the construction of reality and the concept of meaning.*

Results: *From the above foundations, we develop a general narrative coaching methodology by integrating the general characteristics of 'externalising conversation' and 're-authoring' (two common forms of narrative methods) and highlight its collaborative properties including narrative coaching in groups.*

Conclusion: *We summarise the purpose of this paper and conclude that coaching as a narrative-collaborative practice can provide empowerment and social acknowledgments to coachees' self-identity and re-iterate our call to promote coaching as a narrative-collaborative practice.*

Keywords: *coaching psychology; narrative coaching; reflective space; community of practice; collaborative; meaning making; Universal Integrative Framework.*

IN THE following article we would like to present coaching as a narrative-collaborative practice. The evidence of our practice shall be based on a theoretical foundation of our approach and the concrete expertise of a related field of practice (i.e. narrative therapy). Some initial conceptualisations of narrative coaching were developed by David Drake (2006, 2007, 2008, 2009) in Australia, by Ho Law (2006, 2007) in the UK (Law et al., 2006, 2007) and by Reinhard Stelter (2007, 2009) in Denmark. Although these practitioner-researchers ground coaching on narrative approaches, the developments have evolved partly independently. On integrating these sources of development, we follow the thoughts of Stober, Wildflower and Drake (2006) on evidence-based practice, who defined evidence from both coaching-specific research and related disciplines, their own expertise, and an understanding of the uniqueness of each client. In this article we would like to present an outline and methodology of this fairly new concept of coaching and base it on two central theoretical bedrocks which shall serve as an argument for the promotion of coaching as a narrative-collaborative practice. In that way

Note and Acknowledgements: The *narrative-collaborative* practice described in this paper was first implemented for the Master Class at the 2nd European Coaching Psychology Conference at the Royal Holloway, University of London in the UK on 16 December 2009. This paper expands on the practice with a more in depth treatment on its philosophical and theoretical foundation. The authors would like to thank all the participants at the Master Class for their contribution and collaboration. As a result, an open discussion forum (Narrative Coaching Network) has been created to continue our stories on Linkedin (www.linkedin.com/e/vgh/2680307/). Readers are welcome to join and share their narrative experiences.

we work towards an 'intelligent and conscientious use of the best current knowledge in making decisions about how to deliver coaching to coaching clients' (Cavanagh & Grant, 2006, p.156).

Theoretical foundation of coaching as a narrative-collaborative practice

To build our approach on a strong theoretical basis we will include two central pillars:

1. ***The societal and cultural foundation of coaching***
   The socio-cultural context is regarded as essential in Universal Integrative Framework (UIF) for coaching and mentoring, as developed by Law, Ireland and Hussain (2007).
2. ***The learning foundation of coaching***
   Based on an understanding that coachees' self-awareness is fundamental for their developmental path, the psychology of learning has great importance for the understanding of the coaching process itself (Law et al., 2007; Stelter, 2002).

In the following sections, these two theoretical pillars will be presented in greater detail.

1. The societal and cultural foundation of coaching

During the last 20 to 30 years, our society has transformed fundamentally and radically and in a way that has had great impact on all its members. These changes – which will be described in further detail later in this paper – have had a radical influence on people's professional and private lives in general, and more specifically, on the way we generate knowledge, construct self and identity and make sense of our lives. There are a number of societal implications that can be considered as arguments that justify and even favor coaching as a narrative-collaborative practice: We live in a world of 'globality' and in a hypercomplex society. Here the term 'globality' means that an event that happens on our planet is no longer just a limited local event only. In other words, all inventions, victories and catastrophes affect the whole world; and thus we must reorient and reorganise our lives and actions, our organisations and institutions, along this 'local-global' axis (Beck, 2000, p.11). This social condition challenges the individual and also specific organisations (e.g. a business, a school or an association) to find their own identity and at the same time to relate to a multifaceted social reality (Luhmann, 1995; Stelter, 2009; Qvortrup, 2003). In the next three sections we would like to highlight, how this societal complexity has an impact on coaching, and why the coaching should be formed as a more open dialogue:

Coaching as a reflective space

The English sociologist Anthony Giddens (1991) highlighted the importance of self-reflexivity as a central pre-requisite of the members of our late-modern societies. They have to handle 'a post-traditional order, in which the question, 'How shall I live?' has to be answered in day-to-day decisions about how to behave, what to wear and what to eat – and many other things – as well as interpreted within the temporal unfolding of self-identity' (p.14). Giddens regarded self-identity as a kind of permanently running individual project where we suggest that coaching can contribute in a positive manner, as a tool of self-reflection.

Coaching and meaning making

To make one's actions meaningful in specific situations, it is a quest that every member of society has continuously to work on in different contexts and social organisations, at work or in private life (Bruner, 1990) – a conduct that is no longer carried out on the basis of a commonly accepted frame of reference (for example, based on religious values or broadly accepted moral standards). Bruner (1991) argued that the mind structures its sense of reality using mediation through 'cultural products, like language and other symbolic systems' (p.3). He specifically emphasised the idea of narrative as one of these cultural products. In regard to

coaching we will argue as follows: Coaching is a way of helping people to create new, alternative and more uplifting narratives about their own life in different social contexts, narratives which are formed in a self-reflective process and which help individuals or groups of people to create coherence and shape meaning as an expression of their relatedness to specific others and contexts (Stelter, 2007). In coaching this process of meaning making can be enhanced by using the metaphors of the coachee's culture (e.g. Turner, 1967; Myerhoff, 1982).

Coaching supporting self-created and reflective leadership

In regard to coaching in a business context we have to take some special and new challenges of leadership into account (Schein, 1992). In the past, a person was usually placed in a leadership position and automatically had authority and received indubitable respect. However, owing to the growing level of autonomy in many job areas and high distinctive expertise of many employees in various industries, these in turn increase the complexity as mentioned earlier. Thus, increasingly leaders have to shape their leadership position in joint action with their employees and other stakeholders (Walji, 2007; Ferdig, 2007). This calls for a new leadership approach. Leaders have to generate their own leadership style. Leadership becomes a reflective project and is self-created. As a result of these challenges leaders frequently search for assistance by cooperating with peers (e.g. through mentoring programmes) or they hire an executive coach who can support leaders in their self-reflective process of their leadership development. To further support leadership development, the focus is often put on values. The Danish management philosopher Kirkeby (2000, p.7) puts it like this:

> There only exist normative criteria of management, no others. What is objective must be considered as an untenable construction. An economical perspective, technical perspective, or social perspective, is also able to be reduced to values … There is a hidden normativity, including both good and evil, in the actions of the manager, whether it is conscious or not.

This value-basis of leaders' decision-making can be one of the focal areas in reflective coaching dialogues, where specific events are studied through the lens of specific value reflections.

2. The learning foundation of coaching

As the second theoretical pillar, we shall focus on learning and its importance for the understanding of the coaching process. Learning and continuous (professional) development is of central importance in our time. But learning has changed character during the post World War II period. The fundamental difference is: Central authorities in our society (e.g. school teachers, leaders, masters, medical doctors or priests) have lost their knowledge monopoly. In our post or late modern society knowledge is generated in specific contexts, in local communities of practice (a team at work, a school class, etc.) (Wenger, 1998). We would like to understand learning as situated and formed in social discourses and actions in particular organisations (e.g. a company, school or hospital) or work relationship. Learning then is a process of co-creation of knowledge (Pearce, 2007). The emergence of coaching as a wide-spread phenomenon in our society is – on the basis of this new concept of learning – a logical consequence of these new societal preconditions. Accordingly, we classify coaching as a central medium in a focused learning process (Law, Ireland & Hussain, 2007). This understanding is consistent with a family of established learning theories that Law et al. (2007) and Stelter (2002) identified as relevant to coaching (see Belenky et al., 1986; Loevinger & Blasi, 1976, Perry, 1970; Kegan, 1982, 1994; Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 1991, 2000; Freire, 1992; and Vygotsky, 1962).

Towards a continuous development of coaching practice

On the basis of this theoretical analysis we see a necessity of continuously developing the epistemology and practice of coaching as the main endeavour of this article. To elucidate this development we would like to present coaching as being divided into three basic and very roughly distinguished 'generations', where we mainly focus on the basic *intentional orientation* of the coach, which only partly are represented by specific theoretical positions:

1. *Coaching with a problem or goal perspective:* These first generation approaches would include sports coaching, the GROW model, NLP, and partly also psychodynamic coaching and cognitive-behavioral coaching. The main perspective here is on taking the plunge from specific and concrete problems the coachee has presented. The coaching session would be mainly centered around these problems with a clear focus on a specific goal ('I would like to solve this task more efficiently.'). In this first generation coaching the coach can be in danger to be pushed into the role of an expert and knower.
2. *Coaching with a solution and future perspective:* These second generation approaches would include systemic and solution-focused coaching, appreciative inquiry coaching and positive psychology coaching. The main perspective here is to create and shape possible new futures with a strong focus on existing resources and the strengths of the coachee. The session is oriented towards possibilities and not on struggles of the past. Therefore, a focus on goals is less beneficial. A goal focus would evolve from a problem perspective and hinder looking at different and new futures that might open the coachee's eyes towards new perspectives.
3. *Coaching with a reflective perspective:* These third generation approaches include social-constructionist, narrative coaching, protreptic or philosophic coaching. The main perspective is a further development of the second generation model. The focus is very strongly on the dimension of co-creation and co-operation. Both coach and coachee are both experts and non-knowers. The preferred issues of the coaching dialogue are around values and meaning-making, on aspects that are really important in life and that put both coach and coachee in a reflective space, beyond basic everyday challenges. Coach and coachee become *philosophers* in regard to 'the bigger questions of life'. The traditional asymmetry between both of them is then reduced. They are both equally wondering about the central human issues and find new ways to understand their existence.

These three perspectives are often integrated parts in specific coaching sessions, because the coaches make shifts in their intentional orientation towards the dialogue, but on the basis of our theoretical analysis we are convinced that the coaching should move towards a practice that is more dominated by second and third generation approaches. The main arguments for strengthening the third generation coaching are as follows:

1. Coaching as a reflective space;
2. Coaching as a process of meaning making; and
3. Coaching supporting reflective and value-based leadership.

Therefore, we find it useful to present some central criteria that will move our intentional focus as practitioners towards the third generation - coaching as a reflective space.

Coaching as reflective space

In the following we will present and discuss three aspects of the coaching dialogue that lead to the broadening of the coachee's reflective space and shall be understood as practitioner guidelines of the third generation coaching (see also Stelter, 2009):

1. *Focusing on values:* In our society, which is characterised by a growing diversity in social and organisational values, we must encourage coachees to reflect on values as guiding markers to help them organise their private and professional lives. These values are no longer timeless and universal, but are rather grounded in the practices and events of the local communities. The ultimate aim is to facilitate and improve leadership, communication and cooperation, not by focusing on specific goals, but by reflecting on key values as a feature of the human condition.
2. *Giving opportunities for meaning-making:* Meaning-making is considered as one of the main purposes to facilitate the coaching dialogue (Stelter, 2007). Meaning is fundamental, because we ascribe specific values to our experiences, actions, our interplay with others and our life and work. Things become meaningful when we understand our own way of sensing, thinking and acting by telling certain stories about ourselves and the world in which we live. Meaning is far from being the same as 'information' – as used in the concept of data processing. Meaning-making is based on past experiences and expectations about the future, and holistically integrates past and present experiences as well as ideas about what the future holds. Meaning evolves the interplay between action, sensing, reflecting and speaking.
3. *Giving space for the unfolding of narratives:* Telling stories to one another and developing and sharing narratives and accounts, either in a coach-coachee relationship or in a group setting, is fundamental to the process of social meaning-making; the grounding of an individual in a cultural context is always based on specific values and meanings. Narratives serve to structure events and to join them together in a timeline. They make stories – the source of meaning-making – coherent and as a result, life makes sense. Narratives establish temporal coherence and shape how events, actions, other persons and ourselves can be experienced and perceived as sensible and meaningful. The plot of every story is the basis for the development of an inner structure and drama (Sarbin, 1986, an early psychologists with a narrative orientation). By telling stories and listening to them, our lives become meaningful. Carr (1986) put it like this: 'Lives are told in being lived and lived in being told' (p.61).

These three elements of coaching as a reflective space shall lead towards epistemological foundations that pave the way to the narrative-collaborative practice of coaching.

Epistemological foundations – bridging phenomenology and social constructionism

In the following section we will present a theoretical framework for a new form of coaching intervention, where we try to balance between an individual, experiential, embodied perspective on the one hand and a social, cultural, community-oriented perspective on the other. By doing so, we combine theoretical roots from phenomenology with social constructionism. Phenomenology casts a light on immediate embodied experiences upon which individuals can focus with regard to a specific situation in which they are involved. Social constructionism, on the other hand, deals with discourses between people, the social implications of relationships and the relational and cultural construction of reality. Although these two theoretical approaches differ in many ways, they share some connections which allow them to be used in an integrated model for coaching. These connecting concepts revolve around:

1. The construction of reality; and
2. The concept of meaning.

The integration of these two aspects is the central basis for the understanding of our theoretical framework where phenomenology and social constructionism meet and

can fuse in an integrated coaching model; a model which we finally synthesise by taking a narrative, community psychological approach. In the following two sections we will first discuss: (1) The Construction of Reality; and then (2) The Concept of Meaning.

The Construction of Reality

In both phenomenology and social construction, reality is not something definite and final. Reality is either constructed in the present moment of experiencing and will change from one situation to another (phenomenology); or is socially constructed in relationship with others (social constructionism). We further present these two approaches in depth.

Phenomenology has developed as a genuine 'science of experience', with its main focus on how individuals create their own world. Husserl (1985), the founder of phenomenology, spoke about a 'descriptive psychology', where the point of departure for psychological investigation is phenomena as *perceived by the subject* (Ihde, 1977). Phenomenologists have developed an empirical method for that open approach to phenomena called *epoché*, meaning suspension of judgement. In epoché, the individual attempts to grasp the pure subjectiveness of the world – the individual's world in itself. In that sense we can speak about an *individual, experiential construction of reality*. There are a number of strategies that allow an individual's perceived experience to be explored in depth (see Stelter, 2007, 2008). To counter the accusation of subjectivism, phenomenologists draw a sharp line between them and rational and empiricist traditions in philosophy and psychology, as represented through the method of introspection, a process of 'looking within' one's own mind, i.e. thoughts, emotions and sensations are explored through a method of reflective self-observation.

How do *social constructionists* regard the term 'reality'? In social constructionism, the focus is on relationships and how social relations develop and form the individual and the social context itself. This relational perspective sees also the evolvement of emotions and thoughts as *socially* constructed and not formed internally by the individual. Reality is constructed exclusively though social discourse and interaction with others – in a workplace, family or team – and thereby evolves in the *relationships* that people are part of (Gergen, 1994). What appears as 'reality' is, indeed, a social construction. From a sociological perspective, Berger and Luckman (1966) set the stage by saying: 'The sociology of knowledge understands human reality as socially constructed' (p.211).

As a consequence of this epistemological assumption, it becomes 'possible' – as a strategy of intervention – to de-construct and re-construct a specific social reality (e.g. in a sports team, a group of exercisers or in an organisation) by influencing the way people talk to each other. Gergen (1994) put it like this: 'The degree to which a given account of the world or self is sustained across time is not dependent on the objective validity of the account but on the vicissitudes of social process' (p.51). It is here intervention strategies such as Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2003) are seen as valuable.

The AI process is jointly constructed by the participants, who through interaction are able to co-create a new social reality for themselves. By choosing positive topics as the starting point for their dialogue, by discovering and imagining possibilities, the participants have a chance of creating a reality that furthers their development, both personally and as a group or team. AI can easily be integrated into the coaching process, because it is often much more helpful not to focus on the problems of the situation but on the possibilities and strength of the participants involved.

The Concept of Meaning

The underlying assumption of traditional objective theories of perception and under-

standing is that there is a reality *out there* in the world; we perceive the world while creating a picture of it. This approach lets us understand the world through concepts that focus on internal representations of external reality. This traditional view can be replaced by a definition of reality as something that is constructed through the individual's interplay with a concrete environment.

From the *phenomenological* perspective, Husserl (1950) spoke about *constitution*, which he regarded as a function prior-to-meaning and as part of transcendental intersubjectivity, which offers the individual a set of prefabricated meanings embedded in culture through the medium of language. In our world, we become conscious of meanings, which we receive through a cultural originator as part of a transcendental intersubjectivity. Meaning is formed through the experiences and (implicit) knowledge that an individual acquires in various social contexts. This process is constitutional: the individual develops meaning by being in action in a specific socio-cultural context. Hence the 'outer' world becomes real – namely meaningful – through an individual's reflection and interpretation of a situation. From a phenomenological point of view, 'meaning is formed in the interaction of experiencing and something that functions as a symbol' (Gendlin, 1997, p.8). This symbolisation often takes a verbal form, but can be expressed by other means, such as painting, drama, dance or writing. By highlighting and giving space to experiential meaning, the coach can establish a *contextual ground* for individuals as embodied and settled in the cultural context of concrete situation.

In *social constructionism* meaning is negotiated between the participants in the specific social setting. Gergen (1994) wrote:

> There is an alternative way of approaching the problem of social meaning: removing the individual as the starting point opens a range of promising possibilities. Rather than commence with individual subjectivity and work deductively towards an account of human understanding through language, we may begin our analysis at the level of the *human relationship* as it generates both language and understanding (p.263; italic in the original).

Ideally, all participants realise that their position and opinion is only one of many possibilities, only one world-view. Hence, open-mindedness and curiosity about whether others see the world in different ways or how they regard a specific task, is extremely helpful in the negotiation process or social discourse. The views of other persons should inspire an individual's personal or professional growth. This would enable all members of a social group or organisation to grow and mature in their perception of the world and ideally come to a form of agreement or acknowledgement of differences.

In a community of practice such as in teams, where all participants take part in the process of meaning-making, we observe that social negotiation often unfolds through personal accounts and narratives. Narratives tie in with the concrete context and to actions and events which the person either is or has been part of, and which are often related to other people (friends or opponents, colleagues, team members, etc.). A narrative is formed with a specific 'plot' which gives the narrative coherence in terms of action and meaning and provides a basic orientation in the form of a guiding clue in the story (Polkinghorne, 1988). Encouraging and uplifting narratives strengthen co-operation in the community of practice. For example: An uplifting narrative in a sports team could be shaped around the good experiences of playing together and enjoying each others' company despite the defeat in last game. On the other hand, narrative myths can be created about certain members of the group or team, and external relations or events. For example: A myth can emerge when a mistake of one player in one specific situation is unfolded as the reason for having lost the whole game. In this way narratives

can create a form of reality which comes into existence through the social discourse of the involved parties. But we also have to be aware of power structures and boundaries, as well as opportunities that may influence our ability to participate freely in dialogues (Foucault, 1972). There are organisations and social contexts where it might be impossible to negotiate equally because of the dominance of powerful stakeholders. Coaching is generally based on a form of *collaborative and egalitarian* relationship (Grant & Stober, 2006). On the basis of this understanding it seems to be impossible to build up a dialogue which is biased by the dominance of one part which is not willing to negotiate and reflect on his/her own position.

The coaching practice as meaning-making

Based on the above epistemological foundation, coaching can be base on two central dimensions of meaning-making:

1. Meaning is formed through the actual experiences and (implicit) knowledge the individual acquires in different life contexts. This concept of experiential meaning making can be linked to the concept of experiential learning.
2. Meaning is shaped through social negotiation and narratives that describe the focus of the person's life practice. This process of meaning making is a process of co-creation between coach and coachee and can be related to a form of social learning, aiming at understanding relationships and the importance of others for creating reality. In the next section, we will explain how the above theoretical foundations translate into the narrative coaching process and techniques (also see Stelter, 2007; Law & Stelter, 2010).

Meaning-Making as an experiential process

In the first stream, the focus of coaching intervention is on *individual experience and personal meaning-making*. Together with the coach, coachees strive to understand their subjective reality or a subjective experience of the culture they live in. Their focus is on the implicit and often embodied dimensions of their doing, a perspective which might throw light on some ontologically essential experiences and values. As the starting point of the conversation, the coachees study detailed descriptions of certain activities and explore their felt sense (Gendlin, 1997; Stelter, 2000) at the time in order to reach a deeper understanding of their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Gendlin (1997) as one of the leading practitioner-researchers in this field defined the felt sense as a form of inner aura or physical feeling about a specific situation, event or person. But this felt sense is often pre-reflective, namely preconscious and not verbalised. The coach's sensitive questioning helps the coachees to get in touch with these implicit, embodied and pre-reflective dimensions of their doing. I will discuss strategies of sensitive questioning in a later section of this chapter. For now I will simply say that this form of experience-based inquiry remains a challenge, because it is difficult to find words for experiences that are basically personal and embodied. Stevens (2000) mentioned that it depends on 'how articulate, how skilled and expressive' (p.115) people are to speak about their experiences. Another challenge for Steven is 'that the words used relate to a diffuse network of semantic assemblies both for the speaker and the listener' (p.115), which means both speaker and listener have to create their universe of meaning together.

From a narrative perspective, White (2007) spoke about revisiting the absent but implicit, thereby describing the importance of personal meaning-making. His idea was to relate forgotten experiences and episodes and join them with a storyline which is more uplifting than the training story the coach might have presented in the beginning of the session. By revisiting the absent but implicit reality, for example, by remembering the importance of a teacher in one's first school years, the coachee has a chance to re-tell and enrich her story on the basis of

her cultural background and life history. This might allow her to modify story plots and couple events in a new way, thus leading to the creation of a more uplifting storyline and a positive, encouraging reality.

Meaning Making as Co-creation: The Narrative-collaborative Practice of Coaching

In this second and central strategy for narrative coaching, the focus is on the cultural and collaborative dimension of coaching. We take a closer look at how the coach can facilitate the process of social meaning-making, a process that goes beyond the individual, experiential perspective. Social meaning-making always involves several people, the minimum being the dyad of coach and coachee or a group or team led by a coach. The collaborative dimension can briefly describe as follows (see also Anderson, 2007):

- Both coach and coachee(s) are experts. Every participant contributes to the joint process of meaning-making and knowledge production.
- All participants stay in floating and changeable positions, where mutual development is possible and are able to redefine their own perspective and position.
- All participants value the knowledge that is co-created locally, but at the same time value possible and remaining differences.
- 'Generous listening' is central for mutual inquiry, where interested and sometime naïve wondering helps to develop generative conversations.

This fundamental conversational stance can be combined with various narrative techniques that depend on the coaching context. The central property of any narrative process is that it is a form of a collaborative practice. Integrating the narrative practice into the Universal Integrative Framework (UIF) model, it allows coaches to link their practice to the four dimensions flexibly. The UIF consists of four dimensions: (1) Self; (2) Social; (3) Cultural; and (4) Professional (Law et al., 2007). For instance, the key characteristics of the narrative approach: *externalising conversation* and *re-authoring*, are methods that help coachees to scaffold their learning from their experience within the social and cultural dimensions onto the self dimension in terms of their values and self-identity through a meaning-making process. We shall expand on this process within the coaching context next.

During the externalising conversation, the coachees are invited to tell their story, very often we notice that they have internalised their problem as if it were their own personal characteristic. However in narrative coaching, the fundamental position is: The coachee as a person is not the problem, the problem is the problem that is outside the person. Thus the externalisation provides the coachee with a new perspective to view and talk about the problem differently (White, 2007).

In re-authoring, the coachee story is regarded as a 'script', and the coachee the 'author'. As such the coachee should have power and freedom to re-author the story of their life. Here one can regard re-authoring as another form of externalisation – where the coachee is taking an externalised position to view their own 'life story' as an author. In this paper, we describe a general process of narrative coaching by integrating the re-authoring technique within the process of externalising conversation. There are two parts of the narrative coaching process. Part 1 consists of two stages: description and relation mapping. Part 2 consists of three stages: evaluation/re-evaluation, justification and conclusion/recommendation. The readers who are familiar with narrative therapy may notice that both applications share the same basic steps. This is understandable; as Law (2007) argues that epistemologically, narrative practice is grounded in cultural anthropology, which was concerned with non-clinical population, and, therefore, it should be re-located within the mainstream coaching practice. Many examples of those practices can be found in the case studies in Law et al. (2007) and

Law (2010 in press). Here, we shall summarise these steps as follows.

Stage One – Description

The coach invites the coachees to tell a story about life or work domain (depending on the topic of the coaching session, for example, their business/work issues, relationships or work/life balance, etc.). The story may consist of many themes or plots. As the coach listens to the coachee's story, the coach tries to identify any 'internalised problem' that might have affected the coachee's sense of self and identity. The coach encourages the coachee to externalise the problem by for example, giving it a name.

Stage Two – Relation Mapping

In the coachee's story, the coach attempts to identify the coachee's aspirations, values, hopes and dreams that give the coachee's a sense of purposes that is more consistent with the coachee's desirable self-identity. However, the evidence that appeared in the story told might very often be in thin traces. Borrowed from the anthropological theory of Geertz (1973) Michael White (1997) spoke about 'thin description' as in contrast to the foreground dominant storyline ('thick description'). The coach needs to identify any 'unique outcomes' that might have been neglected by the coachee, and yet these neglected events and their unique outcomes may help the coach and coachee to co-construct the alternative story lines. The coachee may give many examples of failure (thick description) to support their negative story line. The coach may ask the coachee to think about any exceptions in their experience that constitute a successful outcome (counterplot). This counterplot provides 'a point of entry' *(rite de passage)* to the alternative storyline that may lead the coachee to see new possibilities. The mapping between the coachee's positive self-identity and the negative description of coachee's action in a sequence of events unfolding (thin and thick descriptions) would enable the coach to identify the 'learning gap' or the 'zone of proximal development' (use Vygotsky's term) that the coachee needs to bridge.

Stage Three – Evaluation/Re-evaluation (re-authoring)

To bridge the learning gaps that have been identified in Stage two, the coach continues to focus on those thin story lines that could strengthen the coachee's sense of identity; gather more evidence to support the alternative storyline (thicken the plot). This stage provides 'scaffolding' to bridge the coachee's learning gap by recruiting their lived experience. The coach asks the coachee to re-evaluate the impact of their action upon their own sense of self-identity, values and belief, stretch their imagination and exercise their meaning-making resources. The coach also encourages the coachee to map their aspirations, values and self-identity upon their action in terms of new future possibilities on their life's horizons. This stage is very often referred to as 'the turning point' where the coachee begins to change from re-iterating the old story line to start discovering new possibilities and action.

Stage Four – Justification

The coach further thickens the plot of the story and consolidates the coachee's commitment for change. The aim of narrative coaching is to develop a 'thick description' of an alternative storyline 'that is inscribed with … meanings' and finds linkages between 'the stories of people's lives and their cherished values, beliefs, purposes, desires, commitments, and so on' (White, 1997, pp.15–16). At this stage, the coachees are asked to justify the above evaluation in terms of their aspiration, belief, values and self identity and strengths.

Stage Five – Conclusion/Recommendation

The coach guides the coachee to draw conclusion by making valued statements about their self identity in terms of their beliefs, values, hopes, and dreams. The

coach may ask the coachee to write these statements down in words on a piece of paper or in a form of letter, etc. Finally the coach invites the coachee to make commitments for action by summarising an action plan for change and how to achieve their hopes and dreams (the 'bridging tasks').

Community of practice and narrative coaching in groups

The above process is described as a *narrative-collaborative* practice. It can be applied to community and group situations. The technique is called 'outsider witness re-telling'. In group narrative coaching, only one coachee at a time is at the 'centre' of the focus who acts as a storyteller while the other members of the group act as 'witnesses'. After the coachee has told the story, the coach asks the outsider witnesses to describe how the coachee's story resonates with their own experience and the learning that they gained which are relevant to those aspects that are most significant to the coachee's personal development. Thus both the coach and the outsider witnesses are taking a 'de-centre' position and act as a support group with the objectives to provide acknowledgements and further strengthen the coachee's new storyline about their life and identity. When the outsider witness re-telling process re-iterates and applies to a very large group or community, it is called 'definitional ceremony' – re-tellings of re-tellings. In a one-to-one coaching session the coach might function as a kind of 'outsider-witness' by reflecting how the coachee's story resonates with his/her own experience, values and identity. This brings a new dimension to coaching where the usual asymmetrical dialogue develops into a more symmetrical one: The coach becomes somehow a *fellow human.*

Conclusion

In this paper, we have provided the philosophical and theoretical foundation for coaching as a *narrative-collaborative* practice, drawing from the post-constructivism and the psychology of learning. We have described the general narrative coaching process and argued that it offers a powerful approach to provide empowerment and social acknowledgments to coachees' self-identity. It amplifies the coachee's aspiration and mobilises their hidden strengths and resources for change. We encourage coaching and coaching psychology communities to actively promote the narrative approach by engaging in its practice and carrying out further research on its outcomes.

Note: The authors of this revised article are very grateful to the reviewers for their valuable comments on the earlier draft.

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Strengthspotting in coaching: Conceptualisation and development of the Strengthspotting Scale

P. Alex Linley, Nicky Garcea, Jonathan Hill, Gurpal Minhas, Emma Trenier & Janet Willars

Objectives: *Many coaching psychologists use strengths approaches in their practice. The current study set out to develop a conceptualisation of what is meant by strengthspotting, as well as to identify different domains of strengthspotting. The aim was to develop and validate a Strengthspotting Scale that could be used by researchers for future inquiry, and by practitioners for the self-assessment of their own strengthspotting preferences and capabilities.*

Design: *A Strengthspotting Scale item pool of 50 items was developed by six strengths experts and used for initial data collection. An online survey was used to collect data on the newly-developed Strengthspotting Scale, together with measures of personality, optimism, positive and negative affect, and strengths knowledge for concurrent validation.*

Method: *Data were collected from 456 respondents. Analyses used included exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation, correlation analysis and multivariate analysis of variance.*

Results: *A 20-item Strengthspotting Scale with five subscales assessing the Ability, Emotional, Frequency, Application and Motivation domains of strengthspotting was developed and validated. All subscales demonstrated very good internal consistency reliability and concurrent validity with extraversion, agreeableness, optimism, positive affect and strengths knowledge. There were no gender differences, but small positive associations between strengthspotting and age.*

Conclusions: *A reliable and valid Strengthspotting Scale was developed, which will now be able to support future research in this area. It will also enable coaching practitioners to assess more readily their own preferences and capabilities in relation to strengthspotting.*

Keywords: *Strengths; strengthspotting; measurement; scale development; coaching.*

COACHING PSYCHOLOGY and positive psychology have many shared fundamental assumptions about human nature, and thus, about how to develop people to perform at their best (e.g. Linley & Harrington, 2005, 2006). This has led to numerous works on the integration of positive psychology principles into coaching practice, including a previous special issue of the *International Coaching Psychology Review* (Linley & Kauffman, 2007), and several books on the topic, including *Positive Psychology Coaching* (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007) and *Practicing Positive Psychology Coaching* (Biswas-Diener, 2010).

One of the areas, however, which perhaps lends itself most readily to the coaching endeavour is the identification, assessment and development of strengths. Research has shown that using one's strengths leads to a range of positive outcomes. These include better goal attainment (Linley et al., 2010) and higher levels of self-esteem, self-efficacy, vitality, and well-being (Govindji & Linley, 2007; Proctor, Maltby & Linley, 2009). People who use their strengths more have been shown to have higher levels of work engagement (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2003) and to be more effective in their development over time (Minhas, 2010), as well as performing better at work (Corporate Lead-

ership Council, 2002; Smedley, 2007; Stefanyszyn, 2007). These findings are summarised in Linley, Willars and Biswas-Diener (2010). A free download, *Strengths: The Evidence*, is available from www.strengths2020.com/resources.htm for interested readers.

Traditionally in the identification of strengths, psychologists, coaches and other practitioners would typically have turned to one of a number of online strengths assessments, such as StrengthsFinder (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001) or its recent revision, StrengthsFinder 2.0 (Rath, 2007; www.strengthsfinder.com), the VIA Inventory of Strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; www.viastrengths.org), or the Realise2 (Linley, Willars & Biswas-Diener, 2010; www.realise2.com).

There are, however, other ways in which the identification of strengths may proceed. These include the Dependable Strengths Articulation Process developed by Haldane (1947; see also Duttro, 2003), the conversational strengths articulation process described by Forster (2009), the identification of A-grade activities described by Pegg and Moore (2005), and the Individual Strengths Assessment described by Linley (2008a, chapter 4). In each of these cases, the emphasis rests on the relatively open-ended articulation of strengths, using the client's own language and descriptions, rather than the identification of strengths through the completion of a pre-determined strengths classification and assessment.

Of course, it is important to acknowledge that there are benefits and limitations of each approach. The use of pre-determined assessments provides people with a ready framework and language for strengths, both of which are fundamentally important. First, because we know that only around one-third of people can reliably identify their own strengths (Hill, 2001).

Second, because we also know that a key factor in developing any shared understanding is a shared language that describes the construct. As the medical philosopher Lawrie Reznek (1987, p.1) has described, 'Concepts carry consequences – classifying things one way rather than another has important implications for the way we behave toward such things.' Reznek is making the point here that when we give something a label, we reify it, making it 'real' – in his case, he sees this as a negative (the reification of psychological disorders into physical illnesses), yet there is also a very positive side to this where strengths are concerned. One of the challenges that has been faced by the strengths approach is the absence of a shared language of strengths (Linley, 2008a). In the absence of this shared language, it can be difficult, if not impossible, for people to create a mutually understood and sustained dialogue on their strengths. This was one of the reasons that Realise2 was developed, and includes 60 different strengths, each with their own recognisable strengths name (Linley, Willars & Biswas-Diener, 2010). Our coaching and consulting experiences have shown consistently that by creating this shared language of strengths, we are able to create something of a culture and mindset shift through changing the nature of the conversations that people have, moving from their often inherent negativity bias to what Linley (2010) described as the 'positivity payoff' – the idea and evidence that there are multiple positive outcomes that flow from paying more attention to the positive aspects of human experience.

Third, having a clear framework by which to understand strengths provides a way in which people can locate their understanding of strengths in context and in practice, For example, the Realise2 model distinguishes between Realised Strengths, Unrealised Strengths, Learned Behaviours, and Weaknesses, on the basis of the three-dimensional assessment of energy, performance, and use. From this model comes the advice to marshal Realised Strengths, maximise Unrealised Strengths, moderate Learned Behaviours, and minimise Weaknesses. In the absence of frameworks such as this,

professional practitioners have to depend much more on their own intrinsic models of strengths development, while lay consumers are left to make sense of what can be quite complex information without a guide map to do so.

Notwithstanding these benefits of formal strengths assessment approaches, their limitation is that respondents can be constrained by the language and models which are applied to them. It is for this reason that some coaches prefer to use more open-ended approaches to the identification and assessment of strengths. The advantage of doing so is that the language and construction of the strength is grounded firmly in the lived experience of the client, thereby feeling potentially more authentic and owned by them. The drawback of this approach is that it is vulnerable to both the skill of the coach, and the emotional insight of the client in being able to identify accurately their strengths – and as a foundation, knowing how to define, conceptualise and understand strengths in the first instance.

To be clear, we do not mean to suggest that either coaching practitioners or clients are incapable of doing so – far from it. We merely wish to acknowledge that this can be a lot to ask. Further, even having done so successfully, both client and coach are then left with the challenge of having created an idiographic language and construction of strengths for the client that is entirely valid and valuable for them, but which may not translate as easily to others with whom they work and interact. This can be one of the key advantages of more formal strengths assessments.

Our focus here, however, is not to make the case for one approach or the other, but merely to acknowledge the benefits and limitations of each. In doing so, we provide the context for the current study, which was about the development and initial validation of the Strengthspotting Scale.

Recognising these two broadly different approaches to strengths identification and assessment, we asked the question as to whether there would be individual differences in people's strengthspotting capability, broadly defined. We believed there would be, and so set out to develop a Strengthspotting Scale that would provide a self-report means for assessing one's own standing as a strengthspotter. This is, we believe, a fundamentally helpful skill for coaches and coaching psychologists, as well as having application across a far wider range of practitioners – for example, managers, social workers, teachers, youth workers, therapists – and outside of the professional sphere, of course, parents also – essentially, any person who may have some level of responsibility or opportunity to identify and develop strengths in others. To date, the value and application of strengthspotting has been shown in relation to therapy (Linley & Burns, 2010; Linley, 2008b), coaching (Linley, 2008c) and rapid learning (Linley, in press).

We undertook to develop the original item pool for the Strengthspotting Scale through a variety of means. In the first instance, we sought to define and describe, *a priori*, the domains of strengthspotting which our experience had shown to exist and to be important. We note explicitly that this was an *a priori*, theoretically-driven, exercise, rather than one of which the outcome was determined by a post-hoc factor analysis.

In doing so, we identified five domains that we believed to represent the broad construct of strengthspotting. First, there is one's *ability* as a strengthspotter – how good you are at doing it. Second, there is the *emotional* reaction to strengthspotting, since people who do this well naturally get a buzz from doing it. Third, there is the *motivation* to identify strengths in others, and why we might think that it is important to do so. Fourth, there is the *application* of strengthspotting – what you do when you have actually identified a strength in someone. Fifth and finally, there is the *frequency* of use – how often you get to practice your strengthspotting.

Having developed a conceptual framework for the construct of strengthspotting, next we developed an initial item pool to measure each of the five domains, with 18 items for Ability, and eight items for each of the other four domains. The items were developed by the authors, all of whom are extensively experienced in working with strengths, together having more than 100 years of collective experience of working in the area, and having conducted more than 30,000 hours of strengths-based interviewing (which is itself about listening for strengths and strengthspotting).

To provide initial validation for the Strengthspotting Scale, we included four additional assessments as part of the research. We assessed personality, to answer the basic question of how strengthspotting is associated with the different domains of personality. We were particularly interested in the domains of extraversion (having a sociable, positive and outgoing approach to life), and agreeableness (wanting to get on well with others and develop good relationships with them), since these personality domains lend themselves most closely to what we might consider to be the relevant personality characteristics of a strength-spotter. We assessed optimism, to explore whether people who had a naturally more positive outlook on life would be predisposed to be better strengthspotters. We assessed positive and negative affect, to examine whether general affective style would be associated with strengthspotting. Finally, we assessed an individual's knowledge of their own strengths, to see whether having a greater strengths knowledge was associated with strengthspotting. We hypothesised that higher levels of extraversion, agreeableness, optimism, positive affect and strengths knowledge would be associated with higher scores on the Strengthspotting Scale.

Method

Participants

The sample comprised 456 people (110 men and 278 women; 68 people did not disclose their gender). The age of participants ranged from 19 to 79 years, with a mean age of 44.68 years and a standard deviation of 11.07 years. The participants were primarily from a white ethnic background (91.5 per cent) with Indian (3.6 per cent) being the next highest representation. Participants were well-educated, with 59.0 per cent qualified to postgraduate level, 15.1 per cent having a Bachelor's degree, and 13.3 per cent holding a PhD.

Measures

Strengthspotting Scale. The 50 items that were described above in the section on scale development were included as the initial item pool for the Strengthspotting Scale. Participants were asked to respond using a 1 (strongly agree) through 7 (strongly disagree) fully-anchored Likert scale response format. Three reverse-scored items were included in the initial item pool. The items included in the final Strengthspotting Scale are reported below.

Mini-IPIP (Donnellan et al., 2006) is a 20-item short form assessment of the Big Five dimensions of personality, based on the 50-item International Personality Item Pool. It measures the Big Five personality dimensions of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience with 20 items, four per factor. There are 11 items that are negatively worded (and so reverse scored) and nine positively worded. The Mini-IPIP has acceptable alpha scores ranging from above .60 for the five personality dimensions. When correlating the Mini-IPIP scales, research found that they tapped nearly the same Big Five facet content as the original 50-item international personality item pool. Test-retest correlations of the Mini-IPIP demonstrated high correlations in the short term (.62 to .87) and longer term (.68 to .86). Donnellan et al. found that the Mini-IPIP has similar reliability and validity to the 50-item IPIP inventory.

Life Orientation Test – Revised (LOT-R; Scheier, Carver & Bridges, 1994) is one of the most widely used measures of optimism. It includes 10 items, but four items are filler items and only six items are used for scoring. A sample item is 'I'm always optimistic about the future.' The LOT-R is scored using a 1 (strongly disagree) through 5 (strongly agree) fully-anchored Likert scale, thus giving a potential range of 6 through 30 for optimism. Three items are reverse scored.

Positive and Negative Affect Scales (PANAS; Watson, Tellegen & Clark, 1987) is a widely used 20-item measure of positive affect (10 items, e.g. 'interested,' 'attentive') and negative affect (10 items, e.g. 'irritable,' 'jittery'). Participants were asked to respond in relation to the extent 'you generally feel this way.' The PANAS is one of the most widely used measures of positive and negative affect, and is scored using a 1 ('very slightly or not at all') through 5 ('extremely') fully-anchored Likert scale, thus giving a potential range of 10 through 50 for each of positive affect and negative affect.

Strengths Knowledge Scale (SKS; Govindji & Linley, 2007) is an eight-item measure of how well people know their own strengths. A sample item is 'I am aware of my strengths'. Govindji and Linley (2007) found the eight items to load on a single factor, with an internal consistency of α=.89. One item is reverse scored. Participants respond using a 1 (strongly disagree) through 7 (strongly agree) fully-anchored Likert scale, giving an overall potential range of 8 to 56.

Design and Procedure

The measures included in the study were uploaded to Survey Monkey, a widely used online questionnaire and assessment tool. The study was advertised widely through a variety of networks of people interested in positive psychology and strengths approach, with the invitation to forward study details on to others who may be interested. Since we do not know how many invitations were issued, we were unable to calculate a response rate for the survey. The survey was open for approximately four weeks, in which time 456 responses were collected as described above. Participants provided responses to the measures described above, together with basic demographic information for descriptive purposes.

Results

Statistical Analysis

Items to be included as most representative of each of the five domains of the Strengthspotting Scale were selected on the basis of an exploratory factor analysis using Principal Components Analysis with varimax rotation. Five analyses were conducted; one for each of the five domains. Having established the final items for each of the five domains, these were then validated against the other measures included in the study using correlation analysis. Multivariate analysis of variance was used to test for gender differences on the five domains of the Strengthspotting Scale.

Strengthspotting Scale Analysis

Principal components analysis with varimax rotation revealed that all 18 items loaded on a single 'Strengthspotting – Ability' scale, with 62.7 per cent of the variance explained. For 'Strengthspotting – Emotional' all eight items loaded on a single factor which explained 75.7 per cent of the variance. For 'Strengthspotting – Frequency' all eight items loaded on a single factor which explained 63.5 per cent of the variance. For 'Strengthspotting – Motivation' all eight items loaded on a single factor which explained 58.0 per cent of the variance. For 'Strengthspotting – Application' all eight items loaded on a single factor which explained 56.7 per cent of the variance. In each case, we selected the four highest loading items to constitute the final scale items for that domain. The full results of these analyses are presented in Table 1.

The five domain subscales all demonstrated internal consistency reliabilities that

Table 1: Strengthspotting Scale Factor Loadings.

Ability:	
I am naturally on the lookout for what people do well	.68
I am good at spotting strengths in people	.81
Seeing what people do best comes naturally to me	.85
I am able to identify people's strengths with ease	**.87**
When I talk to somebody, I always seem to get a sense of what their strengths are	.82
I am very effective at spotting strengths in people	**.88**
I am not the sort of person who seems to notice strengths in other people (R)	.64
I always seem to know who is good at doing what	.74
People tell me that I have an eye for seeing what people do best	.80
Identifying people's strengths is not something that comes naturally to me (R)	.67
People recognise me as somebody who is very good at identifying people's strengths	.80
I find it easy to identify people's strengths	**.90**
If I watch someone for a few minutes, I can get a good idea of what their strengths are	.71
I find it hard to identify people's strengths (R)	.84
I can readily identify who does which things well	.81
I always seem to notice what it is that people do well	.82
I am skilled at spotting people's strengths	**.89**
I can name more than 30 different strengths that characterise my close friends and associates	.66
Emotional:	
I get a thrill from spotting people's strengths	.78
I feel a warm glow when I help someone appreciate their strengths	.83
I get a real buzz from identifying strengths in people	**.92**
It makes me feel good when I notice a strength in someone	**.89**
I enjoy finding out what people's strengths are	.88
I love to see what strengths I can identify in different people	.86
I get a deep sense of fulfilment from helping people to see what their strengths are	**.89**
Spotting strengths in people makes me feel happy	**.90**
Frequency:	
I frequently find strengths in my friends and colleagues that have been overlooked by others	.81
During the past week I have spotted a new strength among my friends or colleagues	.73
I have an in-depth understanding of my own strengths	.52
I notice people's strengths all the time	**.86**
No matter where I am or what I am doing, I find that I am spotting strengths in people	**.87**
I find myself telling people about their strengths all the time	**.86**
I find myself identifying strengths in people in a wide variety of situations	**.86**
I frequently comment on other people's strengths	.82

Continued

Note: (R)=reverse scored items. **Bold**=items selected for final Strengthspotting Scale. The four highest loading items were selected from each factor to form the appropriate domain subscale.

Table 1: Strengthspotting Scale Factor Loadings *(continued).*

Motivation:	
My main purpose in life is to help other people make the best use of their strengths and talents	.73
I believe I should be on the lookout for other people's strengths	**.80**
Knowing the strengths of others is valuable information	.72
Spotting strengths in people is integral to helping them deliver good work	.75
It is very important to pay attention to people's strengths and what they do well	**.81**
People grow and develop best through building on their strengths	.62
I believe I have a responsibility to identify and develop strengths in others	**.80**
Helping people to understand their strengths is deeply important to me	**.85**
Application:	
I frequently test out the strengths of colleagues in challenging roles	.72
In the past month I have suggested to a friend or colleague to try out their strengths on a new task	**.78**
I have spoken up to highlight a neglected strength in a friend or colleague	.68
I know what to do with information about other people's strengths	.75
I give people suggestions for strengths use and development frequently	**.80**
I always know who to ask to do what, based on their strengths	.73
I always seem to know who would be the best person for which job and why	**.76**
People appreciate my strengths insights because they help them to do their best work	**.81**

Note: (R)=reverse scored items. **Bold**=items selected for final Strengthspotting Scale. The four highest loading items were selected from each factor to form the appropriate domain subscale.

comfortably exceeded the accepted cut-off for acceptability of α=.70 (α ranged from .81 to .94). Intercorrelations between the domains were all significant and ranged from r=.54 (Ability – Motivation) to r=.84 (Ability – Frequency). Full results are presented in Table 2.

Strengthspotting Scale Validation

The five domains of the Strengthspotting Scale were validated by being correlated against the other measures included in the study. As hypothesised, there were consistent positive significant associations for each of the five Strengthspotting Scale domains and extraversion, agreeableness, optimism, positive affect, and strengths knowledge. There were no significant correlations with neuroticism, and a small positive association between conscientiousness and Strengthspotting – Application (r=.20, p<.05). There were small positive associations between openness and four of the five strengthspotting domains, the exception being Strengthspotting – Emotional. Full results are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Demographic Analyses

We assessed whether the Strengthspotting Scale domains differed according to gender using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). In each case, the gender differences were comfortably non-significant (largest F=2.08, p>.12). We also examined the associations between age and the Strengthspotting Scale domains, and found small but significant associations for each of the five domains: Ability (r=.18, p<.001); Emotional (r=.21, p<.001); Frequency (r=.27, p<.001); Motivation (r=.27, p<.001); and Application (r=.23, p<.001), suggesting that people improve on strengthspotting as they get older.

Table 2: Strengthspotting Scale Intercorrelations.

	α	Ability	Emotional	Motivation	Application	Frequency
Ability	.94	–				
Emotional	.94	.61	–			
Motivation	.87	.54	.81	–		
Application	.82	.76	.73	.72	–	
Frequency	.91	.84	.75	.67	.82	–

Note: All correlations significant at $p<.001$.

Table 3: Strengthspotting Scale Validity with Personality.

	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Openness	Neuroticism
Ability	.29***	.37***	.08	.12*	–.09
Emotional	.20***	.41***	.09	.08	–.06
Motivation	.15**	.35***	.07	.10*	–.06
Application	.27***	.40***	.12*	.16***	–.08
Frequency	.30***	.41***	.10	.11*	–.08

Note: ***All correlations significant at $p<.001$. **All correlations significant at $p<.01$. *All correlations significant at $p<.05$.

Table 4: Strengthspotting Scale Validity – General.

	Optimism	Positive Affect	Negative Affect	Strengths Knowledge
Ability	.32***	.52***	–.14**	.49***
Emotional	.27***	.44***	–.08	.31***
Motivation	.23***	.38***	–.07	.28***
Application	.31***	.52***	–.11*	.42***
Frequency	.29***	.55***	–.13*	.40***

Note: ***All correlations significant at $p<.001$. **All correlations significant at $p<.01$. *All correlations significant at $p<.05$.

Discussion

In this paper, we set out to define the construct of strengthspotting and to develop a reliable and valid Strengthspotting Scale. We identified five domains of strengthspotting: *Ability* (how good you are at doing it); *Emotional* (one's emotional reaction to strengthspotting; *Motivation* (how motivated one is to identify strengths in others; *Application* (what you do when you have actually identified a strength in someone); and *Frequency* (how often you get to practice your strengthspotting). An item bank of 50 items overall was developed and subjected to exploratory factor analyses; the four highest loading items were selected to form the subscale for each of the five domains of strengthspotting. Results showed that the five domains of the Strengthspotting Scale all demonstrated strong internal consistency reliability and intercorrelated significantly. They did not differ by gender, but strengthspotting scores tended to increase with age, a not unreasonable finding given that people are likely to develop their strengthspotting with the benefit of experience and longevity.

Initial validity analyses found that the Strengthspotting Scale domains all correlated significantly with extraversion, agreeableness, optimism, positive affect and strengths knowledge, as hypothesised. The only other consistent associations were the low but significant correlations between openness and the five strengthspotting domains, suggesting that people who are more open to their experiences and surroundings are slightly higher on strengthspotting – again, a not unrealistic finding, given that attention to one's environment, and particularly the people in that environment, would seem to be fundamental to effective strengthspotting.

Based on these findings, this paper has reported the development and initial validation of a valid, reliable and internally consistent Strengthspotting Scale, containing five subscales that measure each of the five strengthspotting domains. Notwithstanding this, it is important also to acknowledge appropriate limitations of the research, particularly where these may inform future research directions and extensions.

Given that the participants were self-selected, were recruited from networks of people interested in positive psychology and strengths approaches, and were well-educated, it is likely that they may represent a population that is more skilled at strengthspotting than may generally be the case. For these reasons, the mean level data for the five domains of the Strengthspotting Scale should be interpreted as such, and not taken to be necessarily representative of the general population more broadly.

This is, of course, the first empirical work reported in relation to the Strengthspotting Scale, and there is much opportunity for further development of our research knowledge in this area. For example, future validation studies may explore questions such as whether strengthspotting is associated with different views of human nature, higher levels of emotional intelligence, or indeed particular strengths, such as *Emotional Awareness*, *Esteem Builder*, or *Listener*, that are included in the Realise2 strengths classification (Linley, Willars & Biswas-Diener, 2010).

Further, the applications of strengthspotting capability in practice hold much promise. Do people who are better strengthspotters make more effective coaches and coaching psychologists? Do they have differential ability in engaging their clients and helping them in achieving their goals? Are they perceived differently by clients because of their ability to identify, nurture and draw out their clients' best qualities? These are intriguing that we are only at the beginning of being able to answer.

With the increasing attention that is being paid to the lessons and applications of positive psychology in coaching psychology research and practice, it is important that the field is able to support both practitioners and researchers through the development of enhanced theoretical and practical knowledge that will deepen our collective capa-

bility. Given the interest in the applications of strengths throughout various parts of the coaching relationship, and given the benefits that using one's strengths have been shown to deliver, building the capability of coaches and coaching psychologists in identifying, assessing and developing strengths is a valuable undertaking. It is our intention that the development of the Strengthspotting Scale will help researchers to understand more about the basic constructs and premises of the field, and will help practitioners in assessing their own capability in relation to strengths work, while also guiding them in how they may develop further in this area.

The development of broader 'strengths capability' is a relatively new and emerging field, but one in which we anticipate coaches and coaching psychologists, as well as practitioners more broadly – including managers, social workers, teachers, youth workers, therapists – will be able to do much. As described by Linley (2008a, chapter 8, p.227), the second pillar of responsibility of the strengths approach is concerned with our 'collective responsibility to create the conditions that enable the strengths of others.' We hope that in our conceptualisation of strengthspotting, and our development of the Strengthspotting Scale, we have taken a significant step in helping to do so.

Acknowledgements

This paper is based in part on Alex Linley's Keynote address, 'Strengthspotting in Coaching' to the 1st European Coaching Psychology Conference, December 2008, and in part on the original development of the Strengthspotting Scale reported herein. The Strengthspotting Scale was published in Linley, Willars and Biswas-Diener (2010), but the scale development has not been previously reported. We thank Robert Biswas-Diener and Reena Govindji for their helpful comments during the development of the Strengthspotting Scale.

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Appendix 1: The Strengthspotting Scale.

The items below ask you about identifying what other people do well. Please respond to each item honestly, using the scale below, to indicate how much you agree or disagree with that statement. There are no right or wrong answers.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree

1.	I am able to identify people's strengths with ease	___
2.	I get a real buzz from identifying strengths in people	___
3.	I notice people's strengths all the time	___
4.	I believe I should be on the lookout for other people's strengths	___
5.	In the past month I have suggested to a friend or colleague to try out their strengths on a new task	___
6.	I am very effective at spotting strengths in people	___
7.	It makes me feel good when I notice a strength in someone	___
8.	No matter where I am or what I am doing, I find that I am spotting strengths in people	___
9.	It is very important to pay attention to people's strengths and what they do well	___
10.	I give people suggestions for strengths use and development frequently	___
11.	I find it easy to identify people's strengths	___
12.	I get a deep sense of fulfilment from helping people to see what their strengths are	___
13.	I find myself telling people about their strengths all the time	___
14.	I believe I have a responsibility to identify and develop strengths in others	___
15.	I always seem to know who would be the best person for which job and why	___
16.	I am skilled at spotting people's strengths	___
17.	Spotting strengths in people makes me feel happy	___
18.	I find myself identifying strengths in people in a wide variety of situations	___
19.	Helping people to understand their strengths is deeply important to me	___
20.	People appreciate my strengths insights because my insights help them to do their best work	___

How to score: Add up your responses for items 1, 6, 11 and 16 for Strengthspotting – Ability (how good you are at Strengthspotting). Add up your responses for items 2, 7, 12, and 17 for Strengthspotting – Emotional (how much of an emotional buzz you get from Strengthspotting). Add up your responses for items 3, 8, 13, and 18 for Strengthspotting – Frequency (how often you get to practice your Strengthspotting). Add up your responses for items 4, 9, 14, and 19 for Strengthspotting – Motivation (how motivated you are to be a strengthspotter). Add up your responses for items 5, 10, 15, and 20 for Strengthspotting – Application (how effective you are in applying your Strengthspotting to make a difference). Higher scores across each of the dimensions indicate people who are naturally better strengthspotters.

Source: The Strengthspotting Scale was originally published in Linley, A., Willars, J. & Biswas-Diener, R. (2010), *The Strengths Book: Be Confident, Be Successful, and Enjoy Better Relationships by Realising the Best of You.* Coventry, UK: CAPP Press. Reproduced by kind permission of CAPP Press.

The British Psychological Society

THE SPECIAL GROUP IN COACHING PSYCHOLOGY

Margaret Chapman Presents:
Coaching for Emotional Intelligence

A one day workshop to be held at the
BPS London Office, Tabernacle Street, London
14th October 2010
11.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.
Registration from 10.30 a.m.

"All researchers agree that the most fundamental factor of EQ is self-awareness, all other aspects build upon it… essentially it is the self-awareness element of EQ development that differentiates it from other management development" (Slaski, 2000).

Whilst some might dispute this research finding, Margaret's work over the last decade is that self-awareness is central to developing emotional intelligence – that is, our capacity to notice, think about, make sense of, and act upon emotional information. At the heart of Relational Gestalt Coaching (RGC) is self-awareness, This workshop draws together three key psychological strands, Gestalt, Coaching and 'EQ' psychology, with a specific emphasis on ways of developing our own and our client's levels, or 'zones', of awareness.

You will learn:

- Up-to-date knowledge on the theory and practice of 'EQ'
- An outline of the Relational Gestalt Coaching (RCG) model
- Awareness of the theory and 'tools' associated with RGC
- Insight into your own level of 'EQ' as measured by the Boston EI-Q based on the 'five steps to EQ' outlined in *The Emotional Intelligence Pocketbook*

Margaret Chapman is a founder member of the SGCP and the Association for Coaching and has worked in the field of applied emotional intelligence for over a decade. She has presented her work nationally and internationally and her text *The Emotional Intelligence Pocketbook* is now in its ninth reprint and available across the world. She is a coaching psychologist, psychotherapeutic counsellor and certified coaching supervisor (Bath Consultancy Group). Margaret is trained in Gestalt, Existential, CBT, NLP/NLPt and Solution-Focused approaches. In terms of her Gestalt training she studied Gestalt Psychotherapy and Organisational Gestalt at Metanoia Institute in London and Relational Gestalt Coaching at is Esalen Institute in California. She writes and speaks regularly on coaching for emotional intelligence and is an editorial board member for the magazine *Coaching at Work*.

For booking information and to download a booking form please see the 'News Page' of the SGCP website www.sgcp.org.uk or please contact Tracy White, E-mail: tracy@virtuallyorganised.com

A conference fee of £90 for SGCP, SCP, ABP, DOP, *Coaching at Work* subscribers and Association for Coaching Members /£120 for BPS Members, £140 for Non-Members and £65 for part-time students, £45 for full-time students, needs to be paid, in advance, to secure a place at the event (all prices inc. VAT).

Space is limited so book early to avoid disappointment.
Each attendee will receive a Workshop attendance certificate as evidence for CPD Logbooks or Practitioner-in-Training Logbooks.

SGCP & IGCP News Update

Special Group in Coaching Psychology News

Ho Law

THE WINNER IS … Well, by the time you read this, you would have known which team won the World-Cup, who won Wimbledon and, etc. At the time of writing this update, history had been made by John Isner and Nicolas Mahut at Wimbledon with the longest match, which lasted 11 hours 5 minutes (70–68 in the final set). People in the UK are still pre-occupied with the World-Cup, Wimbledon, and the economic condition of our time. The connection between coaching psychology and our everyday life may seem to be remote. The idea that coaching psychology may be one of the ways that can actually help the nation through the current tough economic crisis or winning the next World Cup in 2014 may only belong to a few coaching psychologists themselves. This takes us back to my previous update about the importance of coaching psychologists to demonstrate the benefits of applying coaching psychology by engaging the wider community… (Law, 2010).

So I hope you all have had a nice summer holiday; and welcome back to the SGCP business. We have now finalised our strategic plan with the following strategic aims:

1. Promote and advance coaching psychology.
2. Develop coaching psychology as a profession.
3. Encourage and promote the development of coaching psychology through a variety of mechanisms.
4. Engage our members and the wider community.
5. Support our members and the profession of coaching psychology.

Our next step is to develop an action plan that will involve input from all the SGCP Committee members and Officers. This will form part of our business plan 2010–2012. As the SGCP at present has 2255 members with a bank balance of over £59.8k. It is vital for us as a professional body to produce a proper business plan so that we (as coaching psychologists) can lead by example: to be more business-like and evidence-based in everything that we do. The aim of the business plan is to help us to implement our strategic plan. Its objectives are to:

- Show how our strategic aims will be achieved.
- Ensure that the actions are accountable, transparent and achievable/feasible–specific, measurable, agreeable, realistic, time bound, and can be subjected to reviewed and evaluation.
- Enable each Committee member and Officer to have a sense of ownership, responsibility, direction, working proactively rather than reactively.
- Increase clarity.
- Provide accountability for stakeholders.
- Promote evidence-based evaluation.
- Help future planning.

In the next Update, I hope we could be able to show you what we should have achieved, and judge the quality and value of those achievements against the actions that we set out in our business plan…

At present, I am delighted to report that the planning of the 1st International Congress of Coaching Psychology is progressing well (thanks to a team of enthusiastic volunteers and our Past Chair Vicky Ellam-Dyson's continuous leadership). As I always said, the SGCP would not function

without the volunteers. I am looking for ways to acknowledge and honour their contributions to our profession.

Externally, quite a lot has happened since the last Update. There has been numerous debates about the confusion that coaching buyers (and coaches) are facing when trying to select a coaching accreditation offered by different coaching organisations (CaW, 2010, p.19). A roundtable was set up quite a few years ago which consisted of a number of coaching bodies. It has been making a concerted effort (a 'project') to provide a collective response to this issue with an aim to develop a means of capturing the range of accreditation levels provided by the coaching bodies (members of the roundtable) to provide a meaningful comparison for the coaching community.

At the same time, the British Psychological Society has been continuously implementing its re-structuring since the regulation of practitioner psychologists was taken over by the Health Professions Council on 1 July 2009 (www.hpc-uk.org/). The redevelopment of Society registers was discussed at the recent Board of Trustees meeting. A seminar of stakeholders was convened on 14 May at the Society's London office, which Dr Angela Hetherington (Chair-Elect) and I attended on behalf of the SGCP in response to the invitation by Sue Gardner, the Society's President. From the presentations, we were informed that a matrix or framework for various Society registers was being developed that would meet the diverse needs for our members. For example, a register had been developed for Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) practitioners which could provide a model framework for Coaching Psychology – with two levels of entry: Chartered and non-Chartered. This has obvious implication to our development of accreditation for coaching psychologists. It means that it may be possible to provide a similar route for our non-chartered members to be accredited in the future within SGCP. At present, our Accreditation Working Party is developing such a new framework as a proposal for the Society's next Membership and Professional Training Board (MPTB) meeting in autumn.

So we are certainly living in exciting times; and watch this space …

I am also pleased to learn from our Publications and Communication Sub-Committee that *ICPR* is available through PsychINFO, and that a list of databases that consist of *ICPR*'s entry is being compiled. The accessibility of *ICPR* is important for the dissemination of our knowledge (part of our strategic aims). This would enable researchers to seek the papers published in *ICPR*. It would have a significant influence on the impact factor of the publication. Of course, for the readers, the benefits and value of *ICPR* are far more reaching than the impact factor can measure. I shall let the individual articles published in this journal speak for themselves. So enjoy reading! I look forward to welcoming you all on 14 December 2010 at our first International Congress.

Ho Law
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SGCP & IGCP News Update

Interest Group in Coaching Psychology News

Peter Zarris

Dear IGCP Member and Coaching Psychology colleagues at the British Psychological Society.

TIME DOES indeed fly when I come to realise that I have been the Chair (or National Convener) of our interest group for nearly three years now. Not only has time flown, the landscape of Coaching Psychology has also changed dramatically in that time and it is a dramatically growing and maturing field of interest.

The initial impetus of coaching psychology was provided by a small but highly committed band of academics and practitioners. The *International Coaching Psychology Review* is one of the flagships and key reasons for being for our group and the current addition is the latest instalment of the great body of research being conducted between both the British Psychological Society Special Group in Coaching Psychology and our own Interest Group in Coaching Psychology.

It is, however, imperative that we broaden the research base and encourage students and researchers to contribute to this body of knowledge, and, therefore, we need to broaden both the research and the people conducting research globally.

As such one of the key foci of my last 18 months as the Chair of the IGCP will be to incentivise and encourage this research in Australia. There is little doubt that there is an enormous opportunity to professionalise the broader area of coaching, but in particular to professionalise coaching psychology.

There is clear evidence that the use of coaching in corporate situations is increasing, and, therefore, this offers not only a rewarding and exciting career path for psychologists in general, it also provides a unique opportunity for psychologists and the profession of psychology to make an impact among some of the business leaders and broader community and public sector leaders globally.

Part of this opportunity is to continue research in the area of coaching psychology both in terms of its methodology and effects, and we as a national committee will continue to make this a key priority.

The First International Congress of Coaching Psychology 2010–2011

The IGCP is proud to partner with Coaching Psychology groups globally to enable the first ICCP. As is well stated on the website the aim of this two-part congress is to promote the development of the coaching psychology professional globally and to bring the coaching psychology community together.

The congress at the global level is being co-convened by Stephen Palmer in London and I am the representative of the IGCP assisting Stephen in this endeavour.

As many of you would know historically our national symposium has been the flagship of the group bringing together local and international presenters and researchers to discuss and explore the latest trends and research in the area.

The ICCP, however, allows us to explore this opportunity globally and also provides us an opportunity to make links with a range of international organisations. It is hoped that this will provide the impetus for not only

professionalising psychology, but for bringing together the movement globally and beginning to more define our role as a profession moving forward.

As will no doubt be documented elsewhere, the congress will be in a number of countries around the world. The Northern Hemisphere chapter will hold its first congress event in London on 14–15 December at City University and I strongly encourage all of you to attend. Ireland will be hoping to run its congress event in Dublin in June, 2011. Other coaching psychology groups in Europe including the Danish and Swedish groups are still developing their plans. To keep up-to-date with congress events, please visit our joint website which will be updated on a regular basis: www.coachingpsychologycongress.org

The Southern Hemisphere chapter, which at this stage will include representatives from our own IGCP and from counterparts from South Africa, New Zealand and other professional bodies in the AsiaPac region, will be announced.

At this stage it is envisaged that the congress will occur at some stage in March to April in 2011 and will build on what will no doubt be an exciting and groundbreaking event in London in December.

I strongly encourage you all to visit the website and become registered supporters of this initiative.

2010 Symposium

2010 marks the 4th National IGCP Symposium.

The Symposium will be conducted later this year in Melbourne on 26–27 November.

The Symposium sub-committee is being chaired by Nic Eddie who is also the Convener for the Victorian State Committee. Nic and his Victorian committee along with some input from the national committee are essentially the Symposium sub-committee.

They have identified a clear approach to the Symposium which will focus on the development of specific coaching skills and there will be a clear theme and a different approach utilised in the upcoming Symposium.

Nic and his committee will distribute information regarding this in the coming weeks.

The Symposium continues to be one of the key professional development activities within our group and this year promises to be another exciting event which will act as a great precursor to the 1st ICCP Congress event in London the following month.

This event has always been very well attended by our IGCP members and I look forward to seeing you all again there later this year.

The National Standards

As some of you will be aware but perhaps many not, there is a National Standards project to develop guidelines for workplace coaching standards.

These standards will provide clear guidelines on how to undertake work based coaching.

The two primary authors are Anne White and our own Michael Cavanagh.

When the events are published later this year this will again provide a unique opportunity for the development of the coaching profession. It will set clear expectations and parameters of what work based coaching is and creates a unique opportunity for the further development of coaching as a profession.

We (the IGCP) are a key signatory to these standards and further underpins our commitment to the development of coaching and psychology as a profession. We believe that psychologists have a key and crucial role to play in the development of capabilities in a variety of forums and we will have a key role to play in coaching in the workplace.

We encourage all of our members to remain cognisant of these standards and how to be able to present the status of this project at the National Symposium later in November.

Upcoming events

In addition to the two major events being conducted over the 12 months there are ongoing professional development events occurring at your local state branches.

One of these events will have completed by the time this goes to print, but nonetheless there will be a national roadshow showcasing four globally-renowned coaching psychologists entitled 'The Reflective Practitioner'.

Your local state committees will keep you informed of other important events.

The future

There are two key areas I would like to focus on in terms of the future.

First, the need to have greater involvement from our members in the running of the IGCP. So coaching psychology is fast becoming one of the most exciting and dynamic areas in the professional, but it requires us to continually upgrade our state national committees. Often the amount of work that needs to be done to continue to create professional development events and longer term a profession by which all of our members and broader psychologists can benefit is difficult.

As such it is imperative that we have people involved at local state committees moving forward.

In particular, our members in Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia are encouraged to become involved at a state level and if you have interest please contact one of the National Committee via our website.

Second, I'd like to talk about the profession moving forward.

As a practitioner of some 20 years in the area of psychology and as somebody who has worked with both corporate and Government institutions I believe that the opportunity to influence the future direction of these institutions has never been greater.

Whilst to a minor degree the movement in Australia has plateaued, it continues to gain pace globally and there is evidence of increasing interest from non-psychologists in the area of coaching.

The basic responsibility of our professional body is to provide professional development opportunities for psychologists. There is, however, a more pressing challenge and that is to have a seat at the table with key organisational and community decision makers. The coaching psychology profession is a real and exciting career option for not only our members, but for psychologists more broadly.

As such the thought I would like to leave our members, as well as all readers and our partners from the SGCP, is that now is the time for us to understand the opportunity to contribute more greatly.

The two areas in which we can most directly contribute is by contributing to the publications and by becoming actively involved in the committees we have developed.

Whilst the last three years have been a great challenge, they have also been not only rewarding for me, but also developed my professional capability and credibility beyond what I would have thought possible.

As such my final and most important message is to ask you all to become more involved and to take a greater interest in this area. As a professional group we have an enormous opportunity to make the impact that we all so often talk about.

It's time.

Until next time best wishes.

Peter Zarris
National Convenor, IGCP.
E-mail: Peterz@opic.com.au

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ERRATUM

Drake, D.B. (2009). Using attachment theory in coaching leaders: The search for a coherent narrative. *International Coaching Psychology Review, 4*(1), 49–58.

Please note that there is an error in David Drake's article (the word 'not' was missing). Page 55, Column 1, Line 33, should read: A 'pull' strategy would, instead, start from the story of what happens for him when others do not take sufficient initiative …

Notes

Notes

4. Online submission process

(1) All manuscripts must be submitted to a Co-ordinating Editor by e-mail to:
Stephen Palmer (UK): dr.palmer@btinternet.com
Michael Cavanagh (Australia): michaelc@psych.usyd.edu.au

(2) The submission must include the following as separate files:

- Title page consisting of manuscript title, authors' full names and affiliations, name and address for corresponding author.
- Abstract.
- Full manuscript omitting authors' names and affiliations. Figures and tables can be attached separately if necessary.

5. Manuscript requirements

- Contributions must be typed in double spacing with wide margins. All sheets must be numbered.
- Tables should be typed in double spacing, each on a separate page with a self-explanatory title. Tables should be comprehensible without reference to the text. They should be placed at the end of the manuscript with their approximate locations indicated in the text.
- Figures can be included at the end of the document or attached as separate files, carefully labelled in initial capital/lower case lettering with symbols in a form consistent with text use. Unnecessary background patterns, lines and shading should be avoided. Captions should be listed on a separate page. The resolution of digital images must be at least 300 dpi.
- For articles containing original scientific research, a structured abstract of up to 250 words should be included with the headings: Objectives, Design, Methods, Results, Conclusions. Review articles should use these headings: Purpose, Methods, Results, Conclusions.
- Overall, the presentation of papers should conform to the British Psychological Society's Style Guide (available at www.bps.org.uk/publications/publications_home.cfm in PDF format). Non-discriminatory language should be used throughout. Spelling should be Anglicised when appropriate. Text should be concise and written for an international readership of applied psychologists. Sensationalist and unsubstantiated views are discouraged. Abbreviations, acronyms and unfamiliar specialist terms should be explained in the text on first use.
- Particular care should be taken to ensure that references are accurate and complete. Give all journal titles in full. Referencing should follow BPS formats. For example:
  Billington, T. (2000). *Separating, losing and excluding children: Narratives of difference*. London: Routledge/Falmer.
  Elliott, J.G. (2000). Dynamic assessment in educational contexts: Purpose and promise. In C. Lidz & J.G. Elliott (Eds.), *Dynamic assessment: Prevailing models and applications* (pp.713–740). New York: J.A.I. Press.
  Palmer, S. & Whybrow, A. (2006). The coaching psychology movement and its development within the British Psychological Society. *International Coaching Psychology Review 1*(1), 5–11.
- SI units must be used for all measurements, rounded off to practical values if appropriate, with the Imperial equivalent in parentheses.
- In normal circumstances, effect size should be incorporated.
- Authors are requested to avoid the use of sexist language.
- Authors are responsible for acquiring written permission to publish lengthy quotations, illustrations, etc. for which they do not own copyright.

6. Brief reports

These should be limited to 1000 words and may include research studies and theoretical, critical or review comments whose essential contribution can be made briefly. A summary of not more than 50 words should be provided.

7. Publication ethics

BPS Code of Conduct – Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines.
Principles of Publishing – Principle of Publishing.

8. Supplementary data

Supplementary data too extensive for publication may be deposited with the British Library Document Supply Centre. Such material includes numerical data, computer programs, fuller details of case studies and experimental techniques. The material should be submitted to the Editor together with the article, for simultaneous refereeing.

9. Post acceptance

PDF page proofs are sent to authors via e-mail for correction of print but not for rewriting or the introduction of new material.

10. Copyright

To protect authors and publications against unauthorised reproduction of articles, The British Psychological Society requires copyright to be assigned to itself as publisher, on the express condition that authors may use their own material at any time without permission. On acceptance of a paper, authors will be requested to sign an appropriate assignment of copyright form.

11. Checklist of requirements

- Abstract (100–200 words).
- Title page (include title, authors' names, affiliations, full contact details).
- Full article text (double-spaced with numbered pages and anonymised).
- References (see above). Authors are responsible for bibliographic accuracy and must check every reference in the manuscript and proofread again in the page proofs.
- Tables, figures, captions placed at the end of the article or attached as separate files.

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9 771750 276007
ISSN 1750-2764