International Coaching Psychology Review

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Contents

Editorial

Stephen Palmer & Michael Cavanagh

I N THIS ISSUE OF THE *ICPR* we have three types of research, empirical data on the outcomes of coaching interventions, empirical data on the internal dynamics of the coaching relationship and theoretical research into nature of the coaching enterprise.

Passmore and Gibbes present a thought-provoking article on the state of executive coaching research. They draw parallels between the counselling research literature and the coaching literature, and identify a number of potential pitfall and suggestion for the future.

Feggetter reports on the results of a multi-method empirical study investigating return on investment (ROI) and success in gaining promotion among 10 high performing Ministry of Defence personnel. Her results suggest that participants rated the coaching positively and felt that their leadership skills had benefited. Although working with small sample sizes, preliminary results suggest a positive ROI beyond improved leadership, promotion and skills transfer.

Govindji and Linley present empirical evidence which supports the use of strengths based approach to coaching. Their study using 214 college students suggests that which suggest that when a strengths based approach is used, people are likely to experience an increased sense of authenticity, vitality and well-being.

Spence presents both the benefits and limitations of measuring progress in coaching using Goal Attainment Scaling. He presents in some detail this method of tracking progress and shows its applicability for both research and day to day practice.

Gyllensten and Palmer present qualitative data on the role of the coach-coachee relationship in the coaching engagement. While strong goal setting and performance enhancement are important features of coaching for clients, the authors also find that the relationship is highly valued aspect of the engagement. This value is related to the level of trust and transparency in the coaching relationship. This has clear implications both for the way in which coaches work with clients and for contracting on issues such as confidentiality.

Cox and Bachirova examine 39 coaches' use of emotion in the coaching session. In this qualitative study they find that coaches tend to deal with difficult emotional one of four ways ranging from self reflection through to termination of the coaching engagement. This paper raises a number of issues regarding the boundary between coaching and therapy and for the training and supervision of coaches.

In two quite different ways, Stelter and Laske present papers which seek to understand the purpose of the coaching engagement. Stelter looks at coaching as a process of making meaning from a social constructivist and phenomenological perspective. Based on the work of Piaget and Kegan, among others, Laske takes a cognitive developmental perspective on the coaching enterprise. He presents a model of coaching which sees development as a gradual process of diminishing egocentricity.

The growing proportion of empirical papers in this issue appears to be indicative of a growing body of research and researchers in coaching. It is this growing research agenda that will ultimately determine the place of coaching and coaching psychology in the world.

Stephen Palmer & Michael Cavanagh

The state of executive coaching research: What does the current literature tell us and what's next for coaching research?

Jonathan Passmore & Carla Gibbes

This paper asks the question; what do coaching psychologists bring to the developing market of executive coaching? While psychologists are trained in human behaviour, this paper argues that their real unique contribution may be their ability to undertake high quality research. The paper moves to summarise executive coaching research to date, and to suggest new areas for study, drawing from a review of counselling research history over the past five decades. Finally, the paper calls for coaching psychologists to address three key research strands, with the objectives of; evidencing the impact of coaching on performance, improving coaching practice and assisting in identifying the key components required for effective coaching training.

Keyword: executive coaching, coaching research, counselling research, evidenced-based coaching.

OVER THE PAST five years the coaching marketplace has become crowded with potential coaches all offering executives the chance to 'fulfil their potential', 'achieve excellence' or 'find the inner hero'. In a global $2 billion per annum market (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006), what can coaching psychologists offer?

The unrestricted use of the term 'psychologist' in the UK does not help those who have trained for up to five years to achieve a clear and precise standard. In business consulting it is not uncommon to find people who claim to be 'psychologists'. In fact they often have, at best, an undergraduate degree in psychology and sometimes little more than training in a level B psychometric instrument. The situation in coaching is worse, with limited training available, no regulation and no licensing in the UK, Australia (Spence, Cavanagh & Grant, 2006) or in the US (Nowack, 2003).

So what can coaching psychologists bring to coaching that is unique and distinctive? Garman, Whiston and Zlatoper (2000), writing in the US (where the term 'psychologist' is more strictly regulated) have argued that licensed psychologists do have

unique skills. These skills are in understanding and working with the diversity of human behaviour. However, they note that these skills are rarely recognised by the media. In fact, with the confusion around the term 'psychologist', organisational client's or coachee's rarely understand the unique contribution psychologists can make.

Berglas (2004) has offered an alternative perspective to the debate on the contribution of psychologists in coaching. He suggests that the unique contribution is the ability to identify and work with dysfunctional behaviour. Such behaviour he suggests is more common in the board room, as such individuals are driven to succeed, a point echoed by Furnham (2005). However, having attained the most senior positions, the individuals and their organisations are vulnerable to catastrophic failure from dysfunctional behaviour, which may include inappropriate risk taking or a failure to understand and work with the more subtle human emotions of key stakeholders or partners.

An additional potential differentiator is the knowledge psychologists have or can acquire in specialist areas, using new evidence-based methodologies such Motiva-

tional Interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2002; Passmore & Whybrow, in press). These techniques often demand specialist or accredited training, but can be acquired by psychologists, as the knowledge builds on an existing understanding of human behaviour (Passmore, 2007).

The most powerful differentiator, however, is a desire and commitment to undertake, contribute to, share and incorporate into their practice the outcomes from coaching research. Psychological training equips the coaching practitioner with the ability to undertake research within the

scientific tradition of randomised control trails, as well as within the qualitative traditions using methodologies such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), Grounded Theory and discursive techniques. These can add richness and depth to quantitative studies.

Executive coaching research

As recently as four years ago the evidence that executive coaching could transform individual performance at work was scant. As Kampa-Kokesch (2001) reminded us during her own coaching research in 2001/2002 at

Table 1: Summarised executive coaching impact research up to 2000.

Author	Key points
Foster & Lendl (1996)	A review of the impact of EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) procedures on four executive coaches, which suggested that EMDR was an effective intervention for desensitising workplace experiences.
Olivero, Bane & Kopelman (1997)	A comparative study of training and training complemented by behavioural coaching to enhance performance in a public sector agency. The study was based on a sample of 31 participants. The results suggested that coaching increased performance by 88% while training only intervention resulted in an increase of only 22%.
Judge & Cowell (1997)	A study of managers using a variety of interventions (behavioural to psychodynamic coaching).
Gerger (1997)	A masters level study based on a sample of 48 participants reviewing the impact of coaching on management behaviour, in particular the adoption of a coaching management style. The results suggested that between 70 to 93% of executives made a change in behaviour.
Hall, Otazo & Hollenbeck (1999)	A study consisted of interviews with 75 executives who had received coaching. The results of the study was a list of coaching behaviours which coachee's found help and less helpful, and a comparison with coaches perceptions of coaching behaviours. A fuller review is set out in Table 2.
Laske (1999)	A study is also an unpublished dissertation. He interviewed a small sample of six executives. His conclusion was that executive coaching is only of value if the executive is ready for development. This implies a need for a stronger assessment stage prior to commencing coaching.
Garman, Whiston & Zlatoper (2000)	The study involved a content analysis of coaching publications and thus failed to demonstrate based on primary empirical research clear evidence of the impact of an executive coaching intervention.

Western Michigan University, the number of impact studies totalled seven in 2000. Unfortunately, few of the studies provided comparable data points and in many cases failed to summarise the key points of their study such as research design, sample size, sampling procedures and a description of the methodology. The papers were reviewed in her paper, but for convenience a short summary is provided in Table 1.

The most interesting of these studies for coaching practice, was Hall, Otazo and Hollenbeck's (1999) work which, while based solely on coachee perceptions, does offer some interesting insights into understanding the perceived value of coaching in the eyes of the coachee. Aspects such as listening and questioning skills are present, alongside integrity, caring and the ability to challenge constructively.

Since Kampa-Kokesch's literature research was published in 2001, the trickle of empirical studies into the impact of executive coaching has continued (Bush, 2005; Conway, 2000; Dawdy, 2004; Evers, Brouwers & Tomic, 2006; Gonzalez, 2004; Gyllensyen & Palmer 2005a; Jones & Spooner, 2006; Kampa-Kokesch, 2002; Orenstein, 2006; Passmore 2006; Smither & London, 2003; Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004; Wang & Wentling, 2001).

This research data, both published in peer reviewed journals and unpublished studies conducted in university settings, is beginning to build a wider literature base of evidence about the impact of coaching and its potential to assist individuals in the workplace. Echoing Kampa-Kokesch's work, this paper sought to draw these recent studies together in summary form, including masters and doctoral level studies which have been conducted. As with the previous review of papers it can be difficult to draw comparisons between papers as authors frequently miss out key information about the sample size, sampling process, methodology and occasionally fail to adequately summarise their results. Following this review, the paper moves on to consider where coaching research should turn its attention to next.

McGovern, Lindeman, Vergara, Murphy, Baker and Warrenfeltz (2001) (commonly referred to as the Manchester Review study) sought to explore coaching return on investment (ROI). The study involved a sample of 100 executives in the US who had received coaching during the previous four years. The participants were interviewed and asked to quantify the impact which the coaching had

Table 2: What works best in coaching?

From executives	From coaches
Honest, realistic, challenging feedback	Connecting personally, recognising where the coachee is
Good listening	
Good action points ideas	Good listening
Clear objectives	Reflecting
No personal agenda	Caring
Accessibility , availability	Learning
Straight feedback	Checking back
Competence, sophistication	Commitment to coachee success
Seeing a good model of effectiveness	Demonstrating integrity
Coach has seen other career paths	Openness and honesty
	Knowing the 'unwritten rules'.
	Pushing the coachee where necessary

(From Hall, Otazo & Hollenbeck, 1999)

made on their business. Secondly, they were asked to estimate the confidence level of their estimates. Costs were collected on the cost of the coaching received and a ROI was undertaken using a simple formula;

$$ROI\ (\%) = \frac{adjusted\ ROI - cost\ of\ the\ coaching\ received\ x100}{cost\ of\ the\ coaching\ received.}$$

To create the adjusted ROI figure, adjustments were made to isolate the effects of other factors and the confidence level was used to further adjust down the potential impact. Having made these adjustments the study concluded that coaching made a ROI of 545 per cent, or that for every dollar invested in coaching, executives estimated that it contributed $5.45 to the business.

Wang and Wentling, 2001 – This study was based on a group of participants from a World Bank of Asia training programme. Participants attended a three-week course and were supported with six months' online coaching. In addition to supporting transfer of skills from the training programme, the researchers also found that online coaching improved relationship, problem solving and enhanced motivation.

Kampa-Kokesch, 2002 – This study used the Multi-factor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) to assess the impact of coaching on leadership behaviour. The study was based on a sample of 50 coachees and 27 coaches. In reviewing the biographical data one of the suggestion made in the paper was that coaching may be an intervention associated with enhancing good behaviour rather than addressing under-performance. The results suggested that coaching did impact on leadership behaviour with increased ratings on charismatic behaviour, impact on followers and inspiration action.

Smither and London, 2003 – This was a longitudinal study of over 400 managers found that executives who worked with a coach showed an improvement in performance in terms of direct report and supervisor ratings using a multi-rater feedback instrument.

Sue-Chan and Latham, 2004 – This paper revisited work by behavioural psychologist, Monroe Lefkowitz on influencing undertaken during the 1950s. The 2004 study looked at the skills of experts, colleagues and the individual to bring about personal change. It confirmed the important role of an expert whose opinion mattered. In establishing credibility one important feature was how individuals dressed. The study found that influencing was increased by 35 per cent when the authority figure (coach) wore a tie.

Dawdy, 2004 – This was a study conducted at Capella University, US. It aimed to measure the effectiveness of executive coaching of coachees who had used a coach for more than six months in 30- to 60-minute coaching sessions, compared with the personality type of the coachee using a US-based product; Peoplemap questionnaire. *Peoplemap* clusters individuals into six types; leader-free spirit, leader-task, leader-people, free spirit-task, people-task and people-free spirit. The results suggest that coaches need to adapt their coaching style to coachee preferences.

Gonzalez, 2004 – The study reviewed coachees perceptions of what contributed towards the coaching process. The study involved a sample of 12 coachees; six male and six female who had received coaching using a collaborative coaching style. Participants were interviewed through a semi-structured interview methodology and the data was analysed using thematic analysis to reduce and cluster the data. The findings highlight that for positive progress to be made the coach needed to command respect, work collaboratively, use a discursive rather than instructional approach and act authentically. The research identified the need for a combination of action and reflec-

tion using gentle probing for transformational learning to occur.

Bush, 2005 – This study, undertaken at Pepperdine University, used a phenomenological methodology to assess effectiveness of coaching based on coachee perceptions. The results suggested that coaches have an impact on the overall effectiveness of coaching. Key aspects of this were the experience of the coach in the eyes of the coachee, the use of a structured process and a focus on development. In addition the research identified that coachees' and the client organisation have important roles to play through, selection of the coach, organisational culture and coachee commitment.

Gyllensyen and Palmer, 2005b – This control group study involving 103 participants from the UK and Scandinavia, examined the potential of coaching as an intervention to reduce workplace stress. The study using a correlation design found that workplace coaching was not a significant predictor of depression, anxiety and stress. However, participants reported high levels of coaching effectiveness. The study found lack of control and role ambiguity were significant predictors of stress.

Passmore (forthcoming) – A doctoral study of executive coaches perceptions of the executive coaching process. The study used Grounded Theory to explore coachees' perceptions of the coaching relationship and the key elements which they valued. The study went on to construct a theoretical model of executive coaching which highlighted the importance of previous experiences in shaping expectations, the behaviour of the coach in balancing challenge and relationship and the selection of homework tasks which take account of the executives organisational role and preferences.

Evers, Brouwers and Tomic (2006) – This study involved a pre- and post-test measurement of individuals and used a control group drawing on a group of 60 managers in a public service organisation; split between the control and experimental conditions. Participants in the control group benefited from a behavioural coaching intervention based on the co-coaching model (Whitworth, Kimsey-House & Sandahl; 1998). The results found significant different between the two groups and in favour of coaching on two of six variables measured; outcome expectations with respect to acting in a balanced way and self-efficacy beliefs with respect to setting ones own goals. The authors' concluded that coaching had a positive effect, but noted that the self-report nature of the study limited the conclusions which could be drawn from the results.

Orenstein (2006) – This study used the Empathic Organic Questionnaire (Brown, 1972) to assess the efficacy of coaching on an individual manager. The manager underwent a period of coaching and was reviewed by a group of 20 colleagues to identify change at the end of the period. The results supported the research hypothesis that the coachee was rated to have changed most in behaviours which were the subject of the coaching. Behaviours indirectly related to the objectives changed, while behaviours unrelated to coaching changed least.

Jones and Spooner (2006) – This study involved used semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences of high achievers drawn from business and sport and their coaches. They sought to identify which factors were perceived as critical for coaching success. The researchers interviewed 21 high achievers and seven coaches. The results echoed the earlier work above highlighting the role of trust, credibility and challenge. In addition the researchers drew out the need for the coach to act as a sponge, to be friendly without becoming a friend, to offer rapid results and for the coach to be confident but focused exclusively on the needs of the coachee.

In addition to the impact-focused studies there have been a number of other valuable contributions to coach research.

Liljenstrand, 2004 – A study undertaken at Alliant International University, San Diego, which compared the coaching practices of individuals from backgrounds in clinical psychology, occupational psychology and business. The study drew on 928 practicing coaches who undertook a survey describing their behaviours. Differences were identified between the groups at the level of frequency and length of session, use of assessment tools, perceptions of what constituted unethical practice and views on certification. The study points towards the existence of two or more markets in the US.

Luebbe, 2005 – This study was in two parts. The first part of the study was a qualitative study of 13 participants who were interviewed regarding their experiences of coaching. The second part involved a survey of 66 coaches. The results indicated that trust is the highest rated attribute, confirming that the relationship is a key component in bringing about change. Secondary aspects were the coaches' skills in summarising, providing candid feedback, fostering independence and self awareness in the coachee and building a partnership with the client organisation. Also important was the role of the organisation in communicating the role and purpose of coaching to ensure coach and coachee were appropriately matched.

Turner, 2004 – This study examined managers' perceptions of coaching behaviours in supporting the transfer of learning from a leadership programme to workplace practice. The participants attended a two-week leadership programme involving strategic thinking, marketing and employee involvement. The programme was supported by coaching both during the event and post-event. The researcher used a combination of qualitative and quantitative unspecified methodologies to assess the impact of the programme and coaching support. The results suggest that the process was most effective in assisting coachees to develop more effective coaching behaviours, while it was marginally less effective in supporting learning transfer.

Life coaching research

A small number of non-work-based coaching studies too have been gathering and publishing evidence of the impact of coaching. While these are not the focus of this paper, the can provide useful insights into the parallel processes between executive coaching and health and life coaching. Two examples of these are Grant's paper (2003) on life coaching and goal attainment, and his study comparing cognitive with behavioural coaching (Grant, 2001). The study, based on population of postgraduate students, revealed that participation in the life coaching programme was associated with goal attainment. In addition, coaching impacted positively on depression, anxiety and stress, while the level of self-reflection increased among participants. As Grant noted one of the key weaknesses of this, as with many other studies, was the lack of a control group. The 2001 study was based on a non-clinical population of trainee accountants and included the use of a control group. The study employed three parallel groups who were offered cognitive, behavioural and cognitive-behavioural coaching. Participants in the cognitive only stream benefited from 'deep' and 'achieving' approaches to learning, reduced anxiety and lower levels of depression. However, academic performance declined relative to the control group. Participants in the behavioural only coaching benefited from reduced anxiety and improved academic performance. The combined stream also benefited from improved academic performance along with reduced anxiety.

The role of coaching case studies

While these empirical studies have been under way, others (Tobias, 1996; Giglio, Diamante & Urban 1998; Kraji, 2001;

Cooper & Quick, 2003; Schnell, 2005; Winum, 2005; Blattner, 2005) have been publishing their own case studies.

Lowman (2001) has argued that case studies provide excellent evidence for building the case for coaching, and were used extensively at the start of psychology by psychodynamic thinkers. He cautions that to be useful the case studies should adhere to a set of guide principles:

1. Description of case events;
2. Diagnostic interpretation by the psychologist;
3. Specific intervention used;
4. Results;
5. Possible explanations for the results.

However, the evidence from psychological research suggests that while case studies have their place, the case for coaching needs to be built on control group studies with random selection of participants between the study group and a wait list group. Where students and others are drawn to use case studies, the following guidance might provide the reader with an improved understanding of the study (see Table 3).

The evidence appears to be building to support the claim that coaching does have positive impacts in a range of areas from stress management to self-regard and performance. However a word of caution from the wider evidence on one-to-one interventions shows that the evidence is not totally conclusive. One example is the meta-study on feedback (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). The meta-research of 600 studies on feedback interventions suggests that in just over 30 per cent of cases feedback was followed by a decrease in performance. As feedback is often seen by coaches as a key tool in developing self awareness, caution should be advised when offering it. While the evidence is not available to confirm this, gently building the evidence from feedback, monitoring the coachee's changing reactions and responding appropriately, may be features which reduce the potential negative effects. A second issue, common to all scientific research, is that while studies showing positive results are published, those that fail to find an impact go unrecorded.

As a result, it is fair to say, that the evidence for coaching having an impact on work-based performance was weak, but is slowly beginning to build. Three generic criticisms can be made of many of the 20 or so studies to date. The studies have typically been based on a small sample size. In the main they have failed to use control groups. They have lacked a random allocation to groups. If coaching is to evidence, without doubt its impact, and answer the question which Filery-Travis and Lane (2006) reflected on, then more robust studies are needed.

The first conclusion from this paper is that coaching research needs to continue, and that studies using larger sample sizes, control groups and random allocation of participants should become the norm not the exception. But in which direction should coaching research travel? For the answer to this question, this paper looks to research work in counselling which has a 50-year head start on coaching.

Table 3: Guidelines for coaching case studies.

- Description of the context (organisational setting).
- Description of the coachee's issue.
- Objectives agreed by the coach and coachee.
- Selection of approach by the coach.
- Description of what happened during the coaching relationship.
- Outcomes and how were these measured/assessed.
- Reflections on lessons learnt by the coach.

Counselling psychology research

One obvious comparison of the coaching process is with counselling, as both involves one to one relationship, which are largely confidential, between a paid worker and customer and employ a series of techniques to help the person achieve a goal set at the start of the relationship. There are also of course some important differences, such as client group and presenting issues. What does a review of the counselling literature reveal about the research into behaviours in the counselling room?

An initial review of the counselling literature suggests that counselling research has travelled a similar pathway. As a one-to-one working relationship, counselling's hundred year history has provided evidence from thousands of studies. There is a good understanding of what work, some shared assumptions about why this works and evidence based practice which has emerged as a result of this history of research.

Fillery-Travis and Lane (2006) asked a crucial initial question of coaching; does it work? The answer from the research into counselling is 'yes', and the evidence from coaching appears to be heading towards a similar conclusion. While in counselling this is a strong conclusion to reach, meta-analysis of 475 controlled outcome studies concluded that, at the end of the treatment, the average client was 80 per cent better off than a similar untreated client (Smith, Glass & Miller, 1980). Other meta-studies have reached similar conclusions for the impact of counselling (Lambert, Shapiro & Bergin, 1986; Howard, Kopt, Krause & Orlinsky, 1986) although with different rates of gain for treated over untreated clients. The trend is clear, counselling as an intervention produces beneficial results as evidenced in multiple control group studies.

This conclusion for counselling was not reached without much trial and error. Early studies neglected the use of control groups, as counsellors did not wish to exclude people from treatment. Once control groups were established, this was done through waiting list groups, with participants were seen on the basis of need. The result was that study results were challenge over the lack of random allocation of participants to groups. As the number of studies increased these procedural issues were gradually overcome and the evidence of counselling as an effective intervention became compelling (Lambert & Cattani-Thompson, 1980). Coaching psychology is inching towards this outcome, at present, with a pre-dominance of poor quality studies.

Once an answer to the question 'Does it work?' was resolved in counselling, the research question was redefined. The next challenge was to understand what within counselling produced the positive impact on clients who themselves had diverse needs. The research question generated significant numbers of comparative studies (Hill & Corbett, 1993). The result of this research is that many forms of intervention appear to produce a positive effect across a wide group of needs in varying timescales. The one exception, agreed international, to this is anxiety disorders which appears to be best treated by cognitive behaviour therapy (Barlow, Craske, Cern & Klossko, 1989; Lambert & Bergin, 1992). In the UK, opinions are stronger regarding the potential advantages of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) over other interventions. This view is built upon the work of the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE, 2005), a Government agency reviewing clinical impacts, whose research supports the claims that CBT is the most effective one-to-one interventions for mental health treatment.

Luborsky, Singer and Luborsky, (1975) have argued that all counselling interventions make a positive contribution, what ever the methodology. Further US meta-analysis comparing different theoretical approaches concluded there was no significant difference between interventions which were intended to be therapeutic (Wamplod, 1997).

One of the problems is that there were no agreed assessments for client level of need or of the outcome achieved over a

defined period in counselling. This led to disputes about which intervention works best, and what is best anyway. In response several changes have been made to standardise the input (client need), process (counsellor behaviour) and outcome (client improvement). Outcome batteries were developed to measure client outcomes (Waskow & Parloff, 1975). Behaviour questionnaires have been developed to assess client need (Lambert & Hill, 1994) and manuals devised to assist counsellor's in adherence to the methodology (Lambert & Ogles, 1988). This work has helped NICE and others to attempt a more balanced comparison of interventions.

This debate is beginning to occur in coaching psychology (Kilburg, 2004). At present there is limited evidence-based research (Grant's 2003 study being the exception) to support which interventions generate the most positive outcomes for coachees, or which methodologies work best with which coachee problems. Kilburg (2004) has argued the results from coaching research will be the same as in counselling, and that 'all should have prizes'. His conclusion is that, psychologists should focus attention on other areas of research as opposed to researching which method works best.

However, the evidence from Grant's study (2003) and the NICE research in the UK suggests that this area may be worthy of further research, and that differences maybe found between different interventions. This difference may be magnified given the diverse range of needs in the non-clinical population, that different interventions maybe more suited to both different individuals (Dawdy, 2004) and to different issues (Passmore, forthcoming).

In counselling there has been a steady shift towards the blending of different methods to form an integrated approach (Smith, 1982). Hill and Corbett (1993) note; 'few therapists now rigidly adhere to a single theoretical model'. Instead most blends cognitive, with behavioural and humanistic elements.

If we can make progress on the evidence of using different methodologies, what role does the counsellor or coach play in the process? Research in counselling suggests that the therapist has a crucial role to play. A key skill in this regard is empathy. Early research (Robinson, 1950) demonstrated that a counsellor's remarks did have an impact on the client's next statement and that contribute to the process of client change. What has been more difficult has been to capture the behaviours.

In executive coaching this research has begun and has started to identify common coach behaviours which may be most beneficial. These include; using a collaborative approach with the coachee (Gonzalez, 2004; Luebbe, 2005; Jones & Spooner, 2006), an organisation culture which is open about the reasons for coaching and offers wider support to the coachee (Luebbe, 2005; Bush, 2004), being authentic or congruent in the work with the coachee (Gonzalez, 2004) and being seen by the coach as experienced or credible (Bush, 2005; Jones & Spooner, 2006). In the UK the work of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) (Willis, 2005), using the Adelphi technique of an expert panel has developed a set of coaching competencies which are believed to contribute to positive outcomes.

The history of counselling research also reveals similar problems to those suggested earlier for coaching (Roth & Fonagy, 2005). Firstly counselling has seen a tendency to publish only positive outcome studies. Studies with null or with negative findings (damage to coachees) are either never submitted or are rejected during the peer review process. This is the 'file drawer' problem; with unsuccessful studies being left in the drawer. Secondly the measures of success vary widely. Thirdly the success criteria are not always full described. Finally, many studies have suffered from small population sizes which impacts on the ability to do more sensitive analysis of the data.

The implications for coaching psychology

What are the implications of counselling research for executive coaching? Firstly we need more research to understand the impact of coaching on performance. In doing such research we need to clearly define what aspect of performance we are seeking to assess, and to describe the nature of the coaching intervention, frequency and methodology. We also need to be explicit about the results which are expected. Such studies at postgraduate level can begin to build a useful bank of evidence for subsequent meta-studies.

At present much of the coaching research from the US is postgraduate in nature and largely unpublished. As we have highlighted, it has been undertaken with small sample sizes, no control groups and no random allocation of participants. Further, the studies frequently fail to define or describe the coaching intervention or methodology employed. If real progress is to be made, the research needs to be with samples of 100+ participants in randomised control studies. We believe this may best be achieved through the involvement of professional bodies such as the BPS, American Psychological Association (APA), Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development (CIPD), Association for Coaching (AC), European Mentoring and Coaching Council and the International Coaching Federation (ICF), as well as funding bodies such as European Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Foundation for Coaching to fund a series of doctoral level studies at institutions currently offering coaching and occupational psychology programmes.

The commercial sector too can make a positive contribution. The main large national and multi-national organisations using coaching could commission longitudinal research, to assess the impact of coaching on team performance over time. A typical study might involve offering coaching to members of a team over a defined period in geographical location, while the control study received structured conversations, thus removing the potential of positive gain from the Hawthorn effect. Agreed targets could be set and measured at the start, at an intermediate point and six or 12 months after the coaching has been concluded.

Through a series of published studies we can, over the coming three to five years, build up the evidence to confirm what many coaching psychologists intuitive believe; that coaching does positively impact on workplace performance.

A second focus of study is around the different coaching methodologies. Research in the UK (Palmer & Whybrow, 2006) identified the three most popular coaching methodologies as facilitative, cognitive and behavioural coaching. What is less clear is; what do these different approaches consist of? And which approach is the most effect for the different challenges which executive coaches face? So is cognitive behavioural coaching the most effective intervention for addressing self-regard, and low self-esteem. Is behavioural coaching best at addressing behavioural skills? Is facilitative the most effective for complex problem solving?

A third area of study is on the behaviours which coaches use. This is the subject of our research at UEL. At the root of this is a desire to begin to understand what behaviours make a difference in coaching? The experiences of counselling suggest that this is a complex and difficult question. The efforts to explore this through micro skills and behavioural codings have failed to provide a definitive answer. It would seem that with the substantial overlay between different interventions in the behaviours used. It might be hypothesised that similar conclusions may be true for coaching. It might equally be hypothesised that more experienced coaches intuitively discover what works overtime and unconsciously incorporate this into their behaviour.

The benefits of coaching research

The coaching profession is still in its infancy but psychology has a significant role to play.

We have suggested that one unique role is to use coaching practice for informing our understanding through research.

Three strands of research on coaching efficacy, the efficacy of different interventions and the coaching behaviours can help in three different aspects of coaching life. The benefits for organisations are to understand more accurately whether coaching is an effective investment, and what outcomes can be anticipated.

The benefits of coaching research for coaching practitioners is to help us better understand which interventions work and when. Many coaching psychologists already have an intuitive feel for what works and when, but research provides the evidence for our practice. Coaching psychology should be about evidence-based practice.

The benefits for those in training are an improvement in the quality of training offered. To ethically train coaches, coaching psychologists need a clear and evidenced based approach. Psychologists also need, in their role as coaching trainers, an understanding of which behaviours have impact, and how they interact. Many have a view about this, drawing from experience and from research in other one to one relationships, but even here the research base, such as counselling, is weak, and coaching psychology has more work to do.

Conclusions

The psychological profession is only one group laying claim to the important area of coaching. However, psychological training and understanding of human behaviour puts the coaching psychologists in a strong position to contribute towards this new profession. This contribution can be through research based practice for the benefits of organisations, coaching practitioners and trainees.

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A preliminary evaluation of executive coaching: Does executive coaching work for candidates on a high potential development scheme?

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Objectives: *This paper describes a preliminary attempt to evaluate executive coaching for 10 members who are on a High Potential Development Scheme within the Ministry of Defence (MoD).*
Design: *A multi-method approach was taken which comprised the use of questionnaires to survey scheme member's perceptions, a Return on Investment (ROI) study and a follow-up of members to determine their success in gaining promotion.*
Results: *The analysis showed that all 10 who had been coached rated their experience positively. All rated their own progress within the Development Scheme as High and in particular they perceived it was their leadership skills that had benefited. A preliminary ROI calculation also indicated that the benefits exceeded the costs. Other benefits included promotion, broader leadership skills, and skills transfer within the MoD.*
Conclusions: *The results indicate that within the context of the Development Scheme coaching provides a potential financial ROI. The findings also show that coaching impacts positively on scheme members such that they are highly committed to demonstrating and exhibiting leadership behaviours and that there is some evidence of a broader impact on the Department as a whole with generalised skills transfer.*
Keywords: Coaching Psychology, high potential development schemes, talent management, Return on Investment (ROI), leadership, skills transfer.

Background

Caveat. The work reported is preliminary, and the numbers are too small to be considered in terms of statistical significance nevertheless the findings and discussion are presented to show how coaching is being integrated within the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

Background. The Ministry of Defence needs to obtain, retain and sustain its talent and even more importantly identify to-morrows top leaders to-day. The selection and development of leaders to meet the current and future demands is itself a skill requiring the identification of high calibre performers and subsequently the ability to nurture their talent. Alongside the initial selection succession planning is essential so that business continues no matter what outside influences occur. To meet this MoD has introduced a development scheme for those with potential for promotion into the Senior Civil Service (SCS) (which equates to a Director General level). The MoD has a suite of learning and development opportunities that are perceived to add value to these individuals. One of these opportunities is external executive coaching. Using the guidelines prepared by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management (CIPD) Jarvis (2004) the MoD commissioned an external contractor to undertake executive coaching

for personnel on a talent management scheme. Scheme members have been identified, by means of an independent assessment, as having the potential to reach the SCS[1] within a five-year time frame. The coaching process is targeted to meet the needs of both the individual scheme member and the MoD. The aim is to coach members on leadership behaviours that have been identified as needing development before they are considered of sufficient standard to meet the standard of the SCS. There is much debate about whether or not coaching works and indeed Fillery-Travis and Lane (2006) suggest that this is the wrong question to ask and that it is critical to take into account how coaching is being used. Phillips (2006) in his discussion article notes that that it is the conditions around the coaching experience that may be critical to its success. There is also more recent research that personality can act as a moderating variable thereby effecting an individual's experience of development initiatives Bywater, Hurst and Berrisford (2007). This study seeks to determine the evidence whether within the context of the MoD external coaching adds value.

Aim

The purpose of this study is to make a preliminary assessment about whether external executive coaching works within the context of members of a high potential scheme of civil servants who have been identified as having the potential to reach the SCS in the MoD.

The requirement

At present there are 32 scheme members. The independent assessment identifies candidates' strengths and development needs in terms of the MoD SCS Core Competences. These have been identified using the SCS Competence Framework developed in 2004.

Figure 1 illustrates the development need profile in percentage terms for all those on the scheme.

The evidence presented in Figure 1 indicates the areas where there is a development need in particular over 50 per cent of members need to improve their people skills (getting the best from people, making a personal impact and giving purpose and direction). These are the areas where coaching will have an impact. Scheme members are diverse in terms of their individual development needs and work areas so the coaching techniques must be flexible and broad including performance and developmental type coaching. Interestingly learning and development is identified as a development need for only nine per cent of this group. This figure appears to be low, however, they are a highly talented group and highly motivated towards achieving promotion and so their learning and development may be included as part of all their identified development needs.

Process

The number of coaching sessions is pre-specified[2] and the contractor is provided with the development needs as identified by the Independent Assessment of the scheme member and assigns a coach for an initial 'chemistry meeting'. Depending upon the results of meeting the coaching process will start. Importantly the coach is expected to meet with the scheme member's line manager at the start and on completion of the process. The coach is working within an agreed framework and to a specific agenda agreed by the MoD.

Evaluation

Method. A multi-method approach has been taken towards evaluation. This includes a questionnaire survey administered to all those who completed the coaching. The

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[1] The assessment is undertaken by outside consultants and consists of psychometric testing, one-to-one interviews and other techniques to confirm potential and development needs against the SCS core skills.

[2] Those identified as ready within 12 months receive eight coaching sessions (six face-to-face and two telephone). Everyone else on the scheme have six sessions (four face-to-face and two telephone).

Figure 1: Development needs in terms of SCS competences identified by Independent Assessment (IA) for all current scheme members (*N*=32).

% of members having development needs
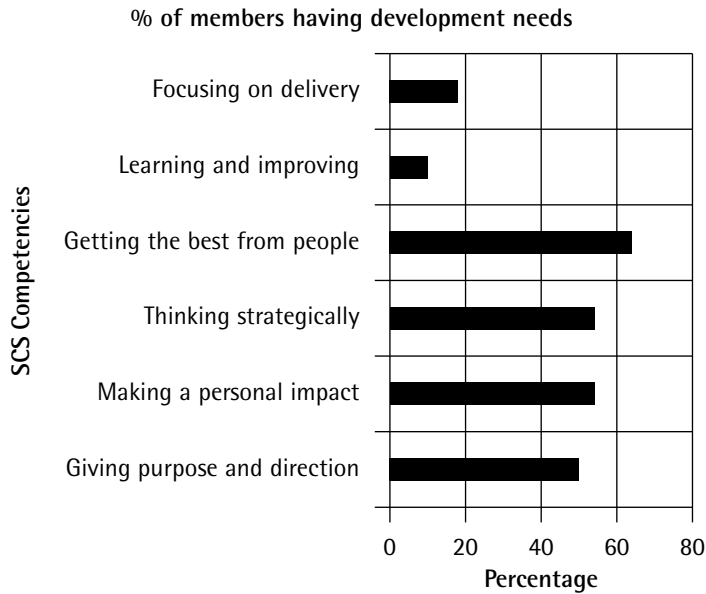
purpose of which was to systematically gather their perceptions about the process. A ROI study was undertaken which examined the coaching costs versus the benefits. Finally, a comparison for the first quarter of 2006 was made between those who had been coached and those who had not in terms of being successful at being appointed to a SCS post.

Sample. The sample comprised 10 Scheme members (eight men and two women) who had completed their coaching session contract. They had all undergone an Independent Assessment to identify their development needs. The assessments indicated that they had the potential to reach the SCS. The average age was 40 years old (maximum 49 years and minimum 31 years). They all had an initial coaching package comprising four face-to-face sessions of two- to three-hours and two telephone coaching session of 90 minutes.

Feedback Analysis. In order to capture the views of those who had been coached all 10

members who had completed the coaching were invited to complete a questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was to systematically capture data that would help evaluate the programme. A copy of the questionnaire is to be found in Appendix A. The results were collated and analysed using a simple calculator rather than any statistical programme as the findings are very much preliminary and the numbers involved do not stand up to statistical analysis.

Measure of Success. The programme was new and so scheme members have not actually had time physically to pass through the scheme, be appointed in an SCS post and undertake the job for a year. In view of this a criteria measure that was available was the ability of candidates to obtain an SCS appointment between January and April, 2006. There was a simple comparison group available of those who had been independently assessed as ready for the SCS, but who had not been coached. Both groups were able to compete for posts.

Return on Investment. McGovern *et al.* (2001) published a study that quotes a Return on Investment (ROI) of 5.7 for evaluating coaching. In attempting to undertake a small ROI study the outlay or costs of executive coaching were looked at in relation to the numbers being promoted into the SCS with the leadership behaviours.

Results

Overall Scheme Members' Perception. The questionnaire comprised a seven-point rating scale with the extremes defined as 'very poor' (rated 1) and 'very good' (rated 7). All 10 candidates completed the questionnaire. The findings were extremely positive. The detailed results can be found in Appendix B. Overall 100 per cent of the members rated the overall coaching process on a seven-point scale as 6 and above, where 7 is 'very good'. They also rated their own overall progress as good, all rating 5 and above. In summary everyone was very positive about the process and its value. Since members were being coached primarily on their 'leadership behaviours which comprised in part the 'people skills' they therefore perceived that it was these behaviours that benefited most through the coaching process. The intangible result for the MoD was the fact that members clearly had an improved perception of their leadership behaviours. For the specific questions:

Question 1: Coaching objectives.

The content analysis of the free text comment confirms that the candidates coaching objectives reflected the coaching needs that had been identified in Figure 1. In other words most of the free comment could be included within the skills Personal Impact and Getting the Best from People.

Question 2: Progress against achieving objectives.

One-hundred per cent of the members rated their progress 5 and above with 10 per cent being 7 'very good'.

Question 3: Summary question.

1. Overall coaching process: 100 per cent rated 6 and above.
2. Content of each session: 100 per cent rated 5 and above.
3. Listening skills: 100 per cent rated 6 and above.
4. Variety of questioning and interventions: 100 per cent rated 6 and above.
5. Care and focus of coach on your needs: 100 per cent rated 5 and above.
6. Amount of challenge and stretch from coach: 100 per cent rated 5 and above.
7. The ability to apply the session within your work: 100 per cent rated 5 and above.
8. Your openness and honesty: 100 per cent rated 6 and above.
9. Your commitment to applying your learning: 100 per cent rated 4 and above.

Question 4: Feedback received from others about their perception of your behaviour change.

A content analysis of the free text indicates that most team members, and their line managers, perceived changes to the team members' behaviour. Three candidates had positive 360 degree feedback results. This in effect indicates that those being coached are reporting that colleagues have seen a change.

Question 5: The contribution of coaching to on-the-job performance and any commercial benefit.

Content analysis indicated nine positive comments and no negative ones. But candidates had difficulty in quantifying any benefit. One person gave a subjective estimate of £10K another considered that they preformed at least 15 per cent better in terms of less time and effort required.

Question 6: Most appreciated things from coaching.

Content analysis indicated that the feedback was one of the key things that candidates appreciated and most of them stressed the honesty and independence of the feedback.

Question 7: How to improve coaching.

In terms of improvement by the coach two people indicated that they would have liked to have been clearer about the process at the start. One indicated that the coach did not understand the Senior Staff Assessment Process[3] and this had been an obstacle. One candidate felt that the coach could have been harder on him. In terms of improvements by the candidate the main theme was better preparation and understanding by the candidates prior to the session as they all said that they had improved as the process progressed.

Question 8: Undertake coaching again.

All, but one of the candidates said that they had already made arrangements to continue with coaching and were funding it from their own budgets. One candidate said that there should be a final line when coaching should cease.

Question 9: Any other comments.

All the comments were positive. Again the majority expressed the value of honest feedback and the opportunity to talk to someone independent.

Analysis of success

Following the SSAP 2005, nine candidates (two women and seven men) were independently assessed as being ready for the Promotion scheme and were, therefore, put directly onto the Promotion list. Ten other candidates (three women and seven men) who had been on the development scheme and who had been coached, were put onto the list. These included some of those who had been in the first study, but not all. Consequently in January, 2006, 19 people were on the promotable list and technically were ready to be appointed into an SCS job.

Table 1 shows the number of individuals on the 2006 Promotable list who have been appointed or not appointed to an SCS post against whether, or not, they had an executive coach.

In other words 40 per cent of those who received executive coaching were appointed into the SCS within the first four months of being on the list compared with 22 per cent of those who had not received any executive coaching. Clearly there are many other factors that impact on whether, or not, candidates on the promotable list are selected for jobs, for example, specialist area, whether or not they choose to apply for a specific post,

Table 1: Number of Candidates on the Promotable List being appointed to an SCS Post as at 24 April, 2006.

'Promotable' list	Promoted to an SCS Job	Not Promoted	Total
Coached	4	6	10
Not coached	2	7	9
Total	6	13	19

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[3] The Senior Staff Assessment Panel (SSAP) comprises a panel of skills champions who consider all the evidence presented by applicants for promotion and who recommend those that should be independently assessed to determine their potential for the Senior Civil Service.

competition with their peers, but these factors are likely to apply to both groups and the bottom line is that those who have been through coaching and, therefore, the development scheme appear to be being selected above those who are deemed ready. The numbers are very small but nevertheless these preliminary findings are interesting. Those that have been coached appear to be perceived as stronger candidates for promotion. It may be that a candidate who has been on the development scheme is preferred to one who had not.

Return on investment.
The approximate cost of coaching for a scheme member for one year (six to eight sessions) is £3K. At the end of the year the MoD can be certain that the member meets the SCS standard in the specific behaviours that have been coached. Taking the worst case in which a scheme member is at the top of the Band B salary scale (and most are not). The difference between a Band B salary and a new entry into the SCS salary is approximately £5K per year. If the MoD promotes an ineffective and 'limited' person to Pay Band 1 of the SCS, for example, a 50-year-old who can only do one tour, the MoD will in effect have wasted £5K per year. So for an investment of £3K the MoD can be assured that the individual can not only meet the requirements of the initial SCS post in their first year of appointment, but can also continue in other areas at that level. The appointment of a 50-year-old 'limited' person means that after the first four-year tour they have a further six years during which they are paid £5K over their competence level during which time they may well not be able to pick up another appointment. At its worst they may be made redundant with the associated compensation costs. At best they will remain in the SCS being paid £5K per year over their competence, i.e. £30K total.

The coaching process ensures that the scheme members are broader in their leadership skills and therefore more versatile

giving the MoD a wider choice of candidates for the senior positions as well as giving the candidates themselves flexibility to undertake more than one job.

Each scheme member has built on their experience of being coached and is a Departmental mentor. This skills transfer has been embraced enthusiastically and may be seen as a 'spend to save' and a rapid way of cascading coaching techniques and styles within the department and giving line managers further tools and techniques for their staff management role.

Discussion and conclusion
Executive coaching has been a positive experience for those on the Development Scheme. There are several explanations of the findings. It could simply that coaching is perceived to be beneficial by those who are assessed as likely to benefit from it in other words those who are on the Development Scheme. Alternatively it could it be a result of the Hawthorne Effect, Adair (1984) since those on the Development Scheme know that they are being assessed and may well modify their behaviour. Similarly scheme members have been identified as 'talent' and there is the possibility of the 'Pygmalion effect' (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968, 1992) in that those identified as talent become a self fulfilling prophecy. Nevertheless all scheme members reported that they liked to be coached and perceived it to impact positively on their effectiveness in the job. The findings from the evaluation appear to demonstrate that 'it works'. It has been perceived by all scheme members to be of great value and in terms of development they have embraced it enthusiastically.

When evaluating coaching Fillery-Travis and Lane, op. cit. state that it is important to take account of context and the coaching agenda. The evidence presented here indicates that there are positive intangible benefits such as the affect on leadership behaviours. Further work is required to try to relate and quantify these behaviours to the bottom line of producing a more effective

SCS one who is more rounded meeting the required competences, but who also delivers. In the future and as the numbers increase more tangible measures of assessing their performance could be looked such as staff appraisals, job patterns in terms of number and type of SCS posts taken up by scheme members, project delivery rates where appropriate and staff turnover within their Departments.

Although multiple factors, such as the environment, attitudes beliefs and values, and personality have an impact on whether, or not, coaching itself makes the difference, it is clear that those that are coached perceive themselves and they believe that those with whom they interact also perceive that they have improved their leadership skills. Frequently the scheme members have said that it is often the first time they have received and perhaps more importantly they have accepted honest feedback about their behaviour. This in itself may affect their self-belief which in turn is likely to impact on their motivation, and commitment to demonstrating leadership skills with the result that they are highly likely to deliver these skills at the standard required for the SCS. In other words coaching within the context of a Development Scheme provides a financial ROI as well as ensuring that those who are placed on the promotable list are highly committed to demonstrating and delivering the SCS leadership behaviours.

Toscano (2006) suggests that there area also more hidden and as yet not measured qualitative benefits such as:

● The cascade affect: as the skills of the members and those of other coaches cascade upwards and downwards throughout the Department as line managers see the benefits in terms of improved performance on the job.
● Staff feeling more valued.

This has not been specifically examined within the scope of this study but there is evidence that those who have had executive coaching are themselves mentors and it is likely that there is a skills transfer both upwards and downwards within the Department.

Summary
The MoD seeks a tangible outcome from the process of employing external executive coaches. This study has tried to show that coaching delivers and that it gives added value to those on a Development Scheme and more widely to the Department as a whole. The ultimate criteria would be performance in the SCS job. It is too early to use this as a criterion nevertheless the present findings highlight the fact that coaching appears to enhances the likelihood of achieving an SCS job. There is also some small evidence that it is having an impact on leadership behaviours and that it provides some ROI. Within MoD Executive Coaching is perceived as a positive experience for those identified as High Potential the fact that MoD is prepared to invest in this as a development tool impacts on the candidates perceptions, motivation and commitment and leadership behaviours.

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Appendix A: Executive Coaching Evaluation Questionnaire.

Name:.. Date:..

Question 1. What were your coaching objectives?

....

Question 2. How would you rate your progress against achieving these objectives? (tick box)

	Very poor			Adequate			Very good
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Question 3. How would you rate each of the following? (tick box)

	Very poor			Adequate			Very good
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Overall coaching process							
Content of each session							
Listening skills of coach							
Validity of questioning and interventions							
Care and focus of coach on your needs							
Amount of challenge and stretch from coach							
The ability to apply the session within your work							
Your openness and honesty							
Your commitment to applying your learning							

Question 4. What feedback, if any, have you received from others about a change in their perception of your behaviour?

....

Question 5. How has the coaching contributed to your on-the-job performance? What commercial benefit (£) has the organisation gained from your coaching?

....

Question 6. What have you appreciated most from coaching?

....

Question 7. How could the coaching be improved…

…**by coach?** ....

…**by you?** ....

Question 8. Given your experiences to date, would you undertake coaching again? If yes, under what circumstances? If no, why not?

....

Question 9. Are there any other comments you wish to make?

....

Appendix B: Executive Coaching Evaluation Questionnaire. Detailed results.

Question 1: What were your coaching objectives?
- Develop a more authoritative personal presence.
- Delegating more, with less anxiety.
- Other lower priority objectives available on request.
- Addressing how to improve my personal impact and get the best from people.
- To develop my competences to a level that satisfy the SCS requirements, by paying particular attention to the development areas identified in my Independent Assessment (Giving Purpose & Direction and Personal Impact).
- To coach me on specific issues or problems that may arise.
- Thinking and operating strategically.
- Time management.
- Active Listening.
- To consider, prioritise, and set out to plan to address those development needs highlighted from the SCS assessment process and discussion with Line manager.
- Making a personal impact (ensuring that my work and input is recognised at a 2* level and above).
- Getting the best from people.
- Broadening experience of Departmental Business.
- Learning and Improving.
- Thinking strategically.
- Getting the best from People.
- Making a Personal impact.
- To develop greater self belief in my abilities so that it is conveyed in my interaction with others.
- To develop my verbal conceptualisation skills.
- Improve ability to influence others looking at styles and non verbal signals.
- Improve ability to work at strategic level.
- Understand how best to use own resources.
- Initially to develop apparent areas fro the development scheme then to address the leadership challenge in the current role.

Question 2: How would you rate your progress against achieving these objectives: % rating?

Very poor			*Adequate*			*Very good*
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
				20%	70%	10%

Question 3: How would you rate each of the following (tick box) (*N*=10)

	Very poor		Adequate			Very good	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Overall coaching process						70%	30%
Content of each session					20%	70%	10%
Listening skills of coach						40%	60%
Variety of questioning and interventions						50%	50%
Care and focus of coach on your needs					10%	50%	40%
Amount of challenge and stretch from coach					10%	50%	40%
The ability to apply the session within your work					20%	30%	50%
Your openness and honesty						60%	40%
Your commitment to applying your learning				10%		50%	40%

Question 4: What feedback, if any, have you received from others about a change in their perception of your behaviour?

- In terms of top two priorities very positive feedback from line manager and team members. I believe senior colleagues have noticed the difference even if they have not explicitly said so.
- None at this point I was expecting to follow up with my first and second Reporting Officer in terms of my annual report.
- Favourable comment received from members of my team about me being more succinct.
- I suggest I can now perform to my pre-coaching level with 15 per cent less time/effort.
- My improved ways of working will have leverage through my direct reports and team members.
- Favourable comments from team members about more succinct meetings and presentations and there had been good take-up on my open surgeries.
- Band C1s welcomed their structured coaching.
- My direct reports like their more structured one to ones, my better time management and my clearer delegation.
- My line manager has commented that my progress looks impressive.
- There was the coach's comments to the Promotion Panel and the fact that they placed me on the promotable list.
- Greater self-awareness and involvement in the strategic aspects of the Top Level Budget.

● Recent 360 feedback as part of a Leadership and Management Development Programme showed that I was performing well across the competences, but most notably, had improved in respect of taking a wider perspective. Developing Policies and Programmes and Enabling Others to give of their best since my earlier 360.

● I use a 360 feedback and management team meetings to fully demonstrate my behaviour had changed. I also asked various peers and senior staff if they had noticed any change in my behaviour. The vast majority has so demonstrating that I have embedded the behavioural change required to develop. I undertook some formal training that assisted my development and assimilated and applied those lessons in my work.

● Good feedback leading to success at applying for promotion.

● My best sources of open and honest feedback – given I am currently outside the Dept. is through the Public Sector Leadership Scheme Action Inquiry Group.

Question 5: How has the coaching contributed to your on-the-job performance?
What commercial benefit (£) has the organisation gained from your coaching

● Without the coaching one very significant change in my performance (in relation to personal presence) simply would not have happened. I couldn't put a price on it, but I hope the lone term benefit to the organisation will be considerable.

● I pay more attention to using a range of approaches, as suitable to the circumstances, in working with others, I am also more conscious of making the best use of time.

● My improved ways of working will have leverage through my direct reports and team members.

● My improved behaviours which have ensured that I am working far more effectively and efficiently on the job. It is, however, difficult to translate this effectiveness and efficiency into a financial benefit. I suggested that I can now perform to my pre-coaching level with 15 per cent less time/effort. Furthermore, my improved ways of working will have leverage through my direct reports and team members, enabling the whole team work more effectively.

● Difficult to measure in short space of time, but certainly meetings are more concise and targeted to needs of individual who is coming to see me. Better prepared and able to contribute at 1* level thus raising the profile and input of J8 in operational business. More aware of importance of others.

● Since starting coaching I have been given the opportunity to perform at a higher level in a role that directly aids my personal development as well as highlighting the potential for efficiencies within Defence Analytical Service Agency.

● Coaching has enabled me to become a better manager and overall a better leader. This is difficult to quantify in £ but I would state was as a team are more efficient and less prone to waste than before so could argue savings in £10K but that is a very subjective estimate.

● My performance has improved.

● Coaching has considerably improved my day-to-day efficiency through tools and techniques to best use my own internal resources. I am also better able to deal with work.

Question 6: What have you appreciated most from coaching?

● Coaching has worked for me – it has made me do things differently permanently in a way other techniques have not done so successfully, it has also, as an aide, very nice to talk to someone with no agenda other than one's own personal development.

● The honestly, challenge and sustained enquiry, which led me to understand my own goals and motivations, and the consequences of these, much better by the end than at the start.

● The brutal honesty and challenge from the coach.

● The fact that it made me realise that not everything I did was bad and that it provided an opportunity to sit and discuss different ways of working in a completely safe environment.
● Independent feedback and advice based on behaviour and style rather than purely objective-focused. Holistic approach to development needs, drawing on past experience.
● The support has received from MoD in allowing me the time to undertake coaching and complete follow-up actions. This was certainly aided by the willingness of my coach to meet with my line management and countersigning officer. My coach has been very good at listening to information on the way I work and has asked probing questions that have encouraged me to think about the alternative ways of behaving to improve my effectiveness.
● I appreciate the different perspective of me from someone who was trained to look at other angles in an external fashion. I wanted to explore myself and polish my abilities rather than have a huge step change. I also went down avenues I had not thought about followed by a reinforcement of my behaviour. This was not all theory but practice and review so it was an incremental change.
● An independent person to provide honest feedback to support me in my personal development and perhaps more importantly to challenge me to improve in some areas.

Question7: How could the coaching be improved…
…By coach?
● Coach could have been a little harder on me on occasion in term so making sure I was really setting myself targets that were challenging and ensuring that I stuck to them particularly in our sessions (e.g. being concise and sticking to the point).
● Perhaps a slightly clearer view of the coach can and cannot provide ahead of the initial session.
● The coach might benefit from advance sight of the assessment report.
● In the first session where I had no idea what to expect or how long each coaching session would take. I went along for what I thought would be a short introductory chat say of up to an hour (in practice it was about 2 and half hours). I had done little preparation (other than to bring along my Personal Development Plan, 360 degree feedback and Independent Assessment) and in hindsight would probably have befitted from a short prior brief on how coaching operates what to prepare and how long to put aside.
● The coach is very busy and it is quite difficult to find time in his schedule, otherwise he is very good a his job.
● When we were dealing with my application for promotion the lack of understanding of MOD process was an obstacle – but my circumstances were particularly unique.
…By you?
● Better preparation.
● Get the best outcomes by applying my behavioural improvements to non-work environments as well as doing them on the job.
● I could have been a little harder on myself in terms of applying really stretching targets particularly towards the end of the series of sessions in order to better ensure that the learning was tested while there was still time to review it.
● Prior discussion with others who had undergone coaching might have been helpful.
● It helped when I worked out that I needed to be more receptive t the non-obvious in identifying causes of and solutions to development areas.
● The first two sessions felt like an interrogation, i.e. I felt like I was constantly being asked if I had tried this method or another method, etc. Because I felt I was trying to provide the coach with full details of my experience and development to date. I think I came across as defensive, i.e. rather than just accepting the coaching ideas and mulling over how I might

apply/reapply the ideas to the latest situations. If felt like I changed my behaviour in the subsequent sessions which enabled me to listen and learn more from the probing and challenging nature of the coach's questions.

● I want to push boundaries and explore more of myself both the good and not so good – I like exploring the areas and testing them in ways I had not thought of before.

● I have got better as the process has gone on the more you put in the more you get out.

● At time I found it hard to make the time to carry out the things I had promised and, therefore, sometimes bunched them up in hurry before the next session – this was more of an issue at the start than the end of the process as once I had seen successes the motivation was there.

Question 8: Given your experiences to date, would you undertake coaching again?
If yes under what circumstances? If no, why not?

● Yes I have a plan which I have agreed with to re-engage my coach as soon as I have a new job lined up at 1* level.

● Yes – I have paid for another series from own training budget.

● Yes – am doing so again this year on the development scheme – yes particularly in respect of continuing to understand and develop interpersonal skills and techniques.

● Already extended by coaching funded locally.

● Yes I feel that I gained a lot from coaching and I continue to surprised myself when I find that I am still sub-consciously applying some of the little techniques and lessons.

● Yes where I had a particular developmental need identified which I felt could be addressed through coaching.

● Yes on development scheme.

● Yes if I felt I needed support in changing a behaviour.

● I have continued with the coaching company.

● Think it is good when structured allied to structured training for me.

● Should be a final line when coaching should cease.

Question 9: Are there any other comments you wish to make?

● The issue of feedback is an important one. It is very difficult to get feedback from bosses, and even harder from peers and team members.

● I think those who have not had coaching before should be given more guidance about what to expect.

● Coaching was the most effective training/development I think I've ever had.

● I found it very useful and illuminative and not always terribly comfortable.

● I believe that provision of long-terms coaching relationships is key to enable higher performance by a Band B or SCS mentor.

● Simply that coaching is something I would recommend as something to help you identify your own development needs and also provide for working through.

● I am grateful for the opportunity the coaching and for the real support advice and assistance I received from my coach.

● Found it valuable experience that has certainly aided my development.

● Enjoyable – the ability to talk frankly about personal issues in confidence is also why coaching has to be this close professional relationship.

● It took some time to get going but once it was I found it stimulating and enjoyable.

Strengths use, self-concordance and well-being: Implications for Strengths Coaching and Coaching Psychologists

Reena Govindji & P. Alex Linley

An emphasis of the coaching psychology and positive psychology movements has been strengths and well-being. This study examined two generic aspects of strengths – strengths knowledge and strengths use, together with organismic valuing, and their relations with subjective well-being, psychological well-being, and subjective vitality. Theory suggests that people who know their strengths, use their strengths, and follow the directions that are right for them (i.e. organismically valuing) will be happier. Participants (N=214) completed measures of these variables, as well as measures of self-esteem and self-efficacy. Analyses showed that strengths knowledge, strengths use, and organismic valuing were all significantly associated with well-being and vitality. Regression analyses showed that self-esteem, organismic valuing, and strengths use all predicted unique variance in subjective well-being and psychological well-being, but only self-esteem significantly predicted unique variance in subjective vitality. The discussion locates the findings in relation to strengths coaching, and suggests directions for future research and coaching psychology applications.
Keywords: strengths, well-being, vitality, strengths coaching.

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY came about to redress the perceived imbalance in psychology, resulting from the excess focus that had been given to negative states and pathology, and the insufficient attention that had been given to strengths and well-being (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Similarly, coaching psychology arose as through a focus on building performance and enhancing well-being in non-clinical populations, leading commentators to note the parallels between the emergence of the two movements (Linley & Harrington, 2005).

This renewed emphasis in focusing on the positive aspects of human experience, in both positive psychology and coaching psychology (see Linley & Kauffman, 2007), has led to increased research into the concept of strengths, whether defined as character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), strengths in occupational settings (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001), or more general applications of strengths in work and life (Linley & Harrington, 2006a; Linley, Harrington & Hill, 2005), including specifically in relation to coaching psychology

(Linley & Harrington, 2006b). This article extends this focus on strengths through an empirical consideration of how strengths use and strengths knowledge may be associated with vitality and well-being, simultaneously testing the role of self-concordance that has been linked to strengths coaching in earlier work (Burke & Linley, 2007; Linley & Harrington, 2006b).

Research has now shown that strengths are remarkably consistent in their endorsement across cultures (Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2005), that strengths are meaningfully associated with well-being (Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Peterson *et al.*, in press), that certain strengths are more prevalent following recovery from serious illness (Peterson, Park & Seligman, 2006), that strengths profiles shifted in interpretable directions following the 11 September, 2001, terrorist attacks on the US (Peterson & Seligman, 2003), and that using strengths at work drives employee engagement (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002). Further, it has been shown that inviting people to use their character strengths in new and different ways

each day led to significant increases in happiness and significant decreases in depression, which were sustained over a six-month follow-up period (Seligman *et al.*, 2005).

From what has so far been put forward about a theoretical understanding of strengths, strengths are understood to be natural capacities that we yearn to use, that enable authentic expression, and that energise us. For example, Clifton and Anderson (2002) defined talent (here understood as 'strength') as 'a naturally recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behaviour that can be productively applied…a great number of talents naturally exist within you…They are among the most real and most authentic aspects of your personhood…' (Clifton & Anderson, 2002, p.6)

Similarly, the first criterion for a character strength proposed by Peterson and Seligman (2004) was that 'a strength contributes to various fulfillments that constitute the good life, for oneself and for others' (Criterion 1, pp.17–18). They suggested possible exemplars that would constitute this first criterion, including: 'a sense of ownership and authenticity ('this is the real me') vis-à-vis the strength…a sense of yearning to act in accordance with the strength; a feeling of inevitability in using the strength, as if one cannot be stopped or dissuaded from its display…invigoration rather than exhaustion when using the strength…intrinsic motivation to use the strength' (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.18).

These characteristics of using strengths – authenticity, vitality, invigoration, intrinsic motivation, and yearning – were linked by Linley and Harrington (2006b) to the views of human nature offered by Karen Horney and Carl Rogers, amongst others. Both Horney (1951) and Rogers (1963) argued that people have within them constructive directional tendencies that guide them towards realising their potentialities. For Horney, this was the tendency toward self-realisation, and for Rogers, the actualising tendency. Both Horney and Rogers described people's yearning to express and activate themselves, believing that when people were enabled to do so, they were more themselves, acting authentically and achieving well-being and vitality as a result.

More recent empirical evidence supports this premise, since it has been found that people pursuing more self-concordant goals are more likely to achieve them (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999), and to become happier as a result (Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001). It had also been found that people who change their goals over time are more likely to change them in directions that are self-concordant (Sheldon, Arndt & Houser-Marko, 2003), a finding that has been taken to support the idea of an organismic valuing process (OVP) As described by Sheldon and Elliot, the OVP can be understood as an inner voice that guides us in the directions that are right and satisfying for us: 'along with Rogers (1961), we believe that individuals have innate developmental trends and propensities that may be given voice by an organismic valuing process occurring within them. The voice can be very difficult to hear, but the current research suggests that the ability to hear it is of crucial importance for the pursuit of happiness' (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999, p.495). Further, research has shown how coaching interventions may impact self-concordance, which is one possible mechanism through which coaching enables goal attainment (Burke & Linley, 2007).

Noting the similarities between these core elements of human nature, and the characteristics put forward for using strengths, Linley and Harrington (2006b) argued that strengths are consistent with, and can be linked to following one's organismic valuing process: 'strengths are natural, they come from within, and we are urged to use them, develop them, and play to them by an inner, energising desire. Further, that when we use our strengths, we feel good about ourselves, we are better able to achieve things, and we are working toward fulfilling our potential' (Linley & Harrington, 2006b, p.41).

Building on these theoretical integrations, the focus of the current research was

to test these premises empirically. Given that previous research has largely focused on a particular conceptualisation of strengths (e.g. character strengths, Peterson & Seligman, 2004), we set out to examine the concept of strengths knowledge and strengths use more generically, how these related to organismic valuing, and together how these variables related to subjective well-being, psychological well-being, and vitality.

On the basis of extant theory and research, we hypothesised that strengths knowledge and strengths use would be positively associated with each other and with organismic valuing, and that each of them would be positively associated with subjective well-being, psychological well-being, and vitality. It has been suggested that subjective well-being (life satisfaction and affective balance) and psychological well-being (engagement with the existential challenges of life) are correlated but distinct (Keyes, Shmotkin & Ryff, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2001), while subjective vitality represents a more dynamic aspect of well-being (Ryan & Frederick, 1997). Hence, we included measures of each of these aspects of well-being.

Further, to control for possible overlap with other more established psychological constructs, we included measures of self-esteem and self-efficacy. Self-esteem refers to an overall positive evaluation of oneself (Rosenberg, 1979) and self-efficacy to one's belief in one's ability to achieve goals (Bandura, 1997). Self-esteem and self-efficacy are both positively associated with a variety of well-being indicators (Lucas, Diener & Suh, 1996), and it is important to demonstrate effects for strengths knowledge, strengths use, and organismic valuing that are independent of these more established constructs.

In short, this study examined the associations between strengths use, strengths knowledge, and organismic valuing, and their relations with three aspects of well-being. The study was designed to provide a preliminary empirical basis for coaches and coaching psychologists who are working with their clients to try and harness their strengths more, through exploring the potential impact of strengths across different indicators of well-being.

Method
Participants
Participants were 214 college students (129 females, 85 males). They were enrolled on a variety of course programmes, including psychology (42.1 per cent), science (20.4 per cent), humanities (6.3 per cent), law (5.9 per cent) and government and politics (4.1 per cent). Their mean age was 22.78 years (SD=7.90, range 18–58 years), and they were predominantly from a White ethnic background (64 per cent), the next highest representations being Indian (20 per cent) and Chinese (4 per cent). Participants were typically single (79.6 per cent) or married (10.9 per cent), and all spoke English as their first language.

Materials
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1979). This is a 10-item scale that assesses explicit self-esteem; five items are reverse scored. Items were scored from 0 (strongly disagree) to 3 (strongly agree), giving a potential range of 0–30, with higher scores indicating higher self-esteem. The scale is one of the most widely used measures of explicit self-esteem (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991).

General Self-Efficacy Scale (Chen, Gully & Eden, 2001). Eight items assess general self-efficacy, for example, *'In general, I think I can obtain outcomes that are important to me'*, using a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale has a potential range of 8 to 40, with higher scores indicating higher general self-efficacy.

Scales of Psychological Well-Being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Eighteen items assess six dimensions of psychological well-being (three items per dimension: autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, personal growth, purpose in life, and self-

acceptance). Participants responded using a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), giving a potential range of 18 to 108. Six items are reverse scored. An overall psychological well-being score was computed, with higher scores indicating greater psychological well-being.

Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener *et al.*, 1985). Participants rated five items (e.g. *'The conditions of my life are excellent'*) on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), giving a potential range of 5 to 35. Higher scores indicate higher levels of life satisfaction.

Positive and Negative Affect Scales (PANAS; Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). The PANAS is a 20-item scale that measures 10 positive (e.g. *'interested'*, *'excited'*) and 10 negative (e.g. *'irritable'*, *'nervous'*) affects, using single adjectives that were rated on a 1 (very slightly or not at all) to 5 (extremely) frequency scale for the past week. The PANAS has excellent psychometric properties, and is one of the most widely used measures of positive and negative affect.

Subjective Vitality Scale (Ryan & Frederick, 1997). Participants responded to seven items measuring levels of vitality (e.g. *'I feel alive and vital'*), on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 7 (very true), indicating *'the degree to which the statement is true for you in general in your life.'*

One item is reverse scored. Higher scores indicate higher levels of subjective vitality.

Organismic Valuing Scale. An initial item pool of 20 items was developed from the theoretical and empirical literature on the organismic valuing process (Rogers, 1964; Sheldon *et al.*, 2003). Participants were asked to respond *'about how you feel in your daily life'* using a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) scale. Seven items of the initial item pool were reverse scored. Principal components analysis of the items revealed five components with eigenvalues greater than one. Cattell's (1966) scree test showed a single component above a marked elbow. Principal components analysis of the eight items comprising this component showed them to load at .60 to .85 on a single 'organismic valuing' factor which accounted for 39.5 per cent of the variance (see Table 1). These eight items were taken forward to constitute the Organismic Valuing Scale.

Strengths Knowledge Scale. An initial item pool of 20 items was developed to assess strengths knowledge, that is, people's awareness and recognition of their strengths. Participants were informed *'the following questions ask you about your strengths, that is, the things that you are able to do well or do best'*, and were asked to respond using a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) scale. Three items were negatively scored. Principal components analysis of the items revealed three compo-

Table 1: Principal Components Analysis of the Organismic Valuing Scale.

Item No.	Item	Loading
4.	I know the things that are right for me	.60
6.	I get what I need from life	.77
7.	The decisions I take are the right ones for me	.85
8.	I feel that I am in touch with myself	.67
9.	I feel integrated with myself	.67
10.	I do the things that are right for me	.80
14.	The decisions I make are based on what is right for me	.69
17.	I am able to listen to myself	.65

Note: All items loaded on a single Organismic Valuing factor.

Table 2: Principal Components Analysis of Strengths Knowledge Scale.

Item No.	Item	Loading
4.	Other people see the strengths that I have	.51
5.	I have to think hard about what my strengths are	.50
11.	I know what I do best	.57
25.	I am aware of my strengths	.66
29.	I know the things I am good at doing	.74
31.	I know my strengths well	.70
35.	I know the things I do best	.68
40.	I know when I am at my best	.72

Note: All items loaded on a single Strengths Knowledge factor.

nents with eigenvalues greater than one. Cattell's (1966) scree test showed a single component above a marked elbow. Principal components analysis of the eight items comprising this component showed them to load at .50 to .74 on a single 'strengths knowledge' factor that accounted for 46.7 per cent of the variance (see Table 2). These eight items were taken forward to constitute the Strengths Knowledge Scale.

Strengths Use Scale. An initial item pool of 19 items was developed to assess strengths use, that is, how much people use their strengths in a variety of settings. Participants were informed *'the following questions ask you about your strengths, that is, the things that you are able to do well or do best'*, and were asked to respond using a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) scale. Principal components analysis of the items revealed three components with eigenvalues greater than one. Cattell's (1966) scree test showed a single component above a marked elbow. Principal components analysis of the 14 items comprising this component showed them to load at .52 to .79 on a single 'strengths use' factor that accounted for 56.2 per cent of the variance (see Table 3). These 14 items were taken forward to constitute the Strengths Use Scale.

Table 3: Principal Components Analysis of the Strengths Use Scale.

Item No.	Item	Loading
2.	I am regularly able to do what I do best	.79
3.	I always play to my strengths	.67
6.	I always try to use my strengths	.62
9.	I achieve what I want by using my strengths	.54
10.	I use my strengths everyday	.54
18.	I use my strengths to get what I want out of life	.52
21.	My work gives me lots of opportunities to use my strengths	.53
24.	My life presents me with lots of different ways to use my strengths	.53
26.	Using my strengths comes naturally to me	.60
28.	I find it easy to use my strengths in the things I do	.60
30.	I am able to use my strengths in lots of different situations	.63
37.	Most of my time is spent doing the things that I am good at doing	.51
38.	Using my strengths is something I am familiar with	.67
39.	I am able to use my strengths in lots of different ways	.75

Note: All items loaded on a single Strengths Use factor.

Procedure

Participants were invited to take part in the study at a range of locations around a major university. They were informed of their right to withdraw their data from the study at any time; and were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. Participants followed the written instructions in the questionnaire about responding to each scale, and were encouraged to take their time in completing the questionnaire. They did not receive any incentive or remuneration for taking part in the study. The questionnaires were presented in four different orderings in order to control for potential order effects (Krosnick & Alwin, 1987).

Data Analyses

Scores for negative affect, positive affect, and life satisfaction were standardised, and then negative affect was subtracted from the sum of positive affect and life-satisfaction to produce a composite SWB variable, following previous research (e.g. Diener & Lucas, 1999; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999).

Correlation analyses were used to assess the relationships between study variables. Multivariate analysis of variance was used to examine gender differences. Multiple regression analyses were used to examine the unique associations of study variables with the outcome variables. All statistical analyses are reported with two-tailed levels of significances, with alpha set at .05, unless indicated otherwise. Data screening did not reveal any violations of assumptions for the statistical analyses used.

Results

Gender differences

We examined possible gender differences by computing a multivariate analysis of variance including each of the study variables. In each case, there were no significant gender differences for any of the study variables (all $p>.10$).

Correlations between Study Variables

The internal consistency reliabilities, means, standard deviations, and observed ranges for the study variables are presented in Table 4. The intercorrelations between study variables are presented in Table 5. As hypothesised, organismic valuing, strengths knowledge, and strengths use were all significantly correlated with each other. Further, as hypothesised, each of them was also significantly correlated with subjective well-being, psychological well-being, and subjective vitality. Organismic valuing, strengths knowledge, and strengths use were also significantly associated with self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables.

Variable	Alpha (α)	*M*	*SD*	Observed Range
Strengths Knowledge	.89	40.03	9.15	18-61
Strengths Use	.95	64.83	14.09	30-98
Organismic Valuing	.91	40.09	8.01	15-56
Self-Esteem	.87	20.52	5.22	6-30
Self-Efficacy	.87	29.53	4.82	14-40
Positive Affect	.89	33.08	7.49	11-50
Negative Affect	.88	20.79	8.20	10-50
Satisfaction with Life Scale	.86	22.89	6.70	5-35
Subjective Well-Being	–	35.23	16.78	–32–75
Psychological Well-Being	.76	76.40	9.56	52-97
Subjective Vitality	.91	31.25	7.60	13-49

Table 5: Intercorrelations between Study Variables.

	SKS	SUS	OVS	S-EST	S-EFF	SWB	PWB	SVS
SKS	–	.85***	.62***	.61***	.59***	.46***	.53***	.42***
SUS		–	.60***	.56***	.63***	.51***	.56***	.45***
OVS			–	.64***	.53***	.59***	.60***	.41***
S-EST				–	.64***	.62***	.84***	.51***
S-EFF					–	.50***	.56***	.44***
SWB						–	.70***	.52***
PWB							–	.51***
SVS								–

Note: SKS = Strengths Knowledge Scale. SUS = Strengths Use Scale. OVS = Organismic Valuing Scale.
S-EST = Self-Esteem Scale. S-EFF = Self-Efficacy Scale. SWB = Subjective Well-Being. PWB = Psychological Well-Being.
SVS = Subjective Vitality Scale.
***$p<.001$. All two-tailed tests.

Multiple Regression Analyses
To test our hypotheses that organismic valuing, strengths use, and strengths knowledge would be associated with subjective well-being, psychological well-being, and subjective vitality when controlling for self-esteem and self-efficacy, we conducted three standard multiple regressions with simultaneous entry of the predictor variables.

Subjective well-being. Self-esteem was the strongest unique predictor of subjective well-being, but organismic valuing and strengths use also made significant unique contributions to the variance explained. Strengths knowledge also made a marginally significant unique contribution (see Table 6). The model as a whole explained 46 per cent of the variance in subjective well-being (adjusted R^2=.46).

Psychological well-being. Similarly for psychological well-being, self-esteem was the strongest unique predictor, but organismic valuing and strengths use again made significant unique contributions to the variance explained (see Table 6). The model as a whole explained 54 per cent of the variance in subjective well-being (adjusted R^2=.54).

Subjective Vitality. In contrast, for subjective vitality, self-esteem was the only significant unique predictor, although strengths use was the next strongest predictor ($p<.10$). (see Table 6). The model as a whole explained 30 per cent of the variance in subjective well-being (adjusted R^2=.30).

Discussion
This study found that organismic valuing, strengths knowledge, and strengths use were all significantly associated with each other and with subjective well-being, psychological well-being, and subjective vitality. When controlling for self-esteem and self-efficacy, both organismic valuing and strengths use remained significant (together with self-esteem) in predicting subjective well-being and psychological well-being (but not subjective vitality, for which self-esteem was the only significant predictor).

Our findings indicate that people who are in touch with their own feelings, needs, and values (that is, who are organismically valuing) and who are using their strengths more experience greater well-being in terms of both subjective well-being (affective balance and life satisfaction) and psychological well-being (engagement with the existential challenges of life) although on the

Table 6: Multiple Regression of Study Variables on Subjective Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, and Subjective Vitality.

Variable	B	SE (β)	β
Subjective Well-Being			
Self-esteem	.07	.02	.39***
Self-efficacy	.02	.02	.08
Organismic valuing	.03	.01	.26**
Strengths use	.02	.01	.26*
Strengths knowledge	−.02	.01	−.21^
Psychological Well-Being			
Self-esteem	.76	.13	.41***
Self-efficacy	.21	.14	.10
Organismic valuing	.27	.08	.22***
Strengths use	.17	.07	.24*
Strengths knowledge	−.12	.10	−.11
Subjective Vitality			
Self-esteem	.07	.02	.31***
Self-efficacy	.03	.02	.13
Organismic valuing	.00	.01	.03
Strengths use	.02	.01	.21
Strengths knowledge	−.00	.01	−.02

Note: All variables entered simultaneously into the regression analysis. ^{p}=.05. *p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001.

basis of this research we cannot of course specify directionality. In contrast, strengths knowledge was not a significant independent predictor of either, suggesting that it is more important to use your strengths rather than simply to know what they are. This finding is notable, given that strengths use and strengths knowledge were substantially and significantly correlated, and yet had differential predictions of well-being indicators. As such, we would exercise caution before automatically seeking to combine the scales because of their high intercorrelations.

These findings are consistent with organismic valuing theory (Joseph & Linley, 2005; Rogers, 1964; Sheldon *et al.*, 2003) and the extant research on self-concordant goal striving (Burke & Linley, 2007; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999), both of which form the theoretical basis for person-centred coaching psychology (Joseph, 2006), and suggest that behaving authentically promote psychological growth and fulfillment, a view that is consistent with a range of studies, methodologies and approaches showing that SWB and PWB results from engaging in self-concordant, internalised, intrinsic behaviour (e.g. Kasser & Ryan, 1996; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999).

These findings also support the tentative theoretical understandings that have been put forward for strengths (Clifton & Anderson, 2002; Peterson & Seligman, 2004), which suggest that people have intrinsic motivation and a yearning to use their strengths, and that when they do so, they experience authenticity, vitality and well-being. Overall, our findings empirically support the theoretical integrations put forward by Linley & Harrington (2006b) in relation to strengths coaching: strengths knowledge and strengths use are associated with organismic valuing, and in turn with well-being and vitality.

The unique variance explained by self-esteem for each of the three types of well-being examined bears comment. Many

authors regard self-esteem as fundamental to psychological health (e.g. Korman, 1970; Rosenberg, 1979), and these data support that view. It appears that those high in self-esteem are more likely to be able to follow their OVP, and to have greater knowledge about their strengths as well as more confidence in using them. This combination of attributes appears to explain a substantial proportion of variance in both subjective well-being and psychological well-being.

Our findings suggest that organismic valuing and strengths use are both important and independent influences on our well-being. This is as predicted by theoretical understandings of strengths from the field of positive psychology (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and especially its intersections with coaching psychology (Linley & Harrington, 2006b). To our knowledge, this is the first empirical research to link strengths with organismic valuing, and to link strengths use with well-being outcomes, thereby providing an important – but preliminary – basis for developing and designing coaching approaches, or integrating new coaching techniques, that draw from the field of positive psychology and the possibilities for integration between the two fields (Linley & Harrington, 2005). Going forward, we recommend that these approaches are subjected to the evidence-based evaluation recommended by Grant (2005) for coaching psychologists in practice.

Despite its contributions, the study also has its limitations, and these may form the focus of future research. First, the organismic valuing, strengths knowledge, and strengths use scales were all developed for this study and would benefit from further validation, although we note that they were internally consistent and correlated meaningfully and in hypothesised directions with all of the study variables.

Second, the study was cross-sectional, and future work would improve by the longitudinal examination of these issues, exploring if organismic valuing and strengths use predict increases in well-being over time, and

if so, whether there is an upward spiral effect as has been found for self-concordant goal striving (Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001). Extending this, future longitudinal work may seek to assess whether there are contingent or interacting relationships between the factors we have examined here. For example, are strengths knowledge and organismic valuing necessary preconditions for successful strengths use? Do self-esteem and strengths use interact over time to predict higher levels of well-being? These questions remain to be answered by future research.

Third, future work may seek to assess how strengths use influences goal pursuit, goal attainment, and well-being. It appears likely that people using their strengths more would be more likely to attain their goals, but to our knowledge this has not been empirically tested to date. Relatedly, we caution that more may not always be better for strengths use. Empirical work has shown that reporting more of a strength may be consistently associated with higher levels of well-being (Park *et al.*, 2004), but there are also perspectives suggesting that strengths can be overdone (Kaplan & Kaiser, 2006; Peterson, 2006) and these bear future empirical consideration.

Fourth, the pattern of associations with vitality were mixed, and we note that similar mixed findings were reported by Sheldon and Kasser (1995), who found that both strong extrinsic valuing and strong intrinsic valuing were both associated with higher levels of vitality, despite having divergent correlations with other variables. The nature of vitality as a dynamic indicator of well-being, and its associations with and influence from other variables, clearly merits future research consideration.

We believe it also bears note that in completing the scales, many participants commented that various questions, particularly about their strengths, prompted them to ponder upon aspects of their lives and experiences that they had not previously considered. A number of participants spontaneously commented that this was helpful

to them in thinking about their future life directions, and as such could readily be linked to applications in career coaching (Bench, 2003), as well as those instances in the coaching relationship when a person is struggling with the consideration of what to do and where to go next. Coaching has often been cited as giving people a space and time for self-reflection (Burke & Linley, 2007), and it appears that asking people about their strengths does this similarly.

In conclusion, these findings highlight that people do not always consciously think about their strengths, and suggest that future coaching interventions that are designed to help people understand their strengths better, as well as using them more, would have a range of positive implications. In our view, such actions merit a worthy goal for future research and applications at the intersection of coaching psychology and positive psychology, and in relation to strengths coaching particularly.

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GAS powered coaching: Goal Attainment Scaling and its use in coaching research and practice

Gordon B. Spence

As the demand for an evidence-based approach to coaching grows, so does the need for rigourous outcome measures. However, despite the fact that coaching is a goal-focused process, there has been little discussion in the coaching literature about different approaches to measuring goal attainment. Given that goal attainment represents a key dependent variable for coaching interventions, it is important that this gap in the literature be addressed. This paper seeks to stimulate discussion about this important issue by describing an approach to the measurement of goal outcomes, Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS), and discussing the strengths and limitations of the approach. Whilst goal attainment processes are multifaceted and measurement is complicated by a multiplicity of goal constructs and the inherent instability of goals, it is argued that the GAS methodology offers coaches a way of neutralising some of these challenges. In addition, GAS has the potential to stimulate dialogue between practitioners and researchers, as it could provide a methodological framework and language accessible to both.

Keywords: Coaching outcomes, goal attainment scaling, methodology, practitioners, researchers.

COACHING RESEARCH is currently on the rise, with a clutch of outcome studies recently reported on the efficacy of coaching programmes (Chapman, 2005; Grant, 2003; Green, Oades & Grant, 2006; Ladyshewsky & Varey, 2005; Olivero, Bane & Kopelman, 1997; Spence & Grant, in press; Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004). This trend suggests that the coaching community has finally begun to prioritise the validation of its methods, in line with recent calls from several authors (Bennett, 2006; Grant & Cavanagh, 2004; Grant & Stober, 2006; Kilburg, 2004; Lowman, 2005; Stober & Parry, 2005). Whilst these developments are encouraging, coaching research has a long way to go before it can be considered a mature field of study. For that to happen a vibrant research agenda will need to be maintained, one that is informed by the practical, theoretical and empirical questions posed by practitioners and researchers.

Arguably one of the most important issues facing coaching researchers relates to the measurement of goal attainment.

As coaching is a goal-focused process (Grant, 2006), goal attainment represents a key dependent variable for any coaching intervention. To date, however, early outcome studies have shown a tendency to rely on simple quantitative self-report measures of goal attainment (e.g. Grant, 2003; Green *et al.*, 2006; Spence & Grant, in press), with only the occasional study employing more objective methods of measurement (Olivero *et al.*, 1997).

This paper questions the use of such simplistic methods. Whilst the use of self-report measures is widely accepted in social psychological research, it will be argued that the centrality of goal attainment requires coaching researchers to find ways of maximising objectivity in their data sets. This is important because goal attainment ratings based solely on a coachee's subjective assessment of performance are highly susceptible to various forms of distortion and bias (e.g. performance rationalisations, recall inaccuracy), raising doubts about the degree to which reported changes in goal attainment

reflect actual changes in that variable. Ideally, coaching research would involve the use of methodologies that control for these sources of distortion and bias. In this regard it will be suggested that one methodology, Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS), has the potential to provide coaching researchers with a more rigorous approach to the measurement of goal attainment, thereby enhancing the quality of coaching research.

Aside from its value as a research tool, there are features of the GAS method make it an attractive proposition for practitioners. Foremost among these is the intensive cognitive processing that the use of GAS is likely to elicit from coachees. As it will be shown, the GAS process engages individuals in detailed pre-intervention discussions about their goals. It is conceivable that such discussions catalyse important goal striving processes, such as action planning and behavioural monitoring, increasing the likelihood of goal attainment. Given these and other positive attributes (which will shortly be outlined), the use of GAS in coaching research and practice seem worthy of exploration.

The measurement of goal attainment in coaching research

The measurement of goal attainment in coaching research has tended to follow the well-established procedures employed in personal goal research (e.g. Emmons, 1986; Sheldon & Elliot, 1998; Sheldon, Kasser, Smith & Share, 2002). Typically, the measurement process begins with a request that participants record a specified number of goals in a personal goal questionnaire or workbook. In many of these studies, goal attainment ratings are obtained in one of two ways.

First, a pre-coaching goal attainment score is obtained by having participants rate their success for each goal on a simple five-point Likert scale (e.g. 1 = per cent successful; 5 = 100 per cent successful). These ratings are then summed and divided by the total number of goals to obtain a

mean attainment score for Time 1. This process is then repeated at the post-intervention interval (Time 2), along with any follow-up intervals (Time 3, Time 4, etc.). Having obtained a series of attainment scores, data from multiple time points can be statistical analysed to determine the impact of an intervention on goal attainment. Of the coaching outcome studies mentioned earlier, both Green *et al.* (2006) and Spence and Grant (in press) have employed this method.

Second, the method outlined above can be extended by the addition of a difficulty rating that (like attainment) can be measured on a Likert scale (ranging from, say, 1 = very easy to 4 = very difficult). This approach calculates goal attainment scores in the following way:

$$\frac{\text{Goal Attainment} = }{\begin{array}{c}(\text{Goal 1 Difficulty x Attainment}) + \\ (\text{Goal 2 Difficulty x Attainment}) + (\ldots)\end{array}}{\text{Total Number of Goals}}$$

The major advantage of this method is that, by weighting each goal for its perceived level of challenge, the measure becomes more sensitive to change, as goals with higher difficulty ratings exert more influence the overall attainment scores than goals with lower ratings. Thus, if the difficulty rating for Goal 1 is 4 *(very difficult)* and Goal 2 is 2 *(moderately easy)*, and the same amount of progress is observed for both goals between two time points, then a greater degree of attainment will be recorded for Goal 1 than Goal 2, due to the greater weighting it has received. This approach has been used by Grant (2003a) and more recently by Spence (2005).

Limitations of existing methods

Whilst there are some advantages associated with the use of these methods (such as simplicity, ease of use), the accuracy and validity of these measures is open to question. First, these methods tend to lock individuals into particular goal(s) without specifying what a 'near-miss' looks like. This can be problematic because when one's

goal-directed efforts are not aligned to the specifications of a goal, the evaluation of attainment becomes post-hoc and subject to multiple distortions (such as self-serving biases, performance rationalisations and/or inaccuracy during memory recall). Second, demand characteristics are another potential source of distortion. Research participants can sometimes be inclined to report overly positive outcomes, as a way of pleasing or rewarding a researcher (or practitioner).

Finally, the articulation of personal goals in coaching research has generally been achieved via a goal-setting workshop (for groups), or some form of structured goal-setting questionnaire or self-coaching manual (for individuals). As these approaches do not usually involve much one-on-one assistance, they are usually both time and cost effective. Yet, the absence of individualised assistance during goal-setting may lead to a lack of 'quality control' which negatively affects research outcomes. For example, participants may select goals that are unrealistic, misaligned with other important goals, or simply excessively vague and therefore difficult to measure accurately.

Goal Attainment Scaling

GAS is a method of programme impact evaluation that has been used in a variety of applied settings, such as occupational therapy (Ottenbacher & Cusick, 1993), paediatric and geriatric rehabilitation (Mitchell & Cusick, 1998; Stolee, Zaza, Pedlar & Myers, 1999), psychotherapy (Shefler, Canetti & Wiseman, 2001) as well as multi-disciplinary health initiatives, such as the delivery of rural and remote health services (Cox & Amsters, 2002). Originally developed for the mental health field by Kiresuk and Sherman (1968), GAS has proven to be extremely useful for evaluating progress towards programme-specific goals (MacKay & Lundie, 1998). It is typically used as a clinical tool to help address the physical or psychological needs of clients. An appealing aspect of GAS is the active collaboration that it promotes between a client, a helper and the client's family or significant others (Schlosser, 2004). Thus far, however, there has been little discussion of its potential use within non-clinical contexts, even though goal constructs are widely used by coaches and applied positive psychologists.

Description and procedure

GAS can be summarised as involving: (i) the construction of a scale based on a desired level of goal attainment, and (ii) the use of that scale to monitor progress and evaluate performance at time points of interest (Ottenbacher & Cusick, 1990). The GAS process begins with the preparation of a goal chart (see Table 1).

GAS charts articulate goals at two or more levels of abstraction. At the first level goals are stated as general objectives that vary from vague, global statements (e.g. 'Become more social'), to more definitive statements related to particular areas identified for growth and development (e.g. 'Increase number of social interactions to overcome shyness'). At the second level these general goals are expressed according to a set of specific behavioural units that are easily observable, measurable and, most importantly, realistic for the client (e.g. 'Initiate conversations with two new people every day').

Once the client and the helper agree on the specific behaviours that represent improvement, agreement is also sought on a specific level of attainment that represents a realistic (but stretching) goal for the client. Once agreed, this becomes the scale mid-point (Expected Outcome). After a realistic goal has been set, four alternative levels of accomplishment are agreed (i.e. Best Expected Outcome, More than Expected Outcome, Less than Expected Outcome, Worst Expected Outcome) in order to permit programme outcomes to be measured with a greater degree of accuracy. The important steps and considerations for the completion of GAS charts are outlined in Table 2.

Table 1: Example of a Goal Attainment Scaling Chart.

Higher order goals	Goal 1 'Become more social'	Goal 2 'Become more serene'
Lower order goals GAS Levels	Increase number of social interactions to overcome shyness	Increase serenity by doing more meditation practice
Best expected outcome	Initiate conversation (min. 5 mins) with >4 new people per day	Complete 20-min. guided meditation every day of the week
More than expected outcome	Initiate conversation (min. 5 mins) with 3–4 new people per day	Complete 5–6 x 20-min. guided meditations per week
Expected outcome	Initiate conversation (min. 5 mins) with 2 new people per day	Complete 4 x 20-min. guided meditations per week
Less than expected outcome	Initiate conversation (min. 5 mins) with 1 new person per day	Complete 2–3 x 20-min. guided meditations per week (C)
Worst expected outcome	No conversations with anyone new (C)	Complete <2 x 20-min. guided meditations per week

(C) = Current level of attainment

After establishing a goal chart, the intervention commences and runs for a specified period of time. Having determined how goal attainment data will be collected prior to the commencement of the programme (see Step 4, Table 2), data collection should be unambiguous, relatively simple and as immediate as possible (rather than retrospective). The GAS data is assembled and presented to all those involved in the goal setting process (i.e. client, helper, significant others), such that an agreement can be reached on what level of goal attainment has been achieved (Schlosser, 2004). This concludes the scaling process.

The calculation of GAS scores

The use of GAS scales is especially attractive to some researchers because they can be transformed into standard scores and used for the purpose of comparison between different programme groups (Kiresuk, Smith & Cardillo, 1994). Upon completion of the goal attainment chart a numerical value is assigned to each outcome level (i.e., worst expected = -2, less than expected = -1, expected = 0, more than expected = +1, best expected = +2), along with a numerical weighting that reflects the relative importance of each goal (MacKay & Lundie, 1998). At a predetermined future point, this five-point scale (which has an assumed mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1) is used to quantify goal attainment by taking the collected outcome data, comparing it to the scale and calculating how much this deviates from the mean of 0.

Total goal attainment scores can then be calculated using the following formula, which yields a standard score, or *T*-score, with a (hypothesised) mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10 (Kiresuk & Sherman, 1968):

$$T = 50 + \frac{10\Sigma w_i x_i}{\sqrt{(1-\rho)\Sigma w_i^2 + \rho(\Sigma w_i)^2}}$$

Where:
w_i = weights assigned for each particular goal;
x_i = the attainment score for each goal (a value from −2 to +2);
ρ = the average intercorrelation of attainment scores (assumed to be 0.30).

Table 2: The Goal Attainment Scaling Process.

Step	Description	
1.	Identify overall objective	Client and coach discuss and agree on the general goal(s) of the programme (e.g. improve physical fitness).
2.	Identify specific problem areas to be addressed	Requires prioritisation of problem areas (e.g. physical inactivity) and reduction to observable and reportable components (e.g. preferred form of exercise, frequency).
3.	Identify behaviours that would indicate improvement	Involves outlining the operational detail needed for the scale to be a useful instrument in evaluating performance (e.g. defining 'exercise' in terms of completed gym sessions).
4.	Determine how goal attainment will be measured	Decisions made regarding the collection of goal attainment data: Who will collect it? In what setting it will be gathered? (e.g. exercise diary completed by client).
5.	Select 'Expected Outcome' level of performance	A critical step. Both the client and coach appraise and agree on a level of attainment that is both meaningful and realistic for the client given their history and current situation.
6.	Identify alternative levels of attainment	In addition to the 'Expected Outcome', four other levels of attainment are identified in order to quantify greater and lesser levels of performance.
7.	Check for overlapping goals and gaps between levels	Overlapping goals can be used but they must be mutually exclusive and internally consistent. Gaps between levels are not permissible and can be addressed by defining a behavioural range for each goal level.
8.	Ascertain current level of attainment	Discuss past and present goal attainment with the client to determine the GAS level that is 'current'. A timetable for future evaluations should also be agreed at this point.

Adapted from Ottenbacher & Cusick (1990).

T-scores are useful for evaluation not only because they provide an index of individual performance within different intervention groups, but also because obtaining a standardised unit of goal progression allows statistical comparisons to be made between groups (MacKay & Lundie, 1998). A fully worked example of a *T*-score calculation is provided by Schlosser (2004).

GAS: Strengths and Limitations
There are several potential advantages that practitioners and researchers may gain from using the GAS methodology to measure coaching outcomes. These will now be examined, along with some important issues that may limit its use in both applied and research settings.

Strengths
The advantages of using GAS for programme evaluations has been widely reported (MacKay & Lundie, 1998; Ottenbacher & Cusick, 1990; Schlosser, 2004) and can be summarised as follows:

i. GAS is not bound to any theoretical orientation, type of intervention or outcome measure. This makes the procedure very flexible and suitable for measuring performance across a wide range of applied settings;

ii. GAS reduces the likelihood of erroneous post-hoc evaluations of success because individuals have stated for themselves the alternative levels of attainment and, therefore, should be able to measure their performance more accurately;

iii. Outcomes are not based solely on subjective assessments of performance. Rather they are determined as a result of consensus between an individual and their helper (i.e. practitioner or researcher) using data collected during the course of the intervention. This provides the process with greater objectivity, as the helper can ask questions about the attainment data and seek clarification on issues that might otherwise distort or bias the results;

iv. Finally, the calculation of GAS scores provides a numeric index that can permit performance to be accessed over time and used for both within-subjects and between-group comparisons. However, as it will be shown, the validity of GAS scores has been widely questioned, which may make this aspect of the methodology inappropriate in some circumstances.

Limitations

Despite its appeal, several aspects of GAS have been called into question. Arguably the most contentious issue relates to the psychometric properties of GAS scores and the argument that they are 'a parametric expression of non-parametric information' (Schlosser, 2004, p.231). This criticism revolves around the calculation of *T*-scores and the observation that whilst outcome scores such as –2 to +2 are ordinal data, GAS computations treat them as interval data, in order to allow their transformation into standard scores (MacKay & Lundie, 1998).

Second, the calculation and interpretation of GAS scores relies upon a number of assumed values. These values, which include an assumed mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10, are required to permit the parametric analysis of GAS data. In addition, the calculation of *T*-scores involves the use of a constant value (ρ) to represent the expected overall inter-correlation among an individual's goal scores. Kiresuk and Sherman (1968) originally assumed this value to be equal to 0.30. Critics have seriously questioned the assignment of these arbitrary values, arguing that

their use makes *T*-scores almost meaningless (MacKay & Lundie, 1998).

Third, GAS is time consuming and labour intensive. Regardless of whether it is used by researchers or practitioners, a considerable amount of time, energy and care is needed to ensure that: (i) the construction of GAS charts is completed with precision; (ii) the measurement systems are suitable; and (iii) the assessment of outcomes is rigourous and objective. Finally, Cytrynbaum *et al.* (1979) have noted the likelihood of floor effects in GAS data. Given that the 0-point on a GAS scale represents the client's goal, it is likely that current attainment for most clients will be at lower levels on the scale (i.e. the –1 or –2 levels). As such, goal regression may not be easily detected as the scale provides little or no opportunity to measure deterioration in performance.

Research considerations

Several recommendations have been made regarding the use of GAS for research purposes (for a comprehensive discussion see Lewis, Spencer, Haas & DiVittis, 1987). As shown by Shefler and colleagues (2001), the psychometric properties of GAS improve if certain methodological requirements are met. For example, to prevent bias of GAS scores, it is strongly recommended that the follow-up assessments be conducted blindly (that is, with no knowledge of the research hypotheses, the initial status of participants or their group assignment) and by evaluators not otherwise involved in the intervention (Ottenbacher & Cusick, 1993; Shefler *et al.*, 2001). In addition, researchers have been encouraged to minimise threats to internal validity by using control conditions (Schlosser, 2004), randomly assigning participants to groups after the completion of goal setting (Ottenbacher & Cusick, 1990), and ensuring that research staff are adequately trained in all aspects of goal scaling, such as the assessment of initial attainment status (Cytrynbaum, Ginath, Birdwell & Brandt, 1979; Shefler *et al.*, 2001).

The analysis of Ordinal Data

As mentioned earlier, the transformation of GAS data into standard scores (for the purpose of quantitative evaluation) has been strongly criticised. In response to these criticisms, MacKay and Lundie (1998) have proposed that goal-scale ratings may be better treated as ordinal data (thereby making fewer assumptions about the data) and presented as frequency counts on dimensions such as post-intervention attainment levels, goal categories, goal weightings, etc.

Table 3 displays how a post-intervention evaluation might be presented for individuals pursuing three goals each in a group-based coaching programme. As shown, the outcome data is displayed according to the level of attainment achieved by each individual for each goal. Alternatively, data might be displayed dichotomously, according to the frequency of attainment levels that fall 'Below Goal' or 'At or Above Goal' (i.e. expected outcome), or according to the amount of movement from baseline levels of attainment (i.e. pre-intervention levels). The statistical analyses of such data could then be performed by using the appropriate non-parametric tests for the purpose of hypothesis testing (such as the Wilcoxon rank sum or the chi-square test of independence).

Table 3: The Ordinal Display of GAS Data.

Client Name	GAS Outcome Levels				
	−2	−1	0	+1	+2
David	0	1	1	0	1
Claire	0	2	0	1	0
Louise	1	0	2	0	0
Peter	1	1	1	0	0
Total	2	4	4	1	1

Similar presentations are also possible by creating a selection of appropriate goal categories (e.g. weight loss, social interactions) or by goal weightings, whereby post-intervention attainment levels would be reported relative to their level of importance (for examples, see MacKay & Lundie, 1998).

Although there is no reason why these procedures could not also be utilised by practitioners to document outcomes, it should again be noted that the validity of GAS is dependent upon certain conditions being met (as outlined earlier). Thus, researchers and practitioners should take similar precautions (e.g. the use of independent judges) when attempting to remove distortion and bias from GAS data. Whilst such precautions add additional demands of time, effort and resources to the use of GAS, they cannot be ignored as they are necessary to ensure the credibility of the data (Shefler *et al.*, 2001).

GAS Powered Coaching: Additional benefits

There are several additional features of GAS that are likely to appeal to both practicing coaches and coaching researchers. First, it is a methodology that appears to fit neatly within the boundaries of coaching engagements and could form a natural part of the collaborative exchanges that take place between a client and a coach. Second, GAS does not rely on the costly central reporting systems that produce many of the metrics routinely used in executive or workplace coaching (e.g. personality inventories, multi-rater feedback tools). Rather, GAS scales can be produced relatively easily with minimal cost, and yield data that can be displayed in a variety of ways (i.e. tables, graphs, etc.). Finally, as GAS operates on a set of simple goal setting principles, the adoption of GAS methods should be relatively straightforward for coaches and researchers already trained in these principles;

Given these benefits (along with others outlined earlier), it is somewhat surprising that GAS has yet to be adopted within coaching contexts. To date only one study

has attempted to integrate GAS methods into coaching practice (Spence, 2006). Data from this study (which was conducted within a health coaching context) is useful to consider at this point as it provides some indication of the utility of GAS. Rather than report its major findings, the next section will focus on data collected during the study on how participant's perceived the use of GAS methods.

Some preliminary data

Whilst the use of GAS in this study followed the protocols outlined earlier (see Table 2), it is necessary to provide a brief description of the methodology employed. During the pre-coaching phase, 42 participants were asked to complete a goal-setting booklet prior to attending a GAS interview, at which trained facilitators stepped the participants through the GAS process. Once the interviews were completed, a GAS chart was prepared and checked for specificity, measurability and consistency. Participants were then provided with a handbook that contained their GAS chart and a series of weekly monitoring sheets. After random assignment to one of two coaching conditions or a placebo control, participants completed a six-week coaching programme with outcome data obtained from participant handbooks. Data was treated as ordinal (in line with MacKay & Lundie's (1998) proposal) and analysed using non-parametric tests (chi-square test of independence).

To assess the participant's attitudes towards the GAS method, a short questionnaire was designed and included in the measures taken at the midpoint in the study. Using a five-point rating scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 5 = *Strongly agree*), participants were asked to respond to the following questions:
1. Having a goal chart has been useful for me;
2. I find that I 'carry' the goal chart around in my head;
3. Monitoring my goals like this isn't the way I usually do things;

4. I seem to be planning my daily activities better these days;
5. I tend to focus on the 'Expected Outcome' level more than any other;
6. I would prefer it if the goal chart didn't show other levels of attainment (e.g. 'Best expected', 'Worst expected');
7. The goal chart has helped me to stay motivated.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the presence of a GAS chart was generally perceived to be a useful addition to the programme (Q1), with participants indicating that the charts helped to maintain a high level of awareness about their health goals (Q2). In addition, although participants reported that explicitly monitoring goal progression was not something that the usually did (Q3), there was general agreement that the planning of daily activities had improved (Q4).

Questions 5 and 6 were included to assess the degree to which participants focused on the *Expected Outcome* level of the chart (i.e. the goal), as opposed to the four alternative outcome levels. This was of interest because the multiple levels of a GAS chart may potentially be demotivating if individuals become more concerned with over-performance or under-performance, rather than the expected (and realistic) level of attainment (i.e. the 0-point). According to the data, however, participants appeared to focus most of their attention on the *Expected Outcome* level (Q5), whilst also indicating that the display of alternative levels of attainment was not unduly bothersome (Q6). Given that participants also reported that the charts helped with motivation (Q7), it is reasonable to conclude that GAS charts have several properties likely to support goal-directed self-regulation.

Discussion

Goal setting is vital for self-regulation because 'the goal defines for the person what constitutes an acceptable level of performance' (Latham & Locke, 1991, p.234). However, there are complexities associated with goal constructs that can

Figure 1: Participant perceptions of GAS charts.
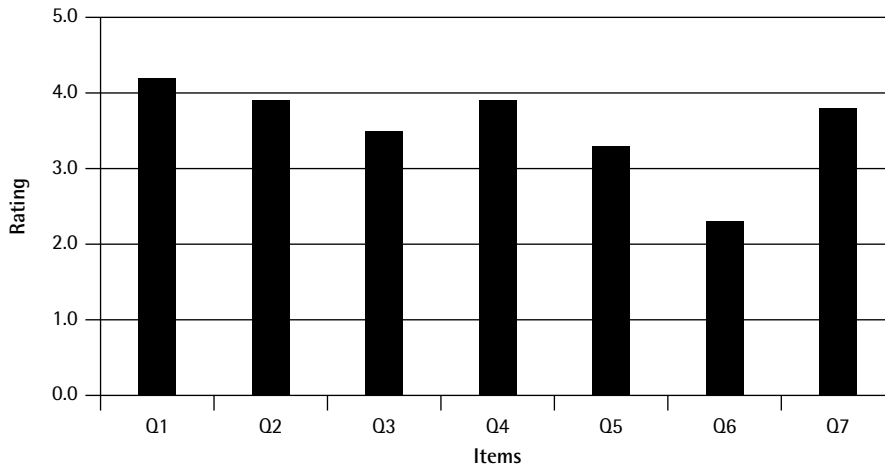
make goal setting and goal attainment challenging to facilitate. As it will now be shown, the use of GAS may help to mitigate some of these challenges.

Goal instability

The self-regulation of behaviour is relatively straightforward whilst a goal remains unchanged. However, goals are unstable constructs. Clients will sometimes find that their aspirations, intentions and motivations change over time. For some this might occur as a consequence of changed personal circumstances (e.g. personal injury, job loss) or because an individual is not committed to the goal and not appropriately energised towards it. For researchers and practitioners who are interested in using GAS to measure coaching effectiveness, changes in goals are problematic because they require a new scale to be developed every time a goal changes.

While there is no way to ensure the stability of any client's goals over time, the use of GAS does seem to provide a way to maximise goal stability. The establishment of a GAS chart promotes a thorough examination of goals and aspirations. A GAS interview provides an individual with the

opportunity to discuss, clarify and reality check the appropriateness of their goals (a process that may be further assisted by a short period of reflection). Given the intense cognitive processing that GAS encourages, it seems reasonable to assume that these goals might be less susceptible to change.

Multi-dimensionality

Individuals have been shown to express goals across a number of different dimensions. For example, the abstract-concrete dimension reflects differences in the degree of specificity reflected in a person's goals (e.g. 'To be a top student' versus 'To do two hours of study a day') (Emmons, 1992). In contrast, the approach-avoidance dimension reflects an individual's general orientation towards particular goals (e.g. 'Be more appreciative of my partner's efforts' versus 'Avoid arguing with my partner') (Elliot & Sheldon, 1997). Finally, the autonomous-control dimension reflects the feeling of subjective ownership one has towards a goal (e.g. ('Get a promotion because I would enjoy the work' versus 'Get a promotion because my Dad would be proud') (Sheldon & Elliot, 1998).

The abstract-concrete dimension is particularly important to the present discus-

sion because a client's willingness (or unwillingness) to engage in GAS may simply reflect a preferred tendency to express goals at a particular level of abstraction. According to Emmons (1992) these differences are related to 'low-level' or 'high-level' thinking. Low-level thinkers are likely to find GAS naturally appealing, as they can express desired outcomes as a series of well-defined behavioural units. On the other hand, high-level thinkers are likely to find the expression of specific goals as overly simplistic, uninteresting, or even insulting, given their preference for thinking more broadly.

Regardless of these individual differences, there seems to be some virtue in encouraging people to understand how abstract and concrete goals fit together, as this can allow coaches to engage clients in 'big picture' discussions about their personal goal systems and the degree to which their goals are congruent (i.e. reflect their values and interests) and coherent (i.e. relatively free of competing goals) (Sheldon & Kasser, 1995). The use of GAS may be helpful for facilitating such discussions due to the fact that it requires individuals to express their goals at more than one level of abstraction.

Given these complexities, goal setting should not to be underestimated. Indeed, being able to distinguish between different types of goals, knowing how they relate to goal attainment and understanding how to maximise client motivation should be key competencies for coaches. As has been argued, GAS has many positive attributes that appear well suited to coaching. By finding ways of adapting GAS to coaching interventions, researchers and practitioners would be making valuable contributions to the development of the field.

Some closing remarks

A few closing remarks are now offered on the use of GAS methods in coaching research and practice. First, GAS provides coaches with a useful framework for using their goal-setting expertise. The possession of this expertise does not guarantee its use,

however, as coaching is underpinned by a basic assumption that clients are functional, the experts in their own lives and capable of making important decisions, such as the articulation of goals (Whitworth, Kimsey-House & Sandahl, 1998). Anecdotal reports suggest that this philosophical stance may be so pervasive that many coaches feel uncomfortable about using technical expertise, lest they become too directive and commit a violation of core Rogerian and solution-focused principles.

Yet, as Cavanagh (2005) notes, the use of domain specific knowledge is vital to effective coaching because sometimes 'the client simply does not have access to what they need to know, and no amount of questioning will change that' (p.4). Thus, one way in which GAS may enhance coaching practice is by providing practitioners with a well defined process that can allow them to inject their expertise into coaching conversations and better direct goal setting activities.

Second, GAS may also prove to be useful for stimulating meaningful communication between researchers and practitioners. Although both share an interest in the formal assessment of coaching interventions, they are likely to be drawn towards different outcome measures. For example, researchers interested in the psychological effects of coaching will tend to be drawn towards quantitative measures that permit within-subject and between-group effects to be detected on variables of interest (e.g. emotional intelligence). In contrast, an executive coach will be more interested in assessing and reporting on more tangible coaching outcomes (such as the attainment of sales targets), data that is more likely to capture the attention of organisational stakeholders. Nevertheless, coaching researchers and practitioners are always likely to share an interest in goal attainment. Should the use of GAS become widespread, dialogue between the two could be enhanced by the presence of a methodological framework and language that is accessible to both.

Third, the utility of GAS may extend well beyond the measurement of outcomes to the

facilitation of goal attainment (Schlosser, 2004). Whilst this hypothesis remains untested, such an effect seems plausible given the cognitive effort a client is encouraged to expend during the GAS process. That is, setting specific and realistic goals requires a client to think clearly about what they want to achieve and how much they are capable of doing. As Locke (1996) has noted, there is overwhelming evidence that intensive cognitive processing is a major factor in successful goal attainment.

Thus, the use of GAS in coaching seems sensible because increased self-reflectivity, the collaborative nature of the process and the formal agreement of goals, may all interact to stimulate goal-oriented cognitions (e.g. planning) and behaviour (e.g. monitoring), whilst enhancing goal commitment; other variables known to be important for successful self-regulation (Locke, 1996). If so, GAS may play an important additional role in goal attainment by helping an individual to move from a deliberative to an implementation mindset (Gollwitzer & Kinney, 1989).

Finally, GAS has been described in this paper according to its traditional usage in clinical settings. Whilst the formality of the approach might appear somewhat dry and uninspiring to some, there are many ways in which GAS can be 'brought to life' by retaining and working with its basic principles. For example, a coachee could be encouraged to generate their own labels for each level of attainment. So, rather than rely on the traditional *'Expected Outcome'*, *'More than Expected Outcome'*, and *'Best Expected Outcome'* levels; scale labels might become *'Well Done!'*, *'Awesome!'* and *'Absolutely Superb!'* By utilising the flexibility inherent in GAS, practitioners and researchers have the opportunity to both customise the approach for coaching and explore ways of increasing coachee engagement by encouraging creativity.

Conclusion

This review suggests that there is much to recommend the use of GAS in coaching research and practice. Not only is the methodology flexible, cost effective and congruent with the collaborative nature of coaching, it also brings a measure of objectivity to the measurement of coaching outcomes that does not currently appear to exist. As the volume of coaching research continues to increase, it is likely to be accompanied by a demand for outcome measures that are rigorous and objective. Although the measurement of goal attainment can be a complex affair, it cannot be ignored by the coaching community. It is only through exploring the use of methodologies like GAS that this challenge can hope to be adequately met.

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The coaching relationship:
An interpretative phenomenological analysis

Kristina Gyllensten & Stephen Palmer

Objectives: *There is a lack of research on the coaching relationship (O'Broin & Palmer, 2006a). The current paper will present the findings from a qualitative study that explored experiences of workplace coaching including the coaching relationship.*
Design: *The study adopted a qualitative design and the data was analysed by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Jaraman, & Osborn, 1999).*
Methods: *Nine participants, from two large organisations, were interviewed about their experiences of coaching.*
Results: *'The coaching relationship' was identified as a main theme which, in turn, comprised of three sub-themes; valuable coaching relationship; trust; and transparency. These themes highlighted that the coaching relationship was very valuable for the participants and that this relationship was dependent on trust and improved by transparency.*
Conclusions: *It was concluded that it is important that coaches are aware of, and are working with, the coaching relationship. Nevertheless, the participants also highlighted that the relationship was not the only factor that made coaching useful. Working towards goals and improving performance were also valuable components of the coaching. It was, therefore, suggested that coaching may be most beneficial if it incorporates a number of components, including a focus on the relationship.*
Keywords: the coaching relationship, coaching, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis; valuable coaching relationship; trust; and transparency.

T HE IMPORTANCE OF the coaching relationship has been acknowledged from psychology research, commentators on the industry, and management perspectives. Indeed, in the relevant literature the coaching relationship is viewed as a vehicle for change. Nevertheless, there are a lack of studies investigating the coaching relationship (O'Broin & Palmer, 2006a, b).

However, a number of studies have reported findings that relate to the coaching relationship. For example, Leedham (2005) conducted a study where 180-degree feedback questionnaires completed by coaching clients were analysed. The comments were categorised and the most commonly mentioned benefit was 'increased confidence, feeling good, believe in myself, higher morale, growth'. The second most common benefit was receiving support and feeling valued in the coaching and the third was improved career. Another study investi-

gating the perceived benefits of coaching was conducted by Wales (2003). The study used a qualitative methodology and the participants were managers who had taken part in coaching. A phenomenological approach was used to analyse the data and it was found that the coaching relationship was a safe and supportive environment where fears and anxieties could be discussed. Moreover, a study that investigated the credentials for effective coaches and coaching tools was conducted by Wasylyshyn (2003). Personal characteristics of an effective coach included, ability to form a strong connection, professionalism, and a clear coaching methodology. Using a rating scale from 1 to 10, the highest rated coaching tools included coaching sessions (9.2), 360 feedback (9.0), relationship with coach (8.3), testing (7.7), and readings on leadership (7.0). Wasylyshyn (2003) suggested that the high ratings of the coaching sessions and

relationship indicated that face-to-face contact and frequency are important for successful coaching. Similarly, Schmidt (2003) conducted a study of success factors in coaching (study reported by Dembkowski & Eldridge, 2004). Questionnaires were completed by coachees and factor analysis was used to identify the main success factors in coaching. One of the main factors identified was involvement of the coach; this involved the coach's ability to develop trust within the coaching. A second factor was clarity of goals; this included clarity of roles, methods, and actions in the coaching. Co-operation was another factor that emerged; this related to the development of a sound relationship and a sense of sharing between the client and the coach. Similarly, trust and quality of the coaching relationship was a further factor; this relates to the importance of the coach being supportive and the development of an open and accepting relationship with the coach. A further study that highlighted the importance of the coaching relationship was conducted by Wilkins (2000). The study used qualitative methodology and aimed to understand the process of coaching, and skills and strategies used in coaching. Grounded theory was used to analyse the data and a model of coaching emerged. According to the model, coaching is an interaction between the coach and the coachee in which the coaching purpose, process, and relationship function in order to develop the coachee to their highest potential. Hall, Otazo and Hollenbeck (1999) also conducted a qualitative coaching study. Executives from Fortune 100 companies and executive coaches were interviewed. The study explored the application of coaching, the effectiveness of coaching, and what lessons can be learned from coaching practice. Regarding the effectiveness of coaching, Hall *et al.* (1999) reported that the best coaching was results oriented, and examples of good coaching included honesty, challenging feedback and helpful suggestions. The overall effectiveness of coaching was rated to be 'very satisfying'.

The coaches agreed with the executives on what characterised good coaching although the coaches were more likely to also focus on the coaching relationship and process.

In summary, previous studies have found that support from the coach is highly valued within coaching (Leedham, 1995; Wasylyshyn, 2003) and that coaching provided a safe and supportive environment where anxieties could be discussed (Wales, 2003). Moreover, it has been found that the involvement of the coach, a sound, supportive, open relationship are success factors in coaching (Schmidt, 2003, study reported by Dembkowski & Eldridge, 2004). Nevertheless, these are few studies and further research will contribute to the knowledge of the coaching relationship.

The aim of the current study
The aim of the current study was to investigate participants' experiences and views of coaching, specifically, the process of coaching, evaluation of coaching (was the coaching beneficial or not – how, in what way) and if/how coaching impacted on stress.

The study used a qualitative methodology and was Part III of a larger piece of research on coaching and stress. This paper will only present a section of the findings from Part III of the study.

Methods
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
Qualitative research is interested in rich descriptions of the topic under investigation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The research process is flexible, and it enables the discovery of novel and uncommon themes and new insights into the topic under investigation (Holliday, 2002) and Coe (2004) has suggested that qualitative approaches can be valuable in the evaluation of, the complex human process of coaching. As the current study aimed to investigate individuals' experiences of coaching in a flexible and open manner and receive rich data, a qualitative method was suitable.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyse the data from the

interviews. The analysis was conducted in accordance with Smith, Jaraman and Osborn's (1999) guidelines to doing IPA. IPA aims to explore and understand meanings of experiences of the participants (Smith & Osborn, 2004). Within IPA it is recognised that the research process is dynamic. Indeed, the researcher takes an active role in attempting to get an insider's perspective of the participant's experiences. This is done with a process of interpretation (Smith & Osborn, 2003). It is assumed that there is a relationship between individuals' verbal accounts and their cognitions and emotions although individuals may have difficulties reporting what they are thinking or/and they may not want to self-disclose (Smith & Osborn, 2003). IPA is a systematic and practical approach to analysing rich data (Baker, Pistrang & Elliot, 2002). According to Smith and Osborn (2004) IPA is appropriate for a range of psychological research questions where the aim is to investigate the meaning of the participants' experiences. However, Smith and Osborn (2004) suggest that IPA is particularly useful if the area of investigation is under-researched or new. This was in accordance with the present study that aimed to investigate individuals experiences of coaching – an under-researched area.

Analysis

Smith and Osborn's (2003) step-by step approach to doing IPA was used in the analysis of the data. An ideographic approach to analysis was used. The analysis begins with a detailed investigation of one case before the other cases are incorporated and a more general categorisation is developed. A transcript of one of the cases was read a number of times and notes of anything interesting were made in the left-hand margin. In the next step the transcript was read again and possible theme titles were recorded in the right-hand margin. At this stage a higher level of abstraction and psychological terminology are introduced in the analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The emerging themes were noted and clusters of

themes that represented, most strongly, the participant's views of a particular topic were given names and represented the superordinate themes. Identifiers and keywords were recorded indicating where examples of the theme could be found in the transcript. In the next stage the themes were ordered coherently and a table of themes was recorded. The same process of analysis was repeated for the remaining transcripts. A final table of themes and subthemes was constructed for the whole group of participants. This process involves reduction and prioritising of the data and Smith and Osborn (2003) highlight that this stage can be challenging. It is important to note that prevalence within the data is not the only important factor when themes are selected, ability to explain other aspects of the interview and richness of text passages and are also important factors (Smith, Jaraman & Osborn, 1999). Four main themes with related sub-themes were identified in the study: management of stress, confidence, the coaching relationship, coaching = investment in staff. As the topic of this article is the coaching relationship the focus will be on this main theme.

Participants

Two organisations participated in the study, one UK organisation from the finance sector and one Scandinavian organisation from the telecommunications sector. The organisations had in excess of 3000 employees and mainly focused on telephone based work. Participants were selected on the basis of having participated in workplace coaching within their organisation. Nine participants were interviewed, six from the UK organisation and three from the Scandinavian organisation. Three males and six females participated and the mean age was 33 years with a range of 23 to 52 years. Four of the participants held management positions.

Procedure

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data as they are suitable for IPA

studies and enable the collection of rich data (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Participants from the UK organisation were interviewed at one of the organisations sites and the participants from the Scandinavian organisation were interviewed over the phone. The interviews were recoded and transcribed in their entirety. Lines in the transcript were numbered for ease of reference. Participants were assigned one of the first nine letters of the alphabet in the transcripts. The letter 'I' was used to denote the Interviewer.

The coaching intervention

The coaching intervention did not follow a specific protocol and was focused on the issues the coachees wanted to focus on. Issues included improving self-confidence, getting a promotion, improving presentation skills. Reflective listening was an important part of the coaching. The GROW model (Whitmore, 1992) was used and the coaches did also use NLP (neuro linguistic programming) theory and techniques. A number of techniques were used including affirmation cards, imagery exercises, cognitive restructuring, and assertiveness training. Number of coaching sessions differed between the participants.

Evaluating the analysis

It is important to highlight that qualitative analysis is a subjective process and different researchers may have conducted a different analysis. The researcher's personal frame of reference inevitably influences the analysis in IPA (Golsworthy & Coyle, 2001). According to Elliot, Fisher and Rennie (1999) good qualitative practice involves researchers specifying their personal perspective relevant to the study. In the current study the researcher's interpretative framework has been influenced by; training and practice in counselling/coaching psychology, working with work stress issues; previous experience of research on stress. Regarding the coaching relationship, the researcher was aware of the importance and value of the relationship from previous coun-

selling practice and literature. Indeed, effort was made to minimise unwarranted idiosyncratic interpretations or unwarranted selective attention during the interviews. In order to evaluate qualitative studies Elliot *et al.* (1999) have suggested that it is important to situate the sample. Basic descriptive data about the participants have been presented in the current study. Moreover, the methods have been described to allow replication and examples of the data have been provided to illustrate each theme as suggested by Baker, Pistrang and Elliot (2002).

Results

Four main themes emerged in the analysis: management of stress, confidence, the coaching relationship, coaching = investment in staff. As the topic of this paper is the coaching relationship the focus will be on this main theme.

The theme 'The coaching relationship' consisted of three sub-themes: trust; transparency; and valuable coaching relationship. Figure 1 illustrates how trust and transparency leads to, and is a part of, a valuable relationship between the coachee and the coach.

Trust

The development of a good relationship between the coach and the coachee was clearly very important (as indicated under 'Valuable coaching relationship') and trust was a very vital part of this relationship according to the participants:

I think you both need to have that sort of trust. (E: 470).

It would appear that the confidentiality of the coaching sessions played a vital role in helping to build and maintain the trust between the coach and the coachee. When trust and confidentiality were present it was possible for the coachee to 'let their guard down' and share sensitive information with the coach including aspects of themselves perceived as less than perfect:

I think it is the person. It is complete trust because I know whatever would be said that is

Figure 1: The Coaching Relationship.
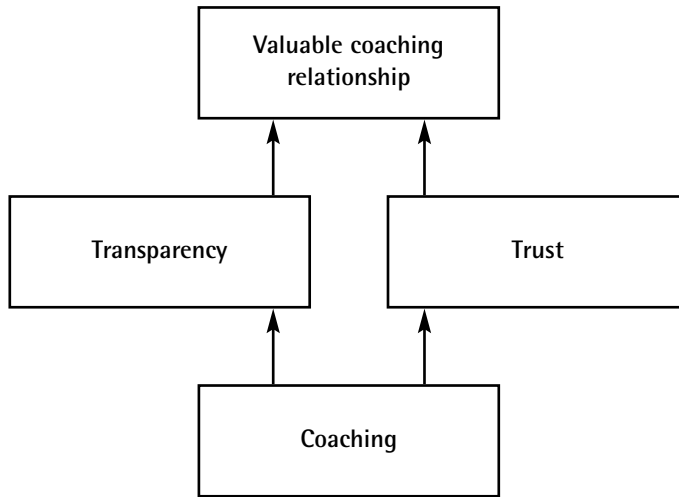
it, it is never repeated, even if you are being a little irrational. I feel confident to probably let your guard down in front XXX (name of coach), to know that you aren't perfect at doing everything. (F: 232–235)

According to some of the participants the coaches in their organisation had proved to the employees that they were trustworthy and this was viewed as the reason to why they had been successful:

And I think that is why our guys (referring to the coaches) have been quite successful. It is the fact that they can be trusted, they are confidential. (F: 311–312)

In some coaching relationships one of the parties may have more power and be more senior in the organisation. However, it was stated that it was indeed possible to get beyond the issue of power and build a good relationship if trust was developed:

My own personal view is that if you are able to establish trust the issues whether one is the manager or not is not relevant. (G: 197–198)

Transparency

The coaches in the two participating organisations appeared to have been transparent in their coaching practice and had explained the process and theory supporting the

various coaching interventions. This transparency was viewed very positively by the participants as highlighted by the following quote:

And what he did though as well, which was really good, he explained this process. What idea was behind it what theory was behind it so I knew where I was in every stage of everything I was doing. (A: 280–282)

An important positive consequence of the coach being transparent was that the participants felt included in the coaching process:

I was told of every stage and what we were doing and what technique we were adapting to a given situation and I felt included. (A: 785–786)

Because the coach had been open and transparent with the coaching process some participants felt that there was little that could have been improved in the coaching sessions. Thus, some participants clearly viewed transparency as one of the most important aspects of the coaching:

But that again in my experience there is little I feel could have been improved. Because as I said he was very open and kept me well informed in every stage of the process. (A: 800–802)

Valuable coaching relationship

Trust and transparency were two factors that helped to create a good coaching relationship. Indeed, the relationship between the coach and the coachee appeared to be one of the most essential aspects of coaching. The importance of this relationship was highlighted by the participants:

> And also, you know, we have got really quite close relationships and it is quite valued actually. (F: 677–678)

The relationship was the basis upon which the coaching was built and without a relationship the coaching would not be as effective as it could be. The following quote describes how the relationship is the first thing that happens in coaching:

> I think you need to get on with your coach, if you don't get on with him you are not going to sort of achieve what you need to achieve. (E: 468–469) So the relationship is first because that is the first thing that is going to happen isn't it, you are going to build your relationship. (E: 471–473)

Prior to starting coaching most participants appeared to experience an uncertainty regarding what to expect and for some there had been an initial scepticism. However, the coaches' approach and manner had helped to make the participants feel comfortable in the coaching situation within a short space of time:

> I was a little bit apprehensive and not sure what to expect and what I found, I am not quite sure if it was a technique, but he kind of put me at easy straight away. (A: 253–254)

A reason for some of the initial apprehension of coaching was based on uncertainty regarding how the coach would view the presenting problem. However, the coaches had not been patronising regarding the presenting problems but had instead been empathic with the participants' feelings:

> And at no stage did I ever feel patronised, and again I had a problem that was mammoth to me but to a lot of people it is quite insignificant 'you soft bugger why don't you go up and talk to people it is no big deal'. And I think it would be quite easy for somebody in a coaching situation to take that attitude of 'what is up with him he has got an insignificant problem'. But I did not get any of that he was really empathic with the way I felt. (A: 790–794)

A positive consequence of feeling comfortable with the coach was that the participants were willing to continue with the coaching. This highlights the importance of developing a good relationship, from the beginning, for the development of coaching:

> I suppose it was from my first occasion I though' I feel really comfortable with what you are doing'. That is why … that is a kind of customer isn't it, if you are happy with a service you go back to the same provider. (A: 242–144)

In addition, the coaches played an important role in being supportive listeners. Indeed having the opportunity to be listened to was quite rare for some participants:

> I think the listening side of things is a massive part of it, because it is not very often that you sit down and actually tell someone exactly how you feel. (D: 507–508)

Despite the fact that the coaching relationship was viewed as important the participants made clear that the relationship was not the only important aspect of the coaching. Techniques used in the coaching sessions were also essential in order for the coaching to be successful:

> It is the relationship but it also that typical … what do you call it … from coaching you get something in your bag. A good piece of advice a good way to solve a problem, it gets my eyes to open in another way. (G: 437–439)

Important factors in coaching appeared to be a good coaching relationship, learning skills, and working towards and reaching specific goals:

> On the one side yes they have helped me reach my goals promotion, different skills that they have taught me. But on the other side I do use them as a sounding board. (C: 423–424). So it has benefited me in both ways, they have increased my performance and they have also been someone that I can turn to and discuss issues with. (C: 426–428)

Discussion

Summary of findings

The aim with the study was to investigate the participants' experiences of coaching. A main theme that emerged was the coaching relationship. It was found that the relationship between the coach and the coachee was viewed as very important and necessary for the coaching to develop. This relationship was dependent on trust and improved by transparency.

Previous literature

In the current study the coaching relationship was found to be important to the participants. Similarly, after reviewing the literature and conducting a study on the benefits of coaching Leedham (2005) found that the clients' satisfaction with the coaching relationship was a central factor in the evaluation of the coaching. In addition, the findings in the current study were similar to those of the Wales (2003) qualitative study, with regards to the value of the coaching relationship. Wales (2003) found that the coaching relationship was a safe and supportive environment where fears and anxieties could be discussed. The importance of the coaching relationship was also found in Wasylyshyn's (2003) study using a sample of executives coaching clients. Similarly, Wilkins (2000) found that the coaching relationship was a factor that helped to develop the coachee to their highest potential.

The coaching relationship was found to be important in the current study and trust and transparency played central roles in the development of this relationship. These findings were similar to Schmidt's (2003) study of success factors in coaching (reported by Dembkowski & Eldridge, 2004) where one of the main factors identified was involvement of the coach. This factor involved the coach's ability to create a coaching relationship involving trust. Clarity of goals was a further factor that included clarity of roles, methods, and actions in the coaching. Dembkowski and Eldridge (2003) suggest that transparency increases trust in the coaching rela-

tionship and without trust the client shares less information and, consequently, does not gain the full benefits of the relationship. Similarly, in a study on coaching, from the viewpoint of the coach and coachee, Hall *et al.* (1999) found that good coaching included honesty, challenging feedback, and helpful suggestions.

When referring to the coaching relationship it is useful to note that the value and importance of the therapeutic relationship has long been recognised within counselling and therapy practice, research and theory. There is a great amount of focus on the therapeutic relationship within the therapy and counselling literature (for example, Bedi, Davis & Williams, 2005; Horvath & Greenberg, 1994). Psychotherapy research has found that that therapist variables (e.g. therapist attributes), facilitative conditions (e.g. empathy), and therapeutic alliance (e.g. bond) are important factors that influence therapy outcome (O'Broin & Palmer, 2006a).

Limitations of the study

When there is a small sample there is a risk that recruitment bias will have an impact on the research (Chapman, 2002). The participants in the study reported mainly positive experiences of coaching. Perhaps individuals with positive experiences were more likely to take part in the study compared to individuals with negative experiences. In addition, the contact persons, at the organisations, may have suggested individuals who held positive attitudes towards coaching. The interviews were analysed as one sample although six participants were from the UK organisation and three from the Scandinavian organisation. Thus, it is possible that the results are more representative of the UK organisation. The participants from the UK organisation were interviewed in person whereas the participants from the Scandinavian organisation were interviewed over the phone. Conducting some of the interviews over the phone may have had a negative impact on the alliance between the researcher and the coachee. Nevertheless,

the researcher believed that a good alliance was developed in all interviews. Moreover, the coaching differed to some extent between the organisations and this will have had an impact on the participants' experiences of coaching. It is also important to recognise that the researcher's experiences and perspectives will have had an influence on the analysis of the data, and that another researcher may have developed a different analysis, resulting in different outcomes. In addition, various issues and ways of evaluating qualitative research have been discussed in the methods section.

Implications and conclusion

The coaching relationship was viewed as important and valuable in the current study. Participants reported that unless a good enough relationship was developed in the coaching, relevant achievements would not be made. It is, therefore, important that coaches are aware of, and are working with, the coaching relationship. This appears to be particularly important at the start of the coaching as many of the participants reported that they were feeling sceptical of the coaching in the beginning. There was also fear regarding how the coach would view the presenting problem. Thus, the current study suggests that it is important that a positive atmosphere is developed between the coach and the coachee from the beginning of the coaching in order for the coachee to feel comfortable to share information about the problem. Moreover, it appears that a good relationship makes it more likely that the coachee will continue with the coaching and consequently gain something from it. Nevertheless, the participants highlighted that the relationship was not the only factor that made coaching useful, rather working towards goals and improving performance were also valuable components. It is, therefore, suggested that coaching may be most beneficial if it incorporates a number of components, including a focus on the relationship.

The current study found that trust was an important aspect of a good coaching rela-

tionship. Trust enables the coachee to be open, even about personal limitations and difficulties, and this is, of course, vital for the development of coaching. According to the participants, confidentiality helped to build a relationship of trust with the coach. Therefore, in order to develop trust within the relationship, the coach would benefit from clearly stating the terms of the confidentiality at the onset of the coaching. Likewise, it could be suggested that it is very important to highlight the limitations of confidentiality as the organisation may demand feedback regarding the coachees' development.

Transparency on the behalf of the coach was viewed as very helpful in the current study as this lead the coachee to feel fully included in the coaching process. It could, therefore, be suggested that an understanding of the steps taken in coaching, and a feeling of being included in the process, could have a positive effect on the subsequent commitment to the coaching. Thus, by being transparent and open, the coach may help the client to feel more inspired to take part in the process. It could be suggested that when the coach is completely open about the process the client is in a better position to evaluate the coaching and take decisions based on a full knowledge of what the coaching entails. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that coaches could benefit from being transparent regarding the coaching process with their clients, regardless of their theoretical orientation.

Future research

Further, qualitative studies could investigate the development of the coaching relationship. How is the relationship developed during the different stages in coaching? What factors are important in a good coaching relationship? How are trust and transparency viewed? What factors can have a negative effect upon the relationship? How important is the relationship in relation to coaching effectiveness, and is the relationship more important with some issues and some clients compared to others?

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This paper was a collaborative project undertaken by the Coaching Psychology Unit, City University, UK and the Swedish Centre for Work Based Learning, adSapiens Sweden.

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Appendix
Interview Schedule

Biographical details
Age ....
Gender ....
Job title...
Full-time/Part-time ....
Length of time in company ....

Details of coaching
When did you go to coaching? ....
How many sessions and how often?..
What was the initial reason to why you decided to start coaching? ....
Your view of coaching before you attended/your view now. ....
Internal/External coaching ....

The coaching process
How would you describe the coaching? What did it involve?...
Did you decide on goals for the coaching?..
Confidentiality...

Evaluation of coaching
Were you satisfied with your coaching?..
Benefits of coaching:
● Did you reach goals, short-term benefits, long-term benefits? ....
● Benefits related to work...
● Benefits related to home life ....
● Self-awareness ....
● Other benefits..
What was it about coaching that was beneficial? ....
Could your coaching have been improved – how?..
Negative effects of coaching...

Coaching and stress
Indirect effects on stress ....
Did you suffer from work stress before you attended coaching? ....
Do you suffer from work stress at present? ....
Did coaching help to reduce work stress?..
Is coaching suitable for workplace stress? ....

Would you recommend coaching
In what situations?...

Coaching with emotion: How coaches deal with difficult emotional situations

Elaine Cox & Tatiana Bachkirova

Objectives: *The coaching process can arouse emotion for both the client and the coach. Coaches then have a choice between either minimising the attention paid to emotional phenomena or working with emotions to achieve results. The objectives of this study were to investigate coaches' personal theories of emotion and in particular their approach to dealing with difficult emotional situations within the coaching relationship.*
Design: *A qualitative study was designed in order to explore coaches' perspectives, theories and strategies for dealing with emotions. Data was analysed using a grounded theory approach to elicit a number of themes.*
Methods: *The study collected data from 39 UK coaches, using a stem-sentence questionnaire approach.*
Results: *Findings suggest that coaches can have very different viewpoints in relation to dealing with difficult emotional situations that arise when working with clients, dealing with them in one of four ways: using self-reflection or supervision, avoiding tackling the emotion considering it to belong to the client, actively exploring with the client, or referral of the client/termination. They also see control of their own emotions as important and recognised some gender related issues.*
Conclusions: *Recommendations are made for an understanding of emotions to be included in the education and training of coaches. The strengthening of supervision provision for coaches is also suggested.*
Keywords: Coaching, difficult emotions, control of emotion, gender, supervision.

O VER THE LAST DECADE OR SO there has been a considerable increase in research into the impact and management of emotions in organisations and questions have been raised about the invisibility or marginalisation of emotionality in organisational life (Gherardi, 1995). This growing emphasis on the use and management of emotion in the workplace implies that coaches need to be aware of both their own and their clients' emotional reactions, and the contexts in which they occur, in order to be in a position to help their clients. Indeed, Whitmore (1996) has urged coaches to 'tap' the emotions.

However, there may be significant apprehension felt by coaches in relation to overt displays of emotions by clients. There may yet be the thought among coaches that emotions should only be explored within a counselling setting and, as in many organisations, the traditional view that emotion interferes with rationality may still influence

thinking. Both of these notions may lead to over-management of what are considered to be difficult emotions.

Following a review of how emotions have been perceived in organisations, difficult emotions are defined. Then the methodology is explained and the three themes that emerged are explored in turn using examples from the data. In the conclusion the implications for coaching practice and further research are considered.

The place of emotion in the workplace
The work of Fineman (2000) has been important in securing the place of emotion in organisational contexts, countering arguments from early philosophers such as Plato and Kant. Fineman highlights the main tension between rationality and emotion and describes three possible positions that could be held:
● Emotions interfere with rationality;
● Emotions serve rationality;
● Emotions and rationality entwine.

The prevailing view has been that emotions interfere with rationality: Pizarro (2000, p.356) confirms that Kant, influentially, believed emotional forces to be 'sources that tainted the process of moral thinking, primarily because they were antagonistic to the reasoning process' and goes on to summarise the three main reasons for the perpetuation of this view:

1. Emotions can be seen to be partial in that they are aroused in relation to things and people we care about.
2. Emotions arise due to the presence of arbitrary factors.
3. Emotions are beyond our voluntary control and are passively experienced.

Thus emotions, particularly so called 'difficult' emotions, have been seen as interfering with rationality, harmful to decision making and as unruly, undesirable and needing to be managed in the workplace in order to reduce unpredictability (Speedy, 2005). Indeed, Smith and Sharma (2002, p.197) confirm that within organisations emotional reactions are seen as disruptive, illogical, biased and weak and consequently as 'antithetical to performance'.

However, Pizarro refutes this traditional judgement on emotion, arguing that we have the capacity to regulate our emotions; that emotions reflect our pre-existing concerns (our values and our principles). The suggestion here is that emotions help reasoning by focusing our attention on the problem, 'allowing us to pay attention to features of the situation that may escape us otherwise' (Pizarro, 2000, p.358). Gross *et al.* (2006, p.2) also focus on acknowledging and managing emotion, suggesting that strong emotions need to be managed 'if we are to keep our appointments, careers and friendships'. They claim that 'successful emotion regulation is a pre-requisite for adaptive functioning. To get along with others, we must be able to regulate which emotions we have and how we experience and express these emotions.'

Simpson and Smith (2005, p.1) confirm that the 'entrance of emotion into consider-ations of work and organisation has occurred alongside other significant developments concerning the growth in the service economy'. This has led to a great need to focus on the eliciting of desired emotions. Emotional labour, sometimes known as 'emotion work', has become a feature of the work of many employees, especially in service sectors such as the health service and education. Such public services require employees to be even-tempered and agreeable in the workplace: 'the major object of emotional labour is to provide predictability and maintain harmony in the workplace, while enhancing competitive productivity' (Speedy, 2005, p.4).

The most substantial incursion of emotion into organisational consciousness has, arguably, come through the concept of emotional intelligence (EI). One of the most frequently used definitions of EI is given by Salovey and Meyer (1990, p.189) as 'the ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action'. However, a review of both emotion work and emotional intelligence carried out by Opengart (2005, p.57) concludes that the application of emotional intelligence is incomplete without an understanding of emotion work, as, she claims, the two function together. She highlights how the emotional display rules that guide emotional expression are 'learned within an employee's particular work context' and so the management of emotions requires not only emotional intelligence, but the ability to perceive, learn, and adjust behaviour as necessary. Opengart also argues that it is difficult to assess and interpret emotional expression without contextual knowledge, since there would be 'no basis from which to understand why someone chooses to express a particular emotion' (2005, p.57).

It can be seen from the brief survey of literature above that there has been renewed interest in the role of emotion in organisational contexts resulting in a burgeoning

literature on the topic (ten Bos & Willmott, 2001; Smith & Sharma, 2002; Mark, 2005). Gender stereotypes in relation to emotion are also being questioned and Brody (1997, p.369) has argued that 'stereotypes about gender and emotional expression tend to be imprecise and misleading. They fail to acknowledge situational, individual, and cultural variations in males' and females' emotional expressiveness'. In addition, reservations are now being expressed in relation to the extreme rationality that has tended to govern bureaucratic organisational structures in the past and a more receptive view of emotion as a resource is emerging. A range of factors are seen as influencing this situation; for example, the growth of emotion work, the impact of globalisation and the influx of more women and people from different cultures into organisations.

Defining difficult emotions

Against the backdrop of conflicting views in relation to the role of emotions in the workplace, coaches have to consider their own position. This study highlights how coaches currently deal with the difficult emotions they encounter in their practice.

Some specific emotions have been described as 'difficult' or 'negative'. Tiedens (2001), for example, has suggested that inwardly directed 'negative' emotions, such as depression or fear, have fewer short-term positive functions and tend to elicit negative emotions in others. More recently, Fineman (2005, p.12) has questioned whether it makes sense to 'bracket off' positive emotions, in the way proposed in positive psychology, since this would assume that they are separate states with their own profile and structure, and not intrinsically linked to negative emotions. However, Greenberg (2003, p.43) explains how primary emotions, such as fear, are essentially positive. He suggests that primary emotions are either adaptive (healthy feelings) or maladaptive (bad feelings) and suggests that the emotions can be divided into four categories:

1. A healthy core feeling (an adaptive primary emotion).
2. A chronic bad feeling (a maladaptive primary emotion).
3. A reactive or defensive emotion that can obscure a primary feeling (a secondary emotion).
4. An influencing or manipulative emotion used by people to get what they want (an instrumental emotion).

In this model all emotions are seen as normal and 'positive' and become maladaptive, secondary or instrumental as a result of an intervention, such as thinking, or of circumstance. Fineman (2005, p.13) confirms this view, arguing that 'the valuation of an emotion by self or others has no necessary universality'. He cites Bagozzi (2003), stressing that the 'same' emotion can be felt differently and responded to differently depending on extant cultural and social factors.

For the purposes of this article we want to define difficult emotional situations as those that give the coach a 'bad feeling', i.e. those that tend make the coach feel uncomfortable in some way, and to acknowledge that what is termed a difficult emotion may vary from coach to coach and be dependent upon a number of internal and external factors.

Methodology

This article reports on findings from a wider research study aimed at exploring the personal theories of a sample of organisational and life coaches in order to understand how they deal with difficult emotional situations. The study was aimed at finding out:

● What role emotions play in coaching according to coaches;
● What it is like for them to deal with emotional side of the process;
● What personal theories coaches have about dealing with emotions
● How these theories affect their practice.

This article explores three important themes that emerged from the study, which focus specifically on how coaches deal with difficult emotional situations:

1. Difficult situations in terms of dealing with clients' emotions.
2. Difficult situations in terms of coaches' emotions.
3. Differentiated and potentially problematic views on male/female client emotions.

The study was intended to uncover the range of possible positions held by coaches in relation to emotion in coaching. In order to do this an interpretative phenomenological study (Smith & Osborn, 2003) was designed that would allow data to be gathered on coaches' personal theories and strategies in relation to emotions in coaching.

We used a questionnaire method built around a set of stem sentences that would engender open, spontaneous and possibly emotional responses. The questions were educed from a detailed reading of the literature combined with the researchers' own experiences of emotional triggers. Sixty questionnaires were distributed amongst practicing executive and life coaches in the UK, and 39 were completed – a nearly 70 per cent return rate. The coaches were presented with a series of unfinished sentences, which they then had to complete in a quick and spontaneous manner. Crotty (1996, p.278) uses stem sentences to encourage development of metaphors and similes, such as 'Learning to start my new small business is like … walking through a hall of mirrors'. This spontaneity and freedom of response is something that we wanted to encourage in our study. Crotty also suggests that the stem sentence method is an invitation to 'open ourselves to the phenomenon as the object of our immediate experience' (1996, p.278). This appeared to fit well with the research questions and with our proposed grounded theory approach to the data analysis. As a form of phenomenological inquiry grounded theory focuses on the question: 'what is the structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon for these people?' (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p.5). This analysis method thus ensured that the knowledge of the respondents was given precedence over that of the researchers.

The stem sentence questionnaire included 21 stems for completion such as:

When/If my client presents an intense emotion, I…
Painful emotions during the coaching process are…
Control of emotions during coaching is…
Those who freely express their emotion at work…
Emotions that are more difficult for me to deal with in coaching are…
Consequences of suppressed emotions in coaching…

Because of the highly interpretative nature of this study, and the lack of existing research in this area, the grounded theory method of analysis was designed to take account of the differing perspectives of the three researchers involved in the data collection. Analysis of this stage of the research was, therefore, a co-ordinated interpretation of data and themes. The answers for each stem sentence were analysed and categorised by each of the three researchers separately, and the categories compared, discussed and agreement reached for each stem sentence. The agreed categories were then analysed in relation to all stem sentences, the overarching categories were identified, and the emerging themes discussed and agreed. This 'triangulation' involved significant discussion of the findings as they emerged and ensured that interpretation was as true to respondents' meanings as possible.

Findings

Six initial themes emerged from the data which reflect the personal theories of the sample of coaches. Three of these themes were related to dealing with difficult emotions and are examined here:

1. Difficult situations in terms of dealing with clients' emotions.
2. Difficult situations in terms of coaches' emotions.
3. Differentiated views on clients' emotions.

Each of these three themes is explored in depth below, using extracts from the data. Respondents' identities are protected using an alpha-numerical code.

1. Difficult situations in terms of dealing with clients' emotions

Our analysis of stem responses indicates that there are a number of difficult situations in the coaching process that coaches perceived as relating to the emotional state of the client. They identified examples of where a client may not be aware of the emotions he/she is presenting, or emotions are not congruent to the coaching process, or he/she is emotionally detached or anxious. The coaches' responses to these situations appear to take five directions:

(i) Coaches analyse their own discomfort in the situation and consider it as a response to an underlying client issue. In this example the coach infers that the client is not expressing emotion adequately:

He/she will often displace their feelings and/or negate others. (R8)

In a similar response the coach confirmed that it would be necessary to:

Probe to find out what he/she (the client) is covering up. (R16)

(ii) Coaches deem the difficult situation to be an outcome of their own actions or the failing dynamics of the relationship:

I ask myself what's going on here… am I missing something.
Am I misaligned with where the client is at? (R4)
I wonder to what extent they are engaged with the coaching relationship. (R7)

(iii) The coach tries to actively influence the client's emotion:

I have a lot of different options and have to act fast. (R2)

I look for ways of engaging their physicality. (R39)
It is important to take time to discuss and work on making them congruent. (R37)
I will try to help them to discuss their anxiety perhaps using metaphors or cue cards to help express the nature of this anxiety. (R22)

(iv) The coach considers referral (without mention of supervision):

I would suggest they may need a different kind of intervention, e.g. counselling or therapy. (R7)
I may call a halt or suggest a referral. (R16)

(v) The coach sees emotions as normal reactions:

I try to remain calm, recognise the emotion and talk about it, ask them what is helpful. (R32)
Blocks and defences occur. (R11)
It opens up possibilities. (R29)

Many of these responses appear to reflect what Fineman (2000) calls the quarrel between rationality and emotion. Coaches that considered referral, as in (iv) above, may hold to the notion that emotions interfere with rationality and so need to be explored outside of the coaching relationship, maybe in a counselling or psychotherapy setting. Responses in (i) and (ii) also imply that there is something wrong with emotions and the coaches seem to attribute the problem either to the client (*covering up or displacing*) or they attribute it to themselves and the relationship they have created (*missing something, misalignment, are they engaged?*).

Where the coach decides to actively influence the emotion, as in (iii) above, it could also be seen as a distrustful reaction to emotion, albeit covert. Although they do not give up on the client immediately, and at first glance it seems that the coach is working positively with the client, they could, in fact, be seen as trying to change or control the emotion, which subtly implies that there is no room for difficult emotions in the coaching process.

These results on the whole imply that the first reaction to emotions by many coaches is

to associate them with problems. Emotions are frequently viewed as needing to be managed somehow and some might even argue that control of emotions is a function of coaching. However, research by Richards and Gross (2005) suggests that control of emotions can come at a 'cognitive price' in that it may impair the memory of emotional events. Similarly, Bono *et al.* (2005) report that employees required to manage their emotions at work experience more stress and lower job satisfaction. However, they also point out that if managers use transformational and empowering leadership behaviours then the negative effects of emotional regulation are reduced. Since 'transformational' and 'empowering' are terms that epitomise the coaching relationship it would appear that there is a role for coaching here in helping clients to reduce problems such as stress at work – not through control and regulation of their emotions, but by acknowledging and understanding them as normal.

A number of coaches did describe how they would work with an emotion, helping the client to express it more fully, name it and use it productively. It could be assumed from their answers that these coaches, at the very least, are not suspicious of any type of emotion and they would explore them and work with them. Examples from the data are given in (v) above and could be seen to support the aims of coaching. This concurs with Patrick's (2004) research with coaching clients, which suggests that those who work to understand, rather than control their emotions, are more likely to experience significant growth.

Our first finding has confirmed that a proportion of coaches in the current study actively try to influence client emotions. However, some would refer a client, suggesting that emotions are considered as unhelpful to the coaching process, or that they need to be managed in some way. Others described a more client-centred approach that would allow exploration: the role for coaches being to acknowledge and understand emotion as normal.

2. Difficult situations in terms of coaches' emotions

This theme is divided into two parts, A and B. Part A identifies the emotions and emotional situations that coaches report impact most on their own emotions and test the boundaries of their work as coaches. Part B then moves on to explore the ways in which coaches deal with these emotional responses.

Part A

In addition to perceived difficult situations in relation to client emotions, there seems to be a range of emotions presented by the client that can affect a coach's own emotions and so also create difficult situations in the coaching process. Our study suggests that coaches see difficult emotional situations as testing their understanding of the boundaries of the profession.

> *A coach needs to understand the fine line between coaching and counselling. (R22)*
> *I would suggest they may need a different kind of intervention – e.g. counselling or therapy. (R7)*

This is not surprising in the light of the messages given to coaches in statements, such as that provided by the International Coaching Federation, that clearly suggest that working with emotions belongs to domains other then coaching: 'Coaching assumes the presence of emotional reactions to life events and that clients are capable of expressing and handling their emotions. Coaching is not psychotherapy' (ICF, 2002). Some emotions could indeed indicate underlying issues that may not be appropriate to work with in coaching and it has been argued elsewhere (Bachkirova & Cox, 2004) for the importance of psychological literacy of coaches in order to define if and when a referral is necessary. However, statements such as the ICF's may lead to coaches being wary of all emotions.

Occasionally client emotions were identified by coaches as impacting on their own emotions. When this occurs, the client's strong or seemingly inappropriate emotions trigger emotions in the coach, making it

hard for the coach to maintain control of his/her own emotions. Control of these is seen as good and necessary. When asked what kinds of emotions were more difficult to deal with, and why, coaches replied:

> *Ones that I can relate to personally might make me feel emotional too. (R38)*
>
> *They irritate me, and force me to spend some of my energies concentrating on dealing with my own emotions. (R16)*
>
> *I get wrapped up in myself and my own internal dialogue and reasons etc. Self-justification, etc. (R10)*

These examples indicate that some coaches are identifying with the client's emotion in some way. Such identification could be interpreted as suggesting a lack of understanding by the coach of the role of empathy. In person-centred therapy and counselling empathy is an expression of values and understanding that results in a 'principled non-directivity' (Schmid, 2001, p.1). Schmid goes on to remind us that in therapy the attempt to understand is not used 'in order to'. When coaches work to understand an emotion in order to do something with it, or try to use client emotions in order to help them achieve goals or help them to manage their emotions in order to placate work colleagues, this could be seen as a lack of understanding and, it could be argued, is a move away from client-centredness. Similarly if coaches avoid particular emotions because they find them uncomfortable to work with, as in the examples above, then this could be seen as a lack of empathy. Empathy involves being in the client's place moment by moment and 'feeling as if' (Schmid, 2001, pp.2–3). Schmid confirms that it is this 'as if' that is important since it distinguishes empathy from identification: 'identification does not pay attention to, and even ignores, the otherness of the Other. Interpretation closes the eyes to his or her uniqueness.' Although closely related, empathy and identification are also different in the affects they produce. Empathy produces acceptance, whilst identification may result in transference/countertransference. For some of our coaches the dangers of identification,

or of ignoring the boundaries between coach and client, are very real and could be seen as unhelpful. There are implications here for coach training and supervision.

In addition, a spectrum of specific client emotions was perceived by coaches as being more difficult to deal with professionally. These included:

> *Anger (R8, R12, R13…)*
> *Apathy and resignation (R3)*
> *Lack of drive, detachment (R33)*
> *My own fears (R6)*
> *Despair, futility (R22)*
> *Hopelessness (R25)*

Le Bon (2001, p.86) argues that a central element in emotions is our beliefs, evaluation and judgements. The feeling of anger, he confirms, includes a judgement that someone has committed a wrong. This implied judgement could account for the fact that, in this study, anger appears most often as a 'difficult' emotion. Our findings also support Tiedens (2001) contention that depression or fear tend to elicit negative emotions in others by evoking uncertainty, pessimism and risk averse choices. Similarly, Fischer *et al.* (2004) report that emotions such as sadness or despair produce reactions of powerlessness and helplessness in others.

There was, however, some useful evidence of self-awareness in relation to these specific emotions and the effect they were having, plus recognition of coaches' own vulnerability in terms of human relationships. This level of self-awareness is essential for further personal and professional development of coaches. In the responses below the indication is that a rational judgement is being made by coaches regarding their abilities to deal with certain emotions. In particular coaches expressed uncertainty in how to handle emotions they perceived as difficult, and some indicated a need for ongoing development or training.

> *I am not sure how to handle them and I get a sense of panic. (R28)*
>
> *I am not sure I have the right tools/training or experience to deal with them effectively. (R36)*

Part B

We now consider how coaches reported that they deal with perceived difficulties associated with their own emotions. When they feel a strong emotion coaches tended to respond in one of four ways:

(i) Through reflection and self-examination, either internally, or externally through supervision, seeing it in one of two ways:

(a) their own issue:

I will reflect on why this is. (R28)

I would need to be aware of the impact on my coaching – stand back and reassess the situation. (R38)

(b) or as their client's issue:

I try to get over it but am always aware they might also provoke this in other people so I would consider whether this was my stuff or part of the client issue. (R10)

I look for what they are doing to trigger it. (R39)

(ii) Through actively exploring the issue with a client

Flag it up or bring it into the room. (R11)

Will if appropriate discuss this with them. (R34)

(iii) By termination of coaching process

I question whether I should have that relationship with that individual. (R24)

I wouldn't continue the relationship. (R35)

(iv) By taking the issue to supervision (although very few respondents mentioned this)

I need at least to discuss this with a supervisor. (R9)

I call my supervisor/mentor for guidance. (R25)

Only one response was to continue the process on the professional level (this is not unusual for similar professions, e.g. counselling)

I will discuss with a supervisor to understand why. Professionally, I should not need to feel enthusiastic about all my clients to be effective. (R9)

The strategy in terms of responsible coaching, so as not to recycle problems, is to use some form of supervision. The responses in (i) (b), above, might well indicate unresolved personal issues that may interfere with the coach's ability to work with clients. For example, there could be irrational fears that these coaches have in relation to their experience, and an outcome would be possible termination and giving up on their own and their client's development, as in (iii). Coaches are not required to work with their personal issues in the way counsellors are, and as a consequence may be unaware of their limitations in relation to their personal 'stuff'. This appears to reinforce a need for supervision.

By contrast, in (ii) above there is an indication of a high level of awareness of the coach, one who is prepared to work in depth. But even actively exploring emotions in this way needs to be reflected on carefully because it could still mask issues such as transference or counter-transference. Thus all responses should be explored in supervision.

The second theme has identified responses to difficult emotional situations caused by the range of emotions presented by the client. Two categories of client emotion have been identified as having most impact: strong emotions and inappropriate emotions and some of these appeared to affect a coach's own emotions, in some cases revealing a strong identification with the emotion. It was evident that most coaches in this study however, were aware of the boundaries between themselves and their client. The results suggest that coaches deal with emotional situations in one of three ways:

1. They take time out to analyse and reflect on the emotion, either viewing the issue as their own and self reflecting or taking it to supervision, or they see it as belonging to their client.

2. They actively explore the emotion with the client in the coaching session and try to use the energy they perceive as captured within it.

3. They refer the client or terminate the process.

Coaches perceived a range of emotions as difficult, but saw control of their own emotions during the coaching process as vitally important.

3. Differentiated views on clients' emotions

Court (1995) considers that beliefs about emotions are still highly gendered. This differentiated aspect of emotion could also have the potential to lead to complex emotional situations for the coach. In the workplace, for example, it has been reported that female executives are expected to control their emotions as any display of feelings can be perceived as weak or irrational (Sachs & Blackmore, 1998). Lupton (1998) also confirms that femininity has been associated with the emotional and the private, whilst masculinity has been associated with a more rational and public persona.

Gender issues in relation to emotion were evident in a variety of responses from coaches:

(a) Some coaches reported no gender differences in dealing with emotions. When prompted with the stem 'When a female/male client presents an emotional reaction, I …' responses included:

> *Behave exactly as I would with a male. (R23)*
> *Respond the same way I would if a female client did so. (R7)*
> *Treat it on the emotion – not their gender. (R21)*
> *Respond appropriately irrespective of gender. (R37)*

(b) Others had somewhat gender biased responses indicating more tolerance to female emotions and more discomfort in working with male emotions:

> *I can probably empathise better. (R2)*
> *I would probably feel less comfortable than I would if it were a female client. (R5)*

> *Can probably empathise, being a female myself. (R39)*
> *Try to deal with it in a professional, sympathetic, but detached way (I am male). (R9)*

The recognition by coaches that gender differences exist and that they might approach them differently, reflects the situation in the workplace. The conventionally male attributes of rationality, control and logic are still positively imbued and in opposition to the traditional female qualities of emotionality and irrationality.

The heightened awareness necessary within coaching suggests that coaches need to recognise that they may hold to certain stereotypes and that there is a need to reflect on this. In (b) above it was evident that even in an overtly non-judgmental occupation such as coaching, some coaches where aware that they are conditioned by stereotypical, gender-biased cultures. Some coaches considered that they would have more empathy with someone of the same sex and may feel less comfortable with male expressions of emotion.

Conclusion and further research

In this paper we have presented an investigation of how coaches deal with difficult emotional situations in their coaching relationships. The study suggests that coaches have very different viewpoints in relation to dealing with challenging emotional situations and that an enhanced awareness of this is essential.

In the workplace, especially with the current stress on being 'emotionally intelligent', or with emphasis on controlling and using the emotions purposefully, as in the case of emotional labour, it is important for coaches to be aware of how emotions can help or hinder the client's progress. It is important too, that they are aware of their own responses, biases and limitations. Although there was evidence in this study of considerable reflective practice and a focus on development as a coach, the results suggest that there is a significant role for

supervision. However, very few immediate responses of coaches to difficult emotional situations included reference to supervision, illustrating probably a stage in the development of the profession when supervision is only gradually starting to playing an important role.

In relation to gender stereotyping some coaches saw no gender difference in relation to how they would deal with emotions, but others admitted they may be more tolerant with females and experience more discomfort when males displayed their feelings. This is an illustration of how unexamined assumptions about emotions, absorbed from a dominant culture, might hamper the coaching process, and points again to the value of supervision.

This paper has also shown that coaches are significantly affected by their clients' emotions: none of the coaches appears to have been involved in a practice where they could avoid emotion as the ICF statement above seemed to imply. In fact, the responses of this sample of coaches show that full involvement in the coaching process implies involvement of the total person, including their emotional characteristics. This may well lead to situations that the coach may identify as difficult.

A further observation relates to the individual responses to our stem sentence questionnaire which reveal a large variety of intentions and strategies in terms of dealing with emotional situations. We believe that this variety is partly an outcome of the very mixed attitudes to emotions evident in organisations (Fineman, 2000). These attitudes range from suppression and rationalisation to acceptance and high expectations, especially in relation to the ability of emotional intelligence to deliver performance related outcomes. We have described elsewhere how this ambiguity contributes to the spectrum of personal theories of emotions that coaches hold (Bachkirova & Cox, 2007).

In addition, the stem sentence method mirrors the spontaneity and immediacy of the coaching conversation and so we would suggest reveals individual tendencies, which, in turn, are coloured by elements of professional background and experience. Thus we would argue that the coaches' responses to difficult emotional situations and their personal theories (articulated or unconscious) might be influenced by current attitudes towards emotions, particularly in organisations, but also by their individual differences. Such individual differences include their tolerance of the affective states of others, their own 'emotionality', their gender and their professional training. This is an area for further research

The implications of these findings for the coaching and mentoring profession are twofold:

1. Education and training would need to include the nature of emotions and their function in individual change; the issue of emotional intelligence with sufficient criticality applied to the concept, its measurement and commercial use; the role of individual differences in dealing with emotions; the difference between empathy and identification.

2. The study shows that coaches need appropriate support in order to advance their awareness and understanding of specific emotions in the coaching process and their individual capacity and style of working with these. However, in this study very few coaches identified this support with supervision and are, therefore, missing the opportunity to enhance the quality of their coaching work through individually tailored professional support.

This paper has highlighted some of the ways in which coaches currently deal with difficult emotional situations and has reinforced the call for supervision for coaches. However, more research is needed. The next stage of our own project is to examine some of the strategies coaches have for helping clients become aware of their emotions and to see how they perceive the role of emotion in aiding performance and well-being.

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Coaching: A process of personal and social meaning making

Reinhard Stelter

In this article, coaching shall be presented as a specific form of conversational process between a coach and a focus person – the coachee – with the aim to give the focus person a developmental space and thereby the possibility for reflection and renewed understanding: (1) about his/her own experiences in relation to a specific context; and (2) about specific relationships, co-ordinated actions with others and about the processes of negotiation in a specific social situation. Theoretically, the ambition is to combine a phenomenological and experience-based perspective with a social constructionist-relational perspective. Both approaches base their ideas on concepts of meaning. It is the aim of the author to integrate these two approaches both theoretically and in regard to their applicability in the coaching process.

Keywords: coaching, meaning making, narrative, social constructionist, coaching relationship, phenomenology.

COACHING SHALL BE presented as a specific form of conversational process between a coach and a focus person – the coachee – with the aim to give the focus person a developmental space and thereby the possibility for reflection and renewed understanding: (1) about his/her own experiences in relation to a specific context; and (2) about specific relationships, co-ordinated actions with others and about the processes of negotiation in a specific social situation.

What is coaching?

Coaching – in this case individual coaching – shall be defined as the coach's participation in the development and learning process of the person in focus. This process creates the foundation for new, alternative, or revised narratives of the focus person's personal and professional life.

Coaching is a form of conversation which always shall be related to a specific context and situation in which the focus person is experiencing something significant and challenging – challenging in the sense that the focus person is governed by a desire for an in-depth reflection, understanding and change of him- or herself and certain circumstances in their life or work (see:

Stober & Parry, 2005). Coaching shall be discussed in relation to learning and development and as processes that can be related to the focus person's interest and fundamental preparedness to have their current view of reality *unravelled*. In coaching, the person's own dialogue will be stimulated by placing an emphasis on selected situations, contexts and challenges, and in such a process the coach is acting as a *facilitator* of this dialogue. In spite of the focus person's relatively central position in his or her own developmental process one must, nevertheless, be aware that new realities and new narratives are formed by the focus person *together* with the coach through their *conversation and co-creation of meaning*. In this dialogue the coach must take on a position, in which he or she is aware of the risk of inadvertedly influencing the process of co-creation. Thus, it is important that the coach, through education and supervision, has been addressing his or her own weaknesses and possible problem areas. This self-knowledge of the coach is the basis for a professional attitude and work ethics which help to prevent an uncontrollable influence of coach interventions in the progress of the conversation.

Meaning as a central concept in coaching

In the following *meaning* is introduced as a central concept for the purpose of understanding the focus person's personal and social reality and his or her pattern of action and practice. Meaning is essential because people ascribe their experiences, their actions in life or work and their interactions with specific meanings. Things appear as meaningful when people *understand* and make sense of their way of thinking, feeling and acting. People do, for instance, create specific narratives about themselves and the world they live in. This *understanding* is a continuous *interpretative process* which is, amongst other things, based on the individual's previous knowledge, experiences, emotions, believes and attitudes towards an actual situation. This process forms the individual's current sense of reality. *Meaning* is far from being the same as the term *information* as used in the concept of data processing in common information technology. The human being functions in a totally different way than a computer, as is emphasised by Jerome Bruner (1990), an influential advocate of a culture and action orientation in psychology. In Bruner's understanding, human beings are not a 'data processing devise' but, rather, are *interpreting* their surroundings, other people and themselves on the basis of their dynamic interaction with the surrounding world.

The article is based on the understanding of two essential ways of meaning making which will be presented and related to two concepts of learning and understanding that can characterise the process of coaching:

1. Meaning is formed through the actual experiences and (implicit) knowledge the individual acquires in the different life contexts. This concept of experiential meaning making will be linked to the concept of aesthetic learning.
2. Meaning is shaped through social negotiation and narratives that describe the focus person's life practice. This process of meaning making will be related to a form of social learning aiming at understanding relationships and the importance of others for creating reality.

These two concepts of meaning making are vital for the theoretical foundation for coaching presented in this article. If the coach does not support the focus person in the process of *meaning making* coaching becomes a superficial conversation which does not seriously affect the focus person's understanding of reality and life practice. The following presentation can therefore be viewed as a meta-theoretical framework for the coaching process, which is the foundation for the very method and technique in the coaching intervention.

The article is divided in two central chapters presenting these two essential approaches and their implications for the coaching practice:

I. Experiences and knowledge – about aesthetic learning in coaching

Our actions and ways of living and working are influenced by earlier *experiences* and *knowledge* and are at the same time based on: (1) how we sense things in the *here-and-now* and, thus, how we relate to the situation and context that we currently are in or which we, in a coaching session, convey to the present moment of the conversation. Often, this sensing and experiencing of the situation is *pre-reflective* (i.e. it is preconscious and not verbalised). In many situations we act on our 'auto pilot', which means on the basis of habits, routines and internalised processes. In that way we are able to handle complex life situations without experiencing an overload of our mental processing. Therefore, the individual will often be acting on the basis of a *tacit* or *implicit knowledge* which is only available through immediate action in a known context or through conversation where one attempts to transfer the tacit knowledge to language (Polanyi, 1966).

The objective is that coaching can be an important way to help the focus person to put the implicit into words, and thereby

make his or her actions reflective and present. In this way coaching is facilitating an aesthetic awareness. The focus person is given the opportunity to revisit and speak about previous significant or challenging situations and thereby achieves a deeper understanding of his/her thinking, feelings and reflections in the given course of actions. With this focus on implicit, tacit and procedural knowledge coaching can help stimulate *aesthetic learning processes.* In everyday language the word aesthetic is associated with artistic expression and the beautiful, but here the original linguistic meaning of the aesthetic concept is used. This concept stems from the two Greek words, *aisthetikos*, which means 'as regards to sensing', and *aisthanesthai*, which means 'sense, feel'. This awareness on the aesthetic and the reflections developed during the conversation with the coach can be a good point of departure for the creation of alternative narratives in relation to the specific challenge and the development of new perspectives on certain tasks and situations with which the focus person is faced.

Aesthetic learning
I will consider aesthetic learning as a particular cognitive process based on a bodily-perceptual involvement from a first-person perspective, a pre-reflective approach to the world that does not immediately offer access to a reflexive and verbal realisation. It is 'lived *experience* associated with cognitive and mental events' (Varela & Shear, 1999, p.1). By focusing on the first-person perspective and by trying to verbalise the implicit in the coaching process, the focus person creates a good basis for an understanding of the aesthetic-sensual perception and experience in actual situations. This perspective will be explored in the following way:

- The first-person approach is a perceptual and *embodied perspective.* This means that cognitive processes are situated, concrete and incorporated by the individual. This understanding of cognitive processes is also gaining ground in cognitive science

– and represents a movement away from the idea that our cognition and thinking are functioning as a kind of computer and towards an understanding which is based on sensory-motor coordination. Varela, Thompson and Rasch (1993, p.9) talk about *'cognition as enaction'.*

- *Through the intermediate sensory experience and orientation* which is provided by the *first-person perspective*, the focus person gains access to an understanding of him- or herself and the world which goes deeper than the ordinary reflective and linguistically rooted understanding. The aesthetic-sensual understanding is built on the basis of an analogue mode of information processing where the world is perceived of in complete entities and not in fractions and is best verbalised by the use of metaphors or linguistic pictures of the things one wishes to describe (Lakoff, 1987).

- The sensory-aesthetic and first-person perspective rests on the person's direct relation to the specific situation, which is embedded through *concrete actions* or *imagined actions* (i.e. visualisation) in the present moment. *The first-person approach* takes place through sensory governed and situated actions (Varela, Thompson and Rosch, 1993). The body is incorporating the situation, and the self is embedded in the context. This sensory and mindful attention is the basis for a meaningful understanding of the situation.

- The first person approach is producing *personal meaning and significance* that is based on the person's experience, interpretation and understanding of the situation. The focus person is sensing his/her surroundings and creating his/her own reality through the meaning creating interplay which the person is having with the context. Through the *incorporation* of the surroundings the situation is experienced as meaningful (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

● The first person approach is orientated towards *knowing-how* (Ryle, 1949); that is, I am involved in the situation, I am perceptually governed via the immediate involvement and handling of the situation; I am in the situation via the pre-reflexive and practically embedded intentionality; I do not think about rules for my actions, and things happen while I act. My action is based on a spontaneous and non-verbal knowledge. My actions are part of my sensory-motor habits and my practical consciousness.

By being coached from the first-person perspective the focus person gets an immediate and initial understanding of his or her position in the actual context and situation which he or she has chosen to take up in the conversation with the coach. This approach to coaching shall be described more in-depth in the following section.

Coaching can uncover the implicit

In the aesthetic perspective the coaching process revolves around attention to and perceptual awareness of specific and selected situations with a focus on revisiting an event from a here-and-now perspective. Coaching deals with putting words on one's *felt sense* (Gendlin, 1997) and this warrants a transformation (Stelter, 2000) in the following way: The felt sense is reformatted in a process of symbolisation into linguistic expression. The challenge lies in the focus person's ability to express experiences in a language. Stevens (2000) describes the challenges in this process as follows:

> If I wish to communicate to you an experience I have had, I can only do it through some system of symbolic forms, probably words. But, there are serious difficulties here for a listener who wants to understand what I am expressing. It is not a simple question of getting the record of the actual words I use or have in mind. It is about knowing what meanings they signify (i.e. about the meaning systems they relate to). One problem here is that communication

depends on the experiencers' ability to express themselves: how articulate, how skilled and expressive they are in the use of language. Another is that the words used relate to a diffuse network of semantic assemblies both for the speaker and the listener: even if we attempt to articulate a particular cluster, where do we begin and stop? Thirdly, we depend on the researcher's or listener's ability to reconstruct or interpret what is heard. We share understanding with the speaker only in so far as we have equivalent semantic systems (and ones related to similar linguistic tags) which can be stimulated in us. (p.115)

The coach should support this process of verbalising experiences and knowledge by, for example, inviting the focus person to employ metaphors and analogies in his/her use of language. The aim is to facilitate the focus person in getting in contact with his/her implicit knowledge and felt sense in relation to a specific situation. With this challenge in mind some key elements and principles will be presented in the following:

Attention on the present moment

The first fundamental principle that enables sensory-aesthetic experiences is the individual's orientation towards the situation *here-and-now*. In the present moment the focus is on the immediate experiences that are connected to this situation. Daniel Stern (2004) describes the *present moment* as a subjective, psychic process unit that one is aware of. He highlights that the present moment is not the verbal description of a moment. The experience enacted in the present moment gives rise to both *Erlebnis* (immanent lived experience) and *Erfahrung* (experiential apprehension of self and situation). The present moment can be experienced in the *concrete situation*: I am aware of what I am doing and things are developing in the flow of the action. The Greek describe this perspective as *kairos* which stands for 'the appropriate moment' or the moment where things happen. *Kairos* is orientated towards

action – an action that is emerging, but which one is far from able to describe through words. *Kairos* is being related to *knowing how.* There is an inherent 'logic' in practice, and this logic takes shape in the present moment which is, at the same time, containing *kairos.* The quality of this moment lies in the individual's attentive focus on the flow of the action and the factors in the environment, the task and the person that actually define the action. The individual's alertness and sensory awareness in the situation develop an orientation that makes the individual ready to verbalise some of the experiences of the moment and thereby to work towards new perspectives. This internal readiness is also an important element in the psychological understanding which Stern also considered in his ideas about present moments in psycho-therapy and everyday life.

Being in epoché

This attention and perceptual awareness towards the here-and-now of a situation is based on *epoché*, meaning *suspension of judgement.* The term comes originally from Greek philosophy, there defined as a principle originally espoused by non-dogmatic philosophical Sceptics of the ancient Greek Academy. Scholars used *epoché* when they viewed an epistemological problem as insolvable. When a controversy arose, the proposal was then to show an attitude of non-involvement in order to gain peace of mind for daily living. Edmund Husserl (1985), the founder of Phenomenology, saw *epoché* or the *method of phenomenological reduction* as the 'basic method to a pure psychology' (p.201). He described his understanding of *epoché* as an opportunity to sharpen consciousness. The freedom from judgment that describes *epoché* can also be seen as a fundamental attitude both of the coach towards his or her focus person and of the focus person in order to move closer to the core of the challenge or the situation which he or she has chosen to address. Depraz and Varela (2000) present three phases in the *epoché*:

1. *Suspension* of the habitual thoughts;
2. *Conversion or reorientation* of attention from 'the external' to 'the internal'; and,
3. *Letting-go* or responsiveness towards the immediate experiences and knowledge. *Epoché* implies an attentive and non-judgemental shift of the focus person to the act and activity itself, a shift which is based on *being in the present moment.*

Attention on and awareness of the person-situation relationship

This absorption in and awareness of the situation is based on two forms of intentional relation which the focus person has towards his or her environment:

1. The person has an immediate, implicit and often non-verbalised relationship to his or her environment and the actual situation (Merleau-Ponty, 1994). In the interplay between perception and action, the focus person relates him- or herself to a specific context in a specific environment. Coaching questions in this line of thought would draw on methods which in example are based on *epoché* or *focusing* (Gendlin, 1982).
2. The focus person has an intentional relationship to the environment which is based on goal-orientation (Frese & Sabini, 1985). This type of intentional orientation is generally easier to describe in words than is the former. Here, the coaching conversation has its point of departure in questions about *values, purposes and goals* in relation to a specific activity which the focus person is occupied with.

The presented ideas of intentionality can be related to the (mental) ecological psychology (e.g. Gibson, 1966, 1979), who used the term *affordance* – here defined as an *action possibility from the environment* which the actor is aware of and which then might lead to specific intentions and actions in the context given. A specific constellation in the environment *invites* the individual to carry out an action where the interaction between the person and the environment leads to a

mutual match of the two. Here, Gibson emphasises the fundamental *information* which is encoded in the environment and which appears in the form of *affordances* (Gibson, 1979). In order to strengthen the focus person's perceptual awareness on *environmental possibilities,* the coach might ask questions that help the focus person to become more sensitive about the chosen situation, to discover other possible ways of understanding it and finally to develop new ways of acting in similar and future situations.

The following graphical presentation sketches a number of focus points that might support the coach to develop questions that encourages the focus person to elaborate on his or her position and orientation towards the actual situation which the focus person regards as challenging and wishes to examine in-depth (see Figure 1).

These focus points can also be used when the coach chooses to ask hypothetical questions (De Jong & Berg, 1997) that invite the focus person to reflect on selected situations in which the focus person could act/could have acted differently or that could be desirable or exceptional.

Figure 1: Focus points for the development of questions in relation to the actual context and situation which the focus person wishes to examine in the coaching session.
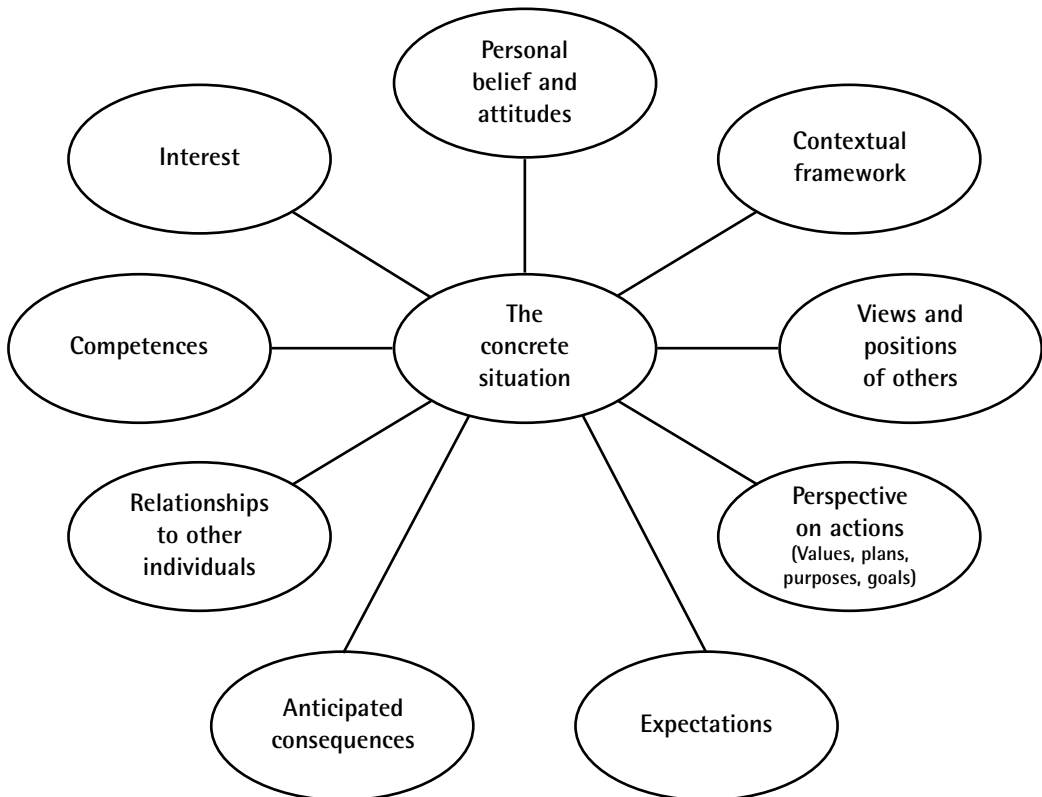
This article's first main section can be concluded in the following way: The focus here was on *experience and (tacit) knowledge* of concrete situations and contexts and their importance to the focus person's opportunity to interpret and develop his or her understanding of his own *subjective reality*. Coaching in this domain facilitates the focus person's aesthetic learning processes. The coaching conversation must give the focus person an opportunity for immediate awareness and perceptual examination of experienced realities in the past, present and possible future. At the same time the conversation should invite alternative interpretations of these realities and focus the attention on a situation-specific view in a possible future. In essence: It is the individual who through his or her interaction with the environment is shaping his or her own *subjective reality*, a reality which is not finite but one which is changing when looking at it from a new perspective – a perspective which is facilitated by the coach through questions that sharpen the attention on the situation and context chosen by the focus person.

II. Negotiation in practice – understanding relational processes in coaching

In the following section the particular focus will be on *social meaning-making* as the second meta-theoretical basis for coaching. Social meaning-making is based on the *social constructions of reality*, a reality which is constructed exclusively though joint-action or co-action with others (e.g. in a workplace, family, or class at school) and which is formed in the *relations* that the focus person is part of (Gergen, 1994). Although the focus person may have an impression of acting on the basis of his or her own intensions and will, all these actions are at the same time based on an interaction with other people in the concrete context in which one is taking part in. In this line of thought, all actions can be defined as joint-actions or co-actions with concrete or imagined others. Meaning is developed in interaction with others in a form of *negotiation* which generates a specific *social reality* which then is experienced as meaningful to the implicated parties (Bruner, 1991). As this reality is constructed in socially co-ordinated processes, it is also shaped differently as it depends on the context (e.g. a situation at work, in the family or in the company of friends). Pearce and Cronen (1980) describe this social interrelatedness with the term *Co-ordinated Management of Meaning* (CMM). We co-create a specific life or work practice with the people involved in specific contexts. These contexts produce a *practice* that comes into play in co-actions or joint-actions with the participants that are part of a certain community of practice, e.g. a work unit, a project group, a sports team, a school class. These actions are concrete and physical (e.g. writing on a computer, moving stones, playing ball, having a meeting together) and these actions are often integrated in conversations. The practice we have together, is shaped, developed and changed through the joint-actions as described above. In this way every participants in a community of practice create a social reality which is changed through the continuous dynamics in this practice.

This practice is manifested both in concrete terms (such as a work plan or the use of specific tools) and through the way the participants talk with each other (e.g. the way of exchanging opinions or form of a conversation between colleagues handling a difficult task). In the following two forms of manifestations or 'thingness' (Wenger, 1998, p.58) will be highlighted as based on joint-actions in the concrete practice:

1. Acts in a certain context of practice are established through and formed by specific *reifications*, a kind of objectification which is created and formed in a specific community of practice (e.g. a work unit, a team).
2. Simultaneously the practice people are carrying out together unfolds through *linguistic discourses* that end up as specific *narratives* about this practice.

These two forms of manifestation of practice can be seen as an important framework for the coach in his or her way of leading the conversation with the focus person. This framework can be the basis for the development of an in-depth understanding of the joint-actions and conversations that the focus person is part of in his/her practice. Action and language should here be understood as connected phenomena that have a circular or interwoven relationship to each other (Cronen & Lang, 1994). Therefore, the following two separate sections only exist out of analytical reasons, but should be perceive as one unit.

Reification

The use of this concept is based on the work of the Swiss-American educational researcher, Etienne Wenger (1998) who states the following:

> I will use the concept of reification very generally to refer to the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into 'thingness'. In doing so we create points of focus around which the negotiations of meaning becomes organised (p.58).

Wenger continues:

> With the term reification I mean to cover a wide range of processes that include making, designing, representing, naming, encoding and describing, as well as perceiving, interpreting, using, reusing, decoding, and recasting. Reification occupies much of our collective energy (p.59).

Wenger sees reification as a connection between the process in which participants of the community of practice are part and the manifestations or objects that this process is producing. When people carry out joint-action (= the process) they create something together (= the product). In their joint practice they produce meaning as an expression of their co-ordinated actions, and reification appears then as a materialisation of their joint practice of meaning making. This reification can take up various forms, such as an abstract formula, a set of rules in a ball game, a construction drawing, a draft for a work plan or as a specific gesture after a lengthy discussion. The joint practice in a work relationship can end up in a fundamental and more homogenous intentional orientation in the involved parties. In the best case this 'synchronisation' will lead to a well-functioning and well-co-ordinated cooperation. If this co-ordination does not take place, the process can also produce reifications that express this missing co-operation (e.g. a dispute or the dismissal from the job). However, a certain reification (such as having the tables in a class room placed in a u-shape rather than in rows) can also improve communication and co-operation.

Linguistic discourses in, and narratives about, practice

Linguistic discourses shall be defined as a number of statements and language acts, by individuals in a given context, which are the basis for developing linguistic systems of meaning. In linguistic discourses knowledge, understanding and concepts are shaped in such a way that they find acceptance in the social space and help form the very same context. Certain discourses contribute to the establishing of certain power relations that favor certain ways of talking about things and at the same time suppress other perspectives (Foucault, 1972). This understanding applies both to small groups (e.g. a division in a workplace or a family) or to society in general (e.g. the way in which people talk about cultural and social integration of immigrants).

In a systemic perspective, this linguistic co-ordination can be described as a *structural coupling* which, according to Maturana and Varela (1987) is present whenever there is process of engagement which effects a '… history or recurrent interactions leading to the structural congruence between two (or more) systems' (p.75). The systems can be either individuals in dialogue and interaction with each other (such as a soccer team or a school class) or organisations (such as political parties and trade unions). All inter-

action revolves around people talking and acting in a specific way that leads to a specific co-ordination of actions and where language can be regarded as a particular form of co-ordination of action.

In contrast to the systemic approach, social constructionism does not focus on entities like systems but considers *relationships* between people as the central point of departure (Gergen, 1994): Joint-actions in a specific community of practice develop certain relations, and the meaningfulness in these actions is developed and manifested through, for example, *narratives*, which can be understood as a certain form of reification of this co-ordination of action and speech. Narratives create cohesion in life. Narratives always tie in with the *concrete context* and to specific actions and events which the person either is or has been part of, and they are often related to other players (such as partners, colleagues at work, fellow professionals, friends or opponents). A narrative is formed with a specific 'plot' which gives the narrative a specific coherence in terms of action and meaning and which provides a basic orientation in form of a guiding clue of the story (Polkinghorne, 1988). Encouraging and uplifting narratives help strengthen corporation in the community of practice. On the other hand narratives can also create myths about, for example, certain people in the work place, external relations or certain events. In this way narratives can create one form of reality which comes into existence through the specific social discourse of the involved parties. Events and courses of action can take a form or a set of dynamics that lift a team, a work unit or the individual participant and thereby strengthen team spirit and performance (Patriotta, 2003; Rhodes & Brown, 2005). Accounts and narratives about these events can be formed in such a dramatic composition and plot so that they help create a good corporation amongst the involved parties. However, narratives can also appear and take on a shape that makes it difficult to develop a good corporation, internally as well as externally.

Coaching: Reflecting on reification and discourses aimed at a new practice

The task of the coach is to support the focus person in reflecting on the practice which the focus person has been involved in. This practice is producing certain types of reification as well as forms of joint-action and joint-speech which the focus person intends to view in a different light and to possibly influence and change.

The coaching conversation can help develop the focus person's understanding of his or her patterns of actions and interactions with other people, for example, in work unit, in a team or in class room. In that sense coaching facilitates a social learning process (Wenger, 1998). An examination of reification and discourses may, during the course of the coaching conversation, create greater insights in the focus person, with regard to:

● How the co-operation (for example, in the project group) is functioning.
● How the different participants contribute to the process.
● What is being created together with others in the form of processes, conversations and products.
● What meanings evolve in the community of practice and how these meanings may differ depending on the participants.
● Which values, attitudes and viewpoints are expressed by oneself and others.
● Which differences and similarities are being expressed or suppressed.
● Where has one stalled, and where are other participants seen as a hindrance.
● What would one like to see different, or what does one dream about.

In a coaching conversation we can also focus on the outline of the conversation in a specific context, on the practice or on specific conversations which the focus person is involved in. It is relevant to ask the focus person about specific discourses and the manner in which the involved parties talk or do not talk, act or does not act, in relation to certain events, tasks and challenges.

● How do you talk about things that concern all parties (such as working overtime, long term illness, stress, or arriving late at meetings)?
● How do you talk about your own and other successes or poor results?
● How do you talk about the group's successes or poor results?
● How do you talk about other people (such as colleagues, other work units, managers, customers or trainees)?
● How do you talk and what do you talk about when you are working together with others?
● How do you talk when things are not going well?

The shaping of these discourses is often not obvious, spoken about or directly referred to. Therefore, a coaching conversation can help the focus person to improve his/her understanding of discourses and co-actions in relation to the implicated persons and the relations (of power) in which the different participants play their part. Creating an awareness of these relationships, discourses and co-actions is often the first step to acting differently in future situations.

Conclusion

Meaning and meaning making have been presented as central dimensions in the coaching process. The coach's professional intention and objective is to support the focus person in order to examine meaning, both in relation to the individual experience of the context and in relation to the reflection of joint-actions with others in a concrete community of practice. In order to gain depth in the coaching conversation it seems to be essential to include both the focus person's perspective on the experience and to highlight the joint practice and the relations which the focus person is a part of. These reflections about practice – facilitated by the coach – are the cornerstone for learning and development which the focus person is involved in and which should lead towards a new or extended understanding of the focus person's practice. New perspectives and new knowledge – possibly evolved through new narratives formed in the coaching process – can be the starting point for an implementation of new practices in relation to the concrete situation.

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Contributions of evidence–based developmental coaching to coaching psychology and practice*

Otto Laske

In this article, some of the major contributions to coaching psychology made by evidence-based developmental coaching, a form of coaching based on research in adult development, are outlined. 'Coaching Psychology' is seen as a behavioural discipline (Stober & Grant, 2006). Therefore, the emphasis is put, not on the developmental paradigm per se, but on how it relates to working with behavioural data in coaching practice. This amounts to shedding light on the limits of a strictly behavioural coaching paradigm, however evidence-based it may be. Positively speaking, it entails pointing to the enrichment of coaching psychology by way of acknowledging and integrating developmental research methods and findings about coaches as well as clients, and thus their interaction.

There is a common thematic denominator of disciplines using a developmental paradigm in Piaget's central notion of increasing loss of ego-centricity over the life span. This notion straightforwardly extends to behaviour, in the sense of Freud's 'what Id is shall Ego become,' in that Freud's Ego is exactly where ego-centricity imposed by Id is being lost. If, as happens in developmental coaching, behaviour is seen, as well as measured, in terms of a person's level of ego-centricity in its many forms, new perspectives on 'helping' and 'consultation' including coaching arise that are unknown in a behavioural universe of discourse.
Keywords: Evidence-based developmental coaching, coaching psychology

THE TEXT is in six parts, each outlining a different contribution of evidence-based developmental coaching to coaching psychology:

1. Epistemological contribution: Frame of Reference.
2. Methodological contribution: Structure vs. Content.
3. Cognitive contribution: Current potential capability (sense making).
4. Social-emotional contribution: Emergent potential capability (meaning making).
5. Clinical-developmental contribution: Work Capacity indicators.
6. Outlook on integrating the developmental paradigm into coaching psychology.

1. Frame of Reference (FoR)

It is one of the central tenets of research in human development since Piaget (1925) and Kohlberg (1970) that the major structural occurrence in human life span development is the mounting *loss of ego-centricity in all of its forms.* By ego-centricity is meant a *structural* state of affairs in both cognitive *sense making* and social-emotional *meaning making* in which human consciousness lacks appropriate operations and tools for de-centring from its own subjective orbit.

In cognitive terms, ego-centricity manifests as lack of dialectical thinking beyond formal logic (Basseches, 1984), while social-emotionally, it is apparent in confinement to lower stages of meaning making (Kegan, 1982). In terms of Freud's 'what Id is shall Ego become,' ego-centricity determines ways of *love and social relating generally*, while in the

world of *work* it shows up in the profile of a worker's *psychogenic needs* regarding self conduct, approach to tasks, and emotional intelligence (Aderman, 1969; Murray, 1938). In Jaques's perspective on work capability, ego-centricity hampers a person's Capacity to realise developmental potential, or map potential into applied Capability (Jaques, 1994, 1998). The more a person remains centred on his/her psychogenic (inborn) needs, the less is there a capacity to 'put to work' existing developmental resources, whether cognitive or social-emotional.

In short, prevalence of high degrees of ego-centricity is the hallmark of early developmental stages, whether in thinking, social relating, faith development, role play, work capacity, and other dimensions of human endeavour. Importantly, this prevalence is a <u>natural</u> occurrence, not a deficiency. It only becomes a deficiency when its duration extends beyond certain period boundaries of mental growth (such as 'late adolescence' or 'middle adulthood'), at which point it appears as developmental delay (Piaget's decalage) or arrest. Thus, ego-centricity entails a lack of readiness (potential Capability) to move on to higher developmental stages or phases typical of *adults.*

Admittedly, for a profession such as coaching – a consultation to another person's mental process in the broad sense of both 'emotion' and 'thinking' – the notion of *level of ego-centricity* is of central importance. In a state of prolonged focus of a client [or coach] on his/her own orbit, no coaching method [or coaching practice] will ultimately be effective.

A major issue for coaching effectiveness is thus the state of **developmental readiness** of a client, whether in life or business coaching. The same must be said of the coach whose capability to assist clients depends on his/her level of adult development relative to that of clients. (Where clients' maturity exceeds that of the coach, developmental arrest, thus harm, is in the offing for them.)

It is one of the major contributions of developmental psychology to coaching that the coach becomes no less a centre of attention than the client. Talking about 'clients' without first attending to how coaches generate *models of clients* is one of the deficiencies of present coaching research that occurs when there is a lack of sensitivity to three major developmental tenets:

- **Coaching outcome is ultimately decided by the Frame of Reference (FoR) of the coach which is determined by his or her developmental profile** [not by any techniques or expert knowledge].
- **To consult *professionally* to another party, the coach has to understand that party's FoR.** Otherwise, the coach simply interprets the client from his or her own developmental level, thereby misconstruing the other party's sense and meaning making.
- **A coach can support a client only to the extent that s(he) is herself *ahead of the client developmentally*, and then only within the limits of the client's developmental potential.** A coach who operates at a lower developmental level than the client, while s(he) may be able to provoke *behavioural changes,* can not only not promote *developmental shifts* in the client; s(he) may even delay or arrest the client's adult development.

Informally, FoR is simply 'how the world shows up for' either coach and/or client (Flaherty, 1999), determining what is 'real' and worthy of goal pursuit for them. In terms of developmental research, FoR results from development in four dimensions:

- Perception and Learning (P&L);
- Capacity (psychological Need/Press Profile, or NP);
- Cognitive Development (CD);
- Social-emotional Development (ED),

as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Anatomy of Frame of Reference in Coaching
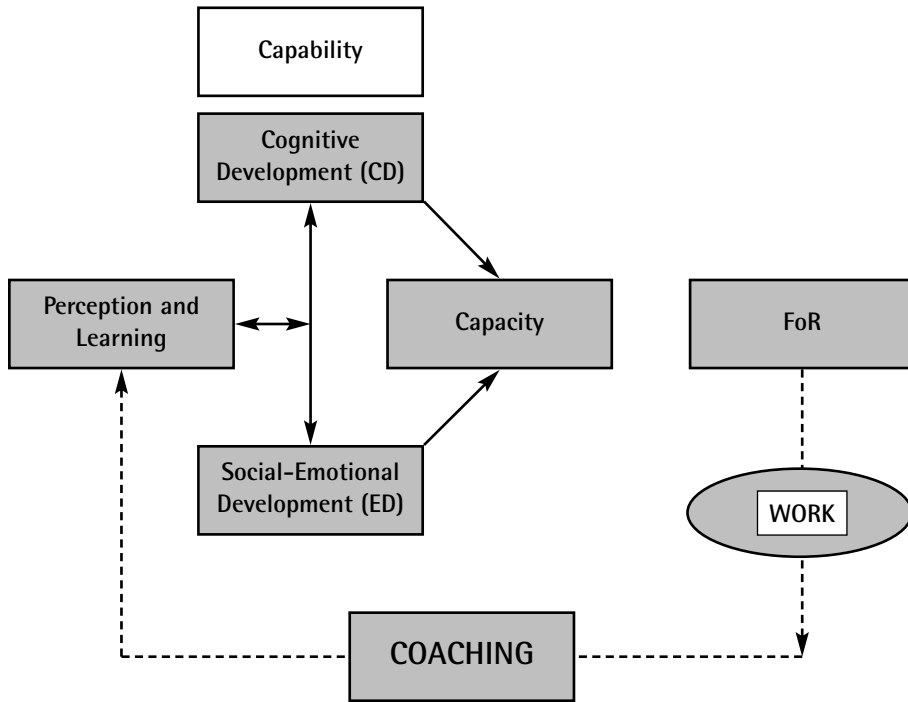
As indicated, for both coach and client, FoR is a result of complex interactions between both horizontal (P&L and Capacity) and vertical dimensions (CD and ED). The two latter define **Capability**, while **Capacity** (in the horizontal dimension) acts as a filter that determines to what extent a person's Capability (developmental potential) can be actualised in performance (applied capability). For this reason, **cutting people down to their performance level unduly reduces the mandate of coaching whose primary function is to act as a 'transfer function' inducing higher levels of FoR, and thus affecting the interplay of all four dimensions** presented in the diagram.

Based on Figure 1, we can methodologically distinguish several kinds of coaching:

1. *behavioural coaching* (disregarding FoR, and confined to applied capability or performance, without access to developmental insight);

2. *cognitive-behavioural coaching* (disregarding FoR, and focusing on behaviour using 'thinking' tools, without access to developmental insight);

3. *cognitive coaching* (centred on boosting of CD and P&L, and disregarding social-emotional research findings);

4. *social-emotional coaching* (focused on emotional intelligence excluding developmental insight; – much 'leadership coaching' is of this ilk)

5. *developmental coaching* (integrating behavioural and developmental research findings, and focused on understanding client's FoR).

In terms of Figure 1, it's clear that developmental coaching best does justice to the complexity of FoR involved, and that coaching psychology is less than it could be without integrating developmental insights. For coaching to become a profession such integration is indispensable.

2. Methodological contribution

How, the reader may ask, can consultants determine a client's Frame of Reference (FoR) **empirically**? It is here that a second contribution to coaching psychology can be noted. The short answer is: by semi-structured interviews that are 'scored' (evaluated) for *structure*, not *content*. This statement needs further elaboration.

Everyday discourse is content-, not structure-focused, and, therefore, does not in and by itself deliver valid cues for how a person presently makes meaning (ED) or sense (CD) of experiences. However, a developmental coach has acquired skills (and theoretical background) to create *special conversations* in which clients are led to reveal the way the world shows up for them, both cognitively and social-emotionally. We speak of 'developmental interviews,' and thereby mean *structured conversations*. Such conversations are different from coaching discourse, since they aim for discerning a client's level of ego-centricity and thus FoR. In developmental coaching, they form the *assessment phase* preceding coaching proper; they also bring a coaching period to a close when empirical proof of coaching effectiveness is desired.

Beginning with Piaget, different kinds of interviews have been created as tools for delving into the structure of individuals' FoR (Basseches, 1984; Lahey *et al.*, 1988; King & Kitchener, 1994; Jaques, 1994; Laske, 1999). Carrying out such interviews requires knowing the theory of cognitive and social-emotional development, and the tools for probing ego-centricity as an indicator of such development. In contrast to sentence completion tests (Loevinger, 1976) and the like, interviews are not 'tests' but are conversations building trust prior to actual coaching. The notion is that one does cannot know 'what to coach for' without developmental data.

In these interviews, learning is potentially life-changing for both coach and client. For the client this is so since the conversations called 'Professional Agenda Interview' (for CD) and 'Subject-Object Interview' (for ED) uniquely center on the client's way of knowing the world, the self, and his/her tasks, staying very close to his or her train of thought elicited either by 'cognitive probes' (CD) or 'social-emotional prompts' (ED). For coaches, learning these interviews is equally life-changing because they acquire an inkling of their own developmental profile, henceforth no longer taken for granted. (In addition, they learn what it *feels* like to be interviewed developmentally.)

A short ED-example will have to suffice.

If, in the context of a social-emotional interview, a client tells you that she recently experienced a situation in her workplace that 'embarrassed' her, you as interviewer have to determine what level of meaning making generated the embarrassment. The client might be embarrassed on an *other-dependent* level where s(he) is defining herself by the expectation of *others*. In this case, the embarrassment arose out of not living up to others' expectations. Another form of embarrassment is one generated by the client's view not to have lived up to her *own* values and principles. In this case, meaning making is occurring at a *self-authoring* level which requires different feedback and coaching interventions. This is a somewhat simplistic example since there are intermediate steps between these two different ED-levels.

Obviously, developmental interviewing is an art as well as a science, that of *developmental listening*, which on the side of the coach requires complete internalisation of theory. It is this internalisation that is life changing, certainly consciousness-raising, and fortifies professionalism to a high degree. Why? Because it replaces the coach's *own little personality* by a professional persona that rests on impersonating developmental theory!

The basic notion in the interview conversations is that LANGUAGE SAYS IT ALL, meaning that developmental interviewing unlocks FoR in an inter-rater reliable way. Based on analysing interviews, results

emerge that professional coaches can agree and give feedback on. What is more, the coach can base the formulation of coaching plans on developmental data elicited through these kinds of structured interview.

3. Cognitive contribution (CD)

We have seen that eliciting FoR is an skill required for determining clients' degree of ego-centricity in all of its forms, understood as something that keeps them at lower levels of realised potential. We have also seen that FoR has two distinct aspects, a cognitive and social-emotional one. As to the former, cognitive, aspects of FoR, it's important to understand that they remain out of reach in *cognitive-behavioural coaching*, simply because 'FoR-CD' does not have to do with behaviour, but with what underlines and determines behaviour, so that 'behaviour' is an epi-phenomenon.

In researching the development of adult thinking, several different paths have been followed:

1. psychometric;
2. 'cognitive';
3. neo-Piagetian;
4. 'contextual'.

Berg and Sternberg, addressing adult cognition as 'intelligence' (in my view, not a good choice), say regarding this classification (2003, p.103):

> These four perspectives on adult intelligence offer different answers to two questions that have guided the field of adult intelligence: (1) What is intelligence throughout adult development? And (2) how does intelligence develop across the adult lifespan? The psychometric and cognitive perspectives define intelligence to be largely the same throughout the lifespan …The neo-Piagetian and contextual perspectives hold that intelligence may change in its composition across the adult lifespan as individuals integrate the emotional and non-rational into thinking systems. …these four different perspectives chart different develop-

mental trajectories for adult intelligence (i.e. decline, maintenance, and improvement). However, all struggle with the potential for both gains and losses at any point during adult development (see Baltes, Lindenberger & Staudinger, 1998).

From a constructivist developmental vantage point, separating the 'neo-Piagetian' and 'contextual' perspectives is hard if not impossible to do. In a Piagetian perspective, cognition is based on a balance of *accommodation* to what's 'out there' and its *assimilation* to existing cognitive structures. While in early development, accommodation wins out over assimilation, increasingly the latter overtakes the former, and the predominance of assimilation results in higher levels of abstract thinking called 'dialectical'. This is the meaning of *cognitive development over the lifespan* adopted for developmental coaching and coach education at the Interdevelopmental Institute.

In terms of coaching practice, what is the focus when centring on clients' cognitive development? Essentially, it means that in both cognitive assessments and cognitively focused coaching interventions the coach focuses on how far clients 'integrate(s) the rational with emotional and interpersonal ways of understanding' (Berg & Sternberg, 2003, p.114). Typically, this is accomplished by way of increasingly *systemic thinking* which 'sees' reality as a living system undergoing unceasing transformation, with the self as a system embedded in other systems. More broadly, it means expanding formal into dialectical logic in order to do justice to the complexities of what is experienced as real.

When viewing cognitive development with a focus on the development of systemic thinking and reflective thinking, we can distinguish *three eras of cognitive development beyond common sense* (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Trajectory of cognitive development from a Piagetian perspective.
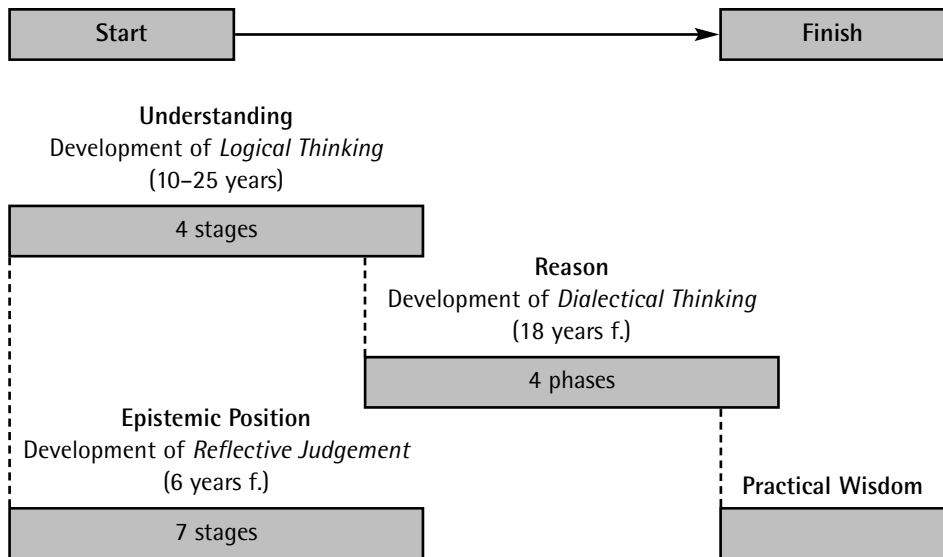
The trajectory is as follows. Late adolescents develop the ability to use abstractions, a development that culminates in the ability to think in terms of formal logic at about age 25. Following that achievement – which neuropsychologically is based on the maturation of the frontal lobes – adults develop increasing capability to think in abstractions at *higher and higher, 'dialectical' levels.* ('Dialectic' refers to the ability to 'split off' one abstraction from another, and thereby relate one abstraction to other, related abstractions not initially acknowledged by the thinker.) The dialectical turn of adult thinking is dependent upon adults' evolving *epistemic position* – having to do with what for them is the nature of knowledge and truth, thus their stage of reflective judgment (King & Kitchener, 1994).

How clients 'think about' knowledge and truth shows up in how they justify beliefs in what is *true* for them. As long as the nature of truth is to be *certain*, thinking and belief do not differ. They only begin to differ to the extent that truth is seen as *uncertain*, and thus as requiring justification of belief. How this is accomplished is different in the two different logics named in Figure 2, namely formal and dialectical logic. As shown in the figure, these logics developmentally overlap during adolescence until dialectical thinking increasingly transcends formal logical constraints. When dialectical thinking – thinking in polarities that are brought together at a higher level – becomes second nature, we speak of Practical Wisdom, meaning an effortless kind of systemic thinking focused, not on static things, but on things seen as ever-changing *forms.*

These notions seem rather academic until one realises that the extent of a client's dialectical – systemic – thinking or lack thereof determines his/her answers to the crucial question of WHAT CAN I DO, AND WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS? At IDM, coaches learn to determine clients' FoR-CD by way of a special interview that is evaluated based on structure in terms of *Thought Forms* rather than content. To do so enables coaches to give clients feedback on the strength of their critical vs. constructive thinking regardless of any specific content. We speak of a client's *current potential capability* which decides what the client can currently do in terms of realising his/her present cognitive potential.

4. Social-emotional contribution (ED)

In addition to the cognitive 'what can I do?' question, clients implicitly or explicitly ask a second focal question, namely: WHAT SHOULD I DO, AND FOR WHOM? Answers to this question reveal the social-emotional aspect of their FoR. With R. Kegan (1982), we can conceptualise social-emotional development as occurring discontinuously, in stages. This development is centred around the relationship of SELF and OTHER, or ME and NOT-ME. Focus on ME is, by definition, ego-centric, but different levels of ego-centrism need to be distinguished. The relationship of FoR-ED to FoR-CD is straightforward (see Table 1).

In strictly social-emotional terms, the five 'main' stages – intermediate stages aside – appear in Figure 3.

As depicted in Figure 3, a social-emotional *stage* is a *mode of functioning* determined by how an individual's focus on Self is negotiated in relation to that on Other (NOT-ME). For instance, focus on Self in stage 2 (the 'instrumentalist' stage) is very different from that in stage 4 where a *self-authoring* view of self, manifest in authentic and idiosyncratic values and principles, has

emerged. Considering that there are four intermediate stages [not shown] between the main stages shown in Figure 3, it's clear that transition between main stages can take a decade to occur. In addition, nobody ever lives at a single stage. Rather, clients act from a *Centre of Gravity*, oscillating between one or two stages below and above the center, and this oscillation is assessed by way of a 'Risk-Clarity-Potential Index'. The index is of high importance in coaching since it suggests to a coach whether attending to developmental risk is a priority, rather than attending to developmental potential. Students at IDM learn to determine a client's Centre of Gravity, as well as the oscillations around the center in terms of lower and higher stages through semi-structured interview.

For example, a client may have behavioural (or even clinical) symptoms having to do with relating to others. A developmental coach approaches such symptoms very differently if the client defines herself by the expectations of others (Stage S-3), compared to a self-definition based on her own values and principles (Stage S-4). The behavioural symptom in question is the same in both cases, but its *meaning* for the client is decid-

Table 1: Correspondence between FoR–ED and Epistemic Position underlying FoR-CD.

Social–emotional Stage	Relationship of Self (S) to Other (O)	Approximate Epistemic Position as to the Nature of Truth and Knowledge
1	S is merged with O	1
2	S and O are opposites, with O opposite to S and an instrument for S	2
3	S 'internalises' O, becoming defined by O	3–4
4	S experiences itself as a system related to, but other than, O	5
5	S knows to be incomplete without O and is dialectically linked to O with which it shares common ground	6–7

Figure 3: The social–emotional trajectory of adult development.
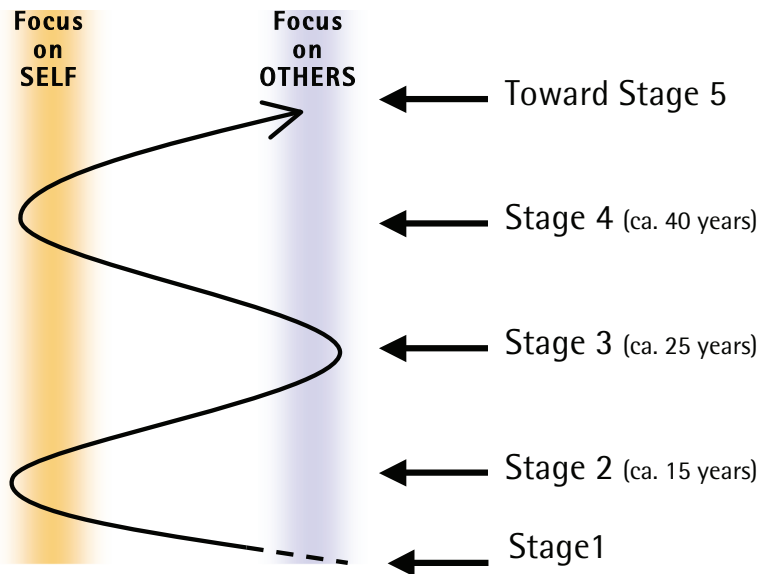
edly different at different stages, and, therefore, requires different interventions. In this context, having available data on a client's developmental risk and potential (index) is of great benefit to the coach.

5. Clinical-Developmental contribution
When bringing together the three dimensions of CDF – social-emotional, cognitive, and psychodynamic ('behavioural') – either in feedback to or work with clients, it is important to understand the different levels of generality of CDF findings, as shown in Figure 4.

While social-emotional findings are highly *generic* – there are millions of people functioning at the same developmental level – cognitive developmental findings are more highly individuated. As a result, many different cognitive profiles can potentially be associated with one and the same level of social-emotional development.

Even more diverse are clinical-developmental data of the form the 'Need/Press Questionnaire' (NP) elicits which point to the concrete singularity of an individual

(Aderman, 1967; Murray, 1938). The questionnaire is a deep-digging assessment tool whose outcomes lend themselves to interpretation from a social-emotional as well as cognitive perspective.

Without going into extensive detail, the psychodynamic data provided by the NP questionnaire focuses on *self-conduct, approach to tasks, and interpersonal perspective* of an individual in an organisational environment. The questionnaire views behaviour from the vantage point of *psychogenic needs* in relation to *pressures* self-imposed by the client in terms of aspirations [ideal Press] and by the social environment [actual Press] (Aderman, 1967). The 18 variables of the questionnaire are evaluated along a Likert scale from 0 to 9 referenced to a managerial norm. Wherever a client's outcomes for these variables lie at extreme ends of the scale, or significantly deviate from the managerial norm, a coaching problem is indicated.

For instance, under Self-Conduct, a client may present with a self concept that is either at 0 (arrogant, unbending, rigid self-perception) or 9 (lack of confidence, self-

Figure 4.

**Hierarchy of degrees of generality
of CDF scores**
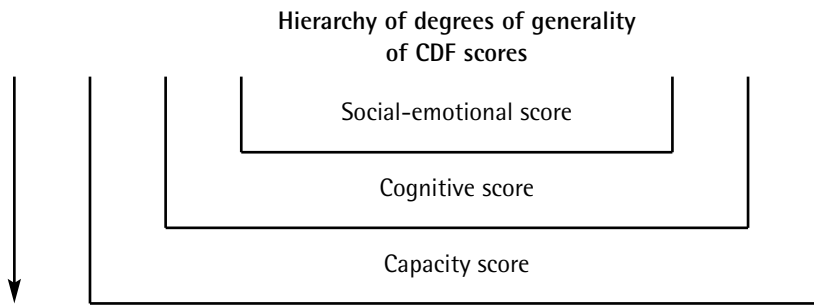
doubts). In this case, there is a significant deviation from the managerial norm of 3 especially on the far end of the scale, indicating behavioural difficulties that a coach would want to attend to. (The finding may also indicate clinical symptoms, in which case the client would have to be referred to a clinical psychologist.)

When considering psychological data of a behavioural nature (like the above) from a developmental point of view, we are essentially asking: ***Why should these symptoms exist?*** That is, we consider developmental information as explanatory of behavioural data. A related question is: ***Given our developmental interpretation of these symptoms, what is the optimal approach to the client in regard to these symptoms?***

For instance, let's say we elicited the following data about our client's interpersonal perspective (emotional intelligence):

● Limited ability to distinguish own motivations from those of others.
● Cloudy regarding own motivations and their impact on others.
● Limited ability to empathise with others.
● Somewhat distant and aloof, undemonstrative.
● Likely to question others' motive.

As developmental coaches we ask ourselves two fundamental questions:

1. What is the developmental explanation for these symptoms, either in the cognitive or social-emotional domain, or both?

2. How, given the client's developmental profile (FoR), should the coach work with the client, and what would seem to be an optimal coaching plan for approaching these issues?

The nature of a coaching intervention in this context would strongly depend on how the client defines herself social-emotionally and cognitively. An 'other-dependent' client (stage 3) would have a fundamentally different understanding of these findings compared to a 'self-authoring' client (stage 4). Also, depending on the client's present cognitive profile, strength or weakness of systemic thinking would matter considerably in terms of how to proceed. (See Laske, 2006, Appendix B, for more details on the case of Sarah.)

6. Outlook on integrating the developmental paradigm into coaching psychology

As noted by D. Stober (2006), 'coaching is all about human growth and change.' In light of this insight, it stands to reason that coaching psychology will remain less professional than it could be wherever developmental methodology and findings are not fully integrated.

What is perhaps less clear to the coaching psychologist coming from a behavioural tradition is the fact that developmental data *lies in a different dimension* compared to behavioural findings. Developmental data flows from a different paradigm that has

consequences not only for clients, but for coaches as well. Most simply, developmental data lie in a 'vertical' dimension that *explains* behavioural data, and thus transcends behavioural arguments. This is highlighted by Figure 1 at the beginning of the chapter.

In light of the *Constructive-Developmental Framework* (CDF) briefly outlined above, there presently exists a 'black hole' not only in coaching practice but also in coaching research. This black hole is due to assumptions made by the international 'coaching community' that closely approximate social-emotional level 3, of other-dependence (Kegan, 1994; Laske, 2006).

Level 3 meaning making fertilises the notion that 'coach and client speak the same language and see the world from the same vantage point' (O'Connor, 2007) while at the same time the coach as a professional claims a self-authoring position (Kegan's level 4) as any piece of the coaching literature will show. This *espousal of a professional, level 4, position associated with a level 3 methodology* is based on lack of self-awareness, and is a clear hindrance to making coaching a true profession. The espousal will continue as long as coaches do not know their own developmental level and do not regard their level of self-development as the basis of their effectiveness with clients.

There would be much to say about the curriculum changes in coaching psychology that would need to occur for the integration suggested above to occur. I have outlined such changes in a previous article (Laske, 2006) when presenting the curriculum followed by the Interdevelopmental Institute. Present commercial pressures leading to a portrayal of coaching as an *industry service* make it difficult to 'come clean' regarding the pedagogical changes that need to be made, even in academia.

The pedagogical changes that seem required for closing the black hole mentioned above all regard the fact that, by laws of human mental growth, coaches live at different developmental levels and 'coach' accordingly. Coaching from a specific developmental level concretely means that the practitioner's model defining 'who the client is' is a function of his/her present way of meaning – and sense-making, or self-definition. Developmental levels define limitations that cannot be overcome by mere espousal, but require mental growth to occur both cognitively and social-emotionally. It therefore stands to reason that coach 'training' – or rather 'education' – would be the best way to make a first step in closing the black hole of coaching. Perhaps then, out of an 'industry service' may arise a 'profession.'

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Book Reviews

Excellence in Coaching: The Industry Guide
Jonathan Passmore (Ed.)
London: Kogan Page.
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Reviewed by Clare Huffington

This book, which came about as a result of a conversation at an Association for Coaching event, brings together an illustrious group of authors, all top coaches and experts in their individual fields. In it they aim to set out what excellence currently means in the dynamic and evolving field of coaching. They cover this both in terms of presenting a diversity of models and approaches and in terms of setting out standards of professional practice to which we should all aspire. As an 'industry guide', it is written primarily for coaches rather than purchasers of coaching.

The book is divided into three parts. The first, called 'The Business of Coaching', covers 'coaching basics'; 'What is coaching?' by Frank Bresser and Carol Wilson; 'Coaching with organisations' by Katherine Tulpa and 'Running your coaching practice' by Alex Szabo. It is intended for those starting or studying coaching or setting up a coaching practice.

The second part, called 'Coaching Models and Approaches' forms the bulk of the book. It contains a selection of eight of the most popular coaching models and approaches(actually six models followed by two approaches) with chapters by leading writers in each of these areas: 'Behavioural coaching – the GROW model' by Graham Alexander; Solution-focused coaching' by Anthony M. Grant; 'Cognitive-behavioural coaching' by Michael Neenan; 'NLP coaching' by Ian McDermott; 'Transpersonal coaching' by John Whitmore and Hetty Einzig; 'Integrative coaching' by Jonathan Passmore; 'Intercultural coaching' by Philippe Rosinski and Geoffrey Abbott and

'Coaching and stress' by Maria Alicia Pena and Cary L. Cooper. The aim is that these chapters are practical and accessible and might lead coaches to develop their practice further both by reading and securing training.

The third part, called 'Professional Issues', covers 'Coaching ethics: Integrity in the moment of choice' by Allard de Jong and 'Coaching supervision' by Peter Hawkins. This section is aimed to take forward the debate in these areas.

Overall this is an impressive book, largely for the achievement of gathering together the luminaries in the field and producing a consistently organised, accessible and practical read for coaches. Particularly helpful was the repeated '10 questions to help you on your way' at the end of each of the chapters on models.

However, with a title like *Excellence in Coaching*, I had expected a number of things I did not get;
1. More depth. The downside of the book's accessibility and practicality was the lack of depth and debate in this complex field. An example would be the concern about the boundaries between coaching and psychotherapy/counselling and how to manage them. A key anxiety of those new to coaching is that they will stray into territory outside of a coaching remit which they feel ill equipped to tackle.
2. There was a significant omission in not including in Part 2 a chapter on the psychodynamic model. There were several mentions of the 'unconscious' and psychodynamic approaches (for example, in Jonathan Passmore's chapter on Integrative coaching). But he was overly dismissive in this comment; 'While many of the psycho-

dynamic techniques may work well in the counselling room, they lack face validity for work with coaches and are less appropriate for the short and more focussed work of coaching' (p.142). I have to declare a personal interest in the systems psychodynamic model in that my organisation runs a well-received training in this approach. It is now a popular rather than fringe model – there have been two books on the subject published in 2006 alone (Newton, J. Long, S. & Sievers, B.(Eds.) and Brunning, H. (Ed.)).

3. More was needed on professional practice and less on models/approaches. The big gaps in the field at present, and acknowledged by Passmore in the introduction to the book, are for outcome research, development of an agreed competency model, definition of coaching standards and agreed accreditation routes for coaches, coaching training and also for coaching supervision and supervision training. These issues are being seriously addressed by some practitioners in the field (for example, Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006, and Whybrow & Palmer, 2006). It would have been helpful if some of the key tensions and issues around defining coaching as a profession had been more fully set out.

4. I would also have liked to see more in Section 1 on 'Why coaching?' in terms of what needs it is meeting in organisations today. One of my clients said; 'Coaching is the new organisational consultancy'. If this is true, coaches need a better understanding of the organisational issues that individuals are trying to fix via coaching as this sets a context for the huge growth of the market in the last 20 years. In my view, it is not just about personal development (Huffington, 2006).

As well as covering how to sell yourself as a coach into organisations (Chapter 2 on 'Coaching within organisations' by Katharine Tulpa), it would have been helpful to hear more about what is going on in organisations at the moment and what their needs are overall and from key individuals in leadership roles so coaches can prepare themselves for what may be asked of them, both achievable and unachievable in a coaching frame.

However, no book on coaching can achieve all that is needed in this growing field. What is clear is that more scholarly as well as practically-based books are needed. I would recommend this one as a valuable primer and handbook for those new to the field.

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Improving Employee Performance through Workplace Coaching: A practical guide to performance management
Earl M.A. Carter & Frank A. McMahon
London: Kogan Page, 2005.
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Reviewed by Manfusa Shams

Depicting both positive (happy) and negative (sad and despair) emotional expressions on a human face in the front page, this book makes an emotional appeal to offer practical workplace coaching guidance to improve employee performance. It sets out to outline an interpersonal approach to workplace coaching. There are nine chapters, the first four chapters deal with theoretical groundwork and the last five chapters provide a practical guide to workplace coaching.

Coaching practice is increasingly becoming a profession on its own. There is a growing need for a practical guide to help setting up a coaching practice as a stand alone practice, and this book is a timely production to meet such need, a useful compendium for practitioners in coaching psychology.

The book begins with an introduction to people management to highlight the importance of an effective performance management system in the workplace. This brief introductory section (pp.1–10) shows how effective coaching practices can improve employee performance. It presents nine principles of a performance management system and highlights the importance of coaching rather than supervision in management in the workplace. The section is followed by the first chapter (pp.15–21) on 'managing people'. The chapter starts with an introduction of who is the approach for and the benefits of coaching to improve employee management and performance. The discussion is presented with key features of coaching for people management.

Chapters 2 and 3 provide the groundwork for the practical application of workplace coaching to improve employee performance, hence the discussion outlines the essential elements of workplace coaching and focuses on how to get started.

Chapters 4 and 5 present an excellent discussion of the way workplace coaching can improve day-to-day job performance (chapter four), and a detailed practical step-by-step guide to design a structure for a formal review is presented in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 also elaborates the groundwork necessary for conducting a performance-related review for employees and provides some good tips for a coach to manage behavioural and emotional aspects during the review process, for example, good listening skills, nonjudgemental attitudes confidence building with acceptance from employees within a strict, continuous professional boundary. Compared to the previous chapters, Chapter 6 focuses on actual coaching practice used by the line managers. This chapter shows the application of a performance-based approach, which is essentially the level of competence required of a coach, and criterion-based approach, which refers to the conditions accompanying performance and standard of performance. This chapter could do with a few more examples to clarify these theoretical constructs. As it is, the readers have to try hard to work out what conditions within employment need to be considered by a coach while reviewing and/monitoring an employee's performance.

The discussions in Chapters 7 and 8 are centred around the application of effective coaching practices to organisational performance. Chapter 7 focuses on disciplinary practice for underperformers and misconduct at work place with examples from two case studies (pp.115, 119). Chapter seven is useful as it shows the transition from coaching mode to discipline mode for employees from a managerial perspective, i.e. when a line manager can switch from coaching employees to a disciplinary action.

The coaching approach to 'risk management' is discussed in chapter eight. This chapter shows a cost-effective coaching

approach to assess the risk at workplace including the consequences of dismissal (Chapter 7). A practical guide to coaching practice involving employees' code of conduct is also provided.

Chapter 9 provides a summary of the previous chapters and includes a reminder of the nine principals of people management and their use in workplace coaching. The authors have provided dynamic discussions in each chapter to show the way each of these nine steps can be implemented, they have also cautioned about the knowledge required to run key activities on people management within these nine steps. The author's reminder for the usefulness of nine steps for middle managers is particularly valuable here. In Chapter 9, readers are also invited to reflect on the discussion around applying the nine principles, as the authors say, 'You have now read the book, so you can now make a judgement about how easy it is to comprehend and learn' (p.139).

From a practitioner's perspective, this book is undoubtedly an excellent practical guide to workplace coaching. The author has provided a thoughtful critical analysis of organisational performance with the use of appropriate coaching approaches, and practices. The discussion of nine principles in employee management is outstanding. This discussion confirms that the organisational culture itself can be a barrier to employee management and performance. In this discussion, the author reconfirms the important role of organisational culture to employee management and performance.

A simple yet informative discussion of barriers to improve employee management is definitely a pragmatic step to ensure the importance of a practical and appropriate coaching model (nine steps as outlined in this book) to improve employees performance.

The Appendices in this book must not be overlooked, as here rich case studies are presented, alongside discussions around codes of conduct, key performance indicators, and an executive coaching model. The authors' emphasis on good practice in workplace coaching with specific attention to manager's accountability as one of the determining factors around the maintenance and enhancement of employee performance is indicated. Workplace coaching is not about just coaching senior managers with regards to employee performance but also about improving the senior manager's performance in relation to employee performance.

The author has used simple language, provided appropriate examples with case studies, presented diagrams to clarify practical steps, a clear set of professional guidelines for dealing with employee performance, ethics and professional accountability. Areas that are not explicitly covered that the reader might find useful include cultural specific coaching practices for minority ethnic employees and specific workplace coaching practices tailored to meet the needs of employees in various types of organisations (such as self-employment, virtual organisations and transcultural business organisations).

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