The Australian Psychological Society Ltd

Interest Group in Coaching Psychology

The British Psychological Society

Special Group in Coaching Psychology

International Coaching Psychology Review

Volume 1 No 1 April 2006

ISSN: 1750-2764

International Coaching Psychology Review

Subscriptions
International Coaching Psychology Review is published bi-annually. It is distributed free of charge to the British Psychological Society Special Group in Coaching Psychology and the Australian Psychological Society Interest Group in Coaching Psychology members. It is available to non-members (Individuals £20 per volume; Institutions £30 per volume) from: The British Psychological Society, SGCP, St. Andrews House, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7DR. UK.

Notes for Contributors

International Coaching Psychology Review (ICPR) is an international publication with a focus on the theory, practice and research in the field of coaching psychology. Submission of academic articles, systematic reviews and other research reports which support evidence-based practice are welcomed. The ICPR may also publish conference reports and papers given at the British Psychological Society Special Group in Coaching Psychology (BPS SGCP) and Australian Psychological Society Interest Group in Coaching Psychology (APS IGCP) conferences, notices and items of news relevant to the International Coaching Psychology Community.

Case studies and book reviews will be considered.

The ICPR is published by the BPS SGCP in association with the APS IGCP.

1. Circulation
The circulation of the ICPR is worldwide. It is available in hardcopy and PDF format. Papers are invited and encouraged from authors throughout the world. It is available free in paper and PDF format to members of the BPS SGCP, and free PDF format to APS IGCP members as a part of their annual membership.

2. Length
Papers should normally be no more than 6000 words, although the Co-Editors retain discretion to publish papers beyond this length in cases where the clear and concise expression of the scientific content requires greater length.

3. Reviewing
The journal operates a policy of anonymous peer review. Papers will normally be scrutinised and commented on by at least two independent expert referees (in addition to the relevant Co-Editor) although the Co-Editor may process a paper at his or her discretion. The referees will not be aware of the identity of the author. All information about authorship including personal acknowledgements and institutional affiliations should be confined to the title page (and the text should be free of such clues as identifiable self-citations, e.g. 'In our earlier work...').

Continued on inside back cover.

Editorial – Coaching Psychology: Its time has finally come

Stephen Palmer & Michael Cavanagh

IT IS WITH MUCH EXCITEMENT THAT we write this, the first editorial in the first issue of the *International Coaching Psychology Review (ICPR)*, and we feel honoured to be the founding Co-ordinating Editors. When we first discussed the possibility of setting up an international journal in 2004 with our colleague, Dr Alison Whybrow, we were all excited that the collaborative joint venture between the proposed British Psychological Society Special Group in Coaching Psychology (BPS SGCP) and the Australian Psychological Society Interest Group in Coaching Psychology (APS IGCP) would bring our two coaching psychology communities together. At that time, in the UK, we were still attempting to form an official sub-system within the British Psychological Society. Nevertheless, the Coaching Psychology Forum, (the forerunner of the Special Group) and the APS IGCP could see the mutual benefits of working together on this project.

Coaching psychologists are at the forefront of developments in the coaching field. We now have many research and applied psychologists working in Australia, the UK, Europe and America, and benefiting both organisations and individuals who are purchasers or users of coaching. University psychology departments in Australia and the UK have set up units to focus specifically on coaching psychology and not just coaching.

But what do coaching psychologists bring to the burgeoning field of coaching? We bring more than just a framework for a conversation with a client, such as the famous GROW model. We bring a host of psychological theories and models that underpin, and bring depth to, the coaching relationship. These include an understanding of mental health; motivation; systems theory; personal and organisational growth; adaptation of therapeutic models to the field of coaching; research into effectiveness, resilience and positive psychology. However, up until now, there has not been an international publication specifically for coaching psychologists to share their understanding and research with colleagues.

Our intention is that the *ICPR* will have a focus on the theory, practice and research in the field of coaching psychology. Any issue of relevance to coaching is welcomed: from theoretical and empirical research into theories, models and measures, to practical application issues such as ethics and the reporting of cases. We welcome the submission of academic articles, systematic reviews, brief reports and research reports which support evidence-based practice. We intend publishing conference reports and papers given at the British Psychological Society Special Group in Coaching Psychology and Australian Psychological Society Interest in Group Coaching Psychology conferences. This is important as BPS SGCP and APS IGCP members may not always be able to attend each other's annual conferences but will still want to read the papers given. We are also interested in notices and items of news relevant to the International Coaching Psychology Community such as coaching psychology conferences.

The *ICPR* has Co-editors who are recognised as experts in their particular field of coaching psychology. In addition, the International Editorial Board consists of experts in coaching psychology and related areas that inform coaching psychology theory and practice. We are pleased to be working with a well-known international team and we thank

them for all of the support they have given us so far. However, this journal needs you too: your research, your theories, your ideas and your contributions.

The circulation of the *ICPR* is worldwide. It is available in hardcopy and PDF format. It is available free in paper and PDF format to members of the BPS SGCP, and free PDF format to APS IGCP members as a part of their annual membership. Papers should normally be no more than 6000 words, although the Co-Editors retain discretion to publish papers beyond this length in cases where the clear and concise expression of the scientific or theoretical content requires greater length.

Papers should first be submitted by e-mail to the Co-ordinating Editor in either the UK or Australia who will focus on processing papers from their own countries. Papers from outside the UK or Australia can be submitted to either Co-ordinating Editor. The journal operates a policy of anonymous peer review. Papers will normally be scrutinised and commented on by at least two independent expert referees (in addition to the relevant Co-Editor) although the Co-Editor may process a paper at his or her discretion. The referees will not be aware of the identity of the author. All information about authorship including personal acknowledgements and institutional affiliations should be confined to the title page (and the text should be free of such clues as identifiable self-citations, e.g. 'In our earlier work…'). Full details are in our Notes for Contributors. Structured abstracts are recommended for research papers.

We hope that the *ICPR* will be the first place coaching psychologists, academics, researchers and practitioners from other associated disciplines will consider submitting relevant papers. Few new academic and practitioner journals start with over 2500 subscribers who are members of the SGCP and IGCP. The readership will be much larger especially after six months as the *ICPR* will be freely available online.

This 'bumper' inaugural issue has eight papers ranging from historical to theoretical, empirical, quantitative and qualitative research, practical issues and opinion pieces. The first paper is a largely historical piece by Stephen Palmer and Alison Whybrow, the Co-proposers of the BPS Special Group in Coaching Psychology. They provide a brief history of the formation of the BPS Special Group. (A similar history of the formation of the APS Interest Group will appear in the next edition – due out later this year.) It takes much effort and much generosity on the part of many people to successfully establish groups such as the SGCP and IGCP. We felt it appropriate that the early editions of the *ICPR* recognise and thank those involved for their efforts.

We have seven papers which discuss substantive theoretical, research and practical issues facing coaching. Anthony Grant leads off with his personal perspective on professional coaching and the development of coaching psychology. He suggests that as coaching psychology continues to grow its challenges will include the issue of distinguishing the work and professional practices of coaching psychologists from coaches who are not psychologists. He believes that the emergence of coaching psychology can make psychology more accessible and acceptable to the public.

Annette Fillery-Travis and David Lane boldly launch into the difficult waters of measuring return on investment in coaching. Along with their review of the practitioner and academic literature on this subject, they present a framework for understanding the varied purposes of coaching. They argue that before we ask 'does coaching work?' we should be asking what is it being used for, and then design our measures accordingly.

Alex Linley and Susan Harrington take us on a journey into coaching from the perspective of psychological strengths. After considering the history of psychological strengths in the wider psychological literature, they present a theory of strengths based

on a conception of the human person as both capable and inherently motivated toward the development of the self. They argue for this conception as a foundation for coaching.

Stephen Joseph's article also considers the foundational models within which coaching is situated. He takes a person-centred perspective on coaching psychology. He argues that because coaching psychology has emerged in relation to other professional branches of psychology which do adopt the medical model, it has as a consequence implicitly adopted the values of the medical model. He believes that coaching psychology should adopt the person-centred meta-theoretical perspective instead.

As a counterpoint to the papers by Linley and Harrington and Joseph, Whybrow and Palmer present some interesting empirical research on the shape of coaching psychology in the UK. They investigate, among other things, the backgrounds and theoretical orientations of those involved in coaching psychology. They examine the level and type of engagement psychologist's have in coaching, and the range of attitudes expressed by coaches towards issues such as supervision, training, and ongoing professional development. This research also looks at how coaching psychology is changing in terms of these important features over time.

In a similar vein, Spence, Cavanagh and Grant report on a survey of Australian life and executive coaches. Their data focuses aspects of coaching related to the duty of care in an unregulated coaching industry. They note that previous Australian studies have suggested that many coaching clients may be using coaching as a socially acceptable form of meeting their therapeutic needs. This highlights the need for coaches to have competencies that adequately safeguard clients' mental health and well-being. A key question that the paper raises is whether or not coaches can reliably identify and then refer clients with mental health issues?

The final paper in this inaugural edition reports on the qualitative study conducted by Gyllensten and Palmer. Qualitative data is often very rich data. They investigated the impact of coaching on stress and provide us with an opportunity to reflect on the comments and experiences reported by coaching clients.

These papers, and this issue of the *ICPR*, is a beginning. Already we can see a wide range of approaches and opinions, and we hope to be able to publish an even wider range! As coaching psychologists, we have the privilege of working in a fantastically rich and exciting field. As several of the authors in this issue point out, there is continuing growth and real engagement with coaching in the workplace and in the wider community. Coaching in general, and coaching psychology in particular, has the potential to make an effective and lasting contribution to people's lives and to our world.

It is our hope that the *ICPR* will come to play a part in this great enterprise by being a forum that stimulates thinking, comment and research in coaching psychology. As editors, we look forward with great enthusiasm, to receiving and publishing your contributions!

Stephen Palmer
Coaching Psychology Unit,
Department of Psychology,
City University,
London, UK.
E-mail: dr.palmer@btinternet.com

Michael Cavanagh
Coaching Psychology Unit,
Department of Psychology,
Sydney University,
Sydney, Australia.
E-mail: michaelc@psych.usyd.edu.au

The coaching psychology movement and its development within the British Psychological Society

Stephen Palmer & Alison Whybrow

To many members of the British Psychological Society (BPS) it may appear that the BPS Special Group in Coaching Psychology (SGCP) has come from nowhere to somewhere in a short space of time. It held its inaugural meeting on 15 December 2004 and by March 2005, it had become the third largest BPS subsystem with over 1600 Founder Members and by December 2005, it had almost 2000 members. Its path through the BPS bureaucracy helped to shape it into an inclusive branch of applied psychology. This paper will cover the history of the coaching psychology movement within the BPS.
Keywords: coaching psychology, coaching, British Psychological Society, Special Group.

History of the UK coaching psychology movement

ONE OF THE LEADING PIONEERS of coaching psychology, Dr Anthony Grant, based at the Coaching Psychology Unit, Sydney, Australia, had given various papers in the UK which increased awareness of his ideas. He and Stephen Palmer at the Centre for Coaching, London, had been in e-mail contact regarding coaching psychology. This contact acted as the UK catalyst which finally galvanised action. In parallel with this process there were many UK psychologists working in the field of coaching research and practice who were also interested in the psychology of coaching.

Initially Palmer received advice and support from the British Psychological Society (BPS) office about taking coaching psychology forward and there were a number of options. The BPS has three key types of subsystems: Divisions, Special Groups and Sections. The BPS website describes the subsystems as below.

- **Divisions** exist where there is a clear professional grouping and professional training. Divisions' main work is in pursuing and enhancing professional practice. Only those who have completed an approved training may join a Division as a full member. (Their members can become chartered in specific areas such as occupational, clinical, counselling or health psychology.)
- **Special Groups** exist to represent groups of members working in a particular field. The members of a Special Group all have some defining characteristics that are less rigorous than that required for a Division.
- **Sections** exist where members have decided to pool and exchange scientific interest and knowledge. Any member may belong to a Section.

Usually the simplest way to establish an interest group would be to set up a Special Interest Group (SIG) or Faculty within a Division. At this time, as one of Palmer's key interests was in the adaptation of therapeutic approaches to the field of coaching it seemed that the ideal place to set up a coaching psychology SIG was within the Division of Counselling Psychology (DCoP). The process seemed relatively straightforward.

With the agreement of the 2001–2002 DCoP Chair, at the British Psychological Society, Division of Counselling Psychology 2002 Annual Conference, Palmer raised the issue of setting up a coaching psychology SIG at the Annual General Meeting. He was then given the go-ahead to run a workshop on

coaching psychology at the conference and facilitated the possible setting up of a DCoP SIG. A working definition of coaching psychology was used at the workshop that Grant and Palmer were developing for an article. Of the 29 BPS members who attended the workshop, 28 were interested in forming a Coaching Psychology SIG within the DCoP. E-mail addresses were exchanged and an internet discussion forum, called the Coaching Psychology Forum (CPF) was set up for use of these members to maintain contact and thereby further the field of coaching psychology. At this stage, most members were counselling psychologists.

Unfortunately, it was later discovered that in 2002 DCoP did not have a constitution that allowed the formation of a SIG. This vexing problem later became part of the solution as the delay provided new opportunities.

As CPF already existed as an internet forum, it was decided to keep it going, but still restricting the membership to BPS members only, as they would have to abide by the BPS Codes of Conduct and would support the fledgling UK coaching psychology movement. Non-BPS applicants who wished to join CPF had to become members or affiliates of the BPS; otherwise they were not permitted to join.

Ho Law (2002), an occupational psychologist who had attended the first workshop at the conference, wrote an article about coaching psychology and CPF which was published in *The Occupational Psychologist*, newsletter of the BPS Division of Occupational Psychology. This generated a further surge in membership specifically by occupational psychologists. During 2002, about 70 BPS members from different BPS subsystems joined the internet CPF. This breadth of membership meant that if a SIG was finally set up within any one BPS Division, many members would be alienated, i.e. would not be allowed full membership of the SIG unless they were also full members of the said BPS Division. The initial constitutional delay for setting up of SIGs within DCoP had unintentionally created a new problem. Should the CPF take into account all of its new members, their diverse psychological backgrounds and their memberships of different Divisions?

Further advice was sought from the BPS office and at a CPF seminar (Palmer, 2003) and meeting held in London on 21 February 2003, it was decided to submit a proposal to the BPS for the setting up of a Special Group in Coaching Psychology. At that time, a Division would have been premature as coaching psychology is a relatively new professional area of practice for psychologists, and a Section did not reflect the professional practice aspect of coaching psychology.

Meanwhile CPF ran a number of successful and profitable conferences and workshops at the BPS offices in London on different aspects of coaching psychology. The BPS agreed to bank the fees on our behalf. Also, the CPF had representatives liaising with other professional coaching bodies including the Association for Coaching and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council and provided input for a Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development publication (see Jarvis, 2004). (Further information about these three organisations is beyond the scope of this article. However, details about them are available from their websites.) CPF's website (CPF 2004) included an online journal, *The Coaching Psychologist*.

The Occupational Psychologist had a special issue on coaching psychology (edited by Chapman, 2003). In the following year, *Selection & Development Review* had a special issue on coaching (edited by Hines, 2004). Both special issues were largely written by CPF members and both were instrumental in promoting support within the BPS for the SGCP proposal.

Passage to Utopia

The passage of the proposal through the BPS did take some time as various committees either approved it or commented on it. Some

committees agreed to have a presentation given by the co-proposers to help answer their queries. The summary below illustrates its progress (Palmer & Whybrow, 2004a).

- Professional Practice Board (PPB): 6 June 2003. Presentation to Board by co-proposers Palmer and Whybrow. Some challenging feedback was received from a couple of members. There was a concern about the proposed Special Group later becoming a Division. The meeting was a transparent process where co-proposers were allowed to stay to witness the outcome.
- Membership and Professional Training Board (MPTB): 20 June 2003. No presentation to the Board.
- Board of Trustees: 5 September 2003. No presentation to the Board.
- BPS Council: 18 October 2003. Presentation to Council by Palmer and Whybrow. In the light of the discussions, Palmer and Whybrow reassured the Council that they personally had no intention of wanting to set up a Division at a later date. The caveat being that they could not predict what other colleagues may want to do in the future.
- PPB and MPTB representatives were appointed to provide input on revising the proposed draft rules for the Special Group.
- Coaching Psychology Forum AGM 2 February, 2004. Feedback to members about progress.
- After receiving constructive feedback from the PPB and MPTB representatives, the proposal was revised and then returned to BPS Board of Trustees (7 May) in 2004 for approval and then the BPS Council as part of the consultative process (8 May). After the meeting, Chair's action was required by the Council Chair otherwise there could have been a delay until the following Council meeting.
- Support sought from BPS members. Needed 400 (approximately one per cent of BPS Membership). By 31 August over 1200 gave their support. This level of support was higher than expected.
- Then finally a vote for or against the proposal by the entire BPS membership was necessary. The vote declared in favour of proposal on the 16 October 2004.
- Inaugural meeting and oversubscribed inaugural conference held on 15 December 2004 at City University, London, UK. Over 250 members turned up for the meeting. The invited keynote speaker from Australia was Dr Anthony Grant.
- In 2005 the draft rules of the SGCP were revised. However, the BPS Board of Trustees did not approve the proposed revised rules for the SGCP. In particular, they suggested that its rules should be more appropriate to its Special Group status or it should apply for Divisional status in the usual manner. Two key concerns were that the proposed rules included were the setting up of Special Interest Groups (SIG) (as supported by the membership in attendance at the inaugural meeting), and the proposed rules invited one graduate member in training to become a member of the SGCP committee. The SGCP committee members were overworked as the existing draft rules would not allow the appointment of the number of additional members they required. For expediency the rules were revised again dropping the SIG and trainee elements. The Board of Trustees accepted the final revisions and these were approved by the membership.

The key lessons we learnt from this process was to stay focused on the task and listen to all the feedback given by BPS staff and the relevant BPS committees.

During this whole process the Australian Psychological Society Interest Group Coaching Psychology, were supportive of the proposal. In addition to e-mail contact, in 2003 Ray Elliot, their National Convenor, had a meeting in London with Palmer and Whybrow to discuss collaboration. In 2004,

Dr Michael Cavanagh, the new National Convenor, held a meeting in Ide Hill, Kent, with Palmer and Whybrow to discuss the development of the *International Coaching Psychology Review* as well as other relevant issues.

Definition of coaching psychology

Definitions or descriptions of coaching illustrate the difference between coaching and coaching psychology:

- Coaching – Directly concerned with the immediate improvement of performance and development of skills by a form of tutoring or instruction – an instructional approach (Parsloe, 1995).
- Coaching – The art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another – a facilitation approach (Downey, 1999).

Whereas the initial CPF coaching psychology definition focused on the adaptation of therapeutic approaches to coaching:

- Coaching psychology is for enhancing performance in work and personal life domains with normal, non-clinical populations, underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established therapeutic approaches (Grant & Palmer, 2002).

Since the workshop in May 2002, the definition of coaching psychology gradually evolved, influenced by BPS committees and psychologists from different BPS sub-systems becoming involved with the CPF. Although the two main groups were occupational and counselling psychologists, others such as health, sports and clinical were CPF members too. The final working definition used in the last draft of the SGCP proposal was:

- Coaching psychology is for enhancing well-being and performance in personal life and work domains underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established adult learning or psychological approaches (adapted Grant & Palmer, 2002).

However, this differs from the Australian Psychological Society Interest Group in Coaching Psychology definition. The UK definition went through a developmental process which is still on-going.

The application of coaching psychology

The following examples of the application of coaching psychology are intended to illustrate areas of practice; they are not exhaustive and include:

- Supporting people to develop effective strategies for dealing with concerns about specific areas of performance, for example, giving presentations.
- Providing one-to-one support to facilitate people in achieving their life and/or work goals.
- Facilitating the achievement of group goals.
- Supporting the development of effective coaching programmes in organisations.
- Supervising psychologists and non-psychologists in practice as coaching psychologists or as coaches.
- Running training programmes in coaching psychology, the psychology of coaching and coaching.
- Undertaking research into the effectiveness of coaching.

Figure 1 highlights the focus of coaching psychology practice taken from a 2004 survey of 109 CPF members (Palmer & Whybrow, 2004b). It illustrates that coaching psychology practice is being applied to both business and personal arenas. The high percentage scores show that many participants work in more than one specific area.

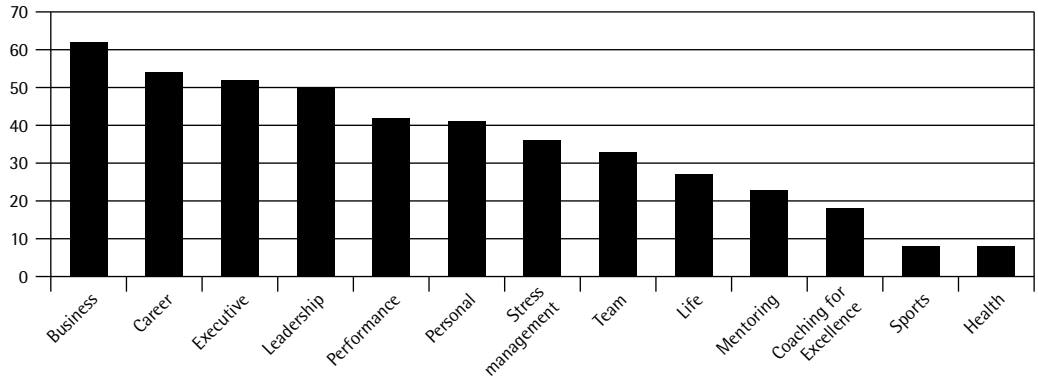
Aims and Membership

The key aims of the SGCP are:

- Development of coaching psychology;
- Foster research and study of coaching psychology;
- Promote standards and guidelines;
- Facilitate workshops and conferences;
- Develop public awareness;
- Working within the BPS and liaising with external groups.

Currently the membership criterion is straightforward. Full membership is avail-

Figure 1: Focus of coaching psychology practice (Palmer & Whyrow, 2004b).



able to BPS members who hold the Graduate Basis for Registration (GBR). Thus, the majority of BPS members are eligible for full membership. Students or affiliates of the BPS join as affiliates. About 50 per cent of the members are already chartered psychologists.

Adaptation of therapeutic approaches used in coaching psychology

Psychologists have adapted a number of therapeutic approaches to the field of coaching psychology including solution focused brief therapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, rational emotive behaviour therapy, multimodal therapy (e.g. Greene & Grant, 2003; Lee, 2003; Neenan & Palmer, 2001; Palmer, Cooper & Thomas, 2003; Peltier, B. 2001; Richards, J.T. 1999. Also, see Grant's seminal work, 2001). Figure 2 (overleaf) highlights the most popular approaches used by UK coaching psychologists although other approaches are also practised to a lesser extent (scores in percentages). This was taken from a survey of CPF members (Palmer & Whybrow, 2004b).

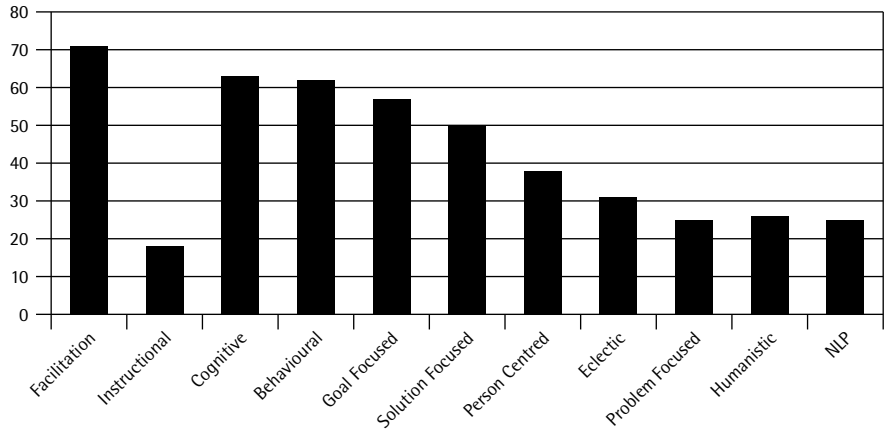
Recent progress and developments

Coaching psychology in the UK had a great start with the newly formed SGCP having over 1600 founding members. At the beginning of 2006, the SGCP had almost 2000 members. During 2005, the SGCP published two issues of *The Coaching Psychologist* in hard-copy format and placed a PDF copy on the Coaching Psychology website. In 2006, after 18 months of planning the *International Coaching Psychology Review* has been launched in association with the APS IGCP. The SGCP ran a successful workshop programme in 2005 which culminated in the SGCP 2nd Annual National Coaching Psychology Conference held on 19 to 20 December. Dr Michael Cavanagh, the current Australian Psychological Society Interest Group Coaching Psychology National Convenor gave a keynote paper and ran a workshop.

In 2005, the CPF website was transferred to the main BPS website and two e-mail groups were set up to aid communication and discussion for members. A membership pack was developed for members providing advice and guidance on a number of relevant issues. At a professional level, SGCP has held roundtable discussions with the other main coaching-related professional bodies. Coaching psychology competencies are being developed and this is likely to continue for sometime.

It is worth noting that the BPS monthly *Appointments Memorandum* carried its first job advertisement for coaching psychologists in April 2005 (see page 54). In December 2005, the UK's first university-based Coaching Psychology Unit was set up in the Department of Psychology at City University,

Figure 2: Coaching approaches (Palmer & Whyrow, 2004b).



London, focusing on coaching psychology research through MPhil, PhD and DPsych programmes. In 2006, information about coaching psychology will be included in the *Directory of Chartered Psychologists* which will help the public secure appropriate services from SGCP chartered members.

During 2005, membership was free and in 2006, it was raised to £3.50 p.a. The SGCP income from its successful workshop series and conferences contribute largely towards its overheads.

Conclusion

Coaching psychology has seen a rapid growth in interest within the British Psychological Society since 2004. From a small group of 28 interested BPS members in 2002 it has made great progress. Realistically membership of the SGCP is likely to plateau during 2006 although this is hard to predict as the SGCP has an appeal to non-psychologists who have joined as affiliates and psychologists who do not feel they have a home elsewhere in the BPS. The international standing of the BPS SGCP is likely to be enhanced by publishing the *International Coaching Psychology Review*, its good working relationship with the Australian Psychological Society Interest Group Coaching Psychology, and running successful conferences with well known overseas speakers. Gradually psychologists in other countries are likely to become interested in coaching psychology too and this is already reflected in the international editorial board of this publication. The future is bright and we predict that the SGCP will go from strength to strength.

Correspondence

Professor Stephen Palmer, PhD, is Honorary Professor of Psychology at the Coaching Psychology Unit, City University, and Director of the Centre for Coaching, London. He was Chair of the SGCP in 2005 and is now Past Chair. He is on the National Executive of the SGCP. He was formerly a Co-proposer of the SGCP with Dr Alison Whybrow.

Dr Alison Whybrow is Treasurer of the SGCP and was formerly a Co-proposer. She is on the National Executive of the SGCP.

Correspondence address:
Professor Stephen Palmer
Coaching Psychology Unit,
Department of Psychology,
City University, Northampton Square,
London, EC1V 0HB, United Kingdom.
E-mail: dr.palmer@btinternet.com

References

Chapman, M. (Ed.) (2003). Special issue: Coaching Psychology. *The Occupational Psychologist, 49,* August, 3–33.

CPF (2004). Coaching Psychology Forum website. http://www.coachingpsychologyforum.org.uk

Downey, M. (1999). *Effective coaching.* London: Orion Business Books.

Grant, A.M. (2001). *Towards a psychology of coaching.* Sydney: Coaching Psychology Unit, University of Sydney.

Grant, A.M. & Palmer, S. (2002). *Coaching Psychology.* Workshop and meeting held at the Annual Conference of the Division of Counselling Psychology, British Psychological Society, Torquay, 18 May.

Greene, J. & Grant, A.M. (2003). *Solution-focused coaching: Managing people in a complex world.* Harlow: Pearson Education.

Hine, P. (Ed.) (2004). Special Edition: Coaching. *Selection & Development Review, 20*(4), August, 3–30.

Jarvis, J. (2004). *Coaching and buying coaching services: A guide.* London: CIPD.

Law, H. (2002). Coaching Psychology Special Group: An introduction. *The Occupational Psychologist, 47,* December.

Lee, G. (2003). *Leadership coaching: From personal insight to organisational performance.* London: CIPD.

Neenan, M. & Palmer, S. (2001). Cognitive behavioural coaching. *Stress News, 13*(3), 15–18.

Palmer, S. (2003). *The development of coaching psychology in the UK.* Coaching Psychology Forum seminar held on 21 February in London.

Palmer, S., Cooper, C, & Thomas, K. (2003). *Creating a balance: Managing stress.* London: British Library.

Palmer, S. & Whybrow, A. (2004a). *The brief history of the UK BPS Coaching Psychology Movement: From Acorns to Oak Trees!* Paper at the BPS Special Group in Coaching Psychology Inaugural Conference, held at City University, London, on 15 December.

Palmer, S. & Whybrow, A. (2004b). *Coaching psychology survey: Taking stock.* Paper at the BPS Special Group in Coaching Psychology Inaugural Conference, held at City University, London, on 15 December.

Parsloe, E. (1995). *Coaching, mentoring and assessing: A practical guide to developing competence.* New York: Kogan Page.

Peltier, B. (2001). *The psychology of executive coaching: Theory and application.* New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Richard, J.T. (1999). Multimodal Therapy: A useful model for the executive coach. *Consulting Psychology Journal, 51*(1), 24–30.

Websites

BPS SGCP
http://www.coachingpsychologyforum.org.uk
Association for Coaching
www.associationforcoaching.com
European Mentoring and Coaching Council
www.emccouncil.org/
Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
www.cipd.co.uk

A personal perspective on professional coaching and the development of coaching psychology

Anthony M. Grant

Coaching psychology can be understood as being the systematic application of behavioural science to the enhancement of life experience, work performance and well-being for individuals, groups and organisations who do not have clinically significant mental heath issues or abnormal levels of distress. Although psychologists have long acted as coaches, coaching psychology has only recently emerged as an applied and academic sub-discipline. As coaching psychology continues to grow there will be some exciting challenges from both within and outside of the profession of psychology. First among these there will be the issue of distinguishing the work and professional practices of coaching psychologists from coaches who are not psychologists. Secondly, will be the place of coaching psychology relative to other psychological sub-disciplines, and thirdly will be the development of a research and practice agenda for coaching psychology.
Keywords: coaching, coaching psychology, professional practice, non-psychologist coaches, positive psychology.

HOW CAN WE, AS PSYCHOLOGISTS, better work with our clients to help them to increase their performance, development, skill sets and levels of well-being? How can we best facilitate the growth and development of normal, non-clinical clients? How can we help them reach goals in their personal and work lives? How we can design and implement real-life interventions that allow us understand the psychological mechanisms of human change and development?

When many of us began to study psychology, we thought that these were some of the essential questions that would be covered in our undergraduate and graduate psychology degrees. Yet many of us were disappointed by the taught material. To be sure, the neuro-psychological aspects of our degrees were fascinating. Milgram's studies were thought-provoking. The building blocks of learning processes, as demonstrated in animal research on classical conditioning and associative learning gave us insights into our own learning processes. The wide range of perspectives on personality theory and measurement gave us understanding of the structure of personality, and where would be we be without the zonule of Zinn!

Many of us were frustrated that there was so little taught about the normal, well-functioning adult person, and even less about how to apply theory to practice, and it was frustrations such as these which gave impetus to the emergence of coaching psychology.

Psychologists have been involved in coaching for many years (e.g. Filippi, 1968). The 1996 special edition of *Consulting Psychology Journal: Research and Practice* dedicated to executive coaching and consultation was a landmark publication on coaching in the psychological academic literature. The roots of coaching psychology stretch back to the humanistic traditions of psychology (e.g. Maslow, 1968), and are related to the factors underpinning the emergence of the Positive Psychology movement (e.g. Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Snyder & McCullough, 2000). However, contemporary coaching psychology as a specific academic sub-discipline can be considered to have come into being with the establishment of

the Coaching Psychology Unit at the University of Sydney in 2000 and the offering of the first postgraduate degree in coaching psychology. The recent (2005) establishment of a Coaching Psychology Unit at City University, London, has been another important step in further developing the academic underpinnings of coaching psychology.

As coaching psychology continues to grow there will be some exciting challenges, from both within and outside of the profession of psychology. First among these there will be the issue of distinguishing the work and professional practices of coaching psychologists from coaches who are not psychologists. Secondly, will be the place of coaching psychology relative to other psychological sub-disciplines, and thirdly will be the development of a research and practice agenda for coaching psychology. This paper presents a personal perspective on these issues and development of coaching psychology.

The nature of contemporary professional coaching

It may be useful to firstly discuss the nature of general professional coaching before exploring aspects of coaching psychology. Definitions of coaching vary considerably (Palmer & Whybrow, 2005) and have been the subject of much debate (e.g. D'Abate, Eddy & Tannenbaum, 2003; Kilburg, 1996; Mace, 1950), but central to most definitions are the assumptions of an absence of serious mental health problems in the client (Bluckert, 2005), the notion that the client is resourceful (Berg & Szabo, 2005), willing to engage in finding solutions (Hudson, 1999), and that coaching is on outcome-focused activity which seeks to foster self-directed learning through collaborative goal setting, brainstorming and action planning (Greene & Grant, 2003). In this way coaches help clients enhance aspects of both their personal and professional lives. Coaching is thus, collaborative, individualised, solution-focused, results orientated, systematic, stretching, fosters self-directed learning, and should be evidence-based, and incorporate ethical professional practice.

Contemporary professional coaching is a cross–disciplinary methodology for fostering individual and organisational change, and comprises both personal or 'life' coaching, and workplace coaching with staff, managers and executives. There are no entry barriers to becoming a coach. In a study of 2529 professional coaches Grant and Zackon (2004) found that coaches had come to coaching from a wide variety of prior professional backgrounds (in order of magnitude) consultants (40.8 per cent), managers (30.8 per cent), executives (30.2 per cent), teachers (15.7 per cent) and salespeople (13.8 per cent). Interestingly, in that sample only 4.8 per cent of respondents had a background in psychology (note percentages are not accumulative).

Such diversity is both strength and a liability. The diversity of prior professional backgrounds means that the coaching industry draws on wide range of methodological approaches to coaching, and a wide range of educational disciplines inform coaching practice. On the other hand, due to the diversity and sheer number of individuals offering coaching services, there is a lack of clarity as to what professional coaching really is and what makes for an effective or reputable coach (Sherman & Freas, 2004).

This diversity also means that there may be a wide range of perspectives about what constitutes best ethical and professional practice, and what is the proper focus of coaching. Most coaches do not have a background in behavioural science and, most commercial coach training programmes are short courses based on proprietary models of coaching with little or no theoretical grounding, and finish with the granting of some kind of coaching 'certification'.

Not surprisingly, there have been concerns expressed that inappropriately trained coaches tend to conduct atheoretical one-size-fits-all coaching interventions (Kauffman & Scoular, 2004) and may cause

harm to clients, particularly those who have unrecognised mental health problems (Berglas, 2002; Cavanagh, 2005; Naughton, 2002). Although coaching is aimed at non-clinical populations it may be that some individuals seek coaching as a more socially-acceptable form of therapy. Indeed, recent studies have found that between 25 per cent and 50 per cent of individuals presenting for life coaching met clinical mental health criteria (Green, Oades & Grant, 2005; Spence & Grant, 2005).

However, it is hard to find actual reports of such damage beyond occasional newspaper articles about the impact of failed therapy or counselling (e.g. Pyror, 2005) or social commentary articles decrying the rise of the self-help or coaching culture (e.g. Furedi, 2005). How are we to understand this? At present, because there is no registration or licensing requirements for coaches who are not psychologists, there is no accessible body for disgruntled members of the public to complain to. If such damage is in fact occurring then one assumes that reports of such harm will surface in time. Alternatively, it may be that coaching clients are highly resilient and in fact little harm is being done by non-psychologist coaches. Interestingly, more common are newspaper reports of inadequately trained business coaches or the inappropriate franchising of coach businesses as 'lifestyle and wealth-creation opportunities' or the promotion of coach 'certification' programmes (Walker, 2004).

Coaching credentialing and the credibility of coaches

An area of concern that has not as yet been discussed in the academic literature, concerns the hunger for credibility and credentialing by some sections of the coaching industry. This is an important issue. The general public are not well-educated as to the worth of various psychological qualifications and accreditations (Lancaster & Smith, 2002) let alone coaching qualifications, and may rely on impressive sounding titles to guide them in their selection of a coach. Because coaching is an industry and not a profession, there are no barriers to entry, no regulation, no government-sanctioned accreditation or qualification process and no clear authority to be a coach; anyone can call themselves a 'Master Coach'. Worldwide there is a veritable industry offering a range of 'coach certification' programmes.

Some of these commercial coach training organisations appear to be little more than coach 'credentialing mills' where, following a few days training and the payment of a suitable fee, one can become a 'Certified Master Life Coach'. Unfortunately, it sometimes seems as if every man and his dog offer a coach certification programme, and the value of such certifications is highly questionable. Indeed, it may be that the majority of money made within the coaching industry is being made by commercial coach training organisations rather than through actual coaching by coaching practitioners.

Of course, organisations such as the Association for Coaching (AC), the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) and the International Coach Federation (ICF), have put considerable effort into establishing credentialing processes and have done important work in beginning to define coaching competencies, and the recent establishment of the Australian Psychological Society Interest Group in Coaching Psychology and the British Psychological Society Special Group in Coaching Psychology are very welcome and vital moves in the development of professional coaching as well as coaching psychology.

However, the credibility and professionalism of coaching is still tenuous. There are increasing media reports which question the credibility of unqualified life coaches who appear to have the lowest perceived levels of credibility (e.g. Salerno, 2005). In contrast, psychologists who are coaches are viewed in a far more credible light and this is particularly the case for executive developmental coaching (Seligman, 2005).

Raising the bar for the coaching industry

As the coaching market matures, the corporations who are the main consumers of coaching are demanding higher standards of qualifications from the coaches they employ, and postgraduate qualification in behavioural science are a key selection criteria for executive coaching (Corporate Leadership Council, 2003). Psychologists have increasingly and more publicly become involved in the coaching industry. The entry into the coaching arena by psychology, with its attendant rigorous educational programmes and professional ethos and qualifications has, I believe, noticeably raised the bar for the coaching industry in general.

In contrast to the commercial training programmes that dominated the coaching market during the late 1990s and early 2000s, there are now a number of universities that offer postgraduate programmes in coaching. As of December 2005, there are three Australian universities offering coach-specific education as part of postgraduate degree programmes. All of these are offered by Schools of Psychology. At least seven UK universities offer coaching degree programmes. Most of those are not offered by Psychology Departments, rather they are offered by Business Schools or from within Faculties of Education. In the US seven universities offer coach degree programmes and in Canada there are two postgraduate programmes in coaching. The majority of the North American programmes are offered from within Business Schools rather than Schools of Psychology. These clearly are welcome changes, and the involvement of graduate schools and universities will raise the standard of the general coaching industry.

However, as the bar gets raised within an increasingly demanding market, and in the quest for credibility and the subsequent commercial advantage, there has been a shake-up in the market. Coaches who do not have proper training in coaching or psychology are beginning to feel the pressure to present themselves in a more academic or professional light.

The temptation for these people is to inappropriately leverage affiliations and/or qualifications which are only tenuously connected to coaching practice. An example here might be the individual who holds a PhD in physics presenting themselves as holding doctoral qualifications relevant to coaching, or the unqualified part-time instructor in a university-based continuing education programme presenting themselves as an 'adjunct professor'. The issue here is that the general public, when presented with impressive sounding qualifications and affiliations, may well attribute a level of credibility which is not warranted. In an applied area of practice such as coaching, this can be seriously problematic. And this is particular of a concern given that there is no one central regulating body to which dissatisfied clients can complain about unethical practices.

Psychologists have several important factors which enhance both their suitability for coaching and their credibility as professional coaches. Psychology is a recognised profession with established academic qualifications and rigorous training, enforceable ethical codes and barriers to entry, and have government-sanctioned organisations which are in a position to police the profession. Further, psychologists bring to coaching a solid understanding of the psychology of human change, and the ability to develop coaching interventions based on theoretically-grounded case conceptualisations using evidence-based processes and techniques.

Unfortunately, in the past psychologists have not been represented in the media as being uniquely competent coaching practitioners (Garman, Whiston & Zlatoper, 2000). Yet psychology has a genuine and important contribution to make to professional coaching in terms of adapting and validating existing therapeutic models for use with normal populations and evaluating commercialised approaches to personal development to ensure consumer protection

and inform consumer choice (Grant, 2001; Starker, 1990). I believe that the emergence of a sub-discipline of coaching psychology can make psychology more accessible and attractive to the public.

What is the place of coaching psychology?

Coaching psychology can be understood as being the systematic application of behavioural science to the enhancement of life experience, work performance and well-being for individuals, groups and organisations who do not have clinically significant mental heath issues or abnormal levels of distress.

In broad terms, coaching psychology sits at the intersection of sports, counselling, clinical, and organisational and health psychology. Where clinical and counselling psychologists tend to work with the client who is distressed and/or dysfunctional, coaching psychologists work with well-functioning clients, using theoretically grounded and scientifically validated techniques to help them to reach goals in their personal and business lives. Coaching is a robust and challenging intervention, is results-driven, delivers tangible added value, is typically a short-term or intermittent engagement, and enables the attainment of high standards or goals.

It may be argued that psychology does not need another delineated sub-discipline, and that the work of coaching is already being conducted by psychologists. Indeed, there is evidence that there is considerable overlap between both the training and the actual practices of different established psychology sub-disciplines. For example, Cobb *et al.* (2004) found that training programmes across three areas, clinical, counselling and school psychology, were more similar than different. Further, many applied, clinical and counselling psychologists already consider themselves to be acting as 'coaches' and continue to work with clinical clients long after their initial treatment objectives have been met. This is because clients frequently find such an on-going performance-enhancing relationship to be highly beneficial.

Paradoxically, such observations also argue for the formal establishment of coaching psychology. The fact that some psychologists are already shifting to a coaching style once therapeutic aims have been met, suggests that there is a client demand for coaching by psychologists, and that clients value a coaching relationship with a psychologist that is focused on goal attainment and well-being, rather than being curative. Further, as Kauffman and Scoular (2004) note, the vast majority of individuals presenting for executive coaching are not remedial clients, but are seeking support in stretching and development. Thus interventions and helping relationships based on a clinical or medical model may be highly inappropriate.

Unfortunately in the public's mind, psychologists are often confused with psychiatrists and have long been seen by the public as being focused on therapy and clinical work (Webb & Speer, 1986), rather than being proactive facilitators of human or organisational change. There is a clear need for psychologists to present their skills in a way that the public finds attractive and accessible (Coleman, 2003). Further, many psychologists find coaching to be an appealing and personally rewarding alternative to therapeutic practice (Naughton, 2002).

Thus, rather than act as a coach, it makes more sense for psychologists to actually be a coach, to develop coaching skills and psychological frameworks that go beyond existing clinical or counselling frameworks and applications.

One challenge for an emerging sub-discipline of coaching psychology will be to develop coaching interventions that utilise existing theory and technique, but do so in a way that is relevant and engaging for non-clinical populations. If we can rise to this challenge I believe that coaching psychology has tremendous potential to be a major force for

the promotion of well-being, productivity and performance enhancement for the individual, for organisations and corporations and for the broader community as a whole. Further, coaching psychology can speed the development of established and emerging psychological approaches by acting as a real-life experimental platform from which to further develop our knowledge of the psychological processes involved in purposeful change in normal, non-clinical populations.

Coaching psychology and positive psychology

Regardless of preferred theoretical orientation (systemic, cognitive, psychodynamic, etc.) psychology as an applied helping profession has traditionally focused on ameliorating distress and repairing dysfunctionality rather than enhancing the well-being and goal attainment of normal, well-functioning adults.

There have been long-standing calls for psychology to broaden its relevance to society in ways that would help the general public to use psychology in a positive manner in their daily lives (Miller, 1969). Indeed, the general public and business organisations have a thirst for techniques that enhance life experience and performance. The worldwide market for personal development material has grown significantly since the 1950s (Fried, 1994) and continues to grow. The American personal development and self-help book market alone is worth over $US600 million dollars annually (Wyld, 2001). However, traditional psychology as a research discipline and an applied profession has not risen to the challenge of meeting the needs of consumers in the normal adult population (Fox, 1996; Laungani, 1999).

Recently there has been considerable interest in a positive psychology that focuses on developing human strengths and competencies (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Snyder & McCullough, 2000). The emergence of positive psychology is to be applauded and welcomed, and marks a shift in the research focus of applied psychology away from psychopathology. Positive psychology can be understood a 'the scientific study of optimal functioning, focusing on aspects of the human condition that lead to happiness, fulfilment, and flourishing' (Linley & Harrington, 2005, p.13).

There has been considerable progress made by positive psychologists in developing theoretical frameworks for understanding human strengths (Snyder & Lopez, 2002). However, most of the work thus far within the positive psychology arena has been about investigating correlational relationships between various constructs (Lazarus, 2003), for example, the relationship between self-concordance, well-being, goal attainment and goal satisfaction (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999), the measurement of constructs such as well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1996) or a taxonomy of human strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) as an alternative to the DSM diagnostic (APA, 2000).

Despite recent publications on the application of positive psychology (e.g. Linley & Joseph, 2004), to date there has been relatively little work within the positive psychology arena about how best to operationalise positive psychology constructs. Further, there have been concerns that over-enthusiasm for positive psychology may lead to ideological enmeshment, and that an over-simplistic dichotomous thinking about 'the positive' or 'the negative' is not helpful or accurate (Lazarus, 2003). We need to bring the promise of a positive psychology into fruition (see Ryff, 2003). One way to further develop the emerging field of positive psychology is to extend past cross-sectional or correlation work by designing interventions which to use coaching as an experimental framework, and this may be an important role for coaching psychologists.

Coaching psychology is inclusive theoretically and sophisticated technically

Although the links between positive psychology and coaching psychology are

clear, coaching psychologists employ a wide range of theoretical perspectives in their work, not just positive psychological frameworks. These include psychodynamic and systemic (Kilburg, 2000), developmental (Laske, 1999), cognitive-behavioural (Ducharme, 2004), solution-focused (Greene & Grant, 2003), and behavioural (Skiffington & Zeus, 2003); also see Peltier (2001) for a useful overview of a range of theoretical approaches to executive coaching.

The relative value and efficacy of different theoretical approaches has been debated long and hard in the clinical literature. It is generally accepted that a key factor in therapeutic outcome is the quality of the working alliance (Horvath & Symonds, 1991), and the alliance is as important as the specific theoretical orientation employed (Howgego *et al.*, 2003). Every theoretical framework emphasises a different understanding and formulation of the presenting issue, and suggests different interventions.

Rather than try to fit a specific theoretical approach to the client, as is frequently the case in clinical work within the medical model, coaching should be collaborative and client-centred. For some developmental coaching clients who are seeking in-depth explanations this will mean coaching based on a psychodynamic model. For others, who are seeking a more psycho-mechanical approach, a cognitive-behavioural formulation and intervention will be more appropriate. Similarly, for those with a defensive pessimism personality style, an overemphasis on aspects of positive psychology may not be helpful (Norem & Hang, 2002).

Coaching psychology needs to be theoretically inclusive and I believe that the professional coaching psychologist should be able to draw on a range of theoretical frameworks, using client-congruent, theoretically-grounded techniques in order to best help the client reach their coaching goals. Such client-centred theoretical flexibility brings with it significant challenges in terms of the coach's training and personal and professional development.

Firstly, in order to become skilled in the use of a specific theoretical modality, practitioners tend to integrate the key tenants of the psychological framework into their personal world view, and in a sense, they personally embody the core facets of their preferred theoretical approach in their own lived experience (Binder, 2004). Indeed, it has been argued that integration of one's sense of self with one's theoretical approach is essential in order to be a truly effective therapist (Norcross & Halgin, 2005). Thus, for example, the psychologist trained in a cognitive-behavioural approach will tend to make sense of the world, both personally and professionally, using cognitive-behavioural concepts. In order to be flexible in working with different theoretical perspectives, as best suits specific coaching clients, the coach needs view the presenting issues from a range of theoretical perspectives and this may well be very challenging personally.

Secondly, coaches need to be highly skilled in dealing with mental health issues. It has been my experience that coaching psychology is sometimes regarded somewhat disdainfully by some clinicians, as if it is a soft version of 'real' clinical psychology. In fact I argue that the contrary is the case. Clinical clients frequently present for therapy with specific symptoms and an expectation of treatment. Coaching psychologists' clients on the other hand may not know that they have a mental health problem (if indeed they do have such problems), and may far less willing to engage in a therapeutic relationship (if indeed they do need treatment). The coach thus needs finely attuned diagnostic skills, maybe even more so than the clinician, and the ability to consider psychopathological issues whilst engaging in the type of goal-focused fast-paced relationship that characterises coaching.

Thirdly, the dynamics of the coaching relationship differ from the often overtly hierarchical relationship that is associated with consulting, clinical or counselling work. Applied and therapeutic psychologists tend to work from the position of being the

expert who has access to a privileged knowledge position from which they diagnose problems and prescribe interventions or treatment (Carlson & Erickson, 2001). Clearly, psychologists do have skilled expertise and expert knowledge about the psychology of coaching that their clients do not have, otherwise there would be little reason for the client to employ them. Also, in addition to the expert knowledge that a coach holds about the psychology of coaching, it is important for coaches to have a good understanding of the clients' issues and context.

The issue here is about the role of expert knowledge in coaching, and how expert knowledge can be best utilised within the coaching relationship. There are various approaches to the use of expert knowledge in coaching. Expert knowledge in coaching can be understood as highly specialised or technical knowledge held by the coach, in an area where the coachee has less expertise than the coach, and where such knowledge is related to the coachee's goals. The notion of the 'coach as expert advice-giver' is somewhat controversial, and there is some difference of opinion as to the appropriate role of expert knowledge in coaching. For example, John Whitmore's (1992) work emphasises a non-directional ask-not-tell approach, and this stands in contrast to the more directive approach of Marshal Goldsmith (2000) which emphasises robust feedback and advice-giving.

The issue is not which of these approaches is right and which is wrong, but rather which best helps the client reach their goals, and which is the most apt at particular points in any specific coaching conversation. In essence this issue is about striking the right balance between process facilitation and content or information delivery, and this balance varies at different points in the overall coaching engagement and within individual coaching sessions. The skilful and experienced coach knows when to move across the ask-tell dimension, and knows when to promote self-discovery and when to give expert-based authoritative or specialised information.

The challenge for many applied psychologists is to master such flexibility in working with coaching clients. Coaching requires a sophisticated skill set and the ability to be able to draw on expert knowledge, whilst at the same time facilitating the self-directed learning which lies at the core of the coaching enterprise.

Future directions for coaching psychology

What is the future for coaching psychology? It will be useful to have detailed competencies and practices that mark coaching psychology from counselling, clinical and other applied psychological practices. However, this will not be an easy enterprise. Boundaries between and definition of existing sub-disciplines are vague as they stand (Cobb *et al.*, 2004). Although competencies and practices are useful heuristics to define the core functions of a sub-disciple, they tell us little about the overlap between various sub-disciple practice. Perhaps more important, as a future research agenda, may be the development and validation of psychologically-based coaching methodologies that are effective and engaging for non-clinical populations and the emergence of specific areas of coaching psychology practice.

Although executive coaching, workplace coaching and life coaching have received the most media coverage to date, an important emerging trend for coaching psychologists to be aware of is health-related coaching. Examination of the academic literature indicates that health coaching is emerging as the fastest growing area of coaching, and the coaching outcome research that is published in the medical press (e.g. *Medline*) tends to be of better quality than the outcome research published in the psychology press (e.g. *PsycINFO*) or the business press (e.g. *Business Source Premier*). Much of the health-related coaching is being conducted by dieticians, nurses and other health professionals rather than psychologists, yet there is a clear

role for coaching psychologists who have a background in the health sciences. Positive psychology will prove to be an important theoretical basis for many coaching psychologists, and this may particularly be the case in relation to health coaching, where the focus is on both physical and psychological well-being. Of course, the development of BPS- and APS-accredited postgraduate programmes, including conversion courses for practicing psychologists who wish to work as coaches will be important and such moves will further develop the professionalism, credibility and reputation of coaching psychologists.

However, perhaps the most vital factor in the development of coaching psychology will be that we do outstanding work with our clients. After all, they are what this is all about.

Conclusion

Coaching psychology has the potential to be a major force for the promotion of well-being and performance enhancement for the individual, for organisations and society as a whole. The emergence of a sub-discipline of coaching psychology can make psychology more accessible and acceptable to the public. Further, through virtue of their training and professionalism, psychologists are ideally placed to provide coaching services. In addition, coaching psychology can contribute to the development of established and emerging psychological approaches by providing a methodology with which to further develop our knowledge of the psychological processes involved in purposeful change in normal, non-clinical populations.

Correspondence

Anthony M. Grant
Coaching Psychology Unit,
School of Psychology,
University of Sydney,
Australia NSW 2006.
E-mail: anthonyg@psych.usyd.edu.au

Note: This article was based on Dr Grant's keynote address at the 1st Annual Conference of the BPS SGCP in London, December, 2004.

References

APA (2000). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-IV-TR* (4th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.

Berg, I.K. & Szabo, P. (2005). *Brief coaching for lasting solutions*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Berglas, S. (2002). The very real dangers of executive coaching. *Harvard Business Review* (June), 87–92.

Binder, J.L. (2004). *Key competencies in brief dynamic psychotherapy: Clinical practice beyond the manual*. New York: Guilford Press.

Bluckert, P. (2005). The similarities and differences between coaching and therapy. *Industrial & Commercial Training, 37*(2), 91–96.

Carlson, T.D. & Erickson, M.J. (2001). Honouring the privileging personal experience and knowledge: Ideas for a narrative therapy approach to the training and supervision of new therapists. *Contemporary Family Therapy: An International Journal, 23*(2), 199–220.

Cavanagh, M. (2005). Mental-health issues and challenging cleints in executive coaching. In M. Cavanagh, A.M. Grant & T. Kemp (Eds.), *Evidence-based coaching (Vol. 1): Contributions from the behavioural sciences* (pp.21–36). Queensland: Australian Academic Press.

Cobb, H.C., Reeve, R.E., Shealy, C.N., Norcross, J.C., Schare, M.L., Rodolfa, E.R. *et al.* (2004). Overlap among clinical, counselling, and school psychology: Implications for the profession and combined-integrated training. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 60*(9), 939–955.

Coleman, S.K. (2003). *Furthering professional development: An assessment of psychologists' awareness of how they are understood by the public*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Hartford, US.

Corporate Leadership Council. (2003). *Maximising returns on professional executive coaching*. Washington, DC: Corporate Leadership Council.

D'Abate, C.P., Eddy, E.R. & Tannenbaum, S.I. (2003). What's in a name? A literature-based approach to understanding mentoring, coaching, and other constructs that describe developmental interactions. *Human Resource Development Review, 2*(4), 360–384.

de Shazer, S. (1994). *Words were originally magic*. New York: Norton & Co.

Ducharme, M.J. (2004). The cognitive-behavioural approach to executive coaching. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice & Research, 56*(4), 214–224.

Filippi, R. (1968). Coaching: A therapy for people who do not seek help. *Zeitschrift Fuer Psychotherapie und Medizinische Psychologie, 18*(6), 225–229.

Fox, R.E. (1996). Charlatanism, scientism, and psychology's social contract. 103rd Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association: Presidential address (1995, New York). *American Psychologist, 51*(8), 777–784.

Fried, S. (1994). *American popular psychology: An interdisciplinary research guide*. New York: Garland.

Furedi, F. (2005). The age of unreason. *The Spectator* (19 November), 2–3.

Garman, A.N., Whiston, D.L. & Zlatoper, K.W. (2000). Media perceptions of executive coaching and the formal preparation of coaches. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice & Research, 52,* 203–205.

Goldsmith, M. (2000). Coaching change. *Executive Excellence, 17*(6), 4.

Grant, A.M. (2001). Grounded in science or based on hype? An analysis of Neuro-Associative Conditioning. *Australian Psychologist, 36*(3), 232–238.

Grant, A.M. & Zackon, R. (2004). Executive, workplace and life coaching: Findings from a large-scale survey of International Coach Federation members. *International Journal of Evidence-based Coaching and Mentoring, 2*(2), 1–15.

Green, S., Oades, L.G. & Grant, A.M. (2005). An evaluation of a life-coaching group programme: Initial findings from a waitlisted control study. In M. Cavanagh, A.M. Grant & T. Kemp (Eds.), *Evidence-based coaching (Vol. 1): Theory, research and practice from the behavioural sciences* (pp.127–142). Queensland: Australian Academic Press.

Greene, J. & Grant, A.M. (2003). *Solution-focused coaching: Managing people in a complex world*. London: Momentum Press.

Horvath, A.O. & Symonds, B. (1991). Relation between working alliance and outcome in psychotherapy: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 38*(2), 139–149.

Howgego, I.M., Yellowlees, P., Owen, C., Meldrum, L. & Dark, F. (2003). The therapeutic alliance: The key to effective patient outcome? A descriptive review of the evidence in community mental health case management. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 37*(2), 169–183.

Hudson, F.M. (1999). *The handbook of coaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kauffman, C. & Scoular, A. (2004). Towards a positive psychology of executive coaching. In P.A. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp.287–302). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Kilburg, R.R. (1996). Toward a conceptual understanding and definition of executive coaching. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 48*(2), 134–144.

Kilburg, R.R. (2000). *Executive coaching: Developing managerial wisdom in a world of chaos*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Lancaster, S. & Smith, D.I. (2002). What's in a name? The identity of clinical psychology as a specialty. *Australian Psychologist 37*(1), 48–51

Laske, O. E. (1999). An integrated model of developmental coaching. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice & Research, 51*(3), 139–159.

Laungani, P. (1999). Danger! Psychotherapists at work. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 12*(2), 117–131.

Lazarus, R.S. (2003). Does the positive psychology movement have legs? *Psychological Inquiry, 14*(2), 93–109.

Linley, P.A. & Harrington, S. (2005). Positive psychology and coaching psychology: Perspectives on intergration. *The Coaching Psychologist, 1* (July), 13–14.

Linley, P.A. & Joseph, S. (2004). *Positive psychology in practice.* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Mace, M.L. (1950). *The growth and development of executives.* Boston, MA: Harvard Business School, Division of Research.

Maslow, A.H. (1968). *Towards a psychology of being.* New York: Wiley.

Miller, G. (1969). Psychology as a means of promoting human welfare. *American Psychologist, 24,* 1063–1075.

Naughton, J. (2002). The coaching boom: Is it the long-awaited alternative to the medical model? *Psychotherapy Networker, 42,* July/August, 1–10.

Norcross, J.C. & Halgin, R.P. (2005). Training in psychotherapy integration. In J.C. Norcross & M.R. Goldfried (Eds.), *Handbook of psychotherapy integration* (2nd ed.) (pp.439–458). New York: Oxford University Press.

Norem, J.K. & Hang, E.C. (2002). The positive psychology of negative thinking. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 58,* 993–1001.

Palmer, S. & Whybrow, A. (2005). The proposal to establish a Special Group in Coaching Psychology. *The Coaching Psychologist, 1,* July, 5–11.

Peltier, B. (2001). *The psychology of executive coaching: Theory and application.* New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Peterson, C. & Seligman, M.E.P. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues. A handbook and classification.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Pyror, L. (2005). Call to end free rein for therapists. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 19 September, 22.

Ryff, C.D. (2003). Corners of myopia in the positive psychology parade. *Psychological Inquiry, 14*(2), 153–159.

Ryff, C.D. & Keyes, C.L.M. (1996). The structure of psychological well-being revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 96*(4), 719–727.

Salerno, S. (2005). Qualifications needed to be a life coach: er...none. [Electronic Version]. Times On Line. Retrieved 19 December 2005 from http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,7-1726677,00.html.

Seligman, M. (2005). The corporate chill pill. *New Zealand Management, 52*(6), 64–66.

Seligman, M.E. & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 5–14.

Sheldon, K.M. & Elliot, A.J. (1999). Goal striving, need satisfaction and longitudinal well-being: The self-concordance model. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 76*(3), 482–497.

Sherman, S. & Freas, A. (2004). The Wild West of executive coaching. *Harvard Business Review, 82*(11), 82–90.

Skiffington, S. & Zeus, P. (2003). *Behavioural coaching.* Sydney: McGraw-Hill.

Snyder, C.R. & Lopez, S.J. (Eds.) (2002). *Handbook of positive psychology.* London: Oxford University Press.

Snyder, C.R. & McCullough, M.E. (2000). A positive psychology field of dreams: 'If you build it, they will come…' *Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology, 19*(1), 151–160.

Spence, G.B. & Grant, A.M. (2005). Individual and group life-coaching: Initial findings from a randomised, controlled trial. In M. Cavanagh, A.M. Grant & T. Kemp (Eds.), *Evidence-based Coaching (Vol. 1): Theory, research and practice from the behavioural sciences* (pp.143–158). Queensland: Australian Academic Press.

Starker, S. (1990). Self-help books: Ubiquitous agents of health care. *Medical Psychotherapy: An International Journal, 3,* 187–194.

Walker, J. (2004). Business-class coaches. *Business Review Weekly,* 1 July, 15–18.

Walter, J.L. & Peller, J.E. (1996). Rethinking our assumptions: Assuming anew in a postmodern world. In S.C. Miller, M.A. Hubble & B.L. Duncan (Eds.), *Handbook of solution-focused brief therapy* (pp.9–27). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Webb, A.R. & Speer, J.R. (1986). Prototype of a profession: Psychology's public image. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 17*(1), 5–9.

Whitmore, J. (1992). *Coaching for performance.* London: Nicholas Brealey.

Wyld, B. (2001). Expert push. *Sydney Morning Herald,* 15 August, 4.

Does coaching work or are we asking the wrong question?

Annette Fillery-Travis & David Lane

Within the context of an expanding market for coaching in all its forms organisations are asking the questions 'Does coaching work?' They seek evidence of a return on investment. We argue within this paper that this is the wrong question. Before we can ask whether coaching works we must ask how is it being used, is a coherent framework of practice and finally is it perceived or quantified as being effective within that framework?

We review the practitioner and academic literature as well as our own research to address each of these questions in turn. We posit a framework of practice based upon the coaching agenda identify by coachee and coach within the contracting phase of the engagement. This encompasses the coaching mode and role as well as the supervisory relationships which exist. The research literature is then considered in the context of the framework.

Keywords: coaching, evidence, review, return on investment, external, internal, manager.

SUCCESSFUL ORGANISATIONS IN the emerging knowledge economy innovate continually to maintain their place in such a dynamic marketplace. But it is the individual employee who must develop the flexibility and creativity needed to effectively drive growth and deliver appropriate results. They expect (and are expected) to constantly upgrade their technical and leadership skills. Whilst individuals view this professional development as predominantly their own responsibility, they look to their organisation to partner them in accessing and resourcing it (Lane *et al.*, 2000). The challenge for the employer is how to achieve this within the constraints of efficient time and financial resource management.

In facing this challenge organisations are turning away from the traditional training initiatives with the implied ethos of one size fits all. Flexibility and speed of response are imperative and thus development has become more person-centred and tailored to the individual. In this environment it is, therefore, unsurprising that coaching has grown in popularity as an option to meet the emerging needs of organisations and as such has become widespread and well accepted.

As identified by Dr Michael Cavanagh in his keynote address at the 2nd Annual Conference of the Special Group in Coaching Psychology at the BPS, *'coaching has been around too long to be a management fad.'*

It is an established part of the development portfolio available to the executive.

The market is still growing and recent estimates put its size as $2bn per year. In this context, it is not surprising that the question being raised by buyers of coaching is 'Does it work?'

In other words does coaching provide a return on its investment in driving performance up and impacting on the bottom line?

We argue here that this is the wrong question.

Before we can ask whether coaching works we must ask what it is being used for. Is all coaching addressing similar aims which can be quantified by a standard method or is there a number of purposes to the coaching? If the latter, then we need to consider if these purposes are coherent and form part of a framework of practice for the profession or whether the aims are too disparate to formalise.

We have looked to the academic and practitioner literatures to address this issue

as well as our own research. It is clear that coaching practice has evolved almost a quickly as it has grown and there are now a range of roles, coaching models and frameworks of practice. At first sight there seems to be a diversity of practice where few established norms can be assumed.

It can be argued that such diversity is to be welcomed, and indeed expected, as coaches respond to the individual needs of the client. We would agree if we were considering the ***process*** of coaching only, i.e. the nature and description of the coaching relationship. But within this paper we are looking at how coaching is being used, its ***purpose***, and if it is considered effective by its clients and their sponsoring organisations. Therefore, as a review document this work does not fully expand upon underpinning issues such as the emergence and development of learning organisations nor does it explicitly cite the psychology literature which underpins the process of coaching.

Instead we have reviewed the academic literature on the efficacy of coaching published between 1990–2004 although where there is insufficient work some references are cited from 1930s. Similarly we have identified the general trend of the practitioner publications (both articles and books) to identify the focus of practice. We will also draw upon our own research into the experience of over 30 HR directors or buyers of coaching (Jarvis, Lane & Fillery-Travis, 2006).

The first point of note is that in common with previous reviewers (Kampa & White, 2002) we have found that the evidence base for coaching has not increased at the same rate as practice. Research into the efficacy of coaching has lagged behind and it has only started to develop seriously over the last five years. As identified by Grant (Grant, 2003) the literature is at the point of expansion in response to the practice development.

We have focussed our interest on the following questions:

1. How is coaching being used within organisations and who is doing it?
2. Is there a coherent framework of practice across the identified modes of coaching?
3. Is it perceived or quantified as being effective?

The consideration of these questions structures the rest of this paper. Within it we identify the coaching agenda or purpose to be an underpinning concept which allows us to develop a framework of practice which encompasses both coaching mode and role. It is against this framework that the question can then be asked 'Does it work?'

1. How is coaching being used within an organisation?

The School of Coaching survey (Kubicek, 2002) last year provided data on which coaching modes are being used within organisations:

- 51 per cent used external coaches;
- 41 per cent trained internal coaches; and
- 79 per cent manager coaches.

We will consider each of these in turn and also briefly mention team coaches.

External coaches

Various surveys have been undertaken in recent years to investigate the use of this type of coaching within the UK; the Coaching Study (2004) published by UCE (a survey of 1153 organisations across the UK) and The Institute of Employment Studies (IES) report (Carter, 2001) are but two of them. Each sought to identify what coaches were being commissioned to do within organisations. Considering this information together with the journal and research literature we can group the potential functions for an external coach under two main headings:

1. The coaching of a senior executive to their own agenda;
2. The coaching of managers after training to consolidate knowledge acquisition and work with the individual to support and facilitate resulting behaviour change in relation to a specific organisational agenda.

The tasks associated with the first function included; supporting the induction of a senior manager, supporting particular individuals identified as high potential or as targets for extra support, and acting as a critical friend or sounding board for a senior manager where mentors are not appropriate or practical. It is also clear that coaching is being seen as a reward for senior managers and part of a retention package. Indeed it has been noted within the IES (Carter, 2001) study that the phenomenon of 'coaching envy' is a reality for the members of its research forum. As cited by (Hall, Otazo & Hollenbeck, 1999), *'Executives like the confidentiality and personal attention: they also like what coaching does for their careers.'*

So once coaching is introduced to a company other executives within the company want a coach.

Traditionally within this first option the coaching agenda is totally free and defined only by the coachee. It is not even constrained to the work role but allows exploration of any issues that the coachee identifies as interesting. In our previous study on the efficacy of coaching (Jarvis, Lane & Fillery-Travis, 2006) we found that organisations were increasingly aware of the potential difficulties for an organisation of 'free agenda' coaching. These include a perceived 'lack of control' with the potential for distraction of the coachee from the primary task and also the lack of a defined return on investment. In addition there is the real possibility that the coachee may be 'coached out of a job'.

Organisations react to this latter issue in one of two ways: either by acknowledging that the coaching is revealing a hidden problem thereby creating an opportunity to manage it effectively, or by reducing the potential for this type of crisis to occur by restricting the agenda of the coaching at the start of the contract.

In the latter strategy the sponsoring organisation will seek to have a more direct involvement in the contracting phase usually through involvement with the line manager or the HR department. Within our own research HR directors were increasingly requiring their external coaches to undergo a familiarisation process covering the company's culture and ethos and to undertake to keep within a proscribed agenda.

The issues identified within the coaching agenda will, in general, be diverse and the external coach can be working at a variety of levels of engagement. Categorisation of these levels of engagement has been developing within the literature for some time. Grant and Cavanagh (2004) identify three generic levels:

- Skills coaching which can be of short duration and which requires the coach to focus on specific behaviours;
- Performance coaching which will focus on the process by which the coachee can set goals, overcome obstacles, and evaluate and monitor their performance; and finally
- Developmental coaching which takes a broader more holistic view often dealing with more intimate, personal and professional questions. This can involve the creation of a personal reflective space rather like what they call 'therapy for the people who don't need therapy'.

Other categorisations have been also been developed, for example, Witherspoon and White (1996) identify four distinct roles for the coach: coaching for skills, for performance, for development and for the executive's agenda. For Peterson (1996) there are three different types: targeted, intensive and executive. At the present time there are no universally identified definitions of these roles. But it is clear that the level of competence and skill required of the coach increases with the level of engagement and at the highest level it is generally acknowledged that a mastery of practice is needed. Defining what 'mastery' of practice means in this context has been the work of professional bodies in recent years and the interested reader is referred to their websites and publications for further information.

It is whilst considering these levels that the concepts of professional practice, i.e. specified body of knowledge, accreditation, ethical basis of practice, are brought into focus (Garman, Whiston & Zlatoper, 2000). As Lane (2006) points out, *'This is not proposed as an argument that only psychologists should coach but rather that those who work as coaches to address complex personal and professional development should adopt the hallmarks of a profession and work to an evidence based agenda rather than promote untested propriety models built on ideas drawn from sources both spurious and credible.'*

Primary to this goal is the supervision of the coach. The various coaching professional bodies are currently developing frameworks of professionalism and accreditation of coaching and coaches. Central to the majority of these is the supervision of the coach. For example, the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) states in its code of ethics, 'A coach/mentor must maintain a relationship with a suitably qualified supervisor, who will regularly assess their competence and support their development.' The external coach will be expected to be under supervision but may also provide supervision for others. We will deal with this in more detail later.

This free agenda coaching engagement is in stark contrast to the second option for the executive coach – training consolidation (Smither *et al.*, 2003) It is now widely accepted that sustained behaviour change after training can only be achieved through monitoring and consolidation activities which continue after the training itself. In the past this has been in the form of 'follow on workshops', etc., but external coaches are now taking a role in providing one-to-one assessment and feedback on the learning undertaken. This is obviously limited in duration, typically one or two sessions, and there is a highly constrained agenda defined by the training event or focus, with an outcome of facilitating behaviour change to affect the required response. One area where it is highly used is in the training of manager coaches and the supervision of internal coaches. We will deal with those in due course.

Manager coaches

Although current research has focussed on the coach as an external consultant, there is a literature dating back to the 1930s on manager coaches (Grant, 2003). Graham, Wedman and Garvin-Kester (1993) reported an evaluation of a coaching skills programme for 13 sales managers with a total of 87 account representative reporting to them. Although this focus for research has declined in the last couple of decades it is still an active and distinct modality of coaching particularly given the recent emphasis on the learning organisation. Quoting again from the recent survey by the School of Coaching – Is coaching being abused? (Kubicek, 2002) – 'Most organisations will say 'yes our managers are coaching' and 'yes we support it'.

This survey of 179 senior HR managers in the UK during February 2002: found that most organisations in the sample (79 per cent) were providing coaching by line managers to their direct reports. Middle managers were the most likely group of employees to be receiving coaching (74 per cent). It was interesting that only 38 per cent of organisations had an initiative in place to develop their managers coaching skills and these were primarily for middle managers. Most of the respondents (70 per cent) had coaching as part of their development strategy with 40 per cent mentioning performance measures and 37 per cent a competency framework.

An in-depth example of the use of mentoring and coaching within a human resource strategy is provided by Coca-Cola Foods (Veale & Wachtel, 1996). Here coaching is viewed in its widest description which includes instruction and problem solving but the cohesiveness of the approach is worth investigation.

A study by Ellinger and Bostrum (1998) has attempted to define, through a qualita-

tive critical incident study, the ways exemplary managers facilitate their employee learning. They describe a range of behaviours and the interested reader is referred to this paper as well as the range of literature on learning organisations which can inform our training and development of the manager coach.

The coaching agenda for managers is usually solely concerned with the requirements of the organisation and is focused explicitly on the achievement of work goals. It does not have the open agenda commonly used by external coaches and, it is set for the mutual benefit of manager and coachee. The manager needs the output from the employee and seeks to develop it. The employee needs to satisfy the requirements of the post and needs the help and advice of the manager in achieving this. This mutuality sets the focus for the engagement and has an impact both on the learning needs the coaching can address and on the training and supervision required for the coach.

The benefits of this coaching are clear – the coach is on- the- spot with a clear identification of organisational culture and an assessment of the coaching needs of the individual. There is minimal time delay between identification of need and coaching intervention. As one of our case studies identified 'the business environment is changing too fast so we cannot continually retrain everyone – we need to use coaching to constantly update and upgrade'.

It is unlikely and probably unethical for the coaching to be at the developmental level where disclosure of personal and intimate information is required. But it will certainly address skills and probably performance levels. Thus the level of skill and competence required of the manager coach is significantly lower then that of the external coach. However, some level of competence is still necessary. In the School of Coaching Study (Kubicek, 2002) concern was raised that on average the manager coaches received only three days of training to develop their coaching skills and that 67 per cent of companies had no policy/ strategy/vision with regard to the use of coaching (a strategy was more likely the bigger the organisation). As identified by Gebber (1992) the task of coaching for the manager is, *'the most difficult one to perform and requires the biggest paradigm shift of any new system.'*

We should expect managers to need support to attain competence in this role. It is, therefore, not surprising that, as we indicated previously, external coaches are contracted to provide some of this support and help consolidate behaviour change. Alternatively this support can also be supplied by internal coaches whom we will consider next.

Internal coaches

The coach manager is not the only form of internal coach. As discussed in 'The emerging role of the Internal Coach' (Frisch, 2001), *'Coaching is now seen as an investment in the organisation's future. Perhaps concurrent with this has been the emergence of the internal coach.'*

When used in the remedial role it can be argued that the external coach's separateness is essential to reduce defensiveness on the coachee's part and allow focus on their development. However, in the senior development role the trained colleague or internal coach's knowledge of the organisation and immediate availability can be beneficial.

It can be argued that HR professionals have always undertaken some coaching within their job descriptions but it was 'informal and normally transactional'. Internal coaches are now identified and acknowledged by their organisations and Coaching Professional Bodies. Frisch defines internal coaching as: *'a one-to-one developmental intervention supported by the organisation and provided by a colleague of those coached who is trusted to shape and deliver a program yielding individual professional growth'.*

There are several points arising from this definition

1. The internal coach is outside line management, i.e. distinct from the manager coach.
2. (S)he will not always use standard assessment as external coaches as (s)he will already know significant background information and have access to the results of organisational assessment.
3. Multiply interventions are assumed – it is not a single informal discussion but an ongoing programme.

This interaction was identified as different from the many other training and advice-type engagements, e.g. discussion with HR, training, etc., as these are organisationally focused as opposed to the individual focus of the internal coaching relationship. The advantages were seen to be the ability to see the coachee within their role and knowledge of the environment within which the coachee is working. The emergence of the internal coach can be seen as 'a tangible manifestation of the learning organisation'.

We have shown previously (Jarvis *et al.*, 2006) that the tasks associated with this role are:

- Coaching individuals where manager coaches are not fully used;
- Providers of coach training to managers;
- Supervision of manager coaches providing support and further skills as and when required;
- Specialist coaches for senior managers.

The coaching agenda within this mode is still well focused upon organisational objectives but it has a broader vision to that observed with the manager coach. There will be an element of mutual benefit although it can be considered 'indirect' as with external coaching. The coaching agenda can explore the underpinning aspects of the behaviour or change required although it will still be restricted to some extent by the organisational framework. As indicated previously supervision of internal coaches is necessary and is often sub contracted to external coaches.

2. A framework of practice?

In summary, current practice, as identified within our review, can be characterised by the agreed coaching agenda and the role level employed. Coaching is practiced within three modes; external, internal and manager. The breadth and freedom of the coaching agenda will increase as indicated in Figure 1 and the coach will employ a level of intervention appropriate to the agenda.

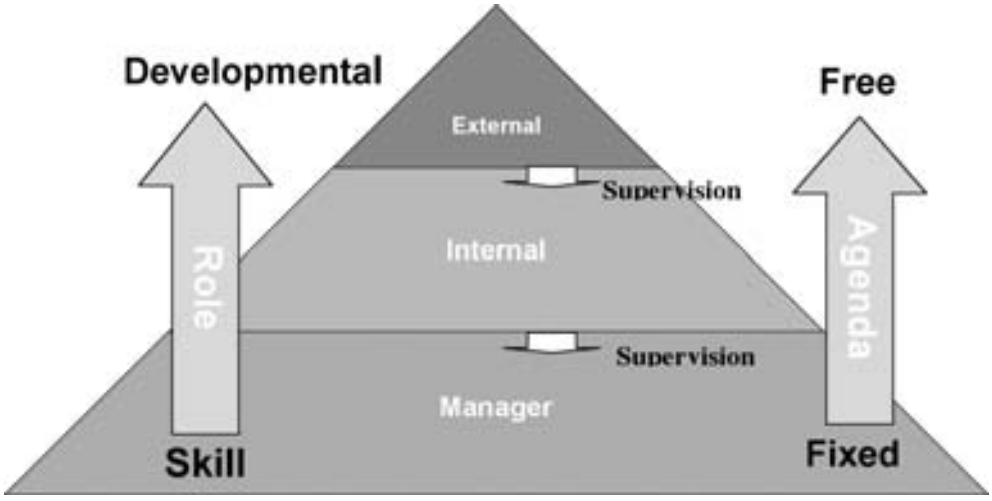
These, in turn, will impact upon the outputs that are expected. For instance a restricted coaching agenda is unlikely to impact upon the development of the coachee at the personal level. It may, however, address very specific skill enhancements which can be quantified by, for example, comparing sales figures before and after coaching in relationship building. Similarly external coaching with a broad agenda in which the coach is acting within a development role will address issues such as purpose and self for the coachee. Measurement of the impact of the coachee's development may be difficult to quantify.

An aside

Before we consider the efficacy of coaching there are several points upon which we would like to comment. From the 'Is coaching being abused?' survey there is also a perception that manager coaching is good for middle managers but not for those at the top. This has led to a lack of integration within the corporate strategies. Within this survey 63 per cent used coaching at senior manger level, 74 per cent and 69 per cent at junior and middle managers level. Blackman-Sheppard (2004) argues convincingly that 'executive' coaching should be a resource to available for all employees. There is an interesting question which has not been addressed within the literature as yet – Does the mode of coaching on offer depend upon your seniority within the organisation?

Another critical point is that coaching is not being confined to individuals – team coaching has started to be the subject of

Figure 1: Coaching role, agenda and supervision.



both discussion and research publications. Diedrich (2001) discusses the lessons learned from practice and identifies a number of principles of practice. Within his practice he does NOT identify team coaching with team building or team development.

> *'The coaching of a team is a process where the consulting psychologist has an ongoing, helping relationship with both the team and the individual executives; that is he or she has time for the team as well as one-to-one coaching contacts with the team members over time. Coaching a team is an iterative process for both the team and the individual that is developmentally orientated as opposed to being a problem-centred quick fix for the team.'*

Within the literature there is not complete agreement with this view and some team coaches positively rule out coaching of individual members except for specific tasks. Coaching at the Top (Kralj, 2001) is a case study of an intervention to enable a company to redesign their organisation. All the interventions were kept to a systems or team level. The authors make a case that coaching should be expanded to include such team engagements.

3. Does it work?

As with all human interactions there are a multiplicity of factors which will impact on the whether the interaction has the desired effect. Indeed, when considering coaching there will even be a variety of criteria for what is constitutes an 'effect'. For instance, is it sufficient that the coachee perceives coaching to have enabled him/her to achieve an identified goal? Or does the output have to percolate down to the bottom-line in terms of a quantifiable performance measure for the organisation?

To date there is only two studies prepared to quote a return on investment, i.e. identify an impact upon the bottom-line. Both of these are concerned with external coaching. The most frequently cited was carried out by Right Management Consultants and published in the *Manchester Review* (McGovern *et al.*, 2001). The quoted figure for ROI was 5.7 in terms of 'tangible' or quantifiable outputs such as increased productivity. There is a difficulty with this study in terms of reliability as it surveyed the clients of the consultancy where the author was based and the results were based upon the coachee's own estimates. However, it

does identify how the clients perceived coaching had impacted upon their behaviour and hence the perceived ROI. In particular it is of note that the frequency of impact was higher for the intangible impacts (e.g. improving relationships (77 per cent) and team work (73 per cent)) then for the tangible impacts (e.g. productivity 53 per cent) and quality (48 per cent)). The other study is provided by the Philips ROI institute (Philips, 2004) quoting a figure of 2.21, however, to date this study has not been published and is only available from their website.

Generally published investigations have concentrated on the self-reporting of improvement by the coachee but some studies have looked at assessment (of improvement) by colleagues and reports. Several seek to quantify improvement of performance of the coachee's department or team but as we shall see these have so far delivered only tentative results. For all studies identified the satisfaction of the coachee was good or high and where self-reporting was used then the coaching was identified as having impact on the development of the individual. Where the studies use quantifiable performance measures, other then multisource feedback, the effectiveness is less well evidenced.

For ease of reading we have classified the studies into those addressing external coaching, internal coaching, manager coaching and team coaching.

External coaching

The most researched task of the external coach has been supporting the impact of multi-source feedback and promoting improvement in performance. We will consider three such studies.

a. The only study to date which compares the performance of coached and non-coached individuals is that by Smither, London *et al.* (2003). They also go beyond self reporting of improvement and compare 360 degree feedback pre- and post-intervention. The advantages of 360 degree feedback are well established in that it provides information on how the coachee is perceived by others; on what should be improved and obtains these ratings from a variety of groups. However, as Smither *et al.* (2003) identify, there can be major problems in working with this information; there can be an overwhelming amount of information, the difference between self and others' ratings can be difficult to reconcile and there is often a need for guidance and help to figure out next step. Locke and Lathan (1990) have shown that feedback alone is not the cause of behaviour change, it is the goals that people set in response to feedback which promotes change. The question asked by this study was: Could coaching facilitate this goal setting with appropriate follow-through and hence enhanced performance?

The subjects of the study were 1361 senior managers in a global corporation who received multi-source feedback in autumn 1999. After feedback, 404 of the managers received coaching (five to seven hours covering review of feedback within two to three individual sessions) and then responded to a brief online questionnaire. In the autumn of 2000 another multi-source feedback programme was carried out in which 88.3 per cent of managers from the initial survey received feedback. In July 2002 a brief survey was carried out in which raters evaluated the progress of the manager towards the goals set by the manager himself, based on the initial feedback.

Managers who worked with a coach were more likely to set specific (rather than vague) goals (d=0.16) and to solicit ideas for improvement from their supervisors (d=0.36). They had a higher performance improvement in terms of direct report and supervisor ratings, however, the effect size (d=0.17) was small.

It should be noted that the multi-

source feedback was being used within the appraisal system in a high accountability culture, e.g. salary and resources were all linked to the results so the effect of the coach might be masked by this driver for change. Also this was a very short intervention with 55 per cent of the managers having three or more conversations, 29.4 per cent having two and 15.6 per cent having just one.

b. On a similar vein Thatch (2002) also investigated the quantitative impact of coaching and 360 degree feedback on the leadership effectiveness of 281 executives within a single company. Within the first phase of the research a pilot programme with 57 executives was run in which the coaching concentrated on one to three development actions arising from a 360 degree assessment. After feedback from participants of phase one the programme was launched in phase two with 168 executives over one year. The participants received four coaching sessions in all before a mini 360 degree and participant survey. This was run the next year in phase three for a further 113 participants. There was no choice of coach and the duration of coaching was short although it was noted many paid for further sessions from their own funds. However, the 360 degree was not linked to appraisal and hence the impact of the coaching intervention should have been more clearly defined. Unfortunately no comparison was made with non-coached executives.

   The overall percentage increase in leadership effectiveness was 55 per cent in phase two and 60 per cent in phase three. The coaching impact was also assessed through the average number of times met with coach (3.6) and it was noted that there was a trend towards higher contacts giving higher scores. From the qualitative feedback from the participants the factor of greatest impact was the relationships with the coach themselves with the 360 degree feedback as the factor of second importance.

c. On a smaller scale but with a similar remit Luthans and Peterson (2003) again used multi-source assessment in conjunction with coaching. They identified that there is usually a discrepancy between the self-rating and that of others. This is lessened by increasing the self-awareness of the coachee. Their proposition was that 360 degree programmes should not seek to deal with this by lowering self-rating but by raising performance to the level of the initial self-rating.

   The authors conducted a study involving all 20 managers in a small firm to determine how effective coaching was at facilitating this improvement. At the start of the study, and again three months later, 360 degree ratings were collected. After the initial assessment the managers were met for a coaching session to analyse the results. All managers met the same coach and followed the same process. The feedback was confidential to the client and the coaching was developmental not assessment orientated. The process was structured around: what are the discrepancies, why they were present; what can be done; with the final part of the session concentrating on the responsibility of the individual to make the changes. Follow-up checks were then carried out randomly and qualitative data collected on whether the coachees had made the changes discussed.

   Given the short time-scale of the study and the short duration of the coaching it is perhaps surprising that the initial discrepancy between self- and others rating was eliminated in all three factors tested, i.e. behavioural competency, interpersonal competency and personal responsibility. The reduction in discrepancy was brought about through the elevation of the others rating not the reduction in the coachee's ratings. There was an improvement in both the

managers and their employees work attitudes with a significant increase in job satisfaction with the work itself, supervision and co-workers. Organisational commitment also increased.

Thus it is suggested that coaching has a part to play in getting the most from feedback to obtain benefits such as positive attitude to work and reduced turnover. The authors also found evidence of an improvement in organisational performance, e.g. in sales figures (seasonally adjusted) following coaching and feedback. However, as they are systems level indicators they were not deemed sufficiently controlled to link directly with the individual coaching intervention.

Other studies have concentrated upon the perception of impact by clients after a coaching programme. Generally groups of clients are surveyed after completion of the coaching programme. In general these have provided a universally positive response from the clients and researchers have sought to dissect the positive impact into its constituent parts by asking 'what worked?' These have been less successful and indicate alternative research designs will be necessary to go beyond the first order question.

a. A study which didn't include multi-source feedback was conducted by Harder & Company Community Research in the US (2003). In this design 24 executives from various organisations were coached for 40 hours over 13 months and three peer round-table events were also included for the sharing of experience and support. The executive were given a choice of coach from a pool of 12 coaches recruited for their diversity of background and interest. The coachees had less then four years' experience at the executive level but no prior experience of coaching.

   A learning contract was drawn up for all coachees and the research design was a survey (before, middle and end), semi-structure interviews (over phone for 20) and case studies of five. At the end of the study the overall satisfaction of the coachees was 4.6 on a scale of 5. One point of note was that significant change was apparent at six months but this rate of improvement was not sustained at 12 months.

b. A doctoral thesis from the US (Dawdy, 2004) provides a comparative design exploring the perceived effectiveness of coaching and methods. The design of the study was to identify whether 'one size fits all'. Does executive coaching suit everyone? The criterion used to group the executives was personality type.

   Sixty-two participants took part in the study, all from a large engineering firm. They were all white males between 40 and 50 years of age. They had participated in a coaching programme for at least six months and completed it. The coaching was provided by a single firm using the in-house framework although little detail is given. A survey of the participants was conducted and 90 per cent of them considered coaching to be effective. Ninety-one per cent thought it was valuable to their relationships outside work whilst 75 per cent thought it was valuable to their relationships within work. On the question of whether it had facilitated behaviour change on a scale 1 not met to 7 met far beyond expectations the mean was 4.34 SE0.15. There was no effect of personality type.

   There was no significant difference in perception of the success of various coaching tools, e.g. interviews, feedback, etc., although 88 per cent of those who had experience 360 degree rated it as positive or neutral. A similar result was found for communication with the coach (82 per cent agreed), acquiring new skills (74 per cent) and coach's encouragement (87 per cent). Thus this study agrees with the norm – people like to be coached and people perceive that they have changed behaviours as a result. But it goes not further.

c. Another thesis from the US (Dingman,

2004) asked the question 'How does the extent and quality of participation in an executive coaching experience affect levels of self-efficacy and job-related attitudes in job satisfaction, organisational commitment and the conflict between work and family?'

The design used sought to identify the quality of the coaching experienced for each individual, i.e. whether generic elements of the coaching process had been implemented and the perception of the coaching relationship. These were then related to the change in self efficacy and job related attitudes of the coachee. The assumption implicit in the work is that positive job-related attitudes correlate with high job performance and thus job-related attitudes indicative of more quantifiable outputs, e.g. specific measure of tasks completed.

The author had chosen to take investigation of the relationship between coach and coachee a stage further and ask the executive to rate their coach in terms of three specific behaviours which illustrate their relation, i.e. interpersonal skills, communication style and instrumental support.

All coachees were coached using the same programme to control some variables but this does restrict the generality of the results. The author looked at the evidence for executive coaching efficacy at each point using Kirkpatrick's (1983) training evaluation criteria.

The research instrument was an online survey distributed to the clients of one coaching centre. Response rate was 52 per cent, 82 per cent of clients were male with an average age was 42. A number of coaches were used with 53 per cent of them having a postgraduate degree.

The hypotheses tested were that there was a significant relationship between the coaching process/quality and job satisfaction and self-efficacy. The quality of the relationship was positive for self-efficacy but negative for job satisfaction. This may have been because the executives were being coached out of their jobs or alternatively there may be some aspect of relationship which was not tested and hence skewed results.

The author goes further in the analysis and identifies that the process and quality of coaching impact on self-efficacy of the coachee and mediate job related attitudes.

There was no support for the relationship between coaching and life/work conflict or organisational commitment but we are not given any information as to whether these are considered within the particular coaching model used.

d. A very extensively cited study concerns the use of a specific tool within a coaching context (Foster & Lendl, 1996). Eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR) was integrated into an executive coaching programme and four case studies are reported. Participants received one to 10 hours of coaching in which EMDR was used to desensitise an upsetting event which was standing in the way of the coachee's performance. The intervention was successful in all cases and each coachee progressed well towards their identified goals. However, the study tests the use of EMDR within a coaching context and not the coaching interaction itself.

Internal coaching

The first reported attempt at examining effects of coaching in a public sector municipal agency was undertaken by Olivero, Bane and Kopelman (1997). Although they describe the mode of coaching used as executive coaching, within the definitions we are using here their study investigated the effectiveness of internal coaching.

Their interest was in the effectiveness of using coaching as a means to translate training into behaviour change. It is known that two of the most dominant factors which

influenced this process are the opportunity for practice and constructive feedback (Anderson & Wexley, 1983). They used an action research methodology to determine if coaching could provide this support. Thirty-one managers underwent a conventional managerial training programme. Then eight of the managers underwent a coach training programme and coached their peers, every week for two months, as they undertook a real life project. A knowledge inventory was completed before and after the workshop.

The productivity of each of the managers was measured after training and after coaching. The measures chosen were appropriate to the specific work of the manager, were quantifiably and of benefit to the organisation. The result was a 22.4 per cent increase in productivity after the management training but an 88 per cent increase after coaching.

Although these figures seem clear cut, there are a number of issues which have to be born in mind. By their very nature the projects undertaken whilst the managers were being coached would also have contributed to enhanced productivity. It is also unclear whether the intervention was coaching or action research facilitation. The authors themselves are clear that this study design cannot address all the issues but the output does provide scare information on how coaching can affect the bottom line.

Manager coach

A rare study looking at effectiveness of leaders as coaches and the performance of teams was conducted in 2001 (Wageman, 2001). The basis of the study was the generation of self-managing teams. It is suggested that the principal reason for their failure is a lack of motivation and the inability of the manager to create the right conditions for them to thrive.

In this field study of the company Xerox two factors are investigated: the design of the team and the coaching by the manager. Thirty-four teams of between three to nine members were used, split between consistent high performers and consistently poor performers (18 superb teams and 15 poor teams). Multiple measures of team design and manager coaching were identified through structured interviews and a survey of the participants. These were then used to assess the teams. Quantitative measures of performance were obtained from the organisation and these related to bottom line quantities such as response rate, parts expenses, machine reliability, etc. The data analysis was rigorous and large effects were seen.

The hypothesis that well-designed teams exhibit more self-management and are more effective then teams with design flaws was supported as expected. The hypothesis that well coached teams exhibit more self-management but NOT higher task performance was also supported.

There was a negative coaching aspect and a positive coaching aspect. Negative aspects were for behaviours such as identifying team problems and task intervention whilst positive was providing cues, informal rewards, and problem-solving consultancy. There was no support for the hypothesis that coaching alone influenced the bottom line factors. The hypothesis that coaching and design interacted positively was supported for self-management but not for performance or satisfaction. Overall positive coaching worked best for well designed teams and negative coaching impacted more on poorly designed teams.

Graham *et al.* (1993) identified that training could develop manager coaching skills, at least within a sales environment, through a study of 87 account representatives who worked for 13 sales managers. Seventy per cent of account representatives indicated that they had observed a positive change in their managers. This was most shown by those who had worked for their managers for two years whereas for lesser or more time with the same boss the percentage decreased.

Summary

3. Does coaching work?

In all the studies undertaken, investigating whatever mode of coaching, the conclusion was the same – everyone likes to be coached and perceives that it impacts positively upon their effectiveness. Thus, to the first order the answer is 'Yes it does'.

But, if we consider the question within the context of our suggested framework of practice, we can start to develop a more structured and useful answer particularly in terms of ROI.

For external or executive coaching where the coaching agenda is broad and, by definition, unconstrained then the identified outputs will be of both direct and indirect impact to the bottom-line. This is well illustrated within the two studies specifically aimed at producing a ROI. Both of these studies identified that the outputs of the coaching would have 'tangible' and 'intangible' elements. Tangible elements such as productivity and sales figures are relatively easy to measure and correct for external factors. The 'intangible' elements such as leadership or relationship handling can be identified and even quantified but their relative impact upon the bottom-line must, by definition, be considered on an individual basis. Any study seeking to address this must specifically design in this issue at the start of the investigation.

To date studies of external coaching have concentrated on quantifying the 'intangibles' and assuming these will impact favourably upon the bottom-line. The improvement in coachee behaviours, etc. post-coaching was consistent across all studies, whether the coachees self-reported or the quantification was through 360 degree feedback.

If we now consider the more restricted and organisationally focussed coaching agenda found with internal and manager coaching then the research studies are, by definition, more closely focussed on 'tangible', bottom-line outputs. The study by Olivero *et al.* (1997) is of particular note. The design used productivity as the factor to be measured before and after coaching and this was also the case with the study at Xerox. Both of these studies show significant improvement in bottom-line measures after the coaching intervention.

It is clear from this analysis that when we ask 'Does coaching work?' we must first identify where within the framework of practice the coaching is actually placed, how constrained is the coaching agenda and whether a tangible or intangible output is being sought. Only then can we identify if the evidence is available to answer the question as posed.

Correspondence

Annette Fillery-Travis and **David Lane**
Professional Development Foundation,
21 Limehouse Cut,
46 Morris Road,
London, E14 6NQ, UK.
E-mail:
Annette.fillery-travis@pdf.net
David.lane@pdf.net

References

Anderson, J.P. & Wexley, A. (1983). Application-based management development: a method to promote practical application of managerial and supervisory training. *Personnel Administrator, 28,* 39–43.

Blackman-Sheppard, G. (2004). Executive coaching. *Industrial and Commercial Training, 36,* 5–8(4).

Carter, A. (2001). *Executive coaching: Inspiring performance at work* (Vol. Report 379). London: The Institute for Employment Studies.

Dawdy, G.N. (2004). *Executive coaching: A comparative design exploring the percieved effectiveness of coaching and methods.* Unpublished Doctorate, School of Education, Capella University.

Diedrich, R.C. (2001). Lessons learned in – and guidelines for – coaching executive teams. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 53,* 238–239.

Dingman, M.E. (2004). *The effects of executive coaching on job-related attitudes.* School of Leadership Development, Regent University.

Ellinger, A. & Bostrom, R. (1998). Managerial coaching behaviours in learning organisations. *Journal of Management Development, 18.*

Foster, S. & Lendl, J. (1996). Eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing: Four case studies of a new tool for executive coaching and restoring employee performance after setbacks. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 48,* 155–161.

Frisch, M.H. (2001). The emerging role of the internal coach. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 53,* 240–250.

Garman, A.N., Whiston, D.L. & Zlatoper, K.W. (2000). Media perceptions of executive coaching and the formal preparation of coaches. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 52,* 201–205.

Geber, B. (1992). From manager into coach. *Training, 29,* 25–31.

Graham, S., Wedman, J.F. & Garvin-Kester, B. (1993). Manager coaching skills: Development and application. *Performance Improvement Quarterly, 6,* 2–13.

Grant, A.M. (2003). Keeping up with the cheese again! Research as a foundation for professional coaching of the future. *International Coach Federation Conference Symposium on Research and Coaching,* 1–26.

Grant, A.M. & Cavanagh, M. (2004). Toward a profession of coaching: Sixty-five years of progress and challenges for the future. *International Journal of Evidence-Based Coaching and Mentoring, 2,* 7–21.

Hall, D.T., Otazo, K.L. & Hollenbeck, G.P. (1999). Behind closed doors: What really happens in executive coaching. *Organizational Dynamics, 27,* 39–53.

Jarvis, J., Lane, D. & Fillery-Travis, A. (2006). *Does coaching work?* London: CIPD.

Kampa, S. & White, R.P. (2002). The effectiveness of executive coaching: What we know and what we still need to know. In R.L. Lowman (Ed.), *The California School of Organisational Studies: Handbook of organisational consulting psychology: A comprehensive guide to theory, skills, and techniques* (pp.139–158). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Kralj, M.M. (2001). Coaching at the top: Assisting a chief executive and his team. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 53,* 108–116.

Kubicek, M. (2002). Is coaching being abused? *Training,* May, 12–14.

Lane, D., Puri, A., Cleverly, P., Wylie, R. & Rajan, A. (2000). *Employability: Bridging the gap between rhetoric and reality.* London: Professional Development Foundation.

Locke, E.A. & Latham, G.P. (1990). *A theory of goal setting and task performance.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Luthans, F. & Peterson, S.J. (2003). 360 degree feedback with systematic coaching: Empirical analysis suggests a winning combination. *Human Resource Management, 42,* 243–256.

McGovern, J., Lindemann, M., Vergara, M., Murphy, S., Barker, L. & Warrenfeltz, R. (2001). Maximising the impact of executive coaching. *Manchester Review, 6,* 1–9.

Olivero, G., Bane, K. & Kopelman, R.E. (1997). Executive coaching as a transfer of training tool: Effects on productivity in a public agency. *Public Personnel Management, 26,* 461–469.

Peterson, D.B. (1996). Executive coaching at work: The art of one-on-one change. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 48,* 78–86.

Philips (2004). http://www.roiinstitute.net/websites/ROIInstitute/ROIInstitute/.ROI Institute.

Research, H.C.C. (2003). *Executive Coaching Project: Evaluation of findings.*

Smither, J.W., London, M., Flautt, R., Vargas, Y. & Kucine, I. (2003). Can working with an executive coach improve multi-source feedback ratings over time? A quasi-experimental field study. *Personnel Psychology, 56,* 23.

Thach, E.C. (2002). The impact of executive coaching and 360 degree feedback on leadership effectiveness. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal, 23,* 205–214 (210).

Veale, D. & Wachtel, J. (1996). Mentoring and coaching as part of a human resource development strategy: An example at Coca-Cola Foods. *Management Development Review, 9.*

Wageman, R. (2001). How leaders foster self-managing team effectiveness: Design choices verus hands-on coaching. *Organisation Science, 12,* 559–577.

Witherspoon, R. & White, R.P. (1996). Executive coaching: A continuum of roles. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 48,* 124–133.

Strengths Coaching: A potential-guided approach to coaching psychology

P. Alex Linley & Susan Harrington

As unlikely as it might seem, strengths have been a much neglected topic in psychology until relatively recently. In this article, we provide an historical context for the study of psychological strengths before going on to consider three approaches to understanding strengths. We locate a psychological understanding of strengths in the context of an assumption about human nature that is characterised by a constructive developmental tendency within people, showing how this assumption is consistent with theory and research about psychological strengths, and how it is consistent with the theoretical approach of coaching psychology. We then begin to examine what strengths coaching might look like in practice, together with considering some caveats and future research directions for the strengths coaching approach.
Keywords: strengths, fundamental assumptions, positive psychology.

'…one cannot build on weakness. To achieve results, one has to use all the available strengths… These strengths are the true opportunities' (Drucker, 1967, p.60).

WRITTEN ALMOST 40 YEARS AGO, management guru Peter Drucker's words might now seem to have an almost prophetic quality. Yet it is equally difficult to believe that – at least as far as strengths are concerned – so relatively little has been achieved in the intervening four decades. Why could this be? One answer is that with regard to psychological research at least, strengths were largely defined out of the personality lexicon (Cawley, Martin & Johnson, 2000). A second answer is that there is an undeniable 'negativity bias' (Rozin & Royzman, 2001), because the prevailing view is – and much evidence attests – that 'bad is stronger than good' (Baumeister *et al.*, 2001). That is to say – in contrast to Drucker – many people believe that weakness will always undo strength. This leads to a third answer, that the cultural ethos is that strengths take care of themselves, but weaknesses result in risk and associated costs for organisations. On this basis, the argument follows, weaknesses need to be managed or they will undo our good work elsewhere. As we are so often told: 'Work on overcoming your weaknesses more than maximising your strengths' (Smart, 1999, p.138). But does all this really hold true?

In this article, we will argue that strengths have been neglected for too long in both research and practice, yet the modern zeitgeist of coaching psychology and positive psychology suggests they are due for a revival. We will begin by defining strengths, and examining the small amount of work that has been dedicated to understanding strengths to date at a broad conceptual level. We will then examine the implications of this knowledge of strengths for coaching psychology, showing why we believe that strengths represent an inner capacity that can be facilitated and harnessed through the coaching relationship. We then explore the implications of this approach for practice, and provide some early suggestions as to the approach and practice of strengths coaching, while also addressing some of the criticisms that might be levelled against a strengths-based approach to coaching psychology.

What is 'Strength'?

A traditional approach to strengths might have used the arm dynamometer as its assessment metric. The arm dynamometer was a device for assessing the physical strength in

the arm of candidates for steelwork (Arnold *et al.*, 1982), and is a tongue-in-cheek means of highlighting that in this article we are not concerned with *physical* strengths, but rather with *psychological* strengths.

The history of the *psychology* of strengths is relatively short. In large part this is because strengths might be considered under the rubric of personality, and when Allport (1937) proffered his seminal definition of personality, he explicitly defined out 'character' as being in the realm of ethics and philosophy: 'Character is personality evaluated, and personality is character devaluated. Since character is an unnecessary concept for psychology, the term will not appear again in this volume…' (Allport, 1937, p.52). This exclusion of character from definitions of personality was decisive (Nicholson, 1998), and had the effect of excluding a psychology of strengths from the personality lexicon because 'strengths' were considered value-laden – and hence part of *character*, which was of concern to ethicists and philosophers, rather than psychologists (Cawley *et al.*, 2000).

However, Allport notwithstanding, the concept of strengths did appear within the business literature, first with Peter Drucker (1967), as above, and subsequently through the vision of Donald O. Clifton of The Gallup Organization (e.g. Buckingham & Clifton, 2001; Clifton & Anderson, 2002; Clifton & Nelson, 1992). The advent of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) promoted the need for a larger conceptual understanding of strengths, and led to the development of the VIA Classification of Strengths. This is a framework of 24 character strengths, organised loosely under six virtues. The 24 strengths are believed to be universal (rank order correlations across 42 different countries produced a mean Spearman's rho=0.75; Seligman, 2005). They were identified through extensive literature searches in psychology, psychiatry, philosophy, and youth development; reviewing historical lists of strengths and virtues from moral studies and religious works; brainstorming with senior figures in the field; and discussions with numerous conference participants (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Of course, this is not to say that strengths were entirely excluded from the map of psychological research, for indeed strengths research had continued for years (McCullough & Snyder, 2000). However, the fundamental distinction is that strengths are now being understood as pieces of a much larger, integrated picture of positive human functioning, rather than as isolated constructs (e.g. optimism, creativity, gratitude) being researched as individual fragments of psychological knowledge. That is to say, we are now moving towards understanding a more holistic psychology of strengths that locates strengths within our assumptions about human nature and our broader knowledge of human functioning, thus painting a much fuller picture of positive psychological health.

Defining strength

This renewed interest in the concept of 'strength' prompts us to consider exactly what a 'strength' is. Clifton used the term *talent* to refer to 'a naturally recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behaviour that can be productively applied' (Clifton & Anderson, 2002, p.6), while *strength* referred to 'the ability to provide consistent, near-perfect performance in a given activity' (Clifton & Anderson, 2002, p.8). Understood in this way, strengths are produced through the refinement of talents with knowledge and skill (Clifton & Anderson, 2002), and the only value-label applied to a strength is that it 'can be productively applied.'

In contrast, Peterson and Seligman (2004) adopt a more explicit virtue ethics approach in their definition of strengths as 'the psychological ingredients – processes or mechanisms – that define the virtues. Said another way, they are distinguishable routes to displaying one or another of the virtues' (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.13). As such, to be included as a strength within the

Peterson and Seligman (2004) classification, a construct must facilitate the display of virtue, which in turn is considered to lead to a 'good life.' This definition of strength is imbued with a moral valence that goes beyond the positive valence that is typically associated with 'strength.'

Building on both of these definitions, and recognising that – in our view at least – strengths need not always be morally imbued, but should be defined in a way that specifies both the process and the outcome of using a strength, in an earlier article (Linley & Harrington, 2006, p.88), we defined a strength as 'a natural capacity for behaving, thinking, or feeling in a way that allows optimal functioning and performance in the pursuit of valued outcomes.' This definition effectively broadens the potential remit of strengths much wider, and opens the door to the consideration of capacities that may be tremendously productive, yet which do not carry an inherent moral value. This is arguably a more pragmatic definition, capturing the phenomena likely of interest in real world applications, such as coaching psychology, and as such is the definition we shall use throughout this article when we talk about 'strengths.'

A theory of strengths

How we think about strengths is inevitably shaped by how we think about human nature, and how we answer the question of what it means to be human. Within psychology – and especially therapeutic psychology, the legacy of Freud has been the 'ghost in the machine' that haunts much, if not everything, of what we do (Hubble & Miller, 2004). The unwritten view is that human beings cannot be trusted, and as such should be controlled and directed. However, just as positive psychology more generally has challenged us to reconsider our fundamental assumptions (Linley & Joseph, 2004), so has strengths psychology specifically raised this issue: 'To break out of this weakness spiral and to launch the strengths revolution in your own organisation, you must change your assumptions about people' (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001, p.8).

Buckingham and Clifton (2001) go on to argue that the two most prevalent assumptions about people are: (a) that each person can learn to be competent in almost anything; and (b) that each person's greatest room for achievement is in their area of greatest weakness. Stated like this, coaching psychologists might disagree, and argue that much of what they do is already focused on working with people's strengths rather than fixing their weaknesses. If this is the case for you, we applaud you and your work, and offer the language, concepts and theory of strengths psychology as a foundation on which you can build and expand your strengths-based practice further.

However, when working as a coach in organisations, it is also often found that there are multiple and conflicting agendas in organisations that do not always allow the coach to do as much as they might wish to play to the strengths of their coaching client. For example, consider these questions in the context of your coaching, while also thinking about the conflicts you may be facing between the agenda of the organisation and the agenda of the coaching client.

Do the organisations you work with employ you to 'round the edges' of your client, addressing the things that they aren't too good at and that might be perceived to be holding them back or costing the organisation in some way?

Or do the organisations you work with employ you to sharpen and hone their employee's strengths, building on the qualities that have already got them this far?

Do they employ you to plug the gaps in employee's skills and competencies, working with them in their 'areas for development' (read: weaknesses)?

And if you work with individuals outside of an organisational context, do the individuals you work with typically retain you to 'fix their problems' or 'harness their strengths'?

Very often, with an organisational contract – and even with a coaching contract

with an individual – the implicit specification may be to fix weakness, because weakness is believed to result in risk and cost. Yet the agenda of the coaching client might often be more concerned about how they can play to their strengths. This is a difficult contractual dynamic, and one that might place the coach in a situation where their own aspiration is to help the client to play to their strengths, but the organisational agenda (of the ultimately paying client) is one of weakness mitigation, risk reduction, and damage limitation – which, so the organisational mindset goes, are all best achieved by dealing with weakness rather than playing to strength.

An answer as to the efficacy of dealing with weakness is often found with the benefit of organisational experience, where the most crushing question is usually this: What are the issues that come up each year at an employee's annual review – the same issues that were supposed to have been addressed last year (or the year before, or the year before that)? Many people recognise this as the developmental treadmill, running ever faster but going nowhere, because, as we quoted Peter Drucker (1967, p.60) at the beginning of this article, 'one cannot build on weakness.'

As coaching psychologists, however, we need more than the rhetoric of business books to convince us that our assumptions might need to be challenged. As such, we go on to present a theory of strengths that draws from the assumptions about human nature shared by Karen Horney and Carl Rogers, that there is an innate developmental tendency within each of us to actualise our potentialities, to become what we are capable of becoming – in strengths psychology parlance, to play to one's strengths. We will first outline the key assumptions of this approach to human nature, and then demonstrate how this approach accounts for both existing theories – and data – about the psychology of strengths.

In essence, both Karen Horney and Carl Rogers (among many others, including Aristotle and Carl Jung; see Joseph & Linley, 2004) argued that inherent within people are socially constructive forces that guide people towards realising their potentialities. When people's tendency toward self-realisation is allowed expression, Horney argued: '…we become free to grow ourselves, we also free ourselves to love and to feel concern for other people…the ideal is the liberation and cultivation of the forces which lead to self-realisation' (Horney, 1951, pp.15–16). Rogers also believed that human beings are organismically motivated toward developing to their full potential, and are striving to become all that they can be, a directional force of becoming that he referred to as the actualising tendency: 'This is the inherent tendency of the organism to develop all its capacities in ways which serve to maintain or enhance the organism' (Rogers, 1959, p.196). Rogers was conceptualising the actualising tendency as the basic drive toward the development of our capacities: 'It is the urge which is evident in all organic and human life – to expand, extend, to become autonomous, develop, mature – the tendency to express and activate all the capacities of the organism, to the extent that such activation enhances the organism or the self' (Rogers, 1961, p.35).

The central theme that runs throughout these fundamental assumptions about human nature is that human beings have a natural tendency to want to develop their capacities, to exploit their natural potential, to become all that they can be. Of course, it is only too evident that this does not always happen, since this directional force can be thwarted and distorted through external influences that disengage us from ourselves. Organisationally, employees are continually encouraged to focus on and address their weaknesses, a message that is often reinforced via HR processes such as performance appraisal and pay/reward schemes. In general, individuals are not encouraged to develop and capitalise on their strengths and what they do best.

As a result, people may often find it very difficult to actually know what their strengths

are (Hill, 2001). This being so, it is arguably a large part of coaching and coaching psychology to strive to re-engage the individual with their natural self, to help them to identify, value and celebrate their inner capacities and strengths, to help them understand why sometimes they feel 'in their element' at work, and at other times they feel tired, disengaged and de-motivated. Adopting a strengths approach allows people to engage with themselves in what they do best, and to begin to discover the power within them that coaching so often sets out to release.

It is notable that this is a central theme throughout many of the leading books in the field. For example, Whitmore (2002, p.8) describes coaching as 'unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.' Gallwey (2002, p.177) describes the Inner Game approach to coaching as 'the art of creating an environment, through conversation and a way of being, that facilitates the process by which a person can move toward desired goals in a fulfilling manner.' More importantly, perhaps, Gallwey (2002, p.215) goes on to describe the most important lesson of the Inner Game: *'It all begins with desire'* (original italics). Desire is the force that motivates us to achieve, yet where does desire come from? This is where Horney and Rogers would argue that the tendency toward self-realisation, or actualising tendency, is felt: in desire, as the force that drives us on, as a natural, self-generating ambition.

How do these assumptions about human nature – and the assumptions about people that have informed some of the most influential coaching models – sit with what we know about strengths? The short answer is 'very well.' First, consider how Clifton and Anderson (2002, p.6) present talents, which they believe to be the underpinning foundation of strengths: 'A talent is 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 parts of your personhood…There is a direct connection between your talents and your achievements. Your talents empower you. They make it possible for you to move to higher levels of excellence and to fulfil your potential.' From this basis, 'strengths are produced when talents are refined with *knowledge* and *skill*' (original italics; Clifton & Anderson, 2002, p.8).

Second, consider how Peterson and Seligman (2004) describe possible criteria for a signature strength. They suggest, among other things, that a signature strength conveys a sense of ownership and authenticity ('this is the real me'); a sense of yearning to act in accordance with the strength, and a feeling of inevitability in doing so; and that there is a powerful intrinsic motivation to use the strength (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p.18).

Third, the definition provided by Linley and Harrington (2006). A strength is 'a natural capacity for behaving, thinking, or feeling in a way that allows optimal functioning and performance in the pursuit of valued outcomes.'

In each case, there is a strong emphasis on the fact that 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. Consider the definition of coaching psychology provided by (Palmer & Whybrow, 2005, p.7; adapted from Grant & Palmer, 2002) as being 'for enhancing well-being and performance in personal life and work domains underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established adult learning or psychological approaches', and it becomes clear that a strengths-based approach to coaching psychology offers significant added value.

Playing to our strengths enhances well-being because we are doing what we naturally do best (Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2005),

and generating feelings of autonomy, competence, confidence, and self-esteem there from. Playing to our strengths enhances performance because we are going with our own flow, rather than struggling upriver against the currents of our natural capacities. And most fundamentally, a strengths-based approach is solidly grounded in established learning and psychological approaches that have a lineage back to Aristotle, through Carl Jung, Karen Horney, and Carl Rogers, to the modern coaching approaches of Whitmore and Gallwey, integrating finally with the definition of coaching psychology that now underpins the further development and direction of this new discipline. As we hope to have shown, a strengths-based approach to coaching psychology is one that is built on firm psychological principles which guide us in facilitating our clients to harness their own natural abilities in the fulfilment of their potential, resulting in significant benefit for individuals, family units, organisations and societies. In the next section, we will give some consideration as to what a strengths coaching approach might look like in practice.

Strengths coaching in practice

Is the concept of strengths coaching new? To psychology and coaching psychology it may be, but in athletics 'strength coaches' have long been employed to help athletes assess their strengths and build on them, and in social work, the strengths coaching perspective has a worthy tradition (Noble, Perkins & Fatout, 2000; Saleebey, 1992). In each case, the emphasis is upon a focus on human potential and positive client attributes as the foundation stones of any success. While it is recognised that the identification and understanding of problems and obstacles can be important, this is counterbalanced with an equal, if not greater recognition that the identification of, and playing to, client strengths is the goal that should guide both assessment and intervention.

It remains an open question as to how one might best identify strengths, especially in light of the point above that many people find it difficult to recognise their own strengths (Hill, 2001). There is obviously a strong argument that if strengths are characterised by an intrinsic yearning to use them and a feeling of inevitability in doing so, and they are a natural part of us, that they will shine through under most circumstances. This view accords very closely with the non-directive approach of person-centred therapy, and is that adopted by our colleague Stephen Joseph (see Joseph & Linley, in press). Within this approach, the coach is a keen observer of the ebb and flow of the coaching conversation, being finely attuned to the subtle nuances of language and emotion that might indicate the presence of a strength. The coach might then choose to reflect these observations back to the client, working with them to identify and celebrate the strength, to raise the strength within their consciousness, and to explore, develop, refine and apply the strength.

However, this approach assumes that the coaching conversation would provide a suitably conducive environment for the natural display of strengths, and that the coach is then able to detect and identify these strengths. Our approach adopts what we believe to be a more pragmatic standpoint, that is, that the coaching conversation does not, of necessity, always allow this to happen – and for at least one very good reason. Some strengths are contextual, being dependent upon the context for their display, and if the coaching conversation – without being at fault – does not provide this context, the strength is unlikely to shine through (consider, for example, the difficulty in identifying the emotional flexibility of a call centre worker or the insight of a top salesperson through a coaching conversation). For these reasons, we subscribe to a more pragmatic assessment approach to strengths, believing that strengths assessments can provide the context for a depth and breadth of coaching conversations that would not otherwise be possible – but always, we are at pains to point out, being predi-

cated on the basis that this strengths assessment is being driven by the client's agenda, rather than the agenda of the coach.

If one were to adopt this pragmatic approach to strengths assessment, there are two explicit strengths measures, at present, that merit consideration. The Clifton StrengthsFinder (www.strengthsfinder.com) was developed by Donald O. Clifton and his colleagues at The Gallup Organization. Based on more than 30 years of research, it is predicated on Clifton's belief that 'to produce excellence, you must study excellence.' The StrengthsFinder assesses 34 themes of talent, primarily within applied occupational settings, and provides a feedback report that documents one's top five themes of talent, based on an ipsative scoring method that compares your response to each theme of talent with your response to each other theme of talent. The measure is atheoretical, with the 34 themes having been retained as those which were the most prevalent from a larger pool of several hundred themes that were identified through structured interviews with excellent performers across different occupations, countries, and cultures (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001).

The Values-in-Action (VIA) Strengths Questionnaire (www.viastrengths.org) was developed by Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman. It was one of the major early initiatives of the positive psychology movement, designed to provide a classification of strength and virtue just as the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* provides a classification of mental disorder and disease (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The VIA Questionnaire measures 24 signature strengths, which are loosely organised under six virtues (wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence). The feedback reports again provide the respondent with a brief description of their five signature strengths, based on an ipsative scoring approach. The VIA Questionnaire is broadly theoretically-based, having been developed on the basis of extensive academic groundwork (as described above, see also Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Relative to existing personality assessment approaches, strengths assessments do arguably advance the agenda of personality assessment – but it is still very early days, and much work remains to be done. Of existing personality assessments, those which might be considered most closely allied with the strengths approach are the personality type indicators, such as the MBTI® and the Type Dynamics Indicator (TDI). The approach taken by type assessments of personality is very much one that can be used to identify the strengths of each personality type, but we would caution again that the universe of strengths is much broader than could be captured purely by an assessment of personality type.

Overall, though, the crux of the strengths perspective is that it changes the nature of the questions one asks as a coach from being diagnostic and problem-focused to potential-guided and solution-focused (Linley, Harrington & Hill, 2005). Consider the following examples of a strengths-based approach to the coaching conversation:

> What are the things that you do best?
>
> How do you know when you are at your best?
>
> What are the key strengths and resources that you can draw upon to find a solution to this situation?
>
> Tell me about a time when you were successful at doing this before….
>
> Who do you know who has done this successfully? How did they do it?
>
> What do you feel is the answer that is coming from inside you?

While, of course, the specific question is always shaped by the client and their context, we hope that the above examples will serve to provoke a re-evaluation of the traditional approach that one might take as a coaching psychologist, and facilitate the exploration of what a strengths-based approach might look like, how it works, and why it works. These are fundamentally important questions that we are only at the

beginning of trying to answer, and there is clearly a broad research and practice agenda in front of us as coaching psychology researchers and practitioners.

Some of the more important research questions may be: How do strengths contribute to the achievement of goals? What are the effects on well-being and performance of playing to one's strengths? What are the effects on stress and burnout of playing to people's strengths? Does playing to one's strengths influence people's motivation? How best can we, as coaching psychologists, identify and/or assess people's strengths? How best can we, as coaching psychologists, adopt a strengths coaching model within our practice? How does a strengths coaching approach compare in terms of effectiveness and efficacy with other coaching psychology models? And is there a downside to playing to one's strengths?

This last question provides a useful caveat. Some people might consider that we do not need any help to do what we're best at – that it should come naturally – but what we do need is help to overcome our weaknesses. For many, this is the prevailing cultural ethos laid down to managers and the mindset adopted by many employees, as shown with the quote from Brad Smart above. The underlying theme of this approach is that if we do not manage weakness, then it will undo the best efforts of any strength. However, here we must be careful to consider the nature of the weakness, and whether it is actually integral to successful performance. Often, when we take a second look, it would be possible to redefine roles and positions to accommodate weakness and play to strength, so the real issue may lie in the organisational culture and climate.

On the other hand, there may be situations where there is a very real level of minimum competence that it is necessary for one to possess. For example, if a manager unintentionally alienates his staff, emotional intelligence training might help (Salovey, Caruso & Mayer, 2004). While the training will never develop the manager into a paragon of emotional intelligence, it might well do enough to limit the damage that he or she would otherwise inflict. This having been achieved, he or she should then be free to focus on what they are best at and play to their strengths.

This is where coaching psychologists can provide a uniquely valuable input, since as an independent and objective sounding board for the client, removed from the agendas and preconceptions that might be found within the organisation, the coaching psychologist can deliver difficult feedback but within a supportive and facilitative environment. And when this feedback is delivered in a way that is potential-guided, being focused on future achievement on the basis of past success, building on the foundations of what the client does well and the successes that have propelled him or her this far, then the whole nature of the coaching conversation changes. From being defensive, closed, and insular, clients become engaged, open, and receptive. They leave the coaching session feeling celebrated, valued, and appreciated, with a re-engaged enthusiasm, energy, and motivation, being keen to get back to work, or life, and perform even better.

This should be the hallmark of good coaching psychology, we suggest, not least because again it is premised on sound psychological models. As Fredrickson's work on positive emotions has shown, the experience of positive emotions serves to broaden our thought-action repertoires (increasing creativity and stimulating mental flexibility), and build cognitive resources that act as buffers against subsequent negative events (Fredrickson, 1998; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Fredrickson *et al.*, 2003), as well as being integral to human flourishing (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). This being the case, it should arguably be the role of the coaching psychologist to facilitate the positive emotions of their clients, not least because positive emotional experience has been shown to predict performance success (Losada & Heaphy, 2004). We suggest that strengths coaching is an exemplary and

sustainable way of facilitating positive emotion in clients through harnessing their natural capacities, and allowing them to do more of what they do best, predicated as it is upon an understanding of the constructive developmental tendencies that we believe exist in all of us.

Conclusion

In this article we have introduced the field of strengths psychology, examining the small literature available to date and suggesting how a psychology of strengths can be understood within the context of a fundamental assumption about human nature that posits a constructive developmental tendency toward the fulfilment of one's capacities and the fulfilment of one's potentials. We have explored how adopting a strengths approach to coaching psychology leads to a shift in the perspective of the questions we might ask, changing them from being diagnostic and problem-focused to potential-guided and solution-focused. We have argued that a strengths coaching approach identifies and capitalises on people's natural capacities, helping them to understand where their capacities may be and building on the resources they already have, and leads to increased engagement, energy and motivation. In turn, these create greater experiences of positive emotion which research has shown engender increased creativity, mental flexibility, resilience, and enhanced performance. As such, we suggest that the strengths coaching approach is a model of coaching psychology, with a solid theoretical and empirical grounding, that harnesses the inner potential of people, thereby facilitating their optimal performance and well-being. It is yet another example of the powerful integration of coaching psychology and positive psychology.

Correspondence

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to either:
P. Alex Linley
School of Psychology,
Henry Wellcome Building,
University of Leicester,
Lancaster Road, Leicester, LE1 9HN, UK.
E-mail: PAL8@le.ac.uk
or
Susan Harrington
Potenthos Ltd.,
University of Warwick Science Park,
Barclays Venture Centre,
Sir William Lyons Road,
Coventry, CV4 7EZ, UK.
www.potenthos.com
E-mail: sueh@potenthos.com

References

Allport, G.W. (1937). *Personality: A psychological interpretation*. New York: Holt.

Arnold, J.D., Rauschenberger, J.M., Soubel, W.G. & Guion, R.M. (1982). Validation and utility of a strength test for selecting steelworkers. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 67,* 588–604.

Baumeister, R.F., Bratslavsky, E., Finkenauer, C. & Vohs, K.D. (2001). Bad is stronger than good. *Review of General Psychology, 5,* 323–370.

Buckingham, M. & Clifton, D.O. (2001). *Now, discover your strengths: How to develop your talents and those of the people you manage*. London: Simon & Schuster.

Cawley, M.J., Martin, J.E. & Johnson, J.A. (2000). A virtues approach to personality. *Personality and Individual Differences, 28,* 997–1013.

Clifton, D.O. & Anderson, E.C. (2002). *StrengthsQuest: Discover and develop your strengths in academics, career, and beyond*. Washington, DC: The Gallup Organization.

Clifton, D.O. & Nelson, P. (1992). *Soar with your strengths*. New York: Dell Publishing.

Drucker, P.F. (1967). *The effective executive*. London: Heinemann.

Fredrickson, B.L. (1998). What good are positive emotions? *Review of General Psychology, 2,* 300–319.

Fredrickson, B.L. & Branigan, C.A. (2005). Positive emotions broaden the scope of attention and thought-action repertoires. *Cognition and Emotion, 19,* 313–332.

Fredrickson, B.L. & Losada, M. (2005). Positive affect and the complex dynamics of human flourishing. *American Psychologist, 60,* 678–686.

Fredrickson, B.L., Tugade, M.M., Waugh, C.E. & Larkin, G. (2003). What good are positive emotions in crises? A prospective study of resilience and emotions following the terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11th, 2001. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84,* 365–376.

Gallwey, T. (2002). *The inner game of work: Overcoming mental obstacles for maximum performance.* New York: Texere.

Grant, A.M. & Palmer, S. (2002, May 18). *Coaching Psychology.* Meeting held at the Annual Conference of the Division of Counselling Psychology, British Psychological Society, Torquay, England.

Hill, J. (2001). *How well do we know our strengths?* Paper presented at the British Psychological Society Centenary Conference (April), Glasgow, Scotland.

Horney, K. (1951). *Neurosis and human growth: The struggle toward self-realisation.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.

Hubble, M.A. & Miller, S.D. (2004). The client: Psychotherapy's missing link for promoting a positive psychology. In P.A. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp.335–353). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Joseph, S. & Linley, P.A. (in press). *Positive therapy.* London: Routledge.

Joseph, S. & Linley, P.A. (2004). Positive therapy: A positive psychological theory of therapeutic practice. In P.A. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp.354–368). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Linley, P.A. & Harrington, S. (2006). Playing to your strengths. *The Psychologist, 19,* 86–89.

Linley, P.A., Harrington, S. & Hill, J.R.W. (2005). Selection and development: A new perspective on some old problems. *Selection and Development Review, 21*(5), 3–6.

Linley, P.A. & Joseph, S. (2004). Toward a theoretical foundation for positive psychology in practice. In P.A. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp.713–731). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Losada, M. & Heaphy, E. (2004). The role of positivity and connectivity in the performance of business teams: A non-linear dynamics model. *American Behavioral Scientist, 47,* 740–765.

McCullough, M.E. & Snyder, C.R. (2000). Classical sources of human strength: Revisiting an old home and building a new one. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 19,* 1–10.

Nicholson, I.A.M. (1998). Gordon Allport, character, and the 'culture of personality': 1897–1937. *History of Psychology, 1,* 52–68.

Noble, D.N., Perkins, K. & Fatout, M. (2000). On being a strength coach: Child welfare and the strengths model. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 17,* 141–153.

Palmer, S. & Whybrow, A. (2005). The proposal to establish a Special Group in Coaching Psychology. *The Coaching Psychologist, 1,* 5–12.

Park, N., Peterson, C. & Seligman, M.E.P. (2004). Strengths of character and well-being. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 23,* 603–619.

Peterson, C. & Seligman, M.E.P. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Rogers, C.R. (1959). A theory of therapy, personality and interpersonal relationships, as developed in the client-centered framework. In S. Koch (Ed.), *Psychology: A study of a science, Vol. 3: Formulations of the person and the social context* (pp.184-256). New York: McGraw Hill.

Rogers, C.R. (1961). *On becoming a person.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Rozin, P. & Royzman, E.B. (2001). Negativity bias, negativity dominance, and contagion. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 5,* 296–320.

Saleebey, D. (Ed.). (1992). *The strengths perspective in social work practice.* New York: Longman.

Salovey, P., Caruso, D. & Mayer, J.D. (2004). Emotional intelligence in practice. In P.A. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp.447–463). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Seligman, M.E.P. (2005). *Positive interventions (and other new stuff).* Paper presented at the Fourth International Positive Psychology Summit, October, Washington, DC.

Seligman, M.E.P. & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist, 55,* 5–14.

Smart, B. (1999). *Topgrading.* Paramus, NJ: Prentice Hall Press.

Whitmore, Sir J. (2002). *Coaching for performance* (3rd ed.). London: Nicholas Brealey.

Person-centred coaching psychology: A meta-theoretical perspective

Stephen Joseph

Coaching psychology provides a new professional arena for thinking about psychological practice. Many will recognise the ethos of coaching psychology as different from the medical model and many coaching psychologists would not recognise a description of the profession as grounded in the medical model. It will be argued, however, that because coaching psychology has emerged in relation to other professional branches of psychology which do adopt the medical model, it has as a consequence implicitly adopted the values of the medical model. The implication of the medical model is the view that we ourselves are the expert on our client's life. This stands in contrast to the person-centred model view which is that our client is their own best expert. It will be argued that coaching psychology should reject the medical model and instead adopt the person-centred meta-theoretical perspective.

THE PROFESSION OF COACHING psychology provides a new professional arena for thinking about psychological practice and the facilitation of well-being and optimal functioning in various life domains. It is in the interest of any newly-emerged professional group to demarcate its territory and many commentators in the new field of coaching psychology have distinguished the practice of coaching psychology from that of clinical and counselling psychology. The argument that advocates of coaching psychology make is that whereas clinical and counselling psychologists work with people at the lower end of the psychological functioning spectrum, coaching psychologists work with people at the higher end of the spectrum (Grant, 2001). Thus, instead of working to alleviate distress and dysfunction, coaches work to facilitate well-being and optimal functioning. But this distinction in practice belies a more complicated conceptualisation. In this paper, which is an elaboration of a previous discussion on this topic (Joseph, 2005), it will be argued that because counselling and clinical psychology have adopted the medical model as their underlying meta-theory, coaching psychology in defining itself in relation to counselling and clinical psychology, has inadvertently also adopted the medical model. It will be argued that the meta-theoretical perspective of the person-centred approach (i.e. that people are intrinsically motivated towards well-being and optimal functioning) is more congruent with the ethos of coaching psychology. Finally, the practical implications of the person-centred model for coaching psychology and how these differ to those of the medical model will be discussed.

Person-centred approach

The idea that we should focus on developing potential is not a new one. In psychology, it is an idea that can be traced back to the person-centred approach originally developed by the psychologist Carl Rogers (1951, 1961). But although Rogers was concerned with the facilitation of optimal functioning, he is rarely acknowledged in the context of coaching because he did not use the term coaching. Rogers adopted the term counselling, but he might equally well have used the term coaching, because in person-centred practice, the terms are interchangeable. Unlike other therapeutic approaches, person-centred practice was never concerned with 'repairing' or 'curing' dysfunctionality, and never adopted the 'diagnostic' stance of the medical model in which the therapist is the expert. This is not

to say that person-centred practitioners don't work with distressed and dysfunctional people. They do, but their focus, no matter where the client lies on the spectrum of psychological functioning is to facilitate the self-determination of the client so that they can move toward more optimal functioning. The person-centred approach is a meta-theoretical approach to working with people, be they in one to one settings, in small groups, in community settings, or as applied to social policy. It is not a set of therapeutic techniques but an attitude based on the theoretical stance that people are their own best experts (Joseph, 2003).

In brief, Carl Rogers proposed the meta-theoretical perspective that human beings have an inherent tendency toward growth, development, and optimal functioning, which he termed the *actualising tendency* (see, Rogers, 1959, 1963). But these do not happen automatically. For people to *self-actualise* their inherent optimal nature they require the right social environment. Rogers proposed that the right social environment was one in which the person feels understood, valued, and accepted for who they are. In such an environment, Rogers reasoned, people are inclined to self-actualise in a way that is *congruent* with their intrinsic actualising tendency, resulting in well-being and optimal functioning. But when people don't feel understood, valued, or accepted for who they are, but only feel valued for being the person they perceive someone else wants them to be, then they *self-actualise* in a way that is *incongruent* with their intrinsic actualising tendency, resulting in distress and dysfunction.

The person-centred meta-theoretical perspective is an established psychological tradition supported by over 50 years of research and theory (see, Barrett-Lennard, 1998), as well as recent developments in positive psychology (see, e.g. Joseph & Linley, 2004, 2005, in press). This assumption that human beings have an inherent tendency toward growth, development, and optimal functioning provides the theoretical foundation that it is the client and not the therapist who knows best. This serves as the guiding principle for client-centred practice, which in essence, is simply the principled stance of respecting the self-determination of others (B. Grant, 2004).

Applications of the person-centred approach have been not only to therapy, but to education, parenting, group learning, conflict resolution, and peace processes (see, Barrett-Lennard, 1998), all based on the same philosophical stance that people are their own best experts, and have within themselves the potential to develop, and to grow. When this inner potential is released the person moves toward becoming more autonomous and socially constructive. These ideas have taken root in many contexts, but often the work of Carl Rogers goes unrecognised and unacknowledged. But they are ideas which will be easily recognisable to coaching psychologists (e.g. Whitmore, 1996).

What might be less familiar is that the person-centred way of working does not make a distinction between people in terms of their level of psychological functioning, because the process of alleviating distress and dysfunction is the same as that for facilitating well-being and optimal functioning. Both ends of the spectrum of functioning are defined in relation to the extent to which self-actualisation is congruent with the actualising tendency (Ford, 1991). When there is greater congruence, greater well-being and more optimal functioning results. But when there is less congruence, greater distress and dysfunction results (see Wilkins, 2005).

Thus, the person-centred approach offers a genuinely positive psychological perspective on mental health because of its unified and holistic focus on both the negative and the positive aspects of human functioning (Joseph & Worsley, 2005). Coaching psychology would be the same activity requiring the same theoretical base, and the same practical skills, as required for working with people who are distressed and dysfunctional. A person-centred coaching psychology, in contrast to one underpinned

by the medical model, would view understanding and enhancing optimal functioning and the alleviation of maladaptive functioning as a unitary task, as opposed to two separate tasks as is the case when viewed through the lens of the medical model.

The medical model

Maddux, Snyder and Lopez (2004) have argued that the adoption of the medical model in psychology can be traced back to the origins of the discipline and the influence of psychoanalytic theory, and the fact that practitioner training typically occurred in psychiatric hospitals and clinics, where clinical psychologists worked primarily as psychodiagnosticians under the direction of psychiatrists trained in medicine and psychoanalysis. This led clinical psychologists to adopt the methods and assumptions of their psychiatrist counterparts, who were themselves trained specifically in the medical model.

There were three implication of this. First, psychologists began to think in terms of dichotomies between normal and abnormal behaviours, between clinical and non-clinical problems, and between clinical populations and non-clinical populations. Second, it locates human maladjustment inside the person, rather than in the person's interactions with the environment and their encounters with sociocultural values and social institutions. Third, it portrays people who seek help as victims of intrapsychic and biological forces beyond their control, and thus leaves them as passive recipients of an expert's care. These three implications stand in contrast to the person-centred model which views well-being as continuous, emphasises the role of the social environment, and the self-determination of the person.

Thus, the medical model refers to the premise that there is discontinuity between psychopathological functioning and optimal functioning so that understanding and alleviating distress and dysfunction is a separate task from facilitating well-being and optimal functioning. Thus, a medical model coaching psychology would be a different activity requiring a different knowledge base and different skills than required for working with people who are distressed and dysfunctional.

Person-centred versus the medical model

It should be clear from the above, that the person-centred model and the medical model are mutually exclusive. The former views understanding and enhancing optimal functioning and the alleviation of maladaptive functioning as a unitary task. The latter views understanding and enhancing optimal functioning as two separate tasks. Insofar as coaching psychologists have viewed the alleviation of distress and dysfunction and the facilitation of well-being and optimal functioning as two separate tasks, therefore, they have implicitly adopted the medical model. It will be argued that coaching psychology should take a stance of opposition to the medical model.

The alternative is the person-centred model. Terms like coaching, counselling, and psychotherapy are interchangeable in person-centred practice because they all refer to the practice of respecting the self-determination of others. Thus it would be possible to talk of any arena of professional psychology as person-centred, if it adopted the meta-theoretical perspective that human beings have an inherent tendency toward growth, development, and optimal functioning. We could equally well talk of person-centred counselling psychology or person-centred clinical psychology. However, these arenas of professional psychology have not adopted the person-centred model, but rather the medical model. If clinical and counselling psychology had adopted the person-centred meta-theory as opposed to the medical model, there would now be no need for coaching psychology, because clinical and counselling psychology would already be concerned with the full spectrum of human functioning!

The fact that clinical and counselling psychology have chosen to ground their practice in the medical model as opposed to the person-centred model does not mean that this is also the best way for coaching psychologists to view human nature. Indeed, the medical model in psychology is now subject to so much criticism (see, Albee, 1998; Bentall, 2004; Maddux, 2002; Maddux, Snyder & Lopez, 2004; Sanders, 2005) that it would seem questionable to also adopt the medical model for coaching psychology. I would argue that historically, clinical psychology adopted the medical model in the first instance for reasons of securing power and status in a professional arena dominated by psychiatry (see also, Proctor, 2005). Ironically, counselling psychology has come to adopt the medical model (albeit not to the extent of clinical psychology) because the professional arena when it was first developing was dominated by clinical psychology.

Counselling psychology began to emerge as a distinct profession from clinical psychology in the late 1980s, with an explicit emphasis on the therapeutic relationship and the full spectrum of functioning, elements largely lacking in clinical psychology at the time. But, over the past two decades, counselling psychology has moved closer towards the values of traditional clinical psychology with its emphasis on understanding psychological problems as if they were discrete medical conditions requiring specific treatments. Thus, counselling psychology has become more about therapeutic technique (at the expense of the relationship), and about psychopathology (at the expense of understanding the full spectrum of human functioning). This has been the result of market forces in an arena dominated by the values of clinical psychology. The very emergence of coaching psychology at the beginning of the 21st century can in some ways be seen as the result of the failure of counselling psychology to stand its ground and maintain its principles as an alternative way of thinking to that of clinical psychology.

Vision and mission

But, times are changing and with the advent of the positive psychology movement our fundamental meta-theoretical assumptions are once again the topic of reflection (see, Joseph & Linley, 2004, 2005; in press; Linley & Joseph, 2004). In discussing the future for clinical psychology, Maddux *et al.* (2004, p.332) conclude: 'The major change for clinical psychology, however, is not a matter of strategy and tactic, but a matter of vision and mission.'

Coaching psychology can be at the forefront of these changes. As already indicated, how we define the territory of coaching psychology is bound up in our meta-theoretical assumptions. We are now in a position to take stock of the history of psychology, the criticisms of the medical model, and to reflect on the person-centred perspective as an alternative meta-theoretical underpinning for the profession of coaching psychology.

The medical model disempowers people as it is the coach who is the expert, whereas coaching psychology, Palmer and Whybrow (2005) say, is 'grounded in values that aim to empower those who use their services' (p.8). As individual practitioners we may indeed hold true to the values of empowerment, but the profession of coaching psychology is not yet well grounded in these values sufficiently, because it has emerged out of medical model thinking applied to psychological practice.

Most coaching psychologists are probably in agreement that the medical model is not the path they want to pursue. Various alternative models (e.g. Greene & Grant, 2003; Whitworth, Kimsey-House & Sandahl, 1998) which embrace the idea that the coachee is an equal partner who has the answers within themselves have been proposed as alternatives to the medical model (see, Kauffman & Scoular, 2004), without always recognising that this is in essence the person-centred meta-theoretical perspective, as developed by Rogers (1959).

Implications for training and practice

But what are the practical implications of coaching psychology adopting the person-centred meta-theory as opposed to the medical model? There are four key areas to discuss: who we work with, what we train to do, what we do in practice, and who we work for.

1. Client group

What we call ourselves professionally determines who we work with, and to that extent coaches and therapists work with different populations (Grant, 2001). But, to define the profession in this way is to belie a more complicated picture and to implicitly condone the medical model view. As already emphasised, the person-centred perspective provides a unitary way of working with clients along the spectrum of functioning. Theoretically, a person-centred coaching psychology is applicable to the range of clinical and health care settings, constrained only by the depth and duration of experience and training of the practitioner, rather than any arbitrary discontinuity between well-being and psychopathology.

If coaching psychology adopts the meta-theoretical perspective of person-centred theory it may come into conflict with other divisions of professional psychology who view maladaptive functioning as their domain. But the possibility of conflict should not stand in the way of developing a theory led profession if the dichotomous thinking of the medical model is simply incorrect and unhelpful. Certainly, coaching is not about the alleviation of distress and dysfunction *per se*, but it is about the facilitation of well-being and optimal functioning. However, the question is whether these are in reality a unitary task rather than two separate tasks?

Within the person-centred perspective, it does not matter where the person starts, coaching can be valuable to all. As Shlien, one of the founders of person-centred psychology, said in a talk originally given in 1956:

> '…if the skills developed in psychological counselling can release the constructive capacities of malfunctioning people so that they become healthier, this same help should be available to healthy people who are less than *fully* functioning. If we ever turn towards positive goals of health, we will care less about where the person begins, and more about how to achieve the desired endpoint of the positive goals' (Shlien, 2003, p.26).

Depth and duration of training and experience are the only issues, therefore, in determining where on the spectrum of psychological functioning a person-centred coaching psychologist is able to work. There are also other practical issues, such as the assessment of self-harm, which a competent practitioner must be aware of. But the theoretical principle that coaching psychology is applicable across the spectrum of psychological functioning stands in contrast to the medical model view that coaching psychology would only be applicable to non clinical and relatively highly functioning populations.

2. Training

There are implications for training. Training programmes that are influenced by the medical model will emphasise the development of intellectual knowledge so that the coach can take on the role of expert. Training programmes that are influenced by person-centred principles will emphasise the development of the self-awareness of the coaching psychologist and their interpersonal and emotional literacy skills, and in learning how to facilitate self-determination in others. Training in person-centred practice is very different to what most psychologists learn in their training. Groom (2005) in writing about how his practice has developed, says:

> 'Most of my coaching time is spent tripping over myself. I can hardly wait to explore the coachee's issues before I am rushing in to get them ready to set goals, or to analyse their lifestyle imbalance, do a cognitive checklist or evaluate their own self-care strategies. I am learning to slow

> down…I am arguing here for a fuller, deeper kind of listening ….nowadays I follow more and lead less…that we bring ourselves fully into the relationship' (Groom, 2005, pp.21–22).

This quote from Groom (2005) exemplifies the shift in thinking that comes with a move away from the medical model toward the person-centred model. Training would involve learning to slow down, to listen, and to be able to follow the client's direction and not one's own. This shift in emphasis does not exclude more traditional aspects of training. There are a variety of ways of working that may be classified as person-centred (see, Sanders, 2004). Person-centred work does not rule out setting goals, checking strategies, and so on, but it emphasises the client's role in taking the lead and the coach's ability to follow, whereas the medical model emphasises the coach's role in taking the lead and the client's ability to follow.

3. Practice

In terms of person-centred coaching psychology practice, the task of the coach is to nurture a social relationship which is experienced as authentic by the coachee and one in which they feel accepted and understood. But although the therapeutic process is the same as that in counselling, the fact that we have developed these different professional arenas based on the medical model creates difference in content. What terms we use will determine what clients we work with. The public understanding is that counselling is about looking back in life at what has gone wrong, whereas coaching is about looking forward to what can go right. If we offer counselling we will get clients who want to look back, and if we offer coaching we will get clients who want to look forward. The task of the person-centred therapist or coach is the same in either case, to stay with the person and to facilitate the person's self determination. Thus, at a theoretical process level, the person-centred psychologist's task is always the same, be they employed as a coaching, counselling, or clinical psychologist, but at the practical level of content the sessions would be different, simply because clients will bring different material to counselling compared to coaching.

The person-centred approach does not prescribe techniques of practice, but allows for a diversity of practice methods, insofar as practice is securely grounded in the meta-theoretical assumption that people have an inherent tendency toward growth, development, and optimal functioning, and that this tendency is facilitated by the right social environment (Rogers, 1959, 1963). Thus, the person-centred coaching psychologist can draw on various cognitive-behavioural, multi-model, solution-focused and systems theory approaches (see Kauffman & Scoular, 2004). There is no prohibition of the use of techniques *per se*. What is different about the person-centred way of working is that the techniques become an expression of the meta-theoretical assumptions of person-centred theory rather than an expression of the meta-theoretical assumptions of the medical model. It is not the fact that the coach uses a particular technique or assessment tool that is the issue, but how they use it.

Cognitive-behavioural psychology, for example, offers a wealth of techniques that can be helpful to people in learning about themselves and in exploring the relationship between our thoughts and our feelings, how we make sense of reality, and what we say to ourselves which can hold us back from achieving our goals (Neenan & Palmer, 2001). But two different therapists, or two different coaches, can employ the same techniques in very different ways, one taking the lead as expert, the other assuming that the client is the expert and following their lead.

4. Clients' agenda

This takes me to the final and most important implication of the person-centred model, and that is the question of whose agenda the coaching psychology is working to. In person-centred psychology, the task is always to facilitate more optimal functioning

in the sense that the person moves towards greater self-determination. Often this is at odds with the needs of the wider social environment (Joseph & Linley, 2004, 2005, in press; Linley & Joseph, 2004). The medical model with the coach as expert who takes the lead can direct the coachee in a variety of directions, not all of which may be facilitative of the client's self-determination. It might be said that clinical and counselling psychologists have already sold themselves to the agenda of the National Health Service at the expense of the self-determination of their clients (Proctor, 2005). If coaching psychology adopts the medical model it too is in danger of becoming a force for controlling people rather than for facilitating their self-direction.

Conclusion

At the meta-theoretical level, either we hold ourselves as the expert on our client's life and take the lead, or we hold our client as their own best expert and it is they who take the lead. As the new profession of coaching psychology emerges it is appropriate that we reflect on the fundamental assumptions that are shaping the direction of its development.

Correspondence

Stephen Joseph
Department of Psychology,
University of Warwick,
Coventry, CV4 7AL, UK.
Tel: +44 2476 528182
Fax: +44 2476 524225
E-mail: S.Joseph@warwick.ac.uk

References

Albee, G.W. (1998). Fifty years of clinical psychology: Selling our soul to the devil. *Applied and Preventive Psychology, 7,* 189–194.

Barrett-Lennard, G.T. (1998). *Carl Rogers' helping system: Journey and substance.* London: Sage.

Bentall, R. (2003). *Madness explained: Psychosis and human nature.* London: Allen Lane.

Ford, J.G. (1991). Rogerian self-actualisation: A clarification of meaning. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 31,* 101–111.

Grant, A.M. (2001). *Towards a psychology of coaching.* Sydney: Coaching Psychology Unit, University of Sydney.

Grant, B. (2004). The imperative of ethical justification in psychotherapy: The special case of client-centered therapy. *Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies, 3,* 152–165.

Greene, J. & Grant, A. (2003). *Solution focused coaching.* Essex, UK: Pearson Education.

Groom, J. (2005). Effective listening. *The Coaching Psychologist, 1,* 21–22.

Joseph, S. (2005). Person-centred coaching psychology. *The Coaching Psychologist, 1,* 3–5.

Joseph, S. (2003). Client-centred psychotherapy: Why the client knows best. *The Psychologist, 16,* 304–307.

Joseph, S. & Linley, P.A. (2004). Positive therapy: A positive psychological theory of therapeutic practice. In P.A. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp.354–368). Hoboken: Wiley.

Joseph, S. & Linley, P.A. (2005). Positive psychological approaches to therapy. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, 5,* 5–10.

Joseph, S. & Linley, P.A. (in press). *Positive therapy: A meta-theory for positive psychological practice.* London: Routledge.

Joseph, S. & Worsley, R. (2005). A positive psychology of mental health: The person-centred perspective. In S. Joseph & R. Worsley, (Eds.), *Person-centred psychopathology: A positive psychology of mental health* (pp.348-357). Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books.

Kauffman, C. & Scoular, A. (2004). Toward a positive psychology of executive coaching. In P.A. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp.287–302). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Linley, P.A. & Joseph, S. (2004). Toward a theoretical foundation for positive psychology in practice. In P.A. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice.* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Maddux, J.E. (2002). Stopping the 'madness': Positive psychology and the deconstruction of the illness ideology and the DSM. In C.R. Snyder & S.J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp.13–25). New York: Oxford University Press.

Maddux, J.E., Snyder, C.R. & Lopez, S.J. (2004). Toward a positive clinical psychology: Deconstructing the illness ideology and constructing an ideology of human strengths and potential. In P.A. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp.320–334). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Neenan, M. & Palmer, S. (2001). Cognitive Behavioural Coaching. *Stress News, 13,* 15–18.

Palmer, S. & Whybrow, A. (2005). The proposal to establish a special group in coaching psychology. *The Coaching Psychologist, 1,* 5–12.

Proctor, G. (2005). Clinical psychology and the person-centred approach: An uncomfortable fit. In S. Joseph & R. Worsley (Eds.), *Person-centred psychopatholgy: A positive psychology of mental health* (pp.276–292). Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books.

Rogers, C.R. (1951). *Client-centred therapy: It's current practice, implications and theory.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Rogers, C.R. (1959). A theory of therapy, personality, and interpersonal relationships as developed in the client-centered framework. In S. Koch (Ed.), *Psychology: A study of a science, Vol. 3: Formulations of the person and the social context* (pp.184–256). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Rogers, C.R. (1961). *On becoming a person.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Rogers, C.R. (1963). The actualising tendency in relation to 'motives' and to consciousness. In M.R. Jones (Ed.), *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation, Vol. 11* (pp.1–24). Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Sanders, P. (2004). *The tribes of the person-centred nation: An introduction to the schools of therapy related to the person-centred approach.* Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books.

Sanders, P. (2005). Principled and strategic opposition to the medicalisation of distress and all of its apparatus. In S. Joseph & R. Worsley (Eds.), *Person-centred psychopatholgy: A positive psychology of mental health* (pp.21–42). Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books.

Shlien, J.M. (2003). Creativity and psychological health. In P. Sanders (Ed.), *To lead an honourable life: Invitations to think about client-centered therapy and the person-centered approach* (pp.19–29). Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books.

Whitmore, J. (1996). *Coaching for performance* (2nd ed.) London: Nicholas Brearley.

Whitworth, L., Kimsey-House, H. & Sandahl, P. (1998). *Co-active coaching: New skills for coaching people toward success in work and life.* Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black Publishing.

Wilkins, P. (2005). Person-centred theory and 'mental illness'. In S. Joseph & R. Worsley (Eds.), *Person-centred psychopatholgy: A positive psychology of mental health* (pp.43–59). Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books.

CALL FOR PAPERS
Special Section
POSITIVE COACHING PSYCHOLOGY: INTEGRATING THE SCIENCE OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY WITH THE PRACTICE OF COACHING PSYCHOLOGY

In 2007, the *International Coaching Psychology Review* will include a special section, *Positive Coaching Psychology: Integrating the Science of Positive Psychology with the Practice of Coaching Psychology*.
Relevant topics include, but are not limited to:

- Applying positive psychology principles in coaching psychology;
- Strengths-based coaching psychology;
- Coaching for happiness and well-being;
- Performance enhancement through positive psychology;
- Integrating coaching psychology and positive psychology.

All submissions will be peer-reviewed, and should follow the 'Notes for Contributors' given in the *International Coaching Psychology Review*. Priority will be given to empirical reports, but theoretical papers, review papers, and case studies that significantly advance our knowledge of coaching psychology and positive psychology are also welcome.

The deadline for submissions is 31 July, 2006. Electronic submissions are encouraged. Correspondence and submissions should be directed to the Guest Editors of the Special Section:

P. Alex Linley
School of Psychology
Henry Wellcome Building
University of Leicester
Lancaster Road
Leicester, LE1 9HN
United Kingdom.
E-mail: PAL8@le.ac.uk

Carol Kauffman
Harvard Medical School
22 Mill Street, Suite 405
Arlington, MA 02476
United States.

E-mail: Carol@CarolKauffman.com

Taking stock: A survey of Coaching Psychologists' practices and perspectives

Alison Whybrow & Stephen Palmer

Objectives: *This paper presents the findings of two surveys exploring the practices and perspectives of the membership of the Coaching Psychology Forum (CPF), the precursor to the Special Group in Coaching Psychology.*

Design: *The study was cross-sectional in design*

Method: *The two surveys were conducted 12 months apart. The surveys focused on psychologists' practice as coaches and their views on a number of relevant issues such as required training and experience to practise as a coaching psychologist.*

Results: *The membership of the CPF consists of psychologists with diverse applied psychological backgrounds, who practice coaching in a variety of settings from a range of psychological developmental perspectives. Issues around training and development for coaching psychologists emerged, highlighting the need for an understanding of the underpinning competencies of the domain and how these fit with existing applied psychological domains. Additionally, important research questions were raised.*

Conclusions: *The outcome of the surveys highlights the diversity in practice and perspectives of the membership of the CPF and the energy and enthusiasm for the development of the profession of coaching psychology.*

Keywords: coaching psychology, professional practice, supervision, continuing professional development, British Psychological Society.

Overview

THE SPECIAL GROUP IN COACHING PSYCHOLOGY (SGCP) came into existence in October 2004 and almost overnight became the third largest subsystem within the British Psychological Society (BPS). Once the pathway had been cleared for the BPS membership to express their views there was a resounding 'yes' vote, the strength of which was somewhat of a surprise even to the SGCP founders.

The overwhelming interest in the area of coaching psychology and continued growth of the SGCP demonstrates the energy and enthusiasm of psychologists to explore and understand the scope of coaching psychology and its fit within the broader applied psychological as well as coaching arena.

This paper is concerned with understanding the current profile and practice of psychologists working as coaches, the implications of this and how coaching psychology specifically is being applied to maximise the performance and well being of people in work and non work situations. There are few surveys of coaches and their practice, indeed Grant and Zackon (2004) provide a useful overview of work done in this area to date. Even less is known about the characteristics and views of coaching psychologists in particular.

We recognise that issues discussed here will be relevant both to psychologists and non-psychologists practising as coaches, however, we focus specifically on psychologists throughout this paper.

Introduction

As the profile of the coaching profession has risen, the recognition and practice of coaching has proliferated among psychologists. However, psychologists were finding themselves practicing as coaches in a rather mixed up and confused market place. In recognition of the current state of the coaching arena, the Coaching Psychology Forum (CPF) and subsequently, the SGCP

was set up with the purpose of providing a clear focus on the psychological underpinnings of coaching and a consistent focus on quality and ethical practice.

Psychologists have been practising in the area of maximising individual well being and performance in work and personal lives for decades (e.g. Parkes, 1955). Indeed, long before the popular concept of coaching as it is now perceived, existed. Despite this, the profession of psychology has taken a long time to establish itself formally within the coaching space and recognise the need for a specific focus on coaching psychology.

This tardiness might be understood more easily if psychologists believed coaching to be something so inherent to the practice of psychology, to their existing repertoire of skills, that there was no need to identify it as a separate domain of enquiry. The tremendous energy underpinning the formation of the SGCP suggests that whilst psychologist might believe coaching to be inherent to their role as psychologists, rather than assuming they already have the necessary understanding, psychologists are very keen to explore and understand this domain.

The diversity of membership of the SGCP, the variety of psychological frameworks that inform individual coaching practice and the range of views on professional issues suggest that there is a lot of shared learning, exploration and discussion to come. This rich background to the SGCP is brought to life in the responses to two cross-sectional surveys that were conducted 12 months apart of what was then, the CPF membership. These surveys were designed to illustrate:

- Which applied psychologists are working as coaches;
- What approaches are being used;
- What psychologist's expectations are about specialist training as coaches;
- What views there are around the issue of supervision;
- Where coaching psychology is being applied;
- What psychologists want in terms of ongoing development.

Method

Members of the CPF were invited to complete the surveys by general e-mail at each iteration. A total of 90 members of the CPF participated in the survey in 2003 (T1). A similar survey was repeated 12 months later in 2004 (T2) when 109 members of the CPF took part. Data were collected online using www.surveymonkey.com as the survey platform. The survey took between five and 10 minutes to complete. Respondents had the opportunity to record their views quantitatively, by choosing one or more options in response to the questions, and/or qualitatively, by expressing their personal perspective in response to each question. Where questions were repeated in the two surveys, direct comparisons can be drawn between the two samples. Additional data, such as membership data was gathered from the membership records of the CPF and subsequently the SGCP.

Results and Discussion

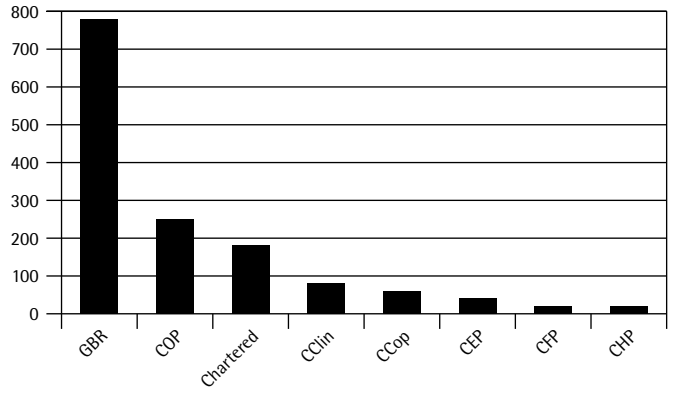
Membership

The profile of membership has changed during the lifetime of the CPF and the SGCP, partly as a result of development of the group which is outlined in Palmer and Whybrow (this issue). The two largest groups at T1 were counselling and occupational psychologists, with occupational psychologists being much the larger group by the T2 survey.

Once the membership of the Special Group was promoted more openly across the entire BPS membership, a more diverse set of applied psychologists from across the full range of BPS subsystems became involved. In addition, a large number of psychologists who did not belong to a specific subsystem became part of the SGCP.

The main subgroups that comprised the SGCP in December 2004 are detailed in Figure 1. Interestingly, the largest sub group are those psychologists with GBR status, who as yet have not taken their formal professional development to the level of Chartered Psychologist status. The reasons for the prevalence of this group of psychologists

Figure 1: Membership across BPS subsystems.



GBR = Graduate basis for registration;
COP = Chartered Occupational Psychologists;
Chartered = Chartered Psychologists with no affiliation;
CClin = Chartered Clinical Psychologists;
CCoP = Chartered Counselling Psychologists;
CEP = Chartered Educational Psychologists;
CFP = Chartered Forensic Psychologists;
CHP = Chartered Health Psychologists.

could be that the SGCP provides a professional home that they have not yet found within an existing subsystem. Similarly, this also suggests that coaching psychology is area of psychological interest and practice that really is not covered sufficiently by any one existing subsystem alone.

Whilst psychologists may believe that coaching is something they do, or should be doing within their area of professional practice, it is likely that it is being approached very differently across the different applied domains of psychology. Thus, the diversity of subsystems in the SGCP suggests there is a great opportunity for shared learning. Indeed. exploring these different perspectives and approaches is likely to enhance psychological practice more broadly, not just the understanding and practice of coaching psychology.

Why are psychologists members of the CPF/SGCP?

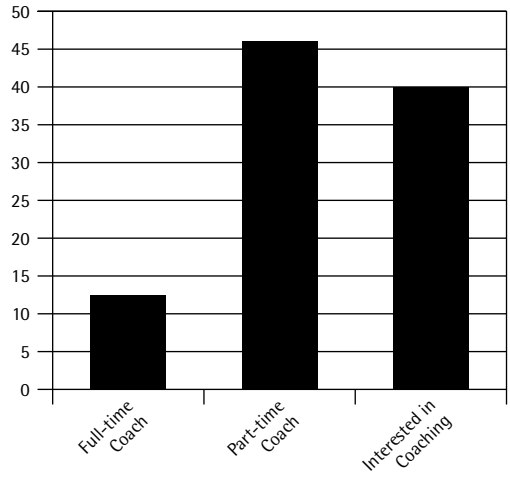
In discussion, many psychologists see coaching as a subset of their repertoire as applied psychologists, combining coaching skills and other areas of skill and expertise in their day to day work. This is reflected in the responses to this particular question. The largest group of people who responded at T1 reported that they were members of the CPF because they worked part-time as a coach (48.9 per cent). This outcome was repeated in the T2 responses shown in Figure 2.

Relatively few psychologists report working as a full time coach (11.1 per cent T1; 11.9 per cent T2). With the further development of coaching psychology as an applied area of psychology, more psychologists may have an opportunity to work in this area on a full-time basis. This in itself will have a reciprocal impact on the development of the profession as psychologists' expertise in the area of coaching deepens and enriches the learning and research in this area.

Reviewing the qualitative comments that people provided at T1, many were members of the CPF because they were interested in developing their coaching skills, networking with other coaches and improving their practice, by T2, it seems members were concerned with the development of the CPF/SGCP as a professional body, specific comments included:

- A desire to maintain the emphasis on the professional development of the field of coaching across the UK.
- A body that works with the broader coaching arena rather than controlling what non-psychologist coaches do.

Figure 2: Time spent working as a Coaching Psychologist (T2).



- The integration of coaching skills and application as a subset of a broader role as an applied psychologist.
- The appropriate use of the descriptor coaching psychologist by psychologists using coaching skills.

The integration of coaching skills as a subset of a broader role as an applied psychologist is supported by the fact that coaching is a part time activity for many members of the SGCP. Together, these provide some momentum to the idea of accrediting competencies that span divisional boundaries. Indeed, the ongoing diversity of the SGCP will depend in part, on maintaining the inclusive and open relationships across BPS subsystems. Thus, it may be that the SGCP can provide a different model for the development of an applied area of psychology than typically exists within the BPS.

The shift from the CPF being seen as more of an interest group to one which is fulfilling a role as a professional body reflects not only the development of the CPF, but parallel developments taking place within the broader coaching space. In moving forward, the SGCP would benefit from continuing to ensure that it engages effectively as a subsystem within the BPS, *and also* as a leading professional body in the general coaching arena.

How well does the BPS meet members' coaching psychology needs?

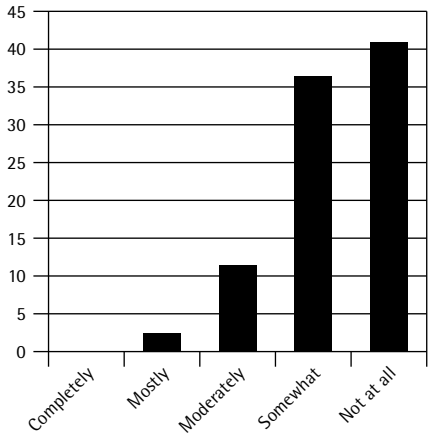
The overwhelming support for the development of the SGCP was assisted by a feeling among psychologists that the BPS did not meet their needs or interests in the area of coaching practice. At T1, more than 85 per cent of respondents felt the BPS did not meet their coaching needs.

Interestingly, many psychologists joined other professional coaching bodies, such as the Association for Coaching, and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council as a means of furthering their professional interest in coaching. Although seen as moderately useful in meeting psychologists' needs in this area, other professional bodies were described as limited to the extent that they referenced psychological models or provided a research basis for coaching practice. The extent to which the SGCP fills these gaps will be useful to monitor as it develops.

Where are psychologists applying coaching?

The growth in coaching has taken place in personal and work domains. In the business arena, coaching has proliferated as organisations have grasped the promise of maintaining and enhancing their competitive advantage through the effective develop-

Figure 3: BPS meets members' needs (T2).



ment of their human capital. Specifically, the sporting analogies have resonated, with the concept of the coach enabling the development of 'corporate athlete' appealing to senior executives. The personal coach for the board member has been widely embraced and seen as a part of the package for those at senior levels.

A second development within organisations is the idea of coaching skills being a subset of the line manager's skills. Many of the alternatives to the Tayloristic command control model of working have continued to be developed under the banner of coaching, potentially enabling every line manager to have appropriate coaching skills at their finger tips in order to get the best out of themselves and those that they work with.

Developmental coaching is perhaps a third area for the practice of coaching within business, enabling coaching to be focused at assisting the development of a specific skill set within employees. Alongside the growth of coaching opportunities within business, the concept of having a personal coach has gained credence to assist people in achieving their overall life goals.

The focus of coaching practice was similar at T1 and T2 (see Figures 4 & 5). Slight differences in the profiles may reflect the fact that further variations of coaching focus were included in the survey at T2.

Given the growth in coaching opportunities, it is not surprising that most respondents at T1 describe themselves as working in more business related fields such as executive, leadership, team, business, and career coaching, with fewer describing themselves as working in personal/life, health and sports domains (see Figures 4 & 5).

The coaching practice reflected in both profiles may reflect the composition of respondents at the time, the majority of whom were occupational psychologists, and therefore may reasonably be expected to be focusing their coaching practice within the business arena.

The profile may also reflect the fact that many different 'types' of psychologist are practicing within organisations, and that the professional subdivisions within the BPS merely reflect the professional training and not necessarily the area of professional practice of many psychologists.

This seems an appropriate point to raise two particular questions. First, what is the boundary between coaching and other forms of applied psychology such as counselling or occupational psychology?

In any coaching relationship the boundary between 'coaching' and 'counselling' is a potential issue, where practitioners are working in the personal and life coaching domains, this becomes more

Figure 4: Focus of coaching psychology practice (T1).

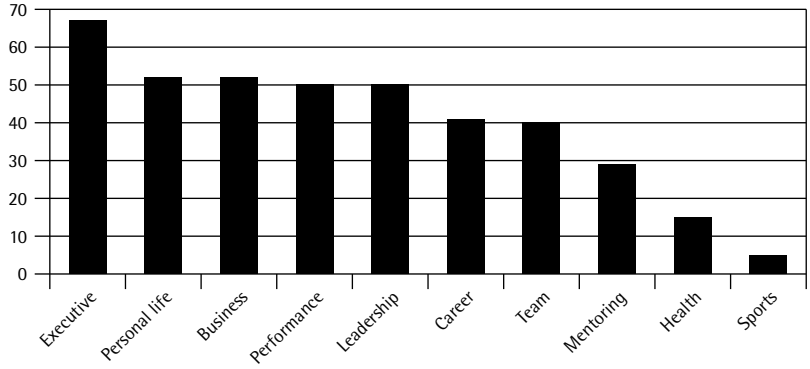
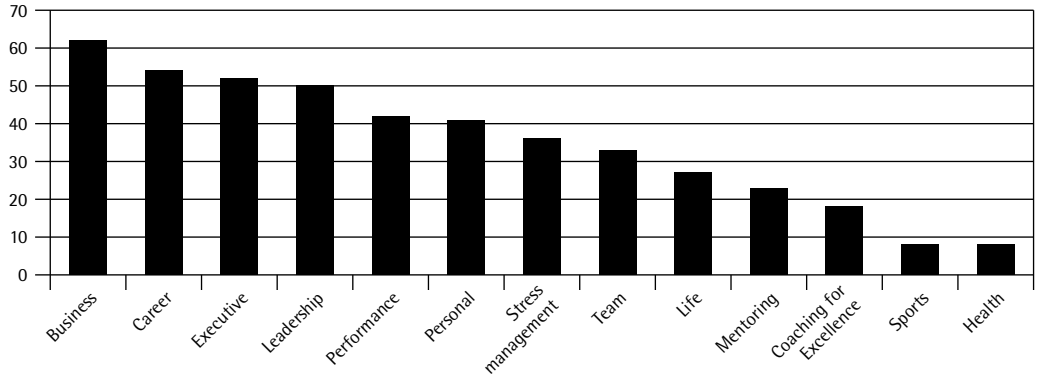


Figure 5: Focus of coaching psychology practice (T2).



apparent. Interestingly, reviewing respondent's qualitative responses people used descriptors such as 'relationship coach' and 'rehabilitation coach' among others. When therefore, does coaching become counselling, and indeed, when does counselling become coaching? Is this a useful distinction to make?

It appears that the boundary of the coaching/counselling skill set is not clear, as the skill sets across the different applied areas of psychology are not clearly differentiated. A useful concept is competence to work with a particular presenting issue or set of issues, when is it more appropriate to be 'coached', when is it more appropriate to be 'counselled' and when and how do psychologists refer to other more appropriately qualified colleagues? (Summerfield, 2002)

Given the predominance of coaching practice in organisational settings, a similar argument may arise regarding occupational and coaching psychology domains. Greater understanding between psychologists of the areas of competence across the domain of applied psychology would be useful.

Second, how do the coaching skills used differ across the range of coaching contexts indicated in Figures 4 and 5? What is the competence required to work as an executive coaching psychologist compared to a health coaching psychologist? Is there in fact any qualitative difference between psychologists working in these different areas?

It is likely that there are more similarities than differences between coaching psychologists working in difference contexts, but importantly, small differences between the

application of skills and competence are going to be significant in terms of individual impact. Similarly, tools and techniques may vary between the contexts as each area starts to develop its own a subset of expertise and experience.

This variety in focus of coaching psychology underlines the need for continued dialogue and shared learning opportunities whether through conferences, workshops and publications.

What psychological frameworks and approaches are used?

The profession of psychology brings with it a large number of developmental frameworks that attempt to explain how and why humans behave as they do. From work by Peltier (2001) we see that a good range of psychological therapeutic frameworks are being adapted for application in the coaching context. Which of these frameworks are psychologists using in the coaching psychology arena? The responses from our members are given in Figures 6 to 9 below.

At T1 the majority of respondents described themselves as using a facilitative approach to their practice, within a Cognitive, Behavioural and/or Solution Focused framework. Many other diverse frameworks were also being used by coaching psychologists, including Psychodynamic, Rational Emotive Behavioural Coaching, Humanistic and Transactional among others.

The qualitative comments revealed a further rich seam of approaches not captured here, including Existential/ Gestalt, Personal Construct Psychology, and Positive Psychology

The range of frameworks applied goes from behavioural, cognitive behavioural, transactional to psychodynamic, gestalt, and rational emotive behavioural approaches.

At T2, a similar diverse range of psychological frameworks were being applied by coaching psychologists. Some additional approaches were emerging in the 'other' responses such as Motivational Interviewing, Psychosynthesis and Hypnosis.

It is interesting to consider why the most popular frameworks that psychologists are using in their coaching work are Cognitive Behavioural, Person-Centred and Solution or Goal Focused.

It could be because these approaches are more effective at generating positive outcomes for coaches. To date there is very limited research that has looked at the effectiveness of different coaching approaches (Grant, 2001a). Much is inconclusive. However, there is some specific evidence for the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioural techniques.

A second reason is that the use of different psychological frameworks may be more to do with familiarity and expertise rather than the demonstrated utility of such frameworks.

Figure 6: Approaches used (T1).

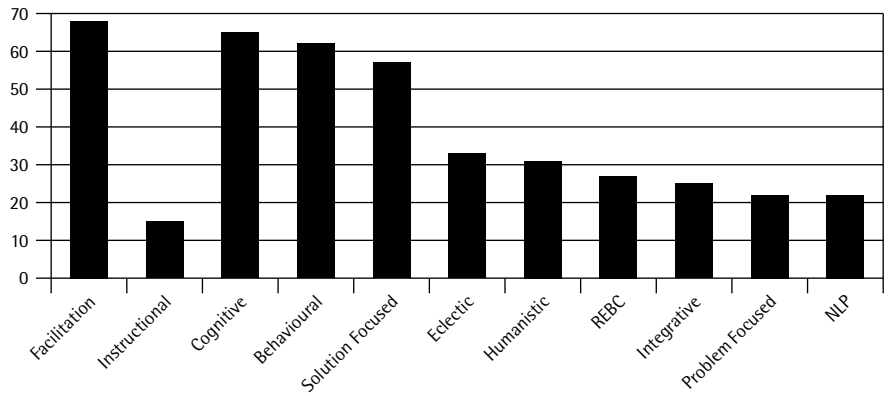


Figure 7: More approaches used (T1).

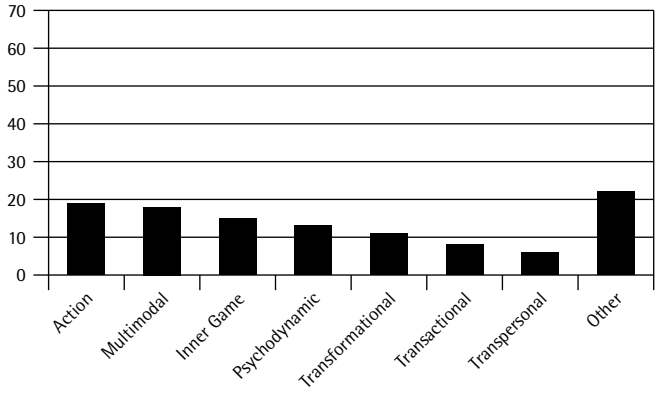


Figure 8: Approaches used (T2).

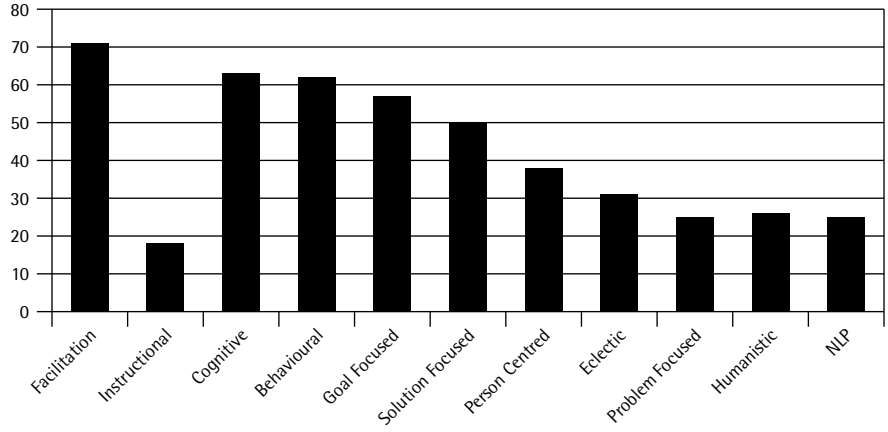
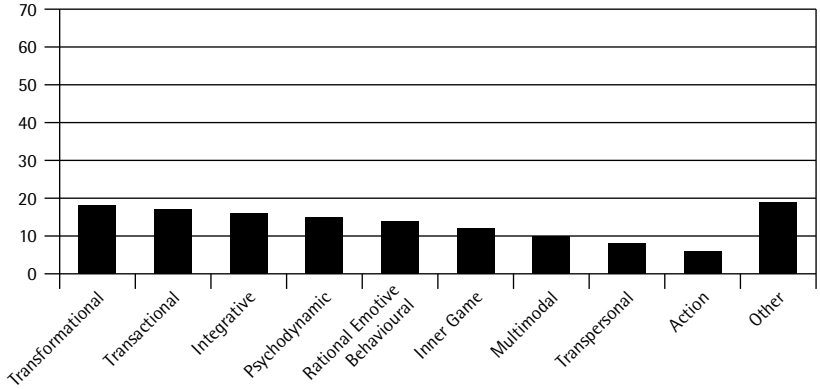


Figure 9: More approaches used (T2).



Maybe coaching psychologists have limited access to the required knowledge of a broader set of developmental frameworks and how these might usefully be applied within the coaching space.

Further, people may be working with these approaches differently. Are they applying them in a 'pure' sense, or combining frameworks to create their own coaching model?

Research in to the effectiveness of different approaches within different coaching contexts is needed (Grant, 2001a) to enable us to ensure we are using the most effective approach or combination of approaches within particular situations. For example, how effective is the facilitation or instructional model of coaching? How does the effectiveness of the approach change during individual transition? Another interesting area relates to intervention adherence or compliance in executive coaching as there are hardly any papers published on this topic (Kilburg, 2001).

The use of therapeutic approaches adapted to coaching within personal, group, organisational and training contexts opens up new and important areas of research. For example, although the theory and practice of the cognitive-behavioural, problem-solving, and multimodal coaching approaches have been illustrated (see, Neenan & Palmer, 2001; Neenan & Dryden, 2002; Palmer, Cooper & Thomas, 2003; Richard, 1999) more research is needed into their effectiveness with non-clinical populations. However, the existing research has been very encouraging (e.g. Grant, 2001b). In addition, the North American-based Cognitive Coaching[sm], which is a variation of cognitive behavioural coaching as practised in the UK, has much published research (e.g. Edwards & Newton, 1994; Foster, 1989).

Part of the remit of the SGCP is to promote research into coaching psychology. However, it is unlikely that research will provide simple answers, but through the process of research the theory, skills and techniques of coaching psychology applied in the coaching space may be better understood.

Continuing Professional Development

A diverse range of applied psychologists make up the membership of the SGCP with the largest subgroup being non-chartered members of the BPS with the Graduate Basis for Registration. All are looking to further their understanding or practice in coaching psychology. As coaching psychology is both a new area, and at the same time consists of an established skill and knowledge base that is dissipated across the areas of applied psychology, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is of key interest to members. Through CPD, some understanding may be reached as to how individuals' existing skill sets and knowledge base fits within the domain of coaching psychology, and what psychologists need to do to enhance their coaching practice. A substantial majority of respondents thought that ongoing CPD was important (78 per cent).

Respondents expressed interest in a variety of CPD activities (see Figures 10 & 11). The most popular CPD activities at T1 were workshops, closely followed by conferences and seminars. Interestingly more were interested in short certificated courses, rather than short courses alone suggesting an interest for some form of coaching accreditation.

The qualitative comments confirmed that members were keen for their ongoing training as coaches to be recognised by the BPS or accredited in some way. One of the reasons for this appreciation of a sign of competence or quality is likely to be due to the very chaotic market place where coaching providers and coaching buyers find that demonstration of coaching competence is a key issue.

At T2, seminars superseded conferences as the second most popular activity. A number of respondents expressed an interest in doing a Doctorate specifically in Coaching. The qualitative comments revealed further ideas about relevant CPD activities including:

Figure 10: CPD activities (T1).

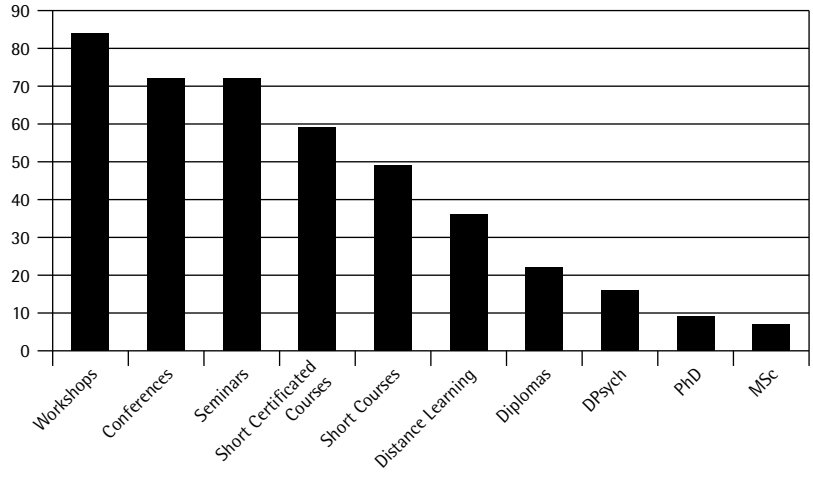
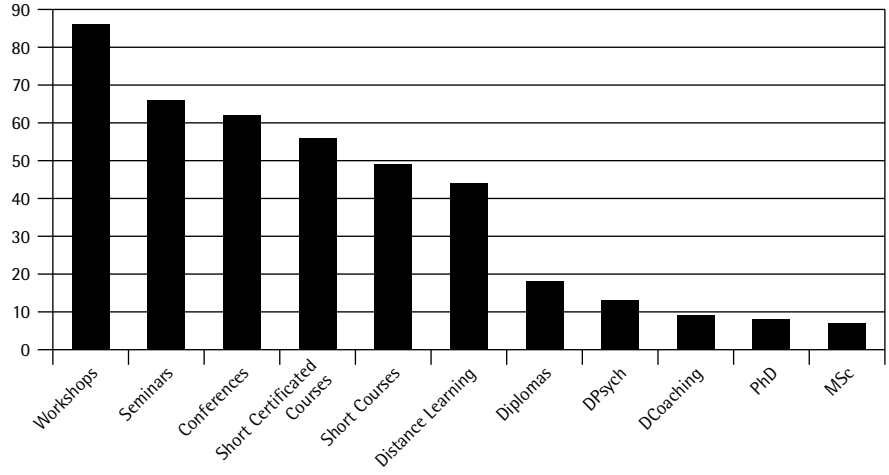


Figure 11: CPD activities (T2).



- Online networks for experience sharing;
- Publication of e-newsletters to enhance coaching practice;
- Local action learning sets and CPD activities.

What is required in terms of the areas of competence to be an effective coach or coaching psychologist has yet to be defined. However, the range of psychological frameworks being applied in by coaching psychologists, suggests there is much shared learning to be gained from both formal and informal CPD activities.

What qualifications and experience are needed for coaching psychologists?

Psychologists have asked: What is coaching psychology? What are the competencies required? The beliefs of the membership about qualifications and experience are outlined in Figures 12 and 13 overleaf.

Qualifications that respondents believed were necessary to be a 'coaching psychologist' ranged from a psychology degree to a full doctorate in coaching or coaching psychology with a variety of levels in between. Interestingly, a number of people believed

Figure 12: Training requirements (T2).

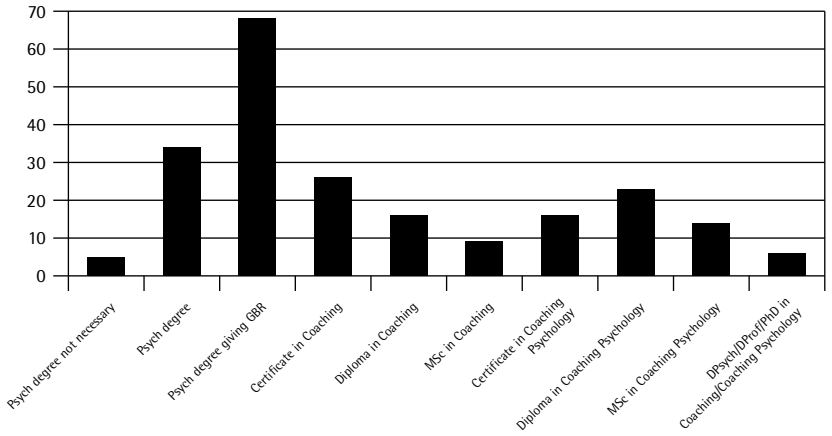
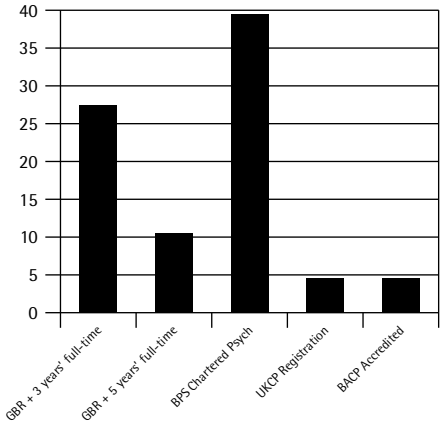


Figure 13: Experience required (T2).



that no degree in psychology was necessary to practice as a coaching psychologist.

Certainly, to practise as a coach, a degree in psychology is not necessary. Psychology is not the only profession to bring a relevant knowledge base and set of frameworks of development to the coaching arena. Thus, the coach without a psychology degree may still have the same or more expertise in their field compared with a coaching psychologist. The question of individual competency as a coach is one that is much broader than the profession of psychology alone.

What then does a degree in psychology provide, and why is this important? One perspective is that if someone has a degree in psychology they have an established body of knowledge underpinning their practice. This body of knowledge is extremely relevant to the practice of coaching and therefore provides one appropriate level of differentiation. However, as the respondents to the survey suggest, whilst a degree in psychology is agreed as necessary by the vast majority, it is not sufficient training to qualify individuals as coaching psychologists.

The qualitative comments provide further insight into respondents' perspectives about the development of competence as a coaching psychologist:

- Respondents expressed the need for counselling skills to be an integral part of any coaching qualification.
- There should be recognition that there are various routes to gaining the skills and experience necessary to be a coaching psychologist.
- That criteria should be set and all those using the term coaching psychologist to describe themselves need to demonstrate they have achieved these standards. There should not be an automatic 'in' for people just because they are members of the SGCP.
- That formal qualifications do not necessarily deliver the competent coach.
- That we can't be definite about what qualifications and experience are required beyond GBR as a minimum until coaching psychology is more clearly defined.
- That an understanding of valid, reliable measurement such as at least BPS full Level B certification where the coaching psychologist is working in an organisation.
- There should be more emphasis on experience and pragmatic application than formal qualifications and theoretical/academic understanding.

In addition to the recognised educational levels, further experience in coaching was also considered necessary. Three years' coaching experience in addition to the psychology degree was considered necessary by 28 per cent to practise as a coaching psychologist, where as 39 per cent thought chartered psychologist status should be the recognised qualification level.

Relatively few people (10 per cent) thought that five years' experience as a coach in addition to a degree in psychology was necessary and less than five per cent thought that accreditation through the two main counselling professional bodies was important.

Members of the SGCP, nearly half of whom are chartered psychologists (albeit from a range of divisions) are keen to understand the domain of practice of coaching psychology. Without this, as indicated by the comments received, they have limited understanding of what it is their aiming for in terms of the competence required to practice in their chosen field of work.

Relatively crude indicators such as a degree in psychology, experience, chartered psychological status clearly do not demonstrate whether a person has the necessary skills, specific experience and rounded knowledge base required to practise effectively in the coaching domain.

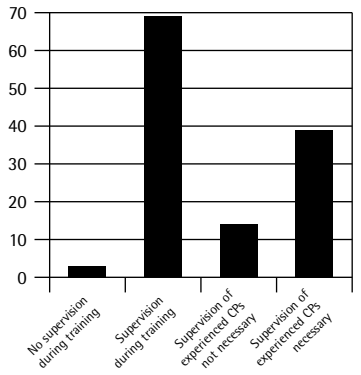
We have an opportunity through the SGCP and IGCP in Australia to raise our understanding of the competence base underpinning effective coaching psychology practice. By establishing the psychological theory underpinning the practice of coaching, and creating standards for study and practice, psychologists, clients and the public in general will be more informed as to what constitutes good coaching from a psychological perspective.

The question of accrediting psychologists as coaching psychologists is not one that is within the remit of the SGCP, but is one that is frequently raised by members. Currently there is no process for achieving this within the BPS. The question of accrediting cross-divisional competencies is once again raised in order to further the practice of coaching psychology.

What are the supervision requirements for coaching psychologists?

Supervision is a key issue within the SGCP, and this issue is mirrored in other professional coaching bodies such as the Association for Coaching (AC) and the Association for Professional Executive Coaching and Supervision (APECS). On the one hand, supervision is presented as a means of underpinning the professional status of coaching, it also has a huge potential in maintaining as well as raising the quality of practice of coaches generally.

Figure 14: Views on Supervision (T2).



There are different models for supervision for applied psychologists within the BPS, clinical and counselling psychologists are required to undertake personal supervision as part of their conditions of registration. Occupational psychologists are not yet required to take part in any further personal supervision once qualified.

The views of respondents are outlined in Figure 14. The majority thought supervision during training was necessary, and 39 per cent thought ongoing supervision of experienced coaching psychologists was necessary (with only 14 per cent feeling it was not necessary). The qualitative comments point to a range of views on supervision:

- There are different models of supervision in practice that need to be considered.
- Reflective practice is a must, practitioners should have self knowledge and insight to know when to access supervision rather than a formal framework being imposed.
- Supervision requirements need to take account of the other supervision that the individual is already involved in perhaps as part of their membership of another subsystem.
- Because coaching is not working with psychologically disturbed people, so supervision along the lines of clinical and counselling models is unnecessary control

If we consider the nature of the coaching relationship between the coaching psychologist and the coachee, it is likely the relationship is more often 1:1 than 1:many. Merely as a precedent then, existing models of supervision within subsystems where psychologists work mainly on a 1:1 basis would seem relevant.

If we consider the nature of how psychologists work, with many coaching psychologists working independently, or at least often at some distance from other psychologists. This potential isolation would indicate the value of some form of supervision.

Most importantly, having regular structured, shared reviews of our professional activities and planned approaches with our clients, with a fellow professional is immensely powerful, promoting openness and learning as well as a source of insight and input that we would otherwise be denied.

The question of coaching normal, non-clinical populations rather than working with clinical populations does not necessarily excuse coaching psychologists from the requirement for supervision of their practice. The complexity of individuals is such that a simplistic clinical/non-clinical dichotomy is too crude to be meaningful as an indicator of the level of risk and vulnerability of the potential client population.

There are various models of supervision,

such as peer supervision, co-coaching, supervision from within the same area of applied psychology, supervision from someone with a different applied psychological background, etc. There is no requirement to engage in only one form of supervision.

As one respondent highlighted, a requirement for supervision can be seen from a number of perspectives, one of which is as a form of unnecessary control. Supervision is indeed a form of control, but not one that would be considered unnecessary even by the most experienced coaches and coaching psychologists. Not only can supervision serve as a safeguard for both the coach and coachee, but also enhance the quality of the work of coaching psychologists and, therefore, the quality of output for our clients.

Conclusions

From the surveys conducted, we can see that coaching practice for BPS members is a uniquely cross-disciplinary activity, involving a diverse range of applied psychologists. This difference is something that is likely to enliven and enhance the development of coaching psychology and psychology more generally, as psychologists come together to share, learn and discuss their approaches to a common area of practice.

Primarily described as only part of the work that applied psychologists are involved, coaching psychology may be a means through which the BPS develops a more radical approach to the professional development of applied psychologists.

The outcome of the surveys provide some important areas of investigation for the BPS and the SGCP specifically. First, to understand the boundaries of coaching psychology and to manage the boundary issues around coaching psychology practice. Second, to gain insight into the effectiveness of various approaches in different coaching situations.

A critical area of development, highlighted by Grant and Zackon (2004) in relation to their study and no less relevant to the SGCP, is that of defining competencies and standards that transcend prior subsystem allegiances and ideologies. Indeed, harnessing the diversity within coaching psychology practice is likely to enhance the profession more broadly.

In terms of practical application, a further remit of the SGCP is to increase coaching psychologists' understanding of the effective application of a diversity of approaches. Something that can be supported through maintaining a focus on CPD activities for members.

There are several process implications from the survey that the SGCP need to take on board. First, that no particular subgroup of psychologists is dominant on the SGCP committee. Such dominance would potentially skew the development of the SGCP and may limit its continued attraction to the full range of subsystem members, thus limiting the richness of the development of coaching psychology as a whole.

Second, as a member-driven organisation, it is important that the subgroups within the SGCP are represented through the activities of the group. For example, those already working as coaches and those interested in the area of coaching would need a balance between the developing expertise as an applied profession and openness to psychologists not actively practising in the area. The continued effectiveness of the SGCP at meeting members' needs should be regularly reviewed.

It seems that continued dialogue and shared learning is key within the SGCP itself. However, it must also be remembered that the SGCP provides a focal point within the BPS for engaging external coaching bodies and the public in general who are interested in coaching. Additionally, the SGCP provides a vehicle psychologists can use to influence the development of coaching beyond the BPS. The influential voice that the SGCP has had to date is important to maintain in moving forward.

Correspondence

Professor Stephen Palmer, PhD, is Director of the Coaching Psychology Unit, City University, and Director of the Centre for Coaching, London. He was Chair of the SGCP in 2005 and is now Past Chair. He is on the National Executive of the SGCP. He was formerly a Co-proposer of the SGCP with Dr Alison Whybrow.

Dr Alison Whybrow is Treasurer of the SGCP and was formerly a Co-proposer. She is on the National Executive of the SGCP.

Correspondence should be addressed to:
Professor Stephen Palmer
Coaching Psychology Unit,
Department of Psychology,
City University, Northampton Square,

References

Edwards, J.L. & Newton, R.R. (1994). *The effects of Cognitive Coaching℠ on teacher efficacy and empowerment.* Research Report No. 1994–1, February. Evergreen, CO: Authors.

Foster, N.J. (1989). The impact of Cognitive Coaching℠ on teachers' thought processes as perceived by cognitively coached teachers in the Plymouth-Canton Community School District. Doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University, 1989. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 27,* 54381.

Grant, A.M. (2001a). *Towards a psychology of coaching.* Sydney: Coaching Psychology Unit, University of Sydney.

Grant, A.M. (2001b). *Coaching for enhanced performance: Comparing cognitive and behavioural approaches to coaching.* Paper presented at the 3rd International Spearman Seminar: Extending Intelligence: Enhancement and New Constructs, Sydney.

Grant, A.M. & Zackon, R. (2004). Executive, workplace and life-coaching: Findings from a large-scale survey of International Coach Federation members. *International Journal of Evidence-Based Coaching and Mentoring, 2*(2), 1–15.

Kilburg, R.R. (2001). Facilitating intervention adherence in executive coaching: A model and methods. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 53*(4), 251–267.

Neenan, M. & Dryden, W. (2002). *Life Coaching: A cognitive-behavioural approach.* Hove: Brunner-Routledge

Neenan, M. & Palmer, S. (2001). Cognitive behavioural coaching. *Stress News, 13*(3) 15–18.

Palmer, S., Cooper, C. & Thomas, K. (2003). *Creating a balance: Managing stress.* London: British Library.

Palmer, S. & Whybrow, A. (2006). The coaching psychology movement and its development within the British Psychological Society. *International Coaching Psychology Review, 1*(1), 2–9.

Parkes, R.C. (1955). We use seven guides to help executives develop. *Personal Journal, 33,* 326-328

Peltier, B. (2001). *The psychology of executive coaching: Theory and application.* New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Richard, J.T. (1999). Multimodal therapy: A useful model for the executive coach. *Consulting Psychology Journal, 51*(1), 24–30.

Summerfield, J. (2002). Walking the thin line: Coaching or Counselling? *Training Journal,* November, 36–39.

Duty of care in an unregulated industry: Initial findings on the diversity and practices of Australian coaches

Gordon B. Spence, Michael J. Cavanagh & Anthony M. Grant

Little has been reported about the skills, experience and training of coaches in the Australian context, yet these are critical factors in the ethical practice of coaching. Previous research and experience suggests that formal coach training varies considerably in terms of curricula and quality. At the same time, data is emerging that suggests a significant number of coaching clients may be using coaching as a socially-acceptable form of meeting therapeutic needs. This raises questions about the duty of care coaches owe to their clients in safeguarding their mental health and well-being. Similarly, it raises questions about the degree to which current industry training assists coaches discharge that duty of care. In order to explore these issues empirically, a total of 148 Australian coaches answered a questionnaire covering three areas: (i) current coaching practice; (ii) background experience and coach training (iii) ethics and professional affiliations. A minority of respondents reported a background in psychology or counselling, yet more than 10 per cent of respondents indicated that they regularly coached clients in relation to issues commonly associated with serious psychological distress (e.g. fears about personal loss, life crises, social isolation and self esteem). The preliminary data presented here indicate that there is need to identify the range and depth of issues presented in coaching, the training needed for coaches to effectively identify and refer clients with mental health issues, and the limits and responsibilities of our duty of care as coaches.

ALTHOUGH COACHING HAS BEEN described as a 'boom' industry (Naughton, 2002), very little is known about the composition of the coaching industry in Australia. Whilst the unregulated nature of coaching has prompted recommendations relating to the formal preparation of coaches (Garman, Whiston & Zlatoper, 2000) and the need for standards of competence (Brotman, Liberi & Wasylyshyn, 1998), acting on these recommendations becomes difficult whilst the characteristics of the industry remain hidden. As such, this paper has two principle aims. The first is to begin building a profile of the Australian coaching industry by reporting the findings from a survey into the characteristics and practices of Australian coaches, in particular the breadth of skills, experience and training that currently exists among practicing coaches. Second, we will discuss the implications of these findings and question the degree to which coaches are adequately equipped to address mental health issues when they happen to emerge in coaching engagements.

Two strands of coaching research

Profiling the Australian coaching industry.

The current study was designed to investigate characteristics of Australian coaching practitioners. Whilst we expect the findings from this study to complement earlier findings by Clegg, Rhodes and Kornberger (2003), the present study extends the scope of the research by asking respondents to outline the particulars of their experience, education and training, ethical practices and professional affiliations.

Such information has importance for the professionalisation of the industry. For example, if the march towards professionalism is to include some degree of standardisation in coach education (as has been suggested by Grant, 2003), then it will be necessary to accurately assess the areas in

which 'knowledge gaps' most obviously exist. In this paper, mental health issues will be presented as one such area.

Mental health issues and coaching

This discussion is prompted by two recent coaching studies (Green, Oades & Grant, 2005; Spence & Grant, 2005) that suggest life coaching may be attracting individuals who wish to address an array of mental health issues (e.g. depression, social anxiety) without the stigma often associated with therapy and counselling. This raises the possibility that life coaching may be publicly perceived as a socially acceptable form of therapy (Cavanagh, 2005) and, if so, it is pertinent to ask: 'How well equipped are Australian coaches for dealing with the mental health issues that may emerge in coaching?' Whilst anecdotal evidence suggests that depression, anxiety, personality disorders and suicidality are all the most common mental health issues found in coaching, open discussion of such matters is rare within the industry.

Given that there are no barriers to entering the industry, it may be that few coaches possess the requisite skills or confidence to deal with such issues. If so, then coaching engagements have the potential to be counterproductive for clients when mental health issues are salient to the goals of coaching (Berglas, 2002; Cavanagh, 2005). For the unwary or uninformed coach, such a situation may have legal ramifications.

It is not the intention of this article to create undue anxiety about what might happen in coaching, or even to suggest that a majority of coaches currently act unethically. Indeed we are unaware of any cases in which an Australian coach has been sued for negligence arising from a coaching relationship. Rather, this article seeks to raise awareness about the obligations of coaching practitioners, by exploring the potential links between coaching, mental health issues and the law. Given that litigation is currently on the rise in Australia (Betts, 2004) this issue appears to be ripe for discussion. Specifically, we will examine what legal obligations exist for coaching practitioners in an unregulated industry, before questioning the degree to which existing ethical frameworks assist coaches discharge their legal duty of care.

The Australian coaching industry: What we know and what we don't know

Although little is known about the profile of the Australian coaching industry, anecdotal evidence suggests that it is populated by a diverse range of practitioners whose 'stock in trade' is the experience derived from a wide variety of professional and non-professional backgrounds. Beyond that, however, little can be said with certainty, as research on the Australian industry appears to be limited to a solitary working paper focused specifically on business coaching (Clegg, Rhodes & Kornberger, 2003).

In this study, Clegg and colleagues assessed the structure and characteristics of the Australian business coaching industry by surveying 42 coaching firms. They sought to ascertain: (i) the basic contours of the business coaching industry; (ii) the characteristics that distinguish one firm from another; and (iii) perceptions of the competitive environment. Based on their data they drew three conclusions. First, business coaching firms in Australia 'tend to be young and small' (p.8), with 65 per cent of firms in business for less than five years, 86 per cent employing less than five people and more than 50 per cent of businesses working out of home offices.

Second, most firms appeared to see themselves as generalists, with only 12 per cent dedicated to business coaching, whilst 51 per cent of firms offered business coaching and at least two other types of coaching related service (either executive coaching, life coaching, consulting, training or coach training). Lastly, firms in the industry appear to have a poor appreciation of the competitive environment in which they work, with over half the respondents unable to identify a single competitor by name.

Whilst this study provides some useful initial insights into the Australian industry, particularly in respect of its maturity, there are many areas of interest that have yet to be explored. For example, little is known about the diversity of coaching-related skills, training and experience amongst Australian coaches. Given that coaching has rapidly emerged in the past decade (Naughton, 2002), two questions can be posed about the industry. Firstly, what experience do coaches draw upon in coaching, and secondly, what specific coach training have they had?

In addition, the unregulated nature of the industry invariably prompts questions about ethical standards and practices within the industry. For example, do coaches discuss ethical issues with their clients? If so, how do they do this? What are the boundaries of confidentiality and disclosure within the coaching relationship? What professional affiliations do coaches hold? What evidentiary bases do coaches draw on to support their claims of efficacy?

This study seeks to examine some of these questions, by presenting the findings from a survey of practicing coaches and discussing the implications of these for future research and training needs.

Survey of Australian Life Coaches and Executive Coaches

The survey was conducted during the First International Coach Federation Australasian Conference held in Sydney during August 2002. It should be noted that the results reported here represent initial findings only and a three-year follow-up is planned, for the purpose of detecting change across the industry during the research timeframe.

Method

Instrument. To ensure the highest possible response rate, it was decided that the questionnaire should be brief and easy to complete. For this reason, the survey consisted primarily of forced choice items, with respondents selecting from a range of possible responses (e.g. 'How many hours a week do you coach?' (i) <5 hours; (ii) 5–10 hours; (iii) 11–20 hours; (iv) >20 hours). In addition, in order to gain more detailed information, a small number of free response items were included (e.g. 'In your experience, what are the three most common issues that lead clients to seek coaching?).

The final questionnaire consisted of 25 items arranged in three areas of general interest: (i) current coaching practice; (ii) background experience and coach training; and (iii) ethics and professional affiliations. Items were designed to assess the following information: general demographic data (e.g. age, sex), coaching status, modes of coaching, niche specialisation, industry background, coach specific training, coaching related experience, professional affiliation and endorsement of a recognised ethical code.

Procedure. The questionnaire was printed on one (double-sided) A4 page and included a short participant information statement and consent clause. Conference delegates were introduced to the surveys via a series of announcements made throughout the conference. To assist, conference organisers agreed to include the questionnaires in approximately 400 conference information satchels, with respondents asked to complete the questionnaires and place them in a sealed collection box located in the conference foyer. The survey took between five to 10 minutes to complete.

Participants

Respondents were Australian coaches who were practicing at the time of the survey. From the initial pool of 155 respondents, seven surveys were excluded on the basis that they were not practicing coaches. Thus, the final sample became 148, representing a response rate of 37 per cent.

The sample consisted of 110 females (74 per cent) and 38 males (26 per cent), with a mean age of 43.5 years (females = 42.7 years, males = 46 years). Not surprisingly, 88 per

cent of the respondents were located on Australia's eastern sea board (New South Wales 55 per cent, Queensland 10 per cent, and Victoria 23 per cent) however, as this survey was conducted in Sydney, the result should not be viewed as an accurate reflection of the geographical distribution of coaches in Australia.

Results

Current coaching practice

Here practitioners were asked about the depth of their coaching experience, where and how they did their coaching, most commonly encountered coaching issues, and niche specialisation (if any).

Coaching status. First, to assess the current level of engagement in coaching practice, practitioners indicated whether coaching was a full-time or part-time occupation. As seen in Table 1, over half the sample confirmed that coaching was their main occupation (58 per cent) and, of these, 69 per cent indicated it had been their main occupation for less than two years. Only 12 per cent reported greater than five years experience. When considered regardless of occupation status, approximately a third of the sample (31 per cent) reported total coaching experience of less than one year, with more than half the total sample possessing less than two years' experience (55 per cent).

In addition, respondents were asked to quantify their coaching experience (in terms of total clients and numbers of hours coached) and indicate their weekly activity levels. As shown in Figure 1, a sizeable proportion of the respondents appear to be early-career coaches, with 38 per cent of coaches having coached fewer than 10 clients, 22 per cent reporting less than 50 hours total coaching experience and 41 per cent reporting that they coach less than five hours per week.

This data also suggests that the industry may include a core of highly experienced coaches, as 26 per cent of respondents have coached a total of more than 50 clients and 38 per cent report that their total coaching experience amounts to greater than 200 hours. Finally, 70 per cent of coaches reported that they coach for less than 10 hours per week.

Modes of coaching. Next, respondents were asked to indicate: (i) where they conducted most of their coaching sessions; and (ii) what percentage of the time was spent coaching using face-to-face, e-mail or telephonic means. Over half the respondents (56 per cent) reported conducting most of their sessions from home, while 16 per cent coached at work, 13 per cent from a rented office and 15 per cent coached from the client's office.

In addition, face-to-face coaching was reported as more usual than technology assisted coaching (i.e. telephone, e-mail, online chat). As can be seen in Figure 2, 36 per cent of respondents reported that their coaching was always conducted face-to-face (with 27 per cent reporting mostly), whilst only 12 per cent always coached by telephone (with 10 per cent reporting mostly). In addition, 73 per cent reported on use of

Table 1: Coaching status and experience.

Response item	*N*	<1 year	1–2 years	2–5 years	>5 years
How long has coaching been your main occupation?	87	41%	28%	19%	12%
How long have you been coaching?	148	31%	24%	25%	20%

Figure 1: Total coaching experience and activity levels.

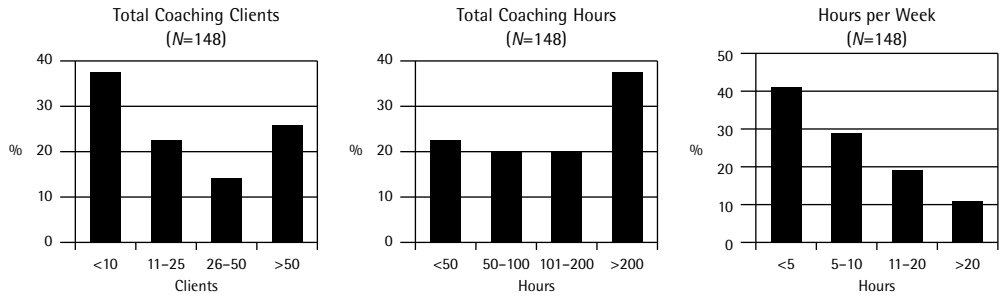
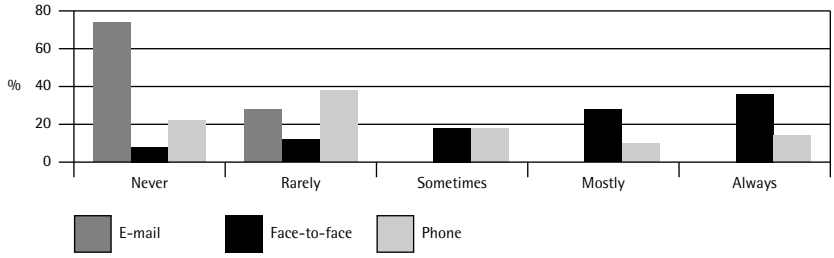


Figure 2: Predominant modes of coaching delivery.



e-mail in their coaching (with only 27 per cent reporting rarely). Only one respondent indicated that they sometimes used on-line chat to conduct coaching sessions.

Niche specialisation. Over half the coaches surveyed (55 per cent) confirmed that they had some sort of a niche specialisation. Of those, 71 per cent reported an interest in executive/corporate coaching, with the remainder (29 per cent) reflecting more of a life/personal coaching orientation. Whilst these proportions are not surprising given a coaching literature dominated by executive and workplace coaching (e.g. Brotman *et al.*, 1998; Garman *et al.*, 2000; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001), it should be noted that 45 per cent of all respondents did not name a specialisation. This suggests that a significant portion of the coaching community perceive themselves as generalists and are willing to coach in multiple domains and, presumably, across a broad range of issues.

Common coaching issues. Respondents indicated that the 'three most common issues' they encounter in coaching are career/business related issues, relationships/interpersonal skills, and direction/goal setting issues (see Table 2 overleaf). When considered along with data just reviewed on niche specialisations, these results are not overly surprising although financial and health/fitness issues may have been expected to feature more prominently in the results. Interestingly, the data also revealed the presence of several issues that may indicate clinical or sub-clinical mental health concerns. For example, approximately 10 per cent of the coaches surveyed indicated that they commonly coach clients in relation to issues that include self-esteem, self-worth, personal loss, life crises, social isolation and distress.

While such issues do not with certainty indicate the presence of mental health issues, our experience suggests such a link, particularly in cases where distress is great

Table 2: Most common coaching issues.

Coaching Issue	Description	Freq. (*N*=136)
Career/Business	Includes career management and transitions, business generation, time management, professional development and strategic development issues	43
Relationships/ Interpersonal	Includes leadership and interpersonal skills development, team building and conflict management	40
Life Direction/ Goal Setting	Includes need to find direction, life purpose, goal clarification, resolving ambivalence, exploring options and assistance setting goals	40
Work/Life Balance	Includes developing stress reduction strategies, more family time, exploring new interests, finding hobbies and reduced hours in office	25
Mental Health	Includes issues related to developing self-esteem, negative life events, social isolation and distress	15
Financial	Includes debt reduction, increasing savings, financial and retirement planning	12
Health & Fitness	Includes increasing exercise levels, improved dietary habits, more sleep, weight reduction and more holiday time	11

enough to motivate clients to seek assistance. As we shall soon show, recent evidence suggests that serious mental health issues are being taken into coaching engagements. However, given that few coach training programmes offer any formal training in the recognition or referral of mental health issues, it is unlikely that practitioners are adequately equipped to deal with such situations (Grant & Zackon, 2004).

Background experience and coach training

In this section, participants were asked to indicate: (i) which industry they spent most time working in prior to becoming a coach; (ii) what sort of coach specific training they had received; and (iii) what forms of coaching-related experience they had acquired.

Industry background. As can be seen in Table 3, the industry group most well represented in this sample was consulting. Whilst this was not unexpected, the disparity between consulting and other corporate sector groups (particularly human resources and trainers) was surprising, as was the small number of human service professionals (e.g. counsellors, psychologists, social workers) who, when taken together, accounted for only 20 per cent of the sample. Other industry groups accounted for seven per cent of responses and included the armed services, information technology, sport and recreation, tourism and the dramatic arts. Of course, caution should be exercised in interpreting these results, as the location for the survey (the ICFA conference) most likely did not attract a representative sample of practitioners from the broader coaching community, rather a disproportionate number of coaches affiliated to the ICFA.

Coach specific training. Over 90 per cent of coaches in this sample reported having completed some form of training. These included training within a coach training school (62 per cent), tertiary study in a

coaching related field (such as psychology or social work) (20 per cent) or training in a helping-related methodology (e.g. in-house workshops) or Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) (13 per cent). Of this training, 68 per cent of qualifications were obtained within the last five years, with 84 per cent obtained within the last 10 years. Encouragingly, only five per cent of respondents reported having no coach-specific training at all and only two per cent had received some form of short in-house training or intensive workshop.

Coaching-related experience. Finally, respondents reported on background experience that could broadly be defined as 'coaching' because these experiences either developed or broadened core coaching skills. Most popular amongst these were training (57 per cent), consulting (41 per cent), counselling (48 per cent) and natural therapies (33 per cent). Less frequently reported experience included psychology (31 per cent), meditation (10 per cent), social work (nine per cent), youth work and sport (both eight per cent). Interestingly, while 31 per cent of respondents claim an experiential background in psychology, less than 20 per cent indicated any formal tertiary level study in behavioural science. This may indicate a lack of clarity over the boundaries between practice in psychology and other forms of helping relationship.

Ethics and professional affiliations

Participants were also asked to confirm how they informed their clients about ethical standards in coaching practice. In this regard, 89 per cent of the coaches confirmed that they provided their clients with some form of ethical instruction, whilst 11 per cent did not. Of those that did, 40 per cent gave a verbal explanation, 11 per cent provided a written hand-out and 49 per cent provided both.

Only 23 per cent of respondents reported no professional affiliations. Of the remainder, many of the coaches held multiple affiliations, with the International Coach Federation (ICF; 57 per cent) most strongly represented. Coaches also reported affiliations with Coachville (30 per cent), the Australian Psychological Society (12 per cent), the Psychologists Registration Board (10 per cent) and a number of other institutions (13 per cent) such as the Australian Institute of Management and the Australian Association of Career Counsellors.

Discussion of survey results

As reported earlier, there has been at least one other attempt to sketch the contours of the Australian coaching industry, albeit one segment of the industry: business coaching firms (Clegg *et al.*, 2003). In contrast, the current study has been broader in its scope, focusing on individual practitioners (rather than firms) and without segmenting the industry according to niche specialisations

Table 3: Background experience and coach training.

Industry Sector	%	Type of Coach Training	%
Consulting	24	Coach Training School	62
Human Resources	14	Tertiary Institution	20
Counselling/Psychology	14	Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP)	11
Training	13	No formal training	5
Education	11	Other	2
Marketing	8		
Finance	5		
Social Work	4		
Others	7		

(e.g. business coaching). Whilst these studies might appear to be qualitatively different, we would argue these differences are only superficial and that these two studies are entirely complementary.

For example, although the Clegg study focused on business coaching 'firms', the majority of these entities operated with less than two people (of which 48 per cent were one-person practices) and only 12 per cent of respondents reported an exclusive focus on business coaching. Indeed, data from both studies suggests that the Australian coaching industry is not yet mature enough to allow meaningful segmentations of the industry. That is, the Clegg study found that 51 per cent of respondents reported offering at least two other types of coaching service, whilst no niche specialisation was reported by 45 per cent of coaches in our sample.

A diverse industry. Apart from validating many of Clegg *et al.*'s (2003) earlier findings, this study also extends them. Most notably, the findings have shown the great diversity that exists within the Australian coaching industry. Despite the existence of a small core of highly experienced practitioners, the vast majority of coaches appear to have little coaching experience and report a great diversity in skills and experience.

There are at least two reasons why the industry might reflect such diversity. First, coaching is a 'feel good' industry and rightly promoted as a dynamic, future-focused and strengths-based form of human helping. As such, it has obvious and wide-ranging appeal. After all, what could be more satisfying than assisting another to scale the self-actualised heights of their Maslovian pyramid? Increasingly, coaching appears to be attracting the attention of people in established occupations who seek either a more meaningful career (e.g. a management consultant who wants to become an executive coach) or an expanded practice (e.g. clinical psychologist and life coach).

Second, the diversity of the coaching industry may reflect the lack of barriers to entry. It is not difficult to become a coach. The Australian coaching industry is free from any form of regulation. One has only to decide that they will become a coach and secure their first client to begin coaching. Just as significantly, getting started requires only a small investment of capital and has few overheads. Hence, with no barriers to entry and little financial outlay, a career in coaching may appear very accessible, financially viable and immediate.

For some, diversity might be perceived as a major strength of the coaching industry, with consumers able to choose from a greater range of practitioners and approaches than would be available if the industry were regulated. Of course, this presupposes that consumers know what they are looking for in coaching services and are thus capable of making informed decisions. Yet, as evidence we are about to present will suggest, the general public may not understand the nature of coaching or the coaching industry and, if so, they are likely to find the industry difficult to navigate.

Of greater significance to the present discussion, however, is the observation that relatively few respondents (20 per cent) reported any formal training in psychology or the helping professions (e.g. counselling, social work, nursing). Given that these professions dedicate themselves to the mental and physical health needs of individuals, this result was somewhat surprising. Even more surprising was the finding that a much larger proportion of respondents (31 per cent) claimed an experiential background in psychology. The precise nature of this psychological experience is unclear. However, it seems that for a significant proportion of respondents, experience in psychology is not linked with formal training. This may reflect a very broad definition of psychology, such as used in the personal development/self-help genre, or it may indicate a bias toward using personal development efforts as a basis for credentialing. At any rate, it is an issue that warrants further investigation, and suggests psycholo-

gists need to have a stronger presence in coaching.

Indeed, the call for psychologists to become more involved in coaching has existed for sometime (Brotman *et al.*, 1998; Garman *et al.*, 2000; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001) and there is increasing evidence that these calls have not gone unheeded (Cavanagh, Grant & Kemp, 2005; Green *et al.*, 2005; Spence & Grant, 2005). Nevertheless, a lack of clarity around psychological services in the minds of coaches is worrying given the findings of two recent studies in the area of life coaching (Green *et al.*, 2005; Spence & Grant, 2005).

These studies examined the efficacy of individuals and group-based life coaching programs. Given the distinction that is regularly made between coaching and psychotherapy (i.e. 'coaching is not therapy'), these studies both screened the initial pool of participants for high levels of psychopathology using a mental health screening tool, the Brief Symptoms Inventory (BSI, Derogatis, 1993). Interestingly, this screening procedure detected the presence of unexpectedly high levels of psychological distress in both samples. With the BSI criterion set at two standard deviations above the mean, both studies reported that 52 per cent and 24 per cent of their initial samples met (or exceeded) these levels. In both cases these participants were excluded from further participation and offered a clinical referral. These findings are important as they say something about the likelihood that clinical concerns will emerge in coaching engagements.

Whilst it is tempting to suggest that the results of Green *et al.* (2005) and Spence and Grant (2005) reflect a publicly held perception of coaching as 'socially acceptable therapy', it should be acknowledged that the studies in question were offering free life coaching and may have attracted participants for many different reasons. However, these initial participants must also have perceived coaching to be a plausible option for addressing their deeper psychological concerns, which may invalidate the 'free coaching' explanation. For these reasons, our claims can only be advanced tentatively (as these studies did not set out to directly investigate the public perception of coaching), however, it does seem plausible that coaching may be attracting a subset of people with clinical concerns (e.g. depression) who wish to avoid the stigma attached to therapy or counselling.

Mental health issues in coaching: Importance and impact

While coaching seeks to assist people to enact change, it is often carried out under the assumption that one is dealing with individuals who are not suffering from clinical levels of distress. This assumption justifies coaches in taking a direct and robust and challenging approach with clients. Hence, the presence of significant levels of distress and/or psychopathology may be of major importance to well-being of the coachee and success of the coaching project. For example, a person suffering from unrecognised depression may willingly and eagerly identify stretching goals in the hope that their attainment may help 'make things better'. Unfortunately, the impact of depression on energy and motivation may mean that the person is unable to rise to, or maintain the goal-directed behaviour required by such a 'challenging' coaching process (Cavanagh, 2005). What ensues may be a pattern of regular non-completion of set coaching actions, followed by (at best) disengagement from the coaching process. More likely, however, for such a person, coaching may be experienced as yet another in a series of failures, i.e. yet more evidence that they are unable to measure up to what they see as the legitimate demands of life. This negative ruminative cycle is likely to worsen a depressive episode and may even give rise to potentially dangerous levels of hopelessness and suicidal ideation.

Despite the considerable diversity that exists in the coaching industry, most coaches appear to unite around at least one common

understanding: *coaching is not therapy*. Indeed, most coaching engagements are usually prefaced by an explanation that coaching is *not* concerned with treating deep personal problems (the aim of therapy and counselling), but rather to assist healthy people unlock more of their potential and become more effective (Cavanagh & Grant, 2004; Peltier, 2001; Williams, 2004).

Given this focus, it might be expected that a large number of coaches have little or no training or experience in dealing with mental health issues. The preliminary findings of our study are consistent with this expectation. Less than 20 per cent of the sample indicated a background in the helping professions (such as psychology, counselling or social work). At least superficially, there would appear to be a significant lack of mental health specific knowledge and training. As a result, it is doubtful whether many coaches are well equipped to effectively recognise mental health issues in their clients, or to assess their own capacity to assist clients whose psychological status (e.g. mental health issues, personality styles) make them challenging individuals to coach (Cavanagh, 2005).

This is concerning given the earlier reviewed evidence that suggests coaches are almost certain to encounter significant mental health issues at some point in their coaching practice. Indeed, as Table 2 indicates, over 10 per cent of coaches indicate that they regularly deal with issues often associated with mental health problems. As such, it seems appropriate that further research address two important questions:

Question 1: What guidance do coaches receive in the appropriate handling of mental health issues? A recent review of courses offered by coach training providers revealed that mental health training is not currently represented in the vast majority of course descriptions (Grant & Zackon, 2004). The majority of the coaches (62 per cent) reported here received their training from a coach training school. One must conclude that most coaches are left to develop their own approach to addressing mental health issues with minimal guidance (if they do so at all).

One form of guidance freely available to practicing coaches are the ethical guidelines of industry bodies. According to the data presented earlier, 57 per cent of respondents were members of the ICF and 89 per cent of the total sample provided their clients with some form of ethical instruction. As such, it would appear that a large number of Australian coaches are 'bound' by the ethical guidelines and standards of conduct advanced by that organisation.

However, a review of the ICF Code of Ethics (ICF, 2005) reveals no mention of mental health issues and only vague references to scenarios where mental health issues might be inferred. For example, whilst provisions 18, 19, 20 and 21 (see Table 4) are designed to ensure that coaches act in the best interests of clients, there was little or no readily available information regarding referral procedures at the time of writing (e.g. types of alternative assistance, how to approach a referral conversation, or building a referral network). Encouragingly, we note that some mental health related guidelines have been developed elsewhere by the ICF (i.e. 'Top Ten Indicators to Refer to a Mental Health Professional'). While a welcome development, these guidelines may encourage an overly simplistic approach to mental health issues as they only list of the common symptoms of major depression. There is no mention of anxiety disorders, personality disorders, or any other forms of mental disturbance likely to be seen in coaching.

In sum, it appears that the majority of coaches may have little knowledge, experience or guidance for dealing with mental health issues that may arise during the course of a coaching engagement.

Question 2: In an unregulated industry, what duty of care does a coach owe their client? The ICF is one of the few coaching organisations to have articulated a framework for ethical practice. Anecdotal reports suggest that these principles have also been adopted by many coaches

Table 4: ICF standards for professional conduct with clients.

Standard	Description
# 18	I will respect the client's right to terminate coaching at any point during the process. I will be alert to indications that the client is no longer benefiting from our coaching relationship.
# 19	If I believe the client would be better served by another coach, or by another resource, I will encourage the client to make a change.
# 20	I will suggest that my clients seek the services of other professionals when deemed necessary.
# 21	I will take all reasonable steps to notify the appropriate authorities in the event a client discloses an intention to endanger self or others.

not affiliated with the ICF. Whilst this is undoubtedly a good thing, one wonders whether these guidelines are adequate for discharging the legal and moral obligations coaches have towards their clients.

From a legal standpoint, the absence of any Australian case law means that legal determinations have not yet been passed down for the guidance of coaching practitioners. Whilst it is possible that such determinations may never be made, it seems more likely (given that Australia is becoming increasingly litigious – see Betts, 2004) that the activities of the coaching industry may be subject to legal scrutiny at some point in the future. As such it is worth briefly considering what conditions would contribute to a determination of negligence in a coaching engagement.

According to Katter (1999), any claim of negligence must first prove the existence of a *duty of care* between two persons. For this, it would be necessary to show that: (i) a coach could reasonably foresee that the coachee would be harmed by action or inaction on their part; (ii) a close, causal relationship existed (proximity); and (iii) it is fair, just and reasonable for the law to impose that duty on a coach (Katter, 1999). Given this set of conditions, it is quite conceivable that a legal duty of care could be demonstrated to exist in a coaching relationship. The following hypothetical case study outlines a set of circumstances in which such a determination might be made:

> A client with a history of depression presents for career coaching. After agreeing the desired coaching outcome (e.g. career transition), the client and coach set some intermediate (sub) goals and plan a course of action. Before too long, however, the client begins to experience difficulties, fails to meet agreed targets and starts to feel inadequate. Despite the coach's best attempts to support the client with encouragement and revised goals, the client continues to under-perform, begins missing sessions and finally discontinues coaching amid feelings of worthlessness. The coach, whilst puzzled by the client's behaviour, has no knowledge of the client's clinical history and does not offer a clinical referral. Meanwhile, the client experiences a depressive episode and attempts to commit suicide. Upon recovering the client files a motion and sues for negligence, arguing that the coach had a duty to investigate the client's history of mental health and to refer to an appropriate mental health professional.

In this scenario, according to Katter's criteria, it might be argued that a coach, as a paid 'expert' in human behaviour, is obligated to take action to determine what is *reasonably foreseeable* (the first requirement) in a coaching engagement (including asking about any history of mental illness), and that

the personal nature of a coaching setting amply provides for such enquiries. In addition, the client might argue that coaching relationships, with its focus on personal accountability for inaction, helped to cause the depressive episode that led to the self-harm (the second requirement). If (i) and (ii) are successfully argued then, according to Katter's guidelines, it may be considered fair, just and reasonable (the third requirement) to impose a duty of care on the coach. Although somewhat simplistic, we believe that this example demonstrates how a legal duty of care might be determined, and that existing frameworks of ethical coaching practice do not adequately guide practitioners in how to discharge such duties.

Limitations of the present study

This paper set out to draw together two strands of coaching research. On one hand it considered survey data indicating a considerable degree of diversity of skills, experience and training within the Australian coaching industry, and on the other, empirical data suggesting that coaching is attracting individuals who may wish to address an array of mental health issues without the stigma often associated with therapy or counselling. In doing so, we have sought to promote discussion about the emergence of mental health issues in coaching, outlined the *legal* duty of care owed by a coach to a client, and questioned whether coaches possess the requisite knowledge and skills to adequately discharge these responsibilities.

Whilst the synthesis of these research findings has been an important step in addressing questions of importance for the professionalisation of the coaching industry, it would be premature to draw any firm conclusions from the data given certain limitations of these studies. For example, we are not able to report a response rate for our survey. Whilst we do know that 148 out of 400 delegates (37 per cent) did complete the survey, we know nothing about the characteristics of the non-respondents, including their reasons for not responding. More importantly, in distributing the survey at an industry conference, it is highly likely that sample was biased and non-representative of the broader coaching community. As such, it is difficult to make generalisations about the Australian coaching industry from the available data.

In addition, some items in the survey questionnaire may have been too open to interpretation and not permitted an accurate assessment of individual characteristics. For example, whilst the item: 'What forms of coaching-related experience have you had?' was designed to tap into experiences that either developed or broadened core coaching skills (e.g. counselling), it may be that respondents were biased towards reporting greater levels of experience by incorporating experience only tangentially related to coaching (e.g. interactions with children).

Finally, whilst the life coaching data presented in this paper has been presented as evidence for a public misperception of coaching as 'socially acceptable therapy', this cannot be firmly concluded as this was not directly investigated by either Green *et al.* (2005) or Spence and Grant (2005). As such, the field would be enhanced by an investigation of publicly held perceptions, both about the nature of coaching and attitudes towards the coaching industry. Some further recommendations will now be made for the benefit of future researchers.

Directions for future research

Whilst this paper has provided a first step in developing a detailed profile of the Australian coaching industry, several issues are worthy of consideration by future researchers. In our view, the issue of greatest importance relates to the mental health needs of clients and several questions are posed to help guide future efforts.

When a mental health issue arises in coaching, how does it emerge? While mental health issues may be indicated by a range of obvious signs of

distress or disorientation (e.g. crying), experience suggests that may clients with mental health issues present at coaching in ways that may mask the presence of mental health issues, or at least make them more difficult to detect. For example, the socially anxious client may present with goals around enhancing presentation skills rather than a frank admission of debilitating anxiety in social settings. Seriously depressed clients may present seeking assistance with time management, procrastination, career change, or even attaining unrealistic stretch goals.

While some research does exist linking the type of personal goals adopted by individuals to the development of negative affect and vulnerability to depression (Emmons, 1992; Street, 2002), there is no research to date investigating the relationship between goals and mental health in coaching clients. As personal goals are the usual starting point in any coaching relationship, one avenue for future research would be to study the presenting issues of coaching clients (expressed as personal goals) and correlate these with well-established measures of psychopathology.

How do coaches define 'mental health issues'? Do they recognise them when they arise? Approximately 10 per cent of coaches in this survey reported that self-esteem, negative life events, social isolation and distress were all issues that they commonly encountered in coaching. Such issues may reflect deeper psychological distress and, hence, may indicate the presence of mental health concerns. The current research does not indicate whether respondents make any substantial distinction between issues such as *'improve my career prospects'* and *'improve my self-esteem'*, nor whether they are likely to investigate for potential mental health difficulties. Thus, another avenue for research could be to assess coaches' perceptions of issues that are inappropriate for coaching, and to determine how adept coaches are at recognising the presence of underlying psychological issues and implementing appropriate referral procedures.

What mental health training does the industry provide? Having identified mental health issues as an area of importance to practicing coaches, it would be useful to examine what level of mental health training is currently provided within the industry. As such, a content analysis of the various curriculum offered by coach training providers would be helpful for both identifying whether a training need exists in the preparation of Australian coaches and for making recommendations about appropriate syllabus.

Some general comments. Ultimately the longevity of the coaching industry will be governed by its ability to deliver value in an ethical and professional manner to individuals, groups, organisations and the broader community. Whilst Cavanagh and Grant (2004) have suggested that this is best achieved by 'developing a widespread standard of practice that incorporates theoretically guided and empirically tested models and techniques' (p.13), only a small amount of empirical work has yet been conducted and little is known about the theoretical perspectives that inform coaching practice in Australia.

Aside from those important considerations, the ability of the coaching industry to 'deliver value' is tied to the ability of those within the industry to uphold their duty of care towards clients. We hope that the current longitudinal study will assist the both consumer of coaching services, coach training providers and coaches by providing a better understanding of profile of the coaching community and identifying where some critical training needs exist.

Conclusion

Whilst 'coaching is not therapy' has become a catch-cry throughout the coaching industry (Cavanagh & Grant, 2004), evidence suggests that coaching may be perceived somewhat differently by potential consumers (Green *et al.*, 2005: Spence & Grant,2005). It seems highly probable that, for a subset of people with clinical issues (such as anxiety and depression), coaching

may be seen an alternative to therapy or counselling, one that is stripped of its social stigma and negative stereotypes.

This evidence suggests important mental health issues are likely to arise in coaching. In our view this presents coaches with a number of challenges and opportunities. Coaches face the challenges of making judgements about the nature of the client's issues and limits of their competence, and then presenting their concerns to the client and referring appropriately where necessary. In this, coaches have to tread the fine line between identifying when pathology needs to be addressed and pathologising the client (Maddux, 2002). This challenge introduces added complexity to the coaching engagement for which coaches need to be trained.

Furthermore, the process of referral is not an intrinsically attractive one. Many coaches may fear clients will become confused or angry when referral is attempted. In addition, referring clients away from coaching results in an immediate loss of income. Whilst these difficulties are undoubtedly trumped by a coach's duty of care, they also present as opportunities for coaches to demonstrate to clients that they offer a sophisticated and differentiated service to the market – one which adds real value to the client by ensuring the most appropriate intervention is selected. Thus, in developing an informed and professional strategy for dealing with mental health issues, coaches will be working towards discharging both a legal and ethical duty of care owed to their client, and moving the coaching industry toward a more professional footing.

Correspondence

Gordon B. Spence, Michael J. Cavanagh & Anthony M. Grant
Coaching Psychology Unit,
School of Psychology,
University of Sydney, Australia.
E-mail:
Gordon B.Spence:
gordons@psych.usyd.edu.au
Michael J. Cavanagh:
michaelc@psych.usyd.edu.au
Anthony M. Grant:
anthonyg@psych.usyd.edu.au

References

Berglas, S. (2002). The very real dangers of executive coaching. *Harvard Business Review,* June, 87–92.

Betts, J. (2004). Are we becoming more American? Class action litigation – Australia v United States. Retrieved 13 August 2005, from http://www.freehills.com.au/publications/publications_1582.asp

Brotman, L.E., Liberi, W.P. & Wasylyshyn, K.M. (1998). Executive coaching: The need for standards of competence. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 50*(1), 40–46.

Cavanagh, M. (2005). Mental health issues and challenging clients in executive coaching. In M. Cavanagh, A.M. Grant & T. Kemp (Eds.), *Evidence-based coaching: Theory, research and practice from the behavioural sciences* (Vol. 1, pp.21–36). Brisbane: Australian Academic Press.

Cavanagh, M. & Grant, A.M. (2004). Executive coaching in organisations: The personal is the professional. *International Journal of Coaching in Organisations, 2*(2), 6–15.

Cavanagh, M., Grant, A.M. & Kemp, T. (Eds.). (2005). *Evidence-based coaching: Theory, research and practice from the behavioural sciences* (Vol. 1). Brisbane: Australian Academic Press.

Clegg, S., Rhodes, C. & Kornberger, M. (2003). *An overview of the business coaching industry in Australia* (Working Paper). Sydney: The Australian Centre for Organisational, Vocational and Adult Learning.

Derogatis, L.R. (1993). *BSI Brief Symptom Inventory: Administration, scoring, and procedures manual* (4th ed.). Minneapolis, MN: National Computer Systems.

Emmons, R.A. (1992). Abstract versus concrete goals: personal striving level, physical illness, and psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 62*(2), 292–300.

Garman, A.N., Whiston, D.L. & Zlatoper, K.W. (2000). Media perceptions of executive coaching and the formal preparation of coaches. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 52*(3), 201–205.

Grant, A.M. (2003). *Keeping up with the cheese! Research as a foundation for professional coaching.* Paper presented at the First International Coach Federation Research Symposium, November, Denver, US.

Grant, A.M. & Zackon, R. (2004). Executive, workplace and life coaching: Findings from a large-scale survey of international coach federation members. *International Journal of Evidenced-Based Coaching and Mentoring, 2*(2), 1–15.

Green, L.S., Oades, L.G. & Grant, A.M. (2005). An evaluation of a life-coaching group programme: Initial findings from a waitlist control study. In M. Cavanagh, A.M. Grant & T. Kemp (Eds.), *Evidenced-based coaching: Theory, research and practice from the behavioural sciences* (Vol. 1, pp.127–141). Brisbane: Australian Academic Press.

ICF (2005). The ICF Code of Ethics. Retrieved 12 August 2005, from http://www.coachfederation.org/ethics/ICF_Code_of_Ethics_01_22_05.pdf

Kampa-Kokesch, S. & Anderson, M. Z. (2001). Executive coaching: A comprehensive review of the literature. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 53*(4), 205–228.

Katter, N. (1999). *Duty of care in Australia.* Sydney: LBC.

Maddux, J.E. (2002). Stopping the 'madness': Positive psychology and the deconstruction of the illness ideology and the DSM. In C.R.S.S.J. Lopez (Ed.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp.13–25). New York: Oxford University Press.

Naughton, J. (2002). The coaching boom: Is it the long-awaited alternative to the medical model? *The Psychotherapy Networker, 42*, July/August, 1–10.

Peltier, B. (2001). *The psychology of executive coaching.* New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Spence, G.B. & Grant, A.M. (2005). Individual and group life coaching: initial findings from a randomised, controlled trial. In M. Cavanagh, A. M. Grant & T. Kemp (Eds.), *Evidenced-based coaching: Theory, research and practice from the behavioural sciences* (Vol. 1, pp.143–158). Brisbane: Australian Academic Press.

Street, H. (2002). Exploring relationships between goal setting, goal pursuit and depression: A review. *Australian Psychologist, 37*(2), 95–103.

Williams, P. (2004). The potential perils of personal issues in coaching the continuing debate: Therapy or coaching? What every coach must know! *International Journal of Coaching in Organisations, 2*(2), 21–30.

Experiences of coaching and stress in the workplace: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Kristina Gyllensten & Stephen Palmer

Objectives: *This paper will present the findings from a qualitative study exploring experiences of workplace coaching.*

Design: *The study adopted a qualitative design. Semi-structured interviews were used and the method of analysis was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Jaraman & Osborn, 1999).*

Methods: *Two large organisations participated and nine individuals, who had taken part in coaching, were interviewed. The interviews focused on the participants' experiences of coaching, and one of the topics investigated was coaching and stress.*

Results: *'Management of Stress' was identified as a main theme which, in turn, comprised of a number of sub-themes. According to these sub-themes coaching had helped the participants to reduce stress indirectly, to cope with stressful situations, and was a resource that the participants would consider using in the future. Moreover, coaching also had the potential to cause stress.*

Conclusions: *It was concluded that coaching could help to reduce stress indirectly and help individuals to cope with stressful situations. However, as coaching also had the potential to cause stress it was suggested that it was important that coaches clearly explain what can be expected from coaching. In addition, limitations with the study were discussed.*

Keywords: work-related stress, coaching, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, management of stress.

Coaching and stress

WORKPLACE STRESS CAUSES distress and ill health (Health and Safety Executive (HSE), 2001). There are many different definitions of stress and according to the HSE (2001) stress is *'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them'*. Within cognitive definitions of stress there is more focus on the perceptions of the individual. Palmer, Cooper and Thomas (2003) propose that *'stress occurs when the perceived pressure exceeds your perceived ability to cope'* (p.2).

A variety of interventions are used to tackle workplace stress (Cooper & Cartwright, 1997). One intervention that is not commonly associated with stress reduction is coaching. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that coaching can be useful in reducing stress (Busch & Steinmetz, 2002; Hearn, 2001; Jones, 1996; Meyer, 2003; Palmer, Tubbs & Whybrow, 2003). Hearn (2001) suggests that coaching can help individuals to identify stressors, develop strategies for change and maintain solutions. As well as tackling stress directly, coaching could reduce stress indirectly by helping an individual to reach their personal goals (e.g. improve performance, efficiency, or communication), and thereby decrease any stress caused by the perceived deficiency in the area targeted in coaching (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005a). However, it is also possible that coaching will increase awareness of work stressors that may or may not be tackled by the organisation. This increased awareness may lead to increased stress.

Whilst it is recognised that there is a lack of research on coaching effectiveness and on coaching and stress (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005a), the current qualitative and quantitative research in this area is reviewed below. Grant (2001, 2003) has conducted two quantitative studies investigating the effects of

coaching that demonstrate a positive impact of coaching on mental health. Grant (2001) found that cognitive coaching significantly reduced levels of depression and anxiety. Additionally, Grant (2003) reported that participation in a life coaching programme significantly reduced levels of depression, anxiety, and stress.

Compasspoint Nonprofit Services (2003) used both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the effects of coaching in a group of Executive Directors. The findings indicate that whilst there was no significant reduction of stress and burnout after coaching, coaching had helped participants to reduce stress by encouraging the coachees to take time for themselves regularly and by highlighting the importance of self care. Furthermore, the participants reported that they felt better equipped to cope with any future feelings of burnout as a result of the coaching.

Wales (2003) used a phenomenological approach to explore the experience of coaching in a group of managers. The coaching relationship provided a safe environment where the managers could share fears and anxieties, identify coping skills, and test new behaviours. Coaching was found to help the participants to reduce their experience of stress and manage their work/life balance. At the beginning of the coaching relationships, many of the participants reported that they had been experiencing high levels of stress. Following coaching the participants described themselves as more relaxed, less angry, and better able to understand and deal with work and personal pressures. Coaching had also helped the participants to become more proactive in dealing with the different roles in their lives.

Various case studies have reported that coaching was effective in reducing clients' stress levels (Hearn, 2001; Richard, 1999). A case study describing the coaching of a Regional Drug Strategy Manager was reported by Ascentia (2005). The coaching produced a number of benefits including stress reduction. Stress levels were reduced despite the fact that stress was not specifically targeted in the coaching, and the manager was going through challenging periods of change. In addition, the stress levels had also been reduced among the members of the manager's team.

The current study

The current study was Part III of a larger piece of research on coaching and stress. Part I of the research investigated whether coaching reduced stress. A quasi-experimental design was used and stress was measured before and after coaching. It was found that coaching did not significantly reduce stress (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005b). Part II of the research investigated whether there was a relationship between participation in coaching and levels of stress. A correlational design was used. Participation in coaching did not significantly predict levels of stress (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005c). Part III of the research used a qualitative methodology. A qualitative methodology was suitable as the aim with Part III of the research was to gain a deeper insight into the participants' experiences of coaching and their views and experiences of coaching and stress. The qualitative research process is flexible, interested in rich descriptions of the topic, and enables the discovery of novel themes (Denzin & Lincon, 2000; Holliday, 2002). This article will only present some of the findings from Part III of the study.

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.

Methods

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Phenomenology relates to the person's individual view of an event rather than an objective statement about the event (Smith,

1996). The present study used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyse the data from the semi-structured interviews. IPA is a practical and systematic approach to analysing rich data (Baker, Pistrang & Elliot, 2002). The main aim of IPA is to explore and understand meanings of experiences of the participants (Smith & Osborn, 2004). IPA has been used extensively in health psychology research but according to Smith and Osborn (2004) it is appropriate for a range of psychological research questions where the aim is to investigate the meaning of the participants' experiences. IPA recognises that the research process is dynamic, and the researcher takes an active role in attempting to get an insider's perspective of the participant's experience. However, this cannot be done directly or fully, but rather via a process of interpretation (Smith & Osborn, 2003). IPA assumes that there is a relationship between an individual's verbal accounts and their cognitions and emotions. Nevertheless, it is recognised that the relationship is complicated and individuals may have difficulties reporting what they are thinking or/and they may not want to self-disclose (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Participants

The participants in the current study were selected on the basis of having participated in workplace coaching and thereby being able to contribute to the research question as recommended by Smith and Osborn (2003). One UK organisation from the finance sector and one Scandinavian organisation from the telecommunications sector participated in the study. Both organisations mainly focused on telephone-based work and had in excess of 3000 employees. Potential participants were selected by a contact individual at each organisation. Overall, nine participants were interviewed, six were employees of the UK organisation and three were employees of the Scandinavian organisation. Six females and three males participated and the mean age of the interviewees was 33 years with a range of 23 to 52. Four of the participants held management positions and all nine worked full-time. All participants had taken part in coaching within their organisation.

Procedure

The interview schedule was based on the aim of the research and previous literature. Main topics included details of coaching, the coaching process, evaluation of coaching, and coaching and stress. The questions were piloted prior to the research interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used as this method is flexible, enables the collection of rich data, and is suitable for IPA studies (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The interviews took between 30 to 45 minutes and were recoded and transcribed in their entirety. The lines in each transcript were numbered for ease of reference. In the transcripts participants were assigned one of the first nine letters of the alphabet. The letter 'I' was used to denote the Interviewer.

UK organisation

The interviews with the participants from the UK organisation took place at one of the organisation's sites. Prior to the interview the participants were asked to read and sign a consent form indicating their understanding of the study and agreement to take part. The consent form stated the participants' rights to anonymity, withdrawal and ensured security of the data. The interviewer then asked the participants for permission to switch the tape recorder on and start the interview. At the end of the study the participants were invited to ask questions and they were informed that they were welcome to contact the researcher if they had any further questions or concerns regarding the research.

Scandinavian organisation

All interviews with the participants from the Scandinavian organisation took place over the telephone. Initially, the researcher contacted these participants via e-mail. This initial e-mail outlined the aim of the research, the confidentiality and anonymity

of the study and the right to withdrawal. If the participant replied to this e-mail and agreed to take part in the study the participants' e-mail reply was kept as a proof of their consent (all participants allowed the researcher to print and keep the e-mail). At the beginning of the telephone conversation the researcher asked for the participants' consent to switching the tape recorder on. Following this consent the researcher emphasised that participation was voluntary and that the participant should only agree to take part in the research if they had understood and agreed to the conditions outlined. Once the participant had given a verbal consent to taking part in the study the interview commenced. At the end of the interview the participants were invited to talk about any issues or ask questions related to the topic. They were also informed that they could contact the researcher if they wanted to discuss any questions or issues related to the interview.

Analysis

The analysis was conducted in accordance with Smith, Jarman and Osborn's (1999) guidelines to doing IPA. As suggested by Smith and Osborn (2003) an ideographic approach to analysis was used, where the analysis begins with a detailed investigation of a specific case before the other cases are incorporated and a more general categorisation emerge. In accordance with this approach one transcript was read a number of times and notes of anything significant or interesting were made. Prevalence within the data is not the only important factor when themes are selected: richness of text passages and ability to explain other aspects of the interview are also important factors (Smith, Jaraman & Osborn, 1999). The next step of the analysis involved reading the transcript again and recording the emerging themes. The themes were listed and connections between themes and superodinate concepts were noted. Finally, the themes were ordered coherently and a table of themes was produced. This process of analysis was repeated for the remaining transcripts and a final table of superordinate themes for the whole group was constructed. The main themes that emerged were: management of stress, confidence, the coaching relationship, coaching = investment in staff. As the topic of this article is coaching and stress the central focus will be on the main theme 'management of stress'. However, there will be a brief discussion of the other main themes.

Evaluating the analysis

The qualitative analysis is a subjective process and different researchers may have arrived at different conclusions. In IPA the researcher's personal frame of reference inevitably influences the analysis (Golsworthy & Coyle, 2001). It has been suggested that good qualitative practice involves researchers specifying their personal perspective relevant to the study, as this enable readers to interpret the researcher's analysis (Elliot, Fisher & Rennie, 1999). In this study the researcher's interpretative framework has been influenced by; training and practice in counselling psychology, particularly in working with issues of work stress; previous research on stress; and training in coaching psychology. As the researcher was aware of these factors from the beginning of the study much effort was made to 'bracket' (Baker *et al.*, 2002) preconceived ideas and expectations in order to minimise unwarranted idiosyncratic interpretations or unwarranted selective attention in the interviews.

Various criteria have been suggested for the evaluation of qualitative studies, and the following is a summary list of published guidelines: openness of theoretical framework by researchers (Baker *et al.*, 2002; Elliot *et al.*, 1999); situating the sample (Elliot *et al.*, 1999); methods described in detail to allow replication (Baker *et al.*, 2002); grounding the data and presentation of evidence (Baker *et al.*, 2002; Elliot *et al.*, 1999; Popay, Rogers & Williams, 1998; Smith, 1996); providing credibility checks by the use of an independent

audit, member checks or triangulation (Baker *et al.*, 2002; Elliot *et al.*, 1999; Smith, 1996); internal coherence of the data-based story/narrative (Elliot *et al.*, 1999; Popay *et al.*, 1998; Smith, 1996); limitations of the extension of the findings are specified (Elliot *et al.*, 1999; Popay *et al.*, 1998). The present study has attempted to address these guidelines in the following manner. The researcher's personal perspective has been highlighted and basic descriptive data about the participants have been presented. The methods of the study have been thoroughly described to allow replication. Examples of the data have been provided to illustrate each theme. The data has been presented in a narrative that aims to highlight the phenomenon under study in a coherent manner. Moreover, a summary of the analysis has been presented in a in a model that highlights the relationship between the themes. Finally, it is suggested that the findings should not be generalised to all coaching situations but only to the groups studied and possibly similar groups in similar settings. However, despite the fact that the findings are not generalisable to all coaching situations it is possible that coaches can benefit from some of the issues highlighted in the research.

Results

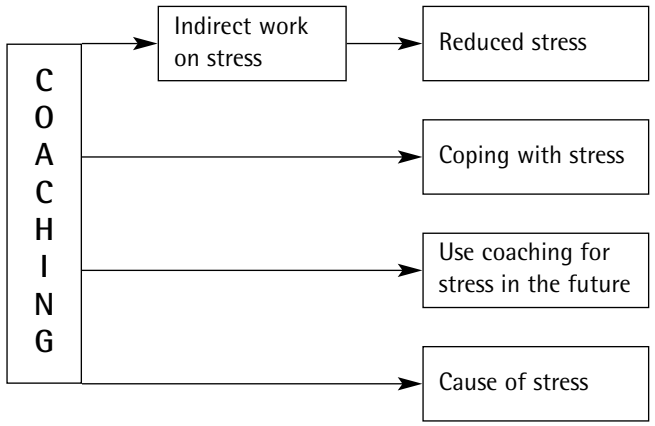
The management of stress

Management of stress was a main theme that emerged from the analysis. It is important to note that that this theme does not only highlight the positive impact of coaching in dealing with stress but also the negative aspects including coaching causing stress. Four sub-themes emerged and these included: indirect work on stress; coping with stress; use coaching for stress in the future; and cause of stress. Their relationship is depicted in Figure 1, 'The Management of Stress'.

Indirect work on stress

The participants had not sought coaching specifically to reduce stress. However, coaching appeared to help participants to reduce stress by helping them to manage other work-related problems that were causing them stress. Thus, it could be suggested that coaching reduced stress indirectly. One route coaching reduced stress indirectly was by helping participants to become more satisfied with their job role. Indeed, role ambiguity is a common stressor in the workplace:

Figure 1: The Management of Stress.



No, it definitely reduced the stress because by working on everything that we have worked on I feel happier in my role so I think it has definitely helped with stress. (B: 331–332)

Another indirect route to reduced stress was improved confidence. Confidence was one of the other main themes found in the analysis and many of the participants had sought coaching in order to increase confidence. Low confidence appeared to have a negative influence on well-being and performance. It was reported that when confidence and job-satisfaction were improved, as a result of the coaching, stress was reduced:

I didn't necessarily go to do the coaching to reduce stress, but I suppose it has done because I feel happier in what I am doing, and more confident, and organised. (B: 338–340)

According to some participants improved confidence automatically reduced stress:

But overall yes it reduced it, because by me feeling more confident I think that automatically reduces stress… (D: 379–380)

Pressure and high workload were sources of stress for the participants. Once again coaching helped to reduce stress indirectly by helping the participants to become more confident and assertive and decline extra work. Thus, it appeared that the coaching helped the participants to increase awareness of their own limitations regarding work demands and to clearly state these limitations at the workplace:

I know now when to say 'it is too much, we can't take on any more' and I feel that I will say that. Whereas previously I may have just said 'oh yes I will do it' and just end up worrying and getting stressed over it, so yes I do. (D: 414–417)

I used to sometimes feel that maybe I was taking on too much and ending up with too much work that I couldn't physically do. So in my mindset I know how much work I can take on and when to start refusing things you know. I will take on as much as I feel I can cope with. (E: 334–337)

Worrying about situations at work was another source of stress. Improved confidence lead to less worry about these work situations and this lead to reduced stress:

I would get stressed about worrying about things and, you know I would sort of, I would worry about going into team meetings so that would stress me. And because of this coaching and the goal of becoming more confident then that doesn't worry me anymore so I don't let it effect me. So yes from an indirect point of view I am less stressed than I was when I first started. (E: 368–372)

Uncertainty over dealing with problems at work was a major source of stress according to the participants. Discussing problems and problem solving were key activities of the coaching. Highlighting and discussing problems at work and developing new solutions helped to reduce stress:

…my coaching sessions also made some things easier for me to work with afterwards. Because I found new ways to do things, I found my way out of things that I thought 'how do I do that'. And then I discussed it… and that kind of clarity takes away the stress feeling. (J: 389–392)

You can't just all of a sudden eliminate all your problems in life, but you got to sit down and plan how you are going to tackle those problems. If you know that then it makes it so much easier to contend with and deal with. I think that has really helped over the last couple of years. (E: 447–451)

It was also suggested that coaching could play a role in preventing future stress by providing an opportunity to discuss problems and to find solutions, the inability to solve problems being an identified cause of stress:

Because if you have like things you have to do and you don't know how to do them I think it is

stressful. And coaching can help you to find out how to solve the problems, and in that way I think it can prevent future stress. (J: 399–401)

However, it is important to note that not all participants felt that coaching had helped them to reduce distress. It is, therefore, important to remember that stress is a complex phenomena that is influenced by a multitude of different factors:

I am not that susceptible to external factors, if I wake up in the morning feeling low that is the way it is regardless of what coaching I have done. (A: 539–540)

Coping with stress

Coaching was not always helpful in eliminating or reducing stress. Nevertheless, coaching helped some participants to cope with situations that were causing them stress:

I never doubted my ability to be competent. The thing that was always undermining me was my nervous reaction – it was something I could never ever cope with. I just hated that, and I just didn't want to feel it. What the coaching has helped me to do is help me deal with that stress. Not to eradicate it. (A: 615–618)

It has not reduced the feeling of pain. It has helped me to cope with it. (A: 660)

In the past some participants had felt unable to remain in distressing situations and had, therefore, avoided these situations. However, with the help of coaching, the participants were able to remain in and cope with distressing situations that they had been unable to tolerate in the past:

So whereas previously I would have run away and avoided the situation and those feelings, whereas now they are still there but I feel I can cope with them and sort of manage them. That is what coaching has helped me to do. (A: 623–625)

Yes, and I am able to sort of stay in there and live with it. As uncomfortable as it (presentations) is I am finding I can cope with it now, which previously I just couldn't have done. (A: 640-641)

Working in a new job role, that was different to the previous one, was identified as a cause of stress. The stress caused by this situation had been so serious for some employees that they had chosen to leave the organisation rather than to continue and face the new work situation. Coaching helped some participants to remain in the organisation and to cope with the new job role. Thus, coaching may have had an important organisational function in reducing staff turnover in a period of organisational change:

The job I applied for has completely changed. And quite a lot of people found that really difficult that change, because it is kind of an uncomfortable zone I suppose. And quite a few people left, but coaching has definitely helped with that. So I don't know, maybe if I did not have that support I don't know whether I would still be here. (B: 431–434)

Although coaching did not always manage to eliminate or even reduce stress some participants expressed hope that continuous work in coaching could help to eliminate the distress:

…I have obviously done loads of presentations in the past and just hated them, and never seeking opportunities and all the rest of it. It has helped me to be able to cope rather than eliminating my stress. So I mean you could ask me this question in 12 months time and I might have totally knocked the stress thing over. (A: 650–654)

Use coaching for stress in the future

As stated previously, the participants had not sought coaching in order to deal with what they perceived to be workplace stress. However, when discussing the usefulness of coaching in dealing with stress the participants any reported that they believed that coaching could be suitable:

I think if I did use coaching for stress, and that sort of thing, then it would help, but I think it

definitely would help, but it not something that I have used it for before. (B: 360–362)

But I think that using the tools from the coaching could have some positive effects so I would not be so stressed. (H: 393–394)

Although they had not used coaching for stress in the past, the participants considered going to coaching for stress problems in the future, with one of the participants contemplating booking further coaching sessions in order to deal with worry that was causing stress:

I mean I don't know whether it would be useful to book more coaching sessions, I might do it actually. I think I still could do with working on the worrying side of things, and worrying about what people think and that type of thing. I think I do put added stress and pressure on myself sometimes because of that. (D: 404–408)

Furthermore, the participants reported that they would recommend coaching to colleagues, as a means of tackling stress. Thus, increasing awareness in the workplace of the potential benefits of coaching:

But I know if any member of my team is suffering from stress I would direct them to go and see a coach. So I imagine that they would be quite good at sorting that out. (C: 395–396)

One explanation to why participants had not yet approached the coaches regarding problems with stress was because the stress problems they were facing were not viewed to be serious enough. There appeared to be a view that in order to seek coaching for stress there should be serious problems with stress:

I know that if I had a problem with it (stress) I would go to them and they would sort it out but I am not stressed above a level that I can work at. (C: 337–338)

When the participants considered where they would like to seek help if they suffered from stress it appeared that that seeing a coach was preferable to seeing a manager. This was principally for reasons of confidentiality, the participants believing a meeting with a coach as being more confidential than one with a manager:

I think most people would rather go to a coach to talk about stress than their team manager. Because once again if you talk to your team manager then it is going to go down on your file, it is just you don't want it on your paper 'he suffers from stress, bla, bla, bla'. (C: 390–393)

Similarly, for some participants seeing a coach was viewed as preferable to seeing a counsellor in order to deal with stress. The reason for this was that seeking help from a counsellor made the problem seem more serious. This indicates that employees may be more willing to participate in coaching than in counselling. One possible reason for this is that there may be a stigma associated with counselling:

Yes, because it if you go to a counsellor then that makes it real. If you go to a coach then that is just chatting to one of your friends about it. Do you see what I mean, if, I think actually counselling would be the next step along from a coach, but I think most people would rather go to a coach and try and sort it out that way. (C: 400–403)

However, it is important to highlight that this view, that attending coaching implied a less serious problem, was not held by all participants, some believing that coaching was very similar to counselling, and counselling psychology:

I mean, at university I did do a bit of counselling psychology and that is what coaching is at the end of the day in a way isn't it. It is like being a counsellor to someone. (D: 179–181)

Cause of stress

As well as being able to reduce stress or help participants to cope with stress it was also reported that coaching could in fact cause

stress. It was pointed out that openness to coaching was an important factor in determining its usefulness. For those coachees who considered coaching a 'waste of time' it actually became a source of stress. This was based upon the perception that the time taken up by coaching could be used in a more constructive manner. The attitudes of the coachees, therefore, being vital:

But you have to get to a point where you can actually see that you get something out of the coaching. Because if you are sitting there and you think it is a waste of time you will just be a bit more stressed knowing that you could have used your time much better at work instead of being coached. So you have to have a coaching set-up that you feel will give you something otherwise it won't help you. (H: 435–439)

Nevertheless, the skills and competence of the coach was also viewed as important. If the coach was insufficiently skilled the coaching session could be perceived as a 'waste of time':

Well it depends on the opinion about it. Because if you go there and you feel it is a waste of time and you keep on insisting it is a waste of time, it will be a waste of time. So somehow you have to decide that this is something I will get something good from, so you go into it with a positive mind. But also of course you need to have someone coaching you that knows what they are doing. Because otherwise I guess it could be a waste of time. (H: 444–449)

Another reason to why coaching could be perceived as unproductive, and thereby cause stress, was if there was an over emphasis on discussion that did not lead to any action. It would appear that the participants sought practical results from the coaching:

Sometimes there is too little action. (G: 452) When it takes too much time or resources. I think it tends to be when we just talk and talk and nothing happens. (G: 456–457)

The appreciation and perceived benefits of coaching did not seem to be immediate for all participants. Indeed, although participants reported that there was a risk that coaching could be unproductive, there appeared, however, to be a process in which the participants could learn to appreciate coaching after a period of time:

Well I think the first time I participated in it I was very disappointed, I did not see any meaning in it and I left with the feeling that I had spent a lot of time and didn't get anything with me. (H: 119–121) But the following times I think it improved very much. And at the end of it, it was really good. (H: 125–126)

Coaching could also cause stress by encouraging the participants to focus on their problem(s). By focusing on the problem(s) at the beginning of the coaching the participant became more aware of the extent of the problem and this, subsequently, could cause distress:

I think my first couple of sessions in a way made me feel worse. Because it was making me focus more on the problem, so I was becoming more conscious that the problem existed and thinking 'god yes I do, do that', and I was focusing on my own behaviour. But once I got over that in the long run it helped definitely. (D: 157–161)

Although the coaching initially caused increased stress it did, however, eventually help to reduce stress. Once again there would appear to be a process in which the participants could derive benefit from coaching after a period of time:

I think like I say in the early stages possibly it makes you feel worse, but then once you really get to grips with everything it makes you feel a lot better. (D: 215–217)

Furthermore, participants highlighted the potential risk associated with leaving coaching before these initial feeling of stress had been worked through. Thus, there

appeared to be a risk that coachees would leave coaching feeling more distressed than when they entered:

And if they weren't prepared to see it through it could have a negative effect. But as long as people are prepared to see it through to the end I think it definitely has a positive effect. (D: 294–296)

Overview of additional main themes

Management of stress is the central focus of this result section. However, a brief outline of the three additional themes is presented below.

The three additional themes that emerged from the analysis included: the coaching relationship, confidence, and coaching = investment in staff. 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. Coaching also helped to increase the participants' confidence and this lead to other benefits, including improved job performance, assertiveness, and well-being outside work. A valuable coaching relationship and increased confidence did of course have a positive impact on the management of stress.

There appeared to be some initial scepticism towards the concept of coaching, however, once the participants had attended coaching it was viewed as a sign that the organisation valued and invested in their staff.

Discussion

The participants in the current study had not sought coaching in order to tackle stress directly. Nevertheless, the participants expressed that coaching had helped them to reduce stress indirectly, for example, by helping to improve confidence and problem solving skills. However, coaching did not always help to reduce stress and it is important to recognise that stress is a complex process that can be influenced by many factors other than coaching. Coaching had helped some individuals to cope with stressful situations. Thus, the coaching had helped them to stay in stressful situations rather than avoid them. Avoidance behaviour can be a behavioural response to stress (Palmer *et al.*, 2003). It was further found that coaching was viewed as a resource that the participants would consider using to tackle workplace stress in the future. However, coaching also had the potential to cause stress. Coaching could cause stress by being perceived as a waste of time and by not leading to any action. This could be the result of a coachee not being open to the coaching process or an unskilled coach. Some participants reported that there was a process of learning to appreciate coaching. Increased focus on the target problem was a further example of how coaching could increase stress. This could occur at the early stages of coaching and participants reported that it was important to stay in the coaching to work through this stage.

The finding that coaching helped to reduce stress was similar to the results from the Wales (2003) qualitative study with a sample of managers. According to Wales (2003) coaching had helped to reduce stress and anger and had increased awareness and capability of dealing with pressures. Similarly, Grant (2001, 2003) found that cognitive coaching and life coaching significantly improved mental health. The findings from the current qualitative study were, however, different from those in the quantitative studies conducted in Part I and Part II of the same larger piece of research. Part I of the study found that coaching did not significantly reduce stress (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005b) and Part II found that coaching was not a significant predictor of levels of stress (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005c). Similarly, stress levels were not significantly reduced after coaching in the quantitative part of CompassPoint Nonprofit Services' (2003) study. However, the qualitative part of the same study found that coaching had helped to reduce stress. The CompassPoint Nonprofit Services' (2003) study is particularly interesting to compare with the current

study as both found that the qualitative and quantitative methodologies produced somewhat different findings regarding stress reduction and coaching. A possible reason for this inconsistency is that there is a problem measuring reduction of stress with questionnaires. The stress process may be too complex and hold so many different meanings for individuals that a questionnaire is not the most suitable way of measuring it. On the other hand, the inconsistencies between the qualitative and quantitative approaches may reflect the fact that the individuals who were interviewed were in a minority or that they felt required to report positive aspects of coaching. Further research is needed in order to clarify this discrepancy.

Limitations

Issues relating to qualitative research designs have been discussed under 'Evaluation of Analysis'. Nevertheless, there are some further limitations of the study that needs to be highlighted. It is always possible that recruitment bias will have an impact on the research when the sample is relatively small (Chapman, 2002). Indeed, it may be the case that only those individuals who considered that their coaching was successful agreed to take part in the study. Moreover, the contact persons, based at the organisations, may unintentionally (or intentionally) have put forward individuals who were positive towards coaching. Six of the participants worked in the UK organisation and three worked in the Scandinavian. All interviews were analysed as one sample as they had all experienced workplace coaching within their organisations and, therefore, would be able to inform the researcher about the topic under investigation. However, there is the risk that the results were consequently more representative of the experiences of coaching in the UK organisation. It would have been preferable to have a more equal amount of participants from both organisations. A further limitation was that the coaching differed between the organisations. Problem solving models were an important part of both organisations' coaching approaches. However, the organisations also used different coaching techniques and theories.

Implications and conclusions

The current study found that coaching was helpful in reducing stress indirectly. This would suggest that it could be useful to introduce coaching in organisations that are facing problems with workplace stress. It was also found that coaching had helped participants to cope with stressful situations such as changing job roles. Thus, organisations that are planning major changes to job roles may benefit from employing coaches to help the employees through the period of change. Furthermore, the participants were positive towards using coaching for stress. Indeed, participants in both the current study and in previous research (Gyllensten, Palmer & Farrants, 2005) have reported that coaching is viewed as preferable to counselling for workplace stress. A potential reason for this being that counselling implies a more serious problem with stress and may carry a stigma. Consequently, coaching has the potential to reach the individuals who are not comfortable seeking counselling for stress at their workplace. In addition, it is important to note that the study also found that coaching can actually cause stress. Based on the participants' views it is important that the coaching leads to some form of action. It is also important that the coach explains what the coachee can expect from coaching and highlights that excessive focus on the target problem may cause an initial increase in distress. If the coachee is aware of what to expect they can then make an informed choice regarding the suitability of coaching and thereby reduce the likelihood of it being perceived as a 'waste of time' for both the coachee and coach. Finally, the current study highlights the need for further qualitative and quantitative research on coaching and stress. Future research could investigate the discrepancy between qualitative and quanti-

tative approaches. Further, quantitative studies could employ larger sample sizes in order to investigate the effectiveness of coaching in reducing stress and qualitative studies could investigate the process of coaching as well as the outcome.

Authors details
Kristina Gyllensten & Stephen Palmer
City University, London, UK.

Correspondence
Professor Stephen Palmer
Coaching Psychology Unit,
Department of Psychology,
City University,
Northampton Square,
London, EC1V 0HB, UK.
E-mail:
K.Gyllensten@gmail.com
dr.palmer@btinternet.com

References

Ascentia (2005). Case studies. *International Journal of Evidence-Based Coaching and Mentoring, 3*(1).

Baker, C., Pistrang, N. & Elliot, R. (2002). *Research methods in clinical psychology: An introduction to students and practitioners* (2nd ed.). Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Bush, C. & Steinmetz, B. (2002). Stress management and management. *Gruppdynamic und Organisationsberatung, 33,* 385–401.

Chapman, E. (2002). The social and ethical implications of changing medical technologies: The views of people living with genetic conditions. *Journal of Health Psychology, 7,* 195–206.

CompassPoint Nonprofit Services (2003). *Executive coaching project: Evaluation of findings.* Retrieved 28 January, 2005, from www.compasspoint.org

Cooper, C.L. & Cartwright, S. (1997). An intervention strategy for workplace stress. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 43,* 7–16.

Denzin, N.K. & Lincon, Y.S. (2000). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincon (Eds.), *The discipline and practice of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp.1–14). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Elliot, R., Fisher, C.T. & Rennie, D.L. (1999). Evolving guidelines for publication of qualitative research studies in psychology and related fields. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology, 38,* 215–229.

Golsworthy, R. & Coyle, A. (2001). Practitioners' accounts of religious and spiritual dimensions in bereavement therapy. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 14,* 183–202.

Grant, A.M. (2001). *Coaching for enhanced performance: Comparing cognitive and behavioural approaches to coaching.* Paper presented at the 3rd International Spearman Seminar: Extending Intelligence: Enhancement and new constructs. Sydney, Australia.

Grant, A.M. (2003). The impact of life coaching on goal attainment, metacognition and mental health. *Social Behaviour and Personality, 31,* 253–264.

Gyllensten, K. & Palmer, S. (2005a). Can coaching reduce workplace stress? *The Coaching Psychologist, 1,* 15–17.

Gyllensten, K. & Palmer, S. (2005b). Can coaching reduce workplace stress? A quasi-experimental study. *International Journal of Evidence-Based Coaching and Mentoring, 3*(2), 75–87.

Gyllensten, K. & Palmer, S. (2005c). The relationship between coaching and workplace stress: A correlational study. *International Journal of Health Promotion and Education, 43,* 97–103.

Gyllensten, K., Palmer, S. & Farrants, J. (2005). Perception of stress and stress interventions in finance organisations: Overcoming resistance towards counselling. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 18,* 19–29.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) (1998). *Organisational interventions to reduce work stress: Are they effective? A review of the literature.* Suffolk: HSE Books.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) (2001). *Tackling work-related stress: A manager's guide to improving and maintaining employee health and well-being.* Suffolk: HSE.

Hearn, W. (2001). The role of coaching in stress management. *Stress News, 13,* 15–17.

Holliday, A. (2002). *Doing and writing qualitative research.* London: Sage.

Jones, J.D. (1996). Executive coaches. *Mississippi Business Journal, 18,* 5–7.

Meyer, J. L. (2003) Coaching and counselling psychology in organisational psychology. In M.J. Schabraq, J.A.M. Winnburst & C.L. Cooper (Eds.), *The handbook of work and health psychology* (2nd ed., pp.569–583). Chichester: Wiley.

Palmer, S., Cooper, C. & Thomas, K. (2003). *Creating a balance: Managing stress.* London: The British Library.

Palmer, S., Tubbs, I. & Whybrow, A. (2003). Health coaching to facilitate the promotion of healthy behaviour and achievement of health-related goals. *International Journal of Health Promotion and Education, 41,* 91–93.

Popay, J., Rogers, A. & Williams, G. (1998). Rationale and standards for the systematic review of qualitative literature in health services research. *Qualitative Health Research, 8,* 341–351.

Richard, J.T. (1999). Multimodal therapy: A useful model for the executive coach. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 51,* 24–30.

Smith, J.A. (1996). Beyond the divide between cognition and discourse: Using interpretative phenomenological analysis in health psychology. *Psychology and Health, 11,* 261–271.

Smith, J., Jaraman, M. & Osborn, M. (1999) Doing interpretative phenomenological analysis. In M. Murray & K. Chamberlain (Eds.), *Qualitative health psychology* (pp. 218–240). London: Sage.

Smith, J.A. & Osborn, M. (2003). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J.A. Smith (Ed.). *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (pp.51–80). London: Sage.

Smith, J.A. & Osborn, M. (2004). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In G.M. Breakwell (Ed.), *Doing social psychology research* (pp.229–254). Oxford: BPS Blackwell.

Wales, S. (2003). Why coaching? *Journal of Change Management, 3,* 275–282.

The Special Group in Coaching Psychology

The British Psychological Society

We are pleased to present further details of our 2006 Event Programme. These events will offer opportunities for further training and development in topics which have been carefully selected to complement coaching psychology. We really look forward to seeing you at one or more events.

30 June 2006:
'Managing Personal and Client Stress in Coaching Psychology'
Facilitator: Jenny Summerfield, CPsychol.
This one-day event will be held at the Work Foundation, 3 Carlton Terrace, London, SW1Y 5DG, and will run from 10.00am to 5.00pm.
Registration from 9.30am.

7 September 2006:
'Positive Psychology in Coaching Psychology'
This one-day conference will be held at the BPS London Office and will run from 9.30am to 4.30pm. Registration from 9.00am.

For further details and information about these events see the 'News Page' of the BPS SGCP website on: http://www.coachingpsychologyforum.org.uk.
For booking information please contact: Tracy White,
E-mail: tracy@virtuallyorganised.com

18 & 19 December 2006:
'SGCP 3rd Annual National Conference'
This 'not-to-be-missed event' will offer a series of stimulating and thought-provoking parallel papers, full-day workshops, mini-workshops, and round-table discussions. Leaders in the field of Coaching Psychology will provide a mix of stimulating and thought-provoking sessions.
Parallel research paper and poster sessions will also provide some of the latest thinking and research in Coaching Psychology.
Further details will soon be announced on the SGCP website.

The 2006 membership fee to join SGCP is £3.50. BPS members can join and immediately benefit from member rates at events.

The Australian Psychological Society Ltd

Interest Group in Coaching Psychology
Second National Symposium

Asking the right Questions:
Exploring the cutting edge of Coaching Psychology

July 14 and 15, 2006
Venue: Palazzo Versace
Queensland, Gold Coast Australia

The 2006 Symposium will focus on the practice of coaching by Psychologists in Australia and will provide a unique opportunity for practitioners to share experience and knowledge regarding the practice of coaching. Join international keynote speakers (Dr. Robert Hogan - international authority on personality assessment, leadership, and organisational effectiveness, And Professor David Lane – authority on measuring coaching outcomes). There will be a range of symposia and opportunities to discuss the issues of importance in coaching with both fellow practitioners and national experts.

Come and share your experience and hear from other coaching psychologists on the issues that help to differentiate psychologists as coaches.

- What are the questions and answers that give us – as Coaching Psychologists – the edge?
- How has practice in the field of coaching evolved over the last few years?
- How do you ask and answer the challenging questions of your coachees?
- What is the latest research
- How do you ask the questions that get you the job as coach?

For Registration Details and Call for Papers go to:

www.psychology.org.au/units/interest%5Fgroups/coaching

For enquiries, please email: igcpqld@hotmail.com

Want to contribute a paper or symposium?

- Write a short summary (200 words) on your chosen topic
- Email this to the IGCP Qld Committee (igcpqld@hotmail.com)
- **CLOSING DATE: Friday, 29TH April, 2006**

PD Points will be available for presenters and attendees.

4. Online submission process

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

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

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

5. Manuscript requirements

- Contributions must be typed in double spacing with wide margins. All sheets must be numbered.
- Tables should be typed in double spacing, each on a separate page with a self-explanatory title. Tables should be comprehensible without reference to the text. They should be placed at the end of the manuscript with their approximate locations indicated in the text.
- Figures can be included at the end of the document or attached as separate files, carefully labelled in initial capital/lower case lettering with symbols in a form consistent with text use. Unnecessary background patterns, lines and shading should be avoided. Captions should be listed on a separate page. The resolution of digital images must be at least 300 dpi.
- For articles containing original scientific research, a structured abstract of up to 250 words should be included with the headings: Objectives, Design, Methods, Results, Conclusions. Review articles should use these headings: Purpose, Methods, Results, Conclusions.
- For reference citations, please use APA style. Particular care should be taken to ensure that references are accurate and complete. Give all journal titles in full.
- SI units must be used for all measurements, rounded off to practical values if appropriate, with the Imperial equivalent in parentheses.
- In normal circumstances, effect size should be incorporated.
- Authors are requested to avoid the use of sexist language.
- Authors are responsible for acquiring written permission to publish lengthy quotations, illustrations etc for which they do not own copyright.

For Guidelines on editorial style, please consult the *APA Publication Manual* published by the American Psychological Association, Washington DC, USA (http://www.apastyle.org).

6. Brief reports

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

7. Publication ethics

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

8. Supplementary data

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

9. Post acceptance

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

10. Copyright

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

11. Checklist of requirements

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

Contents

St Andrews House, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7DR, UK
Tel 0116 254 9568 Fax 0116 247 0787 E-mail mail@bps.org.uk www.bps.org.uk

The British Psychological Society