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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 in 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 publication 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.

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Special Group in Coaching Psychology

The British Psychological Society

BPS SGCP Annual Conference

to be held in December 2015.

Provisional dates:
10–11 December 2014.

Location: London, United Kingdom.

Details of how to submit abstracts for papers and posters, and how to register will be announced soon.

For further information visit the SGCP website:

www.sgcp.org.uk

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Editorial: Celebrating our 10th volume of the *International Coaching Psychology Review*

Stephen Palmer & Sandy Gordon

THIS YEAR we celebrate the 10th volume of the *International Coaching Psychology Review (ICPR)*. During the past 10 years, the articles published in this journal have added to the evidence base of coaching and coaching psychology. This is an excellent time to thank the co-editors, authors, international editorial board members and article reviewers for their immense contribution to the theory, research and practice of the discipline of coaching psychology and also to the development of this peer-reviewed publication. The *ICPR* highlights what can be achieved by the British Psychological Society Special Group in Coaching Psychology and the Australian Psychological Society Interest Group in Coaching Psychology working collaboratively together.

In this March issue of the *ICPR*, in addition to papers, we have also included articles based on keynote papers. The first two papers are on leadership. We start with the paper, 'How coaching helps leadership resilience: The leadership perspective'. This grounded theory research study undertaken by Carmelina Lawton Smith, focused on two key areas: to assess if existing coaching might already be affecting resilience, despite that not being a contracted objective; and to identify what aspects of coaching might be most influential in leadership resilience.

The first keynote presentation in this issue is from Michael Platow (The Australian National University, Canberra) and his colleagues S. Alexander Haslam, Stephen Reicher and Niklas Steffens. Entitled 'There is no leadership if no-one follows: Why leadership is necessarily a group process' the paper is based on Michael's Invited Keynote presentation at the APS Coaching Psychology Interest Group's 4th International Congress on Coaching Psychology, 13–15 November, in Melbourne. Platow and associates use both social identity and self-categorisation theory analyses to argue that leadership is 'fundamentally a group process'. They conclude by reviewing the Identity Leadership Inventory.

In the next paper, 'Differences between critical moments for clients, coaches, and sponsors of coaching', Erik de Haan and Christiane Nieß have extended earlier studies. In this study descriptions of critical moments of coaching as experienced by executive coaching clients, their coaches and their sponsors are analysed and compared to find out more about how coaching conversations are experienced. The results suggest that clients and coaches are considerably more aligned in what they regard as critical in their coaching assignments when compared to their alignment with sponsors' views.

The second keynote paper from Sharon K. Parker and Ying Wang (The University of Western Australia, Perth) is based on Sharon's Invited Keynote presentation at the same conference. Entitled 'Helping people to "make things happen": A framework for proactivity at work' the paper discusses the importance of proactivity at work and different perspectives and motivational pathways such as 'can do', 'reason to', and 'energised to'. The paper concludes with a discussion on applications of proactivity for coaching at work.

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In the next paper, Pepita Torbrand and Vicky Ellam-Dyson undertook a pilot study which investigated the application of group cognitive behavioural coaching (CBC) with college students in order to reduce procrastination and avoidance behaviours. Based on their results they suggest that brief group CBC may be a cost-effective and learner-focused approach in contrast to one-to-one coaching for performance related issues and well-being. It is an area that needs further research.

Lesley Martin, Lyndsay Oades and Peter Caputi (University of Woolongong) present their third paper relating to personality change coaching. In a previous issue of the *ICPR* their first and second papers described, respectively, the development and assessment of a step-wise process of intentional personality change coaching. This third paper explores the qualitative impact of the process of personality change coaching and specifically the practical benefits such as heightened levels of self-awareness, authentic identity, confidence and enjoyment.

We finish with reports from the BPS SGCP Chair and APS IGCP Convenor. Both reports highlight the 4th International Congress of Coaching Psychology 2014 events run by the SGCP and the IGCP last year.

- Coaching Excellence in Practice. Melbourne, 13–15 November 2014.
- Changing Lives, Changing Worlds – Inspiring Collaborations. London, 11–12 December 2014.

Our colleagues in the American Psychological Association, Society of Consulting Psychology (Division 13) are to be congratulated and thanked for hosting their congress event last month in San Diego. This was the first coaching psychology congress to be held in the United States. Interest in coaching psychology around the world continues to develop and we hope to include additional keynote papers in the *ICPR* that you may not have had the opportunity to experience at one of these events. Do visit the congress website if you wish to keep up-to-date with other international events.

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The International Congress of Coaching Psychology events are listed on the group website. Check for updates:
www.coachingpsychologycongress.org

Paper

How coaching helps leadership resilience: The leadership perspective

Carmelina Lawton Smith

Objectives: *Resilience has grown as a topic of interest to coaches and increases in resilience as a result of specific coaching programmes are often reported (Grant, Curtayne & Burton, 2009). However, the perspective of the coached leaders has remained largely unexplored. This study seeks to gain the leadership perspective on two key areas. Firstly to assess if existing coaching might already be affecting resilience, despite that not being a contracted objective. Secondly, to identify what aspects of coaching might be most influential in leadership resilience.*

Design: *The study was positioned in the pragmatic paradigm using a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006). Interview data was gathered from eight senior managers who had previously had coaching. Analysis was based on the grounded theory coding approach using NVivo software.*

Methods: *Eight leaders volunteered to be interviewed on the topic of resilience and had to have completed a programme of coaching at least one year prior to data collection. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews asked about the coaching that they had received and if they felt it had affected their resilience.*

Results: *The results indicated that leaders did perceive coaching to have affected their resilience, even if this was not a defined objective for the coaching. In addition leaders reported that coaching helped in five ways. It helped them reclaim their self-belief, it contributed to their learning, it helped them see the wider perspective, it provided a supportive relationship and gave them a thinking space.*

Conclusion: *Leaders often came to coaching as the result of facing a challenge and experienced significant experiential learning in relation to their resilience as a by product of coaching. While the development of certain cognitive strategies proved helpful, participants expressed the importance of the supportive coaching relationship during times of challenge where resilience was required. This questions how far resilience can be enhanced as a proactive preventative approach through training. Recommendations are made to support coaches when dealing with leaders in a resilience context.*

Keywords: *resilience; leadership coaching; confidence.*

RESILIENCE has traditionally been studied within the developmental (Benard, 1993; Masten & Reed, 2005) and clinical arena (Friborg et al., 2005) but has more recently entered the organisational literature as a key attribute in dealing with rapidly changing and challenging situations. In organisational settings much of the existing work is based in military or nursing contexts (Bartone, 2006; Maddi, 2007; Tusaie & Dyer, 2004) and deals with adversity and coping skills. However, there has been increasing interest in promoting resilience to a wider organisational population. Luthans (2002, p.702) proposes that resilience is one of four essential psychological capabilities (PsyCap) for any successful leader, in addition to hope, optimism and confidence. Resilience in this model is defined as 'the capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, conflict, failure, or even positive events, progress, and increased responsibility'. The PsyCap model suggests that leadership resilience can be enhanced through personal growth and that such learning will contribute to wider organisational resilience. As a consequence of such interest, enhancing resilience through coaching has become a focus of some interest in the literature (Palmer, 2013; Sherlock-Storey, Moss & Timson, 2013)

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Literature review

There is growing evidence that coaching can enhance resilience. Sherlock-Storey et al. (2013) used a 'brief and structured, skills based coaching approach' and found increased levels of resilience as measured by the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007). This study asserts that 'coaching builds resilience' but the quantitative approach employed gives little detail on what might have been the most significant aspects of the coaching that contributed to the reported change. As a consequence, it is unclear if alternative conceptions of coaching which are less structured would have had a similar effect. Given the breadth of alternative approaches to coaching it would be valuable to understand the specific components of coaching that were felt to affect resilience.

Grant, Curtayne and Burton (2009) also reported increases in resilience following a 10-week Solution-Focussed Coaching programme for health care managers. Again, it is unclear how the change was achieved. The programme used a Cognitive-Behavioural Approach and resilience was measured using the Cognitive Hardiness Scale (Nowack, 1990). It is interesting to note that this study was not designed specifically to enhance resilience and yet an increase in resilience was measured. The aim of the programme was 'to develop the leadership and management capability of executives and senior managers' (Grant et al., 2009, p.398). For the coaching profession this raises an interesting issue about the broader impact of coaching and the potential for unintended consequences. Given these findings, it is likely that much existing coaching is already affecting resilience but has not been overtly measured as an outcome.

One possible reason for the reported effect of coaching on resilience is the extensive overlap between methods used in coaching and those proposed to promote resilience. A cognitive behavioural methodology is a common approach in coaching (Williams, Edgerton & Palmer, 2010) and Neenan (2009) asserts that individuals can learn to deal with adversity through learning the application of such cognitive behavioural techniques. Neenan (2009) proposes using this cognitive focus to enhance resilience by developing a set of core strengths: high frustration tolerance, self-acceptance and the ability to keep things in perspective. A cognitive approach is also used by the Penn Resiliency Programme (Seligman, 2011) teaching people to 'think like optimists'. Evidence from this programme supports the idea that resilience can be 'taught' through training. Adapting the cognitive behavioural approach to the coaching context, Palmer (2013) suggests a role for 'Resilience Enhancing Imagery' in coaching. It is proposed this can enhance self-efficacy to 'assist in building up confidence prior, during or after challenging events' (p.50).

The cognitive approach linked with a positive psychology focus was also the basis for the Promoting Adult Resilience Programme (PAR; Millear et al., 2008). The PAR programme is a 'strengths-based resilience building programme that integrates interpersonal and cognitive behaviour therapy perspectives' (p.215). The programme was designed for the workplace context to 'promote mental health and individual resilience'. Short group training sessions over an 11-week period saw a reported rise in coping self-efficacy that was maintained six months after completion of the programme. The participants on this programme rated learning positive self-talk as the most valuable skill learned, which is also commonly used in the coaching context. The authors conclude that resilience can be taught in the workplace as a preventative intervention.

The evidence, therefore, suggests that resilience can be enhanced proactively in the working context through approaches that are also common in coaching. Coaching could, therefore, be a valuable route for enhancing resilience as a preventative strategy to support those in challenging contexts. Using coaching may present a number of benefits over and above the training option. Firstly, personal coaching offers the opportunity for a confidential and private discussion that may be more conducive to open discussion about difficulties. Thus, issues that might require working in the resilience domain may be more likely to surface. Secondly, coaching is often delivered in a proactive context to enhance skills. A recent meta-analysis of resilience literature suggests that enhancing protective factors such as self-efficacy, positive affect and self-esteem may be more effective than reducing risk factors such as anxiety (Lee et al., 2013). This means that working proactively on preventative attributes may be more beneficial to resilience than attempting to reduce anxiety through such approaches as 'stress management' training. Coaching for resilience may also gain more engagement from the management population, than interventions aimed at stress reduction as they are seen as more acceptable (Palmer, 2013).

Coaching, therefore, appears to be having an impact on resilience already based on a number of measures but it is unclear how this is being achieved. While a number of quantitative approaches suggest a role for coaching, there is little which adds the coachee perspective to this body of work. This study will address this gap with an initial exploration of what leaders perceive to be the role of coaching in supporting their resilience.

Aim

The aim of this study was twofold. Firstly to assess if existing coaching might already be affecting resilience, despite that not being a contracted objective. It is important to understand what effect coaching is having on our clients and the literature suggests that at present resilience may be an unintended outcome of coaching. While some might see this as a positive additional coaching contribution, it suggests that coaches are not aware of the consequences of their interventions. This presents two potential issues: The first is that coaches may stray into areas beyond their competence by using approaches that open up domains they were not expecting: The second is that coaches could find themselves working in the personal resilience space that is beyond the contracted objectives that may be seen as inappropriate or unecessary by the client or sponsor.

The second aim of this study was to identify what aspects of coaching might be most influential in leadership resilience. There is significant overlap in the approaches used in coaching and resilience training, however, coaching approaches vary widely. The objective is to identify specific aspects of coaching that are most pertinent to the development of resilience. This will be valuable information to inform coaches who wish to enhance resilience.

Methodology

Paradigm

This research was conducted within a pragmatic paradigm. 'Pragmatism is not committed to any one system or philosophy and reality' (Cresswell, 2003, p.12). Fishman (1999) likens it to using different pairs of glasses, and glasses are chosen according to which pair 'is most useful in meeting our particular, practical goals in that situation' (p.83). The aim of this research was to provide knowledge and understanding to inform the practice of coaching in relation to resilience. It therefore provided an appropriate paradigm for the practical and applied nature of the problem under investigation.

While there is significant work on resilience there is no coherent theory that addressed the leadership perspective on this existing phenomenon. The aim was, therefore, to build a theoretical model based in existing practice which led to grounded theory (GT) as a potential methodology. Grounded theory has been proposed as a valuable approach to investigate leadership (Kempster & Parry, 2011) because it can 'produce a social theory of a particular phenomenon from the relational experiences of participants' (p.108). Charmaz (2006, p.6) proposes that grounded theory can produce some 'explanatory theoretical frameworks, thereby providing abstract, conceptual understanding of the studied phenomena'. GT, therefore, was expected to help explicate the leadership perspective on the role of coaching in resilience and thus inform coaching practice.

Suddaby (2006) has described GT as a 'pragmatic approach' and most suited 'to efforts to understand the process by which actors construct meaning out of inter-subjective experience' (p.634). 'Usefulness' is also highlighted as a key element for a GT study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This alignment with usefulness and the construction of meaning showed a clear synergy with the pragmatic paradigm within which this research was positioned leading to GT as the adopted methodology.

Participants

The participants were eight senior leaders (department manager to chief executive) across both private and public sector organisations in the UK. None of the participants were known to the researcher prior to the interview. All eight leaders were aged between 35 and 65, and comprised of two females and six males. They were recruited using a snowballing approach through coaches. All participants had taken part in a formal coaching programme with seven different coaches. However, no specific coaching approach was stated as a requirement (e.g. cognitive-behavioural) so that findings were not limited to a single coaching paradigm. The aim was to collect information from the coachee perspective so it was important to gather personal descriptors rather than bound the findings within the language of one specific coaching paradigm. Participants had completed their coaching more than one year prior to data collection. This delay was felt to be important so that experiences to test resilience were more likely to have taken place. To ask questions about resilience too soon after any intervention may have resulted in conjecture rather than experiences on which to base their responses.

Procedure

All participants volunteered to take part following a recommendation from a practicing coach, who may not have been their own coach. After they received the Participant Information Sheet they were contacted to ask if they were still prepared to take part. The first eight affirmative responses were recruited as participants.

A mutually convenient time and location was arranged for a one hour interview. This interview asked for their understanding and experiences of resilience and then requested specific information about the coaching they had received and if they perceived any relationship to their resilience. If there was a perceived relationship, the interview went on to discuss which aspects of their coaching they felt had made the difference.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed with pseudonyms used throughout. Data was analysed in line with constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) using NVivo software. Initial open coding was followed by focused and axial coding revealing five emergent themes.

All data collection and storage was in line with ethical procedures and frameworks required by Oxford Brookes University.

Reflexivity

The researcher came to the research with no preconceived ideas of what might emerge, however as Morgan (2007, p.69) states:

> *'research questions are not inherently "important", and methods are not automatically "appropriate". Instead, it is we ourselves who make the choices about what is important and what is appropriate, and those choices inevitably involve aspects of our personal history, social background, and cultural assumptions.'*

It should, therefore, be noted that a single researcher conducted the research and analysis which may lead to a particular perspective on the interview data. However, even without an initial position there remains a danger that the first interview might colour all those that follow, so the challenge for the researcher is more generic; how to avoid formulating and testing any potential hypothesis wherever it originated, even if unconsciously. Here the need for reflexivity and awareness is vital to reliable data. To minimise such effects reflexivity and memos were used together with constant comparison, being sensitive to multiple meanings (McLeod, 2001) in an effort to ensure quality.

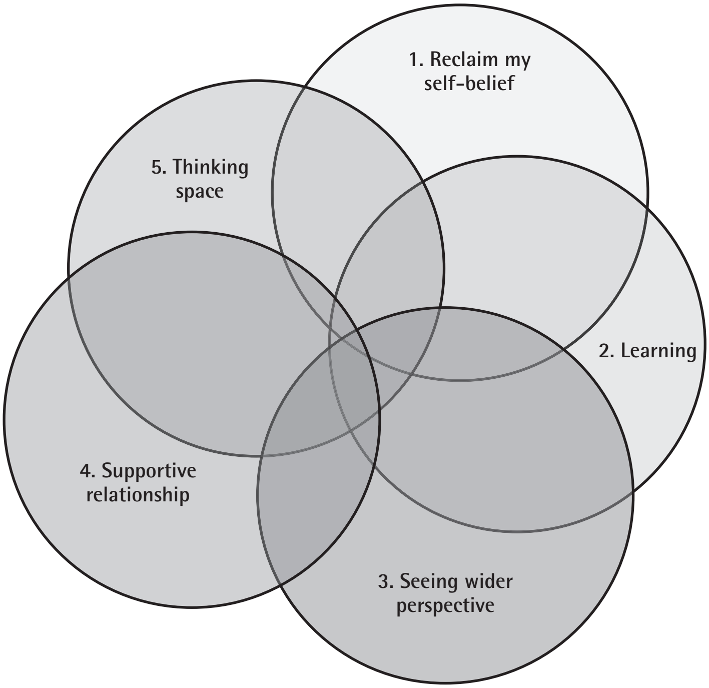
Results

All respondents reported that they felt coaching had enhanced their perceived resilience. Five overarching themes emerged that described how participants felt this was achieved.

1. Reclaim my self-belief.
2. Learning.
3. Seeing wider perspective.
4. Supportive relationship.
5. Thinking space.

In analysing these emergent five themes there was significant interaction and overlap between them. As a result they can be represented as overlapping elements, as shown in Figure.1.

Figure 1: How coaching helped – five elements.


1. Reclaim my self-belief
5. Thinking space
2. Learning
4. Supportive relationship
3. Seeing wider perspective

1. Reclaim my self-belief

This theme reflected feelings the leaders had about themselves and seemed to imply having lost something they once had, this manifests as self-doubt. This self-doubt made leaders question their own judgement and there was a clear implication that coaching helped them feel validated. Jack explains how he no longer trusted his own judgement and that vocalising with a coach helped gain clarity.

> *I think part of how the coaching helped, you're sort of bouncing ideas off and thinking, well actually these don't seem like total nonsense, they are quite coherent, quite consistent, there's a logical strand to them. …I suppose you do get a sense of validation or clarity really, because you realise yourself, oh yes, that probably is a good idea or no, it's not the right time for that, or it's not a priority.* (Jack)

This example suggests validation for ideas. There were also examples of validation of perceptions or courses of action. Validation of feelings was also important for some leaders, and was supported by the coach effectively giving permission for their feelings, as expressed by Rachel.

> *I think it's important to have someone say, 'It's okay to feel like you do. It's understandable that you feel like you do.'* (Rachel)

Once leaders gained a sense that their thinking was still sound and it was both acceptable and logical to feel as they did, they were open to a realisation that the situation was not always their fault. It may be because leaders are so used to exercising control and taking responsibility that they adopt responsibility for the difficulties they are facing. Yet the coach is able to help them step outside that position, and separate themselves from the situation.

> *…it's that business of looking at yourself and realising that actually it's not all you, it's largely the environment and things like that… because there is a tendency to think the situation is down to me. Being able to step back from that a little to say well okay perhaps I am contributing in these areas, but actually this is a pretty bad situation, it would be a pretty bad situation regardless of who was sitting here, is quite a useful discussion.* (Brian)

The descriptions give the impression that leaders can almost lose their ability to evaluate themselves as separate from the organisation and lose their individual worth.

They become part of the system and no longer feel they have worth outside that system. They often describe it as having lost confidence or self-belief as Brian went on to describe.

> *And strangely enough you have to have certain amounts of self-confidence to go and look for another job for a start, and self-belief, and I had almost got to the point of thinking, 'well if I can't cope with this job why should I look for another one', which is a slightly daft approach, but never mind. You need to be able to step back and look at yourself and look at the situation […] and I think a good coach helps you do that, and that's quite a powerful part of it.* (Brian)

Working with a coach, therefore, starts to replace this confidence that had somehow been lost. However, the clearest indication that this confidence was 'reclaimed' under certain conditions came from James who explained how the coach was able to 'bring back that inner self':

> *So if you're faced with a dilemma, if you're faced with a question, if you're faced with a direction of where you're going to go, you often have that inner self who talks to you, don't you? You say, 'Should I really be doing this?' and then that inner self says, 'Yeah of course you should, you should go for it, it'll be great.' I think if you don't have any resilience that inner voice suddenly disappears you don't hear it and I think that's almost what I got from [coach] was to bring back that inner self who would question me and say, 'You don't need to be so worried. Get out there, stand proud, this happens to everybody.'* (James)

So the coaching enabled leaders to regain a self-belief that they had temporarily lost that contributed to their resilience in dealing with difficult situations. This resonates with previous research that identifies how important a supportive relationship can be in building aspects of the self (Wilson & Ferch, 2005).

2. Learning

Throughout the interviews leaders explained how much coaching had contributed to their learning long term. As explained by George.

> *I think for each and every session that I had with [coach] there was stuff that I would take away and it has now become part of […] the way that you dealt with things.* (George)

Leaders refer to learning about specific topics or situations but also learnt a great deal about themselves. This self-learning helped support self-acceptance, or instigated the motivation to change. For example, one leader began to appreciate that others do not expect 100 per cent accuracy, so he became more accepting of his own failings and started to work on changing his approach to tasks.

> *The biggest thing of all and I still struggle with this was… the 80/20 rule is good enough. You don't have to do everything to 100 per cent. And she made me practise, and it's a hard thing to do things to a lower standard than you'd normally do and I really struggle.* (Mark)

This shows a clear overlap in how learning can support the reclaiming of self-belief. His self-belief was predicated on perfectionism that was not sustainable. Learning this about himself helped him see what needed to change.

For Mark this self-awareness went hand in hand with the adoption and application of resilience strategies. He started to appreciate how to recognise the triggers that signalled a need to use a particular tool or technique.

> *I thought I was resilient before, I feel now that that was a fairly brittle resilience, that was fine if I could just keep powering through, I think I've now got many more tools in the toolkit to enable me to do that and also to recognise when I need to get some of them out. …The first step I think is recognising it as an issue. It's as simple as that, recognising that resilience is an issue and however strong I am, I'm going to need my own time to rest, relax, recover, recharge.* (Mark)

The coaching, therefore, contributed to the development of resilience through the application of tools, self insight and awareness that came together to create a far more holistic change in the individual that often went far beyond the component parts, as explained by Rachel.

> *So there have been moments where I've had coaching with [coach] where I've had a real sort of duh, and those are things I can hold on to, they're not just about that, they're about something much bigger… but noticing more is the biggest one, because that is kind of a way of being.* (Rachel)

The perception of enhanced resilience is therefore not just based on specific learning but rather a more integrated development that enables leaders to be in the world in a different way.

Learning, therefore, happens in a number of ways. Leaders learn about others, about situations, and about tools and techniques. Interestingly, very limited reference was made to specific tools, it seemed more important to learn about themselves, this contributed to their self-belief, so they ultimately develop in a more holistic way.

3. Seeing wider perspective

The ability of the coach to help see the wider picture was a vital coaching contribution that helped avoid the 'tunnel vision' described by Jack.

> *[coach] helped me to question and identify priorities, reprioritise things in my own mind and look at things from a slightly different angle than I wouldn't naturally on my own. […] so talking to the coach, I suppose kept me aware of the need to not get tunnel vision.* (Jack)

Participants reported being able to step out of the situation and through these wider perspectives, stimulate new ideas and consider implications as explained by George.

> *…the ability to see it from other people's perspectives, and the role of coaching, would be to throw up those kind of questions… sometimes, some of the suggestions that I came up with, even if I didn't act on them, made me feel like I knew I had that course of action open to me, broadened my horizons in terms of thinking about the problem.* (George)

By contributing wider perspectives the coaching is still supporting learning as the individual learns how to adopt another point of view. This other point of view extends to the view they have of themselves, thus supporting the re-building of self-belief. By seeing their own performance from another perspective they can start to appreciate they are not as incompetent as they may feel.

One of the most perceptive explanations of how this alternative perspective manifests came from Rachel. She likened pressure to 'getting trapped' on the dance-floor in a nightclub, unable to get back onto the balcony. So the role of the coach was to enable her to gain distance, and see the bigger picture.

> *…it's feeling unable to get back onto the balcony. It's when you've got trapped on the dance-floor in a fast salsa or something. There is a sense that you know something more is required of you and you can't find quite what it is.* (Rachel)

This may lend support to the view that pressure results in a narrowing of focus as in the model of dynamic affect (Zautra et al., 2005). In a leadership context this results in an effective paralysis and a failure to see a way forward which may be due to the inability to gain distance on the issue. A similar effect would be predicted by the 'broaden and build' theory where a lack of positive emotion created by pressure would reduce creative possibilities (Fredrickson, 2009). Yet, coaching seems to help the individual regain perspective on the issue and may cause a reverse effect. Whereas positive emotion is said to enhance creativity and generate a wider perspective, perhaps the reverse is also possible: Creating a wider perspective through coaching generates positive emotion. Alternatively, it may be that the generation of ideas supported by the wider perspective taking builds hope as suggested by Snyder, Rand and Sigmon (2005) in Hope Theory. Such potential mechanisms might be fruitful areas for future investigation.

The coach, therefore, encourages a wider perspective and in so doing contributes to learning how to adopt another point of view that may reveal new ideas. This can also bring a new perspective to individual strengths and weaknesses that support self-belief.

4. Supportive relationship

When elaborating on the coaching contribution to resilience, participants often talked of providing a sounding board and the value of having an outsider to talk to. This perceived neutrality and impartiality was vital in creating a safe environment, as explained by Jack.

> *Because sometimes when things are very complex, it's helpful to have that external sounding board, to help clarify your ideas…, getting good coaching, takes you out of the data that you are in, puts you into a context which is neutral, non-threatening, and not directly connected to work, and allows you to then think through what's going on in the other context, in a fairly safe environment. And I think that's the key.* (Jack)

This concept of a safe environment meant leader participants could obtain honest feedback that they found valuable, because the coach could highlight potential issues without creating tension. The supportive relationship created a trusting and safe space that allowed honest or challenging feedback to be discussed which was vital to being able to see the wider perspective. This helped leaders become aware of their own errors or shortcomings when seen from a different perspective. It enabled true feelings to be disclosed and acknowledged, that created candid reflection on the situation.

This safe environment also made it acceptable to disclose feelings which could not be shared with others. James explained how honest disclosure was difficult with family or friends, *'But with somebody like [coach] who is divorced from the whole thing, it's much easier to communicate what you're really feeling.'* (James)

Therefore, the coach contributed emotional support but in a unique way that could not be provided by family or individuals within the organisation. By virtue of being outside the system, the coach was seen as neutral and this gave the coach significant credibility. Because the coach has no relationship or vested interest, their opinion is given more weight than a family member who is seen as partisan and just trying to make you feel better.

> *You might have a family member who would say that to you as well, but I think hearing it from somebody who gets paid to coach lots and lots of different people, and to improve and expand their comfort zones carried a different weight… He was just inquisitive 'what are you going to do… what's your next move?' and that really was deep down coaching for resilience, but it didn't feel like it. It just felt like someone I could talk to, who was just divorced from everything and somebody that I trusted.* (James)

But leaders also drew attention to this being a unique relationship because of the ability to focus on 'yourself' which leaders rarely get the chance to do.

> *A coaching relationship is about you, and there aren't very many relationships that you have, that are focused around yourself. Certainly not that I have anyway. And so, that's quite unique as well, because most of the time when you're discussing – it's focused about something else.* (Brian)

In times of difficulty the power of narrative has been shown to confer unique benefits that may account for the processes at work here (Niederhoffer & Pennebaker, 2005). Niederhoffer and Pennebaker (2005) highlight that 'not talking about emotional upheaval was ultimately unhealthy' (p.575) because suppression of these thoughts or emotions, required physiological work, reflected in central nervous system activity. However, expressing this emotion in verbal form seems to confer benefits above and beyond other expressive mediums such as dance or art. It appears that simply 'letting go' of these emotions through art or music does not show the equivalent health outcomes seen as a result of expressive writing. The processes proposed to account for the increased benefit of verbal expression rely on two factors. Firstly, in order to construct a coherent narrative that can be conveyed to another person the individual needs to order events that give a sense of control. Secondly, once formed, this narrative can be 'summarised, stored and ultimately forgotten' (p.576). These cognitive processes give a sense of meaning and closure to potentially difficult events.

In order to tell the story to a coach the leader is, therefore, engaged in cognitive meaning making that is, in itself, a valuable process to reduce the emotional impact, but telling the story then reduced the physiological strain caused by inhibition. Once the story is created and told it is suggested that this brings a secondary benefit in creating social connection. Without the ability to communicate and tell the story to others the individual is likely to become isolated as explained by Niederhoffer and Pennebaker (2005).

> *'Suppressing thoughts on a daily basis is a large cognitive load, making it difficult to organise thoughts about the event and to make sense of what happened. Thus, the keeper of the secret is more guarded, and the surrounding people who will be unaware of the individual's thoughts and feelings cannot offer sympathy or help. As a result, the individual becomes more isolated.'* (p.577)

This effect was seen in this study as leaders often described disconnection as a key characteristic of not being resilient. Therefore, the coaching relationship may provide a unique way to reduce the cognitive load created by inhibition. The coaching relationship can, in one place, remove the inhibition by allowing emotion to be expressed, facilitate the building of a coherent story by being available to listen and provide a form of social support reducing the sense of isolation.

5. Thinking space

The last theme that emerged was 'thinking space' that expressed the value of dedicated reflection. Jack reflected a common view that coaching enabled reflection and thinking. Having this dedicated time was seen as important to the process of making sense of the situation.

> *I think that came out of talking it through, and reflecting, and refining things in my own mind… […] I suppose you set aside time to problem solve to a certain extent, whereas you might just be thinking, that it might be flowing in and out of your mind, whereas if you set discrete time aside to focus on things, it helps to move your thinking forward.* (Jack)

This lack of reflective time is compounded for leaders who often feel they cannot take time for themselves, so coaching allows them protected time as expressed by Amanda. Having this dedicated thinking time seemed to support meta-reflection that helped her analyse and observe her own thinking.

> *And I think it just made me think about why was I thinking like that, […] So it made me look at myself and think, well actually you wouldn't get to where you were if other people thought that you couldn't do the job, so why is it now that you're thinking you can't do the job? So I think it made me think more, and take time for me.* (Amanda)

This quote clearly shows a widening of perspective that contributes to her learning and is starting to help her reclaim her sense of self-belief, demonstrating the interaction between the themes.

This thinking space is consistently explained as valuable, yet it is clear that leaders rarely engage in this alone, and for some, like Rachel, this would not be an effective strategy as she highlights the benefits of using a coach to aid reflection.

> *One knows that the right thing to do is to reflect regularly but knowing it and doing it are entirely different things, and reflecting properly on your own is really, really hard I think, especially when you're extroverted. I need someone else bouncing back in order to help me reflect properly.* (Rachel)

The value of vocalisation to 'bounce back' ideas may indicate the conversion of ruminations into a verbal narrative supporting the work of Niederhoffer and Pennebaker (2005) discussed above. Brian also highlighted the value of 'turning it into conscious thought' through vocalisation that could be an indication of the cognitive processes suggested.

> *…because it just gets it out there in the open and allows you to think it through… Because you might not be verbalising it, otherwise you might not actually be turning it into something which is conscious thought. And for me, that's quite useful because I don't think I'm particularly good at listening to my feelings.* (Brian)

The thinking space provided by the coach is a special place where leaders can retreat and think through actions and events, gaining personal insight and reaching decisions. The process of vocalisation helps them organise their thoughts and they can focus on their own needs, instead of the needs of others and the organisation that usually take priority. Yet without the justification of a coaching interaction leaders do not, or cannot justify thinking time. Even if they could, there are questions about how effective this might prove for some.

Coaching was clearly perceived by the research participants to support development of their resilience and five key elements were identified as important components of coaching practice that help support resilience. However in many cases the leaders described issues and events that were current and alive at the time of the coaching. In fact, seven of the eight leaders interviewed highlighted that they engaged in coaching specifically because they were facing a difficult issue at the time. This raises questions about the potential efficacy of proactive resilience building programmes without the experiential learning that seems to be happening in the reported situations. Coaching can undoubtedly support leadership resilience but may need to be used selectively at times of difficulty to maximise learning and development.

Discussion

Implications for coaching practice

Coaching was reported as a useful resilience building intervention by leaders, although there are questions about how effective proactive programmes might be for this population. Leaders report experiences that suggest many have demonstrated significant resilience to previous events, which may have contributed to their rise into leadership positions. However, when challenges do arise coaching can be a valuable learning vehicle to make sense of the experience and develop further. Using the real life experiences, leaders are supported through the events but also learn more about themselves and approaches that can help them longer term. There is, therefore, both a short-term and long-term benefit when coaching in relation to resilience.

In terms of the significant elements that leaders felt contributed to building their resilience, five key areas were identified: Participants reported that coaching helped them, reclaim their self-belief, to learn both new techniques and about themselves and also helped them see the wider perspective. The relational aspect was also important with the supportive relationship highlighted, which helped contribute to the unique thinking space. These five areas show significant interaction but are aspects common to most genres of coaching. Wang (2013) identified that despite the variety of coaching approaches used some common factors contribute to effective coaching. These include, building a supportive collaborative relationship, paying attention to context and applying a learning process, which show significant synergy with the factors highlighted by participants. Therefore, it is likely that most genres of coaching will impact resilience in some way.

For those wishing to enhance resilience specifically the research highlights some key areas of focus.

Firstly, the need to create a supportive relationship that gives individuals space and time to reflect. While this is a core founding principle of coaching, what also appears important is that the relationship is seen as external and neutral. While internal coaching can be a valuable resource in organisations (St. John Brooks, 2014), where resilience is the focus it may be necessary to employ independent professionals to offer credible and effective support. This is important because the client needs independent face validity in order to accept and engage with the coaching. Both the responses and alternative perspectives provided are only seen as believable and credible when coming from an independent source with no vested interest. A representative of HR or the OD department may fail to achieve enhanced resilience, not because they lack coaching skills, but simply because the client does not engage with them.

Secondly, it is important for the coach to model acceptance and to validate both thoughts and feelings. Only by allowing all such aspects to be discussed can the client start to make sense of the experience and thus reduce the cognitive load. It is clear that during times of challenge leaders can experience significant changes to their normal modus operandi. Despite a usually confident and assertive approach leaders can experience self-doubt which can lead to questioning of worth and competence leading to disconnection. The coach may, therefore, find that their client needs a very different approach to that normally employed. A coach in a long-term relationship with a leader may need to moderate their use of challenge under such circumstances. This serves to highlight the importance of the dynamics of the coaching relationship and how the coach needs to adapt not only to each client but also to situational factors within each meeting with a client. This has been described as the coaching 'dance' that requires attendance to 'rhythm and reciprocity' for each dance (Wang, 2013) not just each client.

Thirdly, while learning and change may be at the 'heart of coaching practices' (Bachkirova, Cox & Clutterbuck, 2010), for resilience it forms only a small part of the equation. Coaches need to beware of trying to address resilience issues with leaders from a purely educative perspective. Programmes aimed at supporting resilience often focus on the importance of such things as reframing events and handling failure. Yet leaders are often well versed in such techniques so coaching can bring a new dimension to learning in the context of resilience. The learning required is often about the self, awareness of the triggers that lead to issues and building an appreciation of the personal strategies that are most appropriate for that individual: Learning about how to manage themselves in a more resilient and holistic way rather than just learning tools and techniques to apply.

Study limitations and future research

This study was a small-scale study with a number of limitations. The small number of participants means that the findings might benefit from validation with a larger and more diverse sample group. The factors identified may not, therefore, be comprehensive in reflecting all the potentially relevant factors in coaching.

The invitation to participants asked for those who had received coaching and were interested in discussing resilience. There may, therefore, be a bias towards those who felt there was in fact a connection between these two aspects. It was, therefore, more likely that participants would report a positive relationship that may not be common to all coachees. However, since this is a qualitative study it does report the views of those who took part so represents a starting point for further investigations.

Future research might focus on a more diverse group with a longitudinal approach that would avoid the retrospective memory bound aspects of this study. With a more in-depth and contemporary approach it might also be possible to investigate the mechanisms involved. Both the ‘broaden and build theory’ (Fredrickson, 2009) and Hope Theory (Snyder et al., 2005) suggest possible explanations for some of the findings which might merit further investigation.

Conclusion

This study had two aims. Firstly to assess if existing coaching might already be affecting resilience, despite that not being a contracted objective. Leaders reported a clear perception that coaching they had received had helped their resilience. Participants in this study often brought current challenges to coaching and by working with these seemed to experience an increase in resilience as a by product of their coaching. Coaches, therefore, need to be aware that their coaching may already be affecting resilience, but also that when resilience is under threat they may need to adapt their coaching style to support resilience overtly.

The second aim of this study was to identify what aspects of coaching might be most influential in leadership resilience and thus might inform the coaching style that coaches choose to adopt. Participants highlighted five key aspects of the coaching they received that they felt contributed to their resilience. Firstly, it helped them reclaim their self-belief as a result of the validation and acceptance that they experienced. Secondly, they reported learning tools and techniques that helped, but also learning about themselves and how to recognise and manage issues through this enhanced self-awareness. Thirdly, the coach brought a wider point of view that facilitated thinking, helping generate new ideas and a sense of perspective. The importance of the supportive relationship was the fourth factor identified, and significantly the independent and external nature of this relationship was seen as key. Finally, leaders highlighted the importance and value of the dedicated time and space available through coaching. Difficult times are often characterised by very busy and hectic schedules with a need to focus on key business priorities. The coaching space gave leaders the time required for reflection and the interaction needed to support self-analysis. Without this time and stimulus leaders often found it difficult to justify the time for reflection and self-focus that is so critical to reflective learning and development.

These findings, therefore, go some way to explaining how generic coaching programmes appear to show an impact on resilience (Grant et al., 2009; Sherlock-Storey et al., 2013). There is also clear support for the importance of building confidence and self-efficacy to support resilience (Palmer, 2013). However, the findings also highlight the importance of a supportive relationship during times of challenge and that just learning about tools and cognitive strategies alone may not be adequate.

Leaders often came to coaching as a result of facing challenge but did not contract for resilience outcomes specifically. They were frequently experiencing a loss of confidence and an inability to step back and take a wider perspective on the situation. Coaches might, therefore, consider the following as key steps to consider when working with leaders in the resilience domain.

1. **Self-belief.** Even leaders who are very senior and may have previously demonstrated exceptional confidence may need interventions to re-build self-confidence. The level of challenge may need to be reduced with a higher focus on validation and support.
2. **Learning.** Maintaining a focus on learning by directing attention to create holistic learning about self, others and personal strategies may prove more valuable that just teaching cognitive strategies. While tools and techniques might prove useful, personal learning seems more valuable.
3. **Seeing the wider perspective.** It appears that pressure can narrow the focus of attention for individuals so continued attention to the wider system, other potential points of view and alternative perspectives can be helpful.
4. **Supportive relationship.** Highlighting the independence and neutrality of the coaching space and allowing emotional expression may reduce the resources occupied in the suppression of feelings. This may give benefits through the release of energy.
5. **Thinking space.** Maintaining and protecting the private thinking space that focuses on personal needs rather than just problem solving is important. While leaders are busy and are often overly focussed on the needs of others and taking action, they need to understand the benefit of the personal reflective space that coaching can provide. While counter-intuitive this 'time-out' may ultimately provide a solution that might never have emerged from endless rumination and analysis.

Leadership resilience has become a topic of significant interest to coaches in recent years but the leadership perspective on this phenomenon has remained largely unexplored. This study has elucidated the leadership perspective on resilience and how leaders perceive coaching helps. It is hoped this can help coaches support leaders more effectively in the future and raises a number of new areas for future exploration.

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Paper

There is no leadership if no-one follows: Why leadership is necessarily a group process

Michael J. Platow, S. Alexander Haslam, Stephen D. Reicher & Niklas K. Steffens

In this paper, we put forward the thesis that leadership is fundamentally a group process: leaders must be 'one of us'. We build our argument around recent social identity theory and self-categorisation theory analyses of leadership. In doing so, we highlight the essential nature of shared psychological *group memberships as the key mediating processes through which leadership develops. Through a review of existing research, we then demonstrate: (1) how leadership is exerted through in-group-based social influence; (2) how the more that group members capture the attributes of 'us-in-context' – the more they are in-group* prototypical *– the greater will be their leadership potential; and (3) how common attributes associated with leadership (i.e. trust, charisma, fairness) can all be understood as outcomes of shared psychological group membership. Leadership, however, is not simply about 'being', it is about 'doing' as well. In this manner, we discuss the importance of acting to advance the group (in the form of social identity advancement) and crafting a sense of the group (in the form of social identity entrepreneurship). We conclude by reviewing a recently-developed* Identity Leadership Inventory *that allows practitioners to take these ideas from concepts to practice.*

Keywords: *social identity; psychological group membership; social influence; in-group prototypicality; social identity advancement; social identity entrepreneurship.*

OUR WORKING ASSUMPTION in this paper is that leadership is not about individuals who occupy roles. It is, instead, about group processes more broadly. The concept of leadership is senseless when abstracted and decontextualised from the group. It does not differ from other group processes (e.g. co-operation, group decision-making, social loafing) or group outcomes (e.g. social norms) in its necessary emergence from, and boundedness within, groups (Haslam, Reicher & Platow, 2011; Platow et al., 2003). This simple assumption can be understood by the even simpler observation that the absence of followers indicates the clear absence of leadership. Gibb (1947) recognised this over half-a-century ago when he observed, 'there can be no leader without followers' (p.270); this was recently reaffirmed by King (2010), who noted that, 'when individuals follow another's actions, they make that individual a leader' (p.671).

Gibb's (1947) and King's (2010) observations (among others, for example, van Knippenberg et al., 2005; Yorges, Weiss & Strickland, 1999) are critical in another respect; they point to social influence as the essential conceptual linchpin underlying the process of leadership (Turner, 1991). Amongst other things, this means that no analysis of leadership is complete – and that no analysis of leadership will be conceptually and functionally successful – without a proper analysis of social influence. Ultimately, as we and others have outlined previously (Haslam et al., 2011; Hogg, 2001), *leadership is the process* (not a person; see, for example, Hollander & Julian, 1969; Vandersclice, 1988) *of influencing others in a manner that enhances their contribution to the realisation of group goals.* At the heart of our analysis,

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then, are groups, influence and *processes* (not individuals or roles).

Scope of analysis: Psychological groups and psychological leadership

Our positioning of leadership firmly within the domain of group processes is far from unique, despite many analyses seeking to identify or list the individual attributes (e.g. Bartone et al., 2009; Bass, Avolio & Goodheim, 1987) and personal developmental experiences (Avolio & Gibbons, 1988) of leaders. For example, Gibb's (1969) analysis of leadership in Lindzey and Aronson's second edition of their *Handbook of Social Psychology* began with just the same premise, as did Stogdill's (1950) analysis before him. Before even defining leadership, these authors provided theoretical overviews of contemporary understandings of social groups. We follow a similar path, both for conceptual clarity, and to outline the scope of our review and analysis. By positioning our analysis of leadership within the domain of group processes, we knowingly restrict this scope to be within specific theoretical and empirical parameters. Of course, the domain of 'group processes' is substantial in its own right (Burn, 2004; Cartwright & Zander, 1960; Forsyth, 1999). Clearly, then, our chosen definition of a group will establish a second scope condition, binding the parameters of our leadership analysis. As social psychologists, the focus our analysis will be on *psychological groups* in contrast to *sociological groups* (cf., Deutsch, 1949).

In our usage of these terms, a key feature underlying sociological groups is that the parameters defining them can be identified, observed, and measured by independent observers, *regardless of whether supposed group members see themselves as such.* Many of these parameters were central to original social-psychological work in group dynamics, such as interdependence (Lewin, 1951; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) and structure, roles, and norms (Sherif & Sherif, 1969). Other criteria often involved in identifying sociological groups are biological or, at least, consensually agreed upon, inclusionary criteria, such as those based on sex, race, and ethnicity. Delineating such third-party observer criteria aids researchers' and practitioners' attempts clearly to operationalise constructs; it is a relatively easy task to justify to readers that one is examining group and intergroup relations when one studies formal organisations or inter-ethnic attitudes (e.g. prejudice). Moreover, social and psychological processes operating within and between sociological groups are often the precise focus of the theoretical, empirical, and applied questions being asked (Katz & Kahn, 1966). Frankly, many decision makers want to know how best to choose a successful person to manage their company to achieve sought-after material outcomes; and many activists want to know how best to reduce and eradicate real material prejudices and discrimination.

Our concern with examining leadership within the context of sociological groups is two-fold. First, sociological groups themselves vary greatly. There is a substantial difference between large-scale companies, for example, and interdependent communities confronted with the realities of, say, water conservation. Both represent collections of interdependent individuals and, hence, both qualify under some analyses as being groups (sociological groups, in our terminology). But undoubtedly, studying leadership in one or the other is likely to yield very different conclusions about leadership in general (e.g. Ergi & Herman, 2000). Without moving our theoretical work further, we are likely to be left with independent lists of attributes, qualities, or even processes associated with our ever-increasing lists of sociological groups (see Platow et al., 2003). Again, developing, say, an independent model of environmental leadership, as opposed to one of corporate leadership (e.g. Peterson et al., 2003; Russell, 1990), is likely to help answer valued applied questions. However, as long as the independent lists remain independent, then their theoretical and applied utility remains substantially limited.

Second, although researchers and practitioners can independently identify others as being members of one group or another, if these others fail to recognise or accept this independent labelling, then their behaviours are unlikely to be influenced by the group processes the researcher is examining. If individuals do not see themselves as members of the same group as potential leaders – or, for that matter, if potential leaders do not see themselves as members of the same group as potential followers – they are likely to behave in one of two ways: (1) as unique individuals (albeit defined by the superordinate societal and cultural group to which they belong); or (2) as members of a different group. In both cases, co-ordinated leader-follower behaviour is likely to be hard to achieve, at best, if not impossible. In the former case, when individuals act as individuals, then their behaviours will be guided only by their individual self-interests, not those of the broader collective (i.e. group that the erstwhile leader is seeking to lead). Certainly, leadership models have been developed to understand this situation (Blau, 1964), but this leadership-by-buying begins to appear less like leadership, and more like purchasing. In the latter case, when would-be leaders are forced to 'cross the divide' (Pittinsky, 2009), obtaining any sort of following becomes nearly impossible (even most American Democrats would have rather followed George W. Bush than Osama bin Laden when the latter was alive). Again, as another form of *leadership-by-buying*, would-be leaders can wield resource power (Reynolds & Platow, 2003) over would-be followers, but this is not likely to result in any following once the power is removed (French & Raven, 1960; Turner, 2005).

In either one of these two cases, the fact that an independent observer (a researcher or practitioner) notes, for example, that a particular manager and a set of general employees are both part of the same broader organisation is not enough for successful prediction of behaviour. In fact, the independent observer could easily identify (or impose) a sociological group upon individuals, fail to observe anticipated group-based behaviours (in our case, leadership), and conclude that the to-be-examined behaviours were simply not group-based. But this conclusion may well derive from an inferential error, if one that assumes that the social reality identified by the independent observer is understood identically by the subjects of his or her observations. There is now a broad consensus within social psychology, however, that this assumption is faulty, as people's own subjective representations of the context in which they find themselves – which routinely differ from those of other parties (e.g. social scientists, management consultants) – prove to be strong predictors of their behaviours (Augoustinos, Walker & Donaghue, 2006; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Markus & Zajonc, 1985). This applies to perceptions of group membership as well (Dawes, van de Kragt & Orbell, 1988; Kramer & Brewer, 1984). It is thus psychological group memberships (i.e. first-person beliefs that one is a group member, regardless of third-party labels) that we propose are likely to capture the true processes underlying the social psychology of leadership.

On psychological group memberships

The processes underlying psychological group memberships are most clearly outlined in the twin theories of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and self-categorisation theory (Turner et al., 1987), as well as other similar theories of psychological group membership and leadership processes (e.g. Gaertner et al., 1993; Lord, Brown & Freiberg, 1999; Marques, Abrams & Serôdio, 2001; Shamir, House & Arthur, 1993). Self-categorisation theory, in particular, outlines key features of psychological group memberships. The theory assumes, amongst other things, that people's self-concepts are comprised of cognitive self-categorisations, in which perceivers see themselves as similar to (more or less interchangeable with) others at various levels of inclusion. At one extreme, people self-categorise with no-one else; this is akin to a personal identity, as the self is seen as unique and different from others. At the other extreme, people self-categorise with all humanity. Between these two extremes are all other in-group, out-group self-categorisations, such as 'self as a 'company man' or 'company woman'', 'self-as-an-American', 'self-as-an-Indigenous Australian', and so on; these are social identities. The theory assumes that when any given social identity is salient, people cognitively depersonalise, so that self-perception is not as a unique individual but as a group member (Turner, 1984). From this, people are hypothesised to act in accordance with the norms and values of that group (Reicher, Spears & Postmes, 1995; Spears, Lea & Lee, 1990). Importantly, it is the psychological process of depersonalisation that is assumed to make group processes possible at all, including co-operation, norm formation, and, most relevant to present considerations, social influence and leadership (Turner et al., 1987).

It is important to note that the boundaries of psychological groups can be isomorphic with those of sociological groups. Indeed, interdependence, one defining feature of sociological groups, often serves to create a psychological, social self-category (Turner, 1985; see also Platow et al., 2008). But interdependence is not only unnecessary for psychological group formation (Tajfel et al. 1971), it can actually be the *outcome* of psychological group formation (Platow, Grace & Smithson, 2012; Turner & Bourhis, 1996). Our essential point, however, is that people must understand and accept as self-defining specific group memberships before group-based processes, including leadership, will emerge. Leaders certainly have a role to play in constructing the boundaries and meanings of these categories (Haslam et al., 2011; Reicher, Haslam & Hopkins, 2005). However, a would-be leader should expect no followers by simple position of a formal role (e.g. CEO, University Vice Chancellor), at least without buying his or her followership.

Thus far, we have put forward two theses in our analysis of leadership, each with an associated corollary. These are:

Thesis 1: Leadership is a group process.
Corollary 1: Leadership is a psychological group process.
Thesis 2: There is no leadership if no one follows.
Corollary 2: Leadership is a social influence process.

Social influence as an outcome of psychological group membership

As we outlined above, central to our definition of leadership is our claim that leadership is essentially a process of group-based social influence (Turner, 1991; Turner & Oakes, 1989). This is a view with a long theoretical and empirical tradition within social psychology. Indeed, from a Lewinian perspective on group dynamics, Cartwright (1951, p.338) argued over a half-century ago that:

> If the group is to be used effectively as a medium of change, those people who are to be changed and those who are to exert influence for change must have a strong sense of belonging to the same group.

Empirically, we can begin by reflecting on the classic experimental analysis of social influence provided by Asch (1956). Asch's studies are often cited as demonstrating the power of others to induce conformity, although Friend, Rafferty and Bramel (1990) demonstrate that Asch also observed a great deal of non-conformity (see also Jetten & Hornsey, 2012). Social influence was, thus, undoubtedly present in his studies, but undoubtedly, too, it was absent.

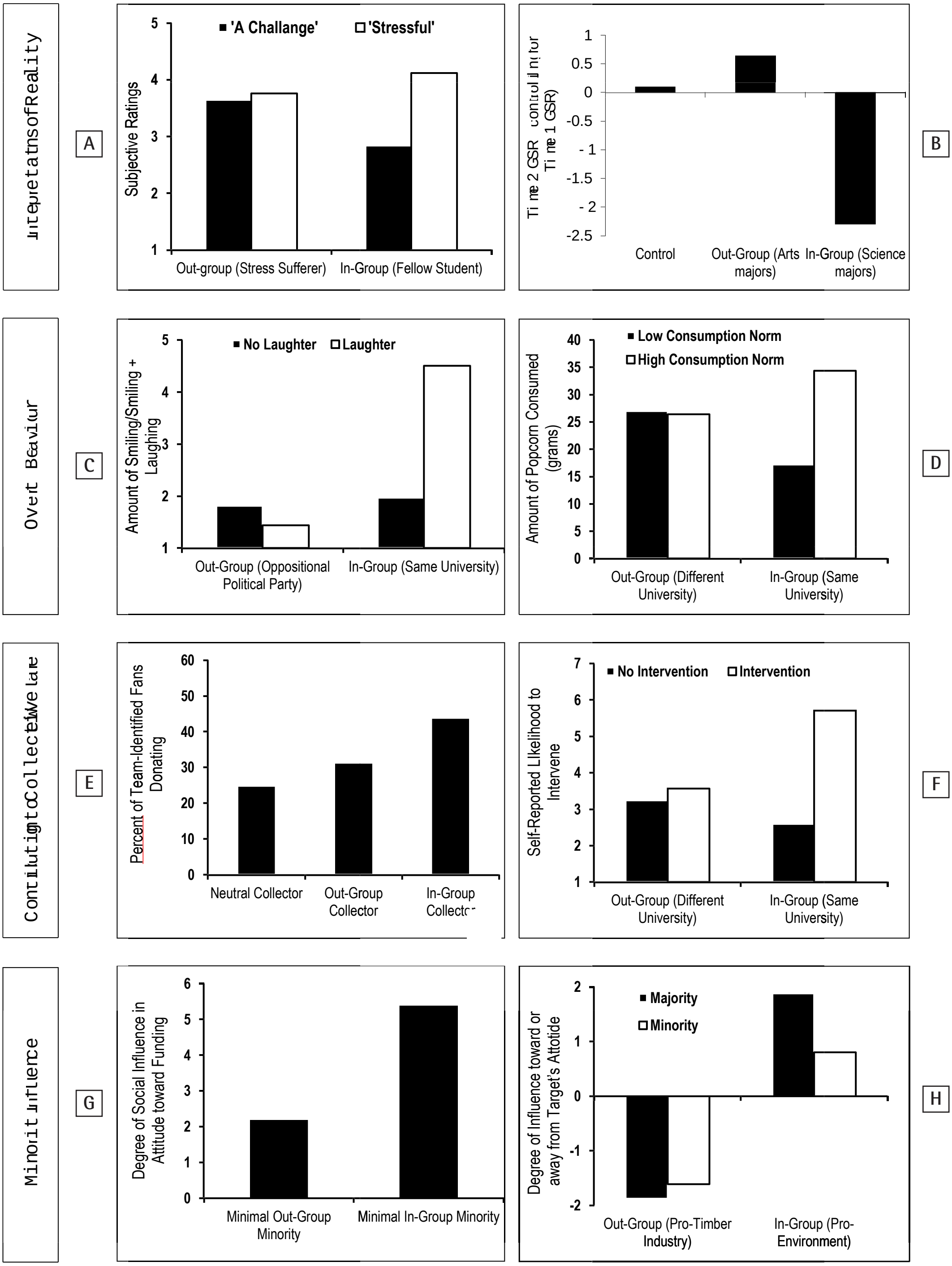
Bond and Smith's (1996) meta-analysis of studies using an Asch-like paradigm (including Asch's own original studies) provides some insight into the basis of this variability. Among other things, this reveals significantly lower levels of social influence when the potential influencing agents were likely to be perceived as out-group members. So, part of the apparent independence observed in Asch's original studies is likely to have emerged from the failure of psychological out-group members to be influential (see Abrams et al., 1990, for a direct test). Indeed, similar failures of out-group members to be influential have been observed in other, less reactive, paradigms (Bourgeois & Hess, 2008; Yabar et al., 2006).

Importantly, there are now several direct tests of the self-categorisation, social-influence hypothesis and the outcomes of eight specific tests are summarised in Figure 1. The first two tests represent analyses of influence upon group-members' interpretations of the social context confronting them, and their own subjective experiences of that reality (e.g. what may otherwise be called 'intellectual stimulation' on the part of the leader; Bass, 1985, p.98; see also Bass & Riggio, 2006). Panel A of Figure 1 displays the results of an experiment in which either an in-group or an out-group influencing agent provided an interpretation of a potentially stress-arousing task (a mathematics exam) as being either 'a challenge' or 'stressful' (Haslam et al., 2004). As can be seen, participants' own stress levels were influenced by the agent's interpretation of the task only when that agent was a fellow in-group member; the would-be influencing agent who was an out-group member simply had no effect on participants' understandings of their own subjective reality. Panel B is even more striking (Platow et al., 2007). Here, participants' levels of physiological arousal were measured in a pain-inducing situation via galvanic skin responses. After a first trial experiencing the pain – induced by immersion of a hand into ice-water – participants were reassured about the ease of the second trial by either a fellow in-group member or an out-group member, or they received no reassurance at all in a control condition. As can be seen in Panel B, *in a setting known to induce pain*, participants were physiologically calmer when they received reassurance from a fellow in-group member than when they received the same reassurance from an out-group member. Indeed, notice that out-group reassurance was no better than receiving no reassurance at all.

Panels C and D of Figure 1 both demonstrate the effects of in-group-based social influence on overt behaviours. In the former, participants listened to an audiotape of a comedian delivering jokes (Platow et al., 2005). In some recordings the comedian spoke with no audible responses from an audience; in other recordings, however, canned laughter overlayed the comedian's delivery. Critically, participants were led to believe that the audience comprised either in-group or out-group members. As is clearly seen, only laughter from in-group members led to an enhancement of participant laughter over a no-laughter baseline. In other words, the identical canned-laughter recording from an out-group was unable to affect participants' behaviour. Panel D shows a similar pattern. Here, participants' food consumption was recorded after an in-group member or an out-group member indicated that she had eaten a lot or a little herself (i.e. establishing a norm of consumption or non-consumption). Only the behaviour of a fellow in-group member led participants to follow through their own eating behaviour (Cruwys et al., 2012).

Crucial evidence of social influence directed toward promoting collective welfare is displayed in the next two Panels of Figure 1. The data represented in Panel E were collected in a context in which monetary contributions to the Salvation Army were sought from sport fans attending Australian Rules football games (Platow et al., 1999). Here one can see that fans contributed more when the collector supported the same team as they did than when the collector supported the opposing team. Note that these contributions were *not* distributed to the opposing teams themselves, but, in all cases to the identical, neutral third-party, known for its charity; yet it was in-group members who exerted the strongest influence on fans to contribute to the broader, collective good. Panel F shows clear in-group social influence in a bystander-intervention paradigm (Levine et al., 2002). Here the self-reported likelihood of helping was

Figure 1. Results from eight direct tests of the self-categorisation, social-influence hypothesis.



completely unaffected by the presence or absence of out-group bystander intervention. However, there was a relative decrease in the likelihood of helping when in-group members failed to intervene, and a substantial increase in the likelihood of helping when in-group members actually did intervene to help. In short, it was in-group members, and not out-group members, who led the way toward helping others.

The final two Panels of Figure 1 relate to similar in-group-based processes that operate in the context of minority influence, a situation often confronted by leaders. Specifically, in Panel G, participants' attitudes toward educational funding increases were influenced more by a minority opinion expressed by in-group members than by out-group members (Martin, 1988). Finally, Panel H displays results from a direct comparison between majority and minority influence (David & Turner, 1996). Here, positive values represent attitudinal movement toward the influencing agent, while negative values represent movement *away* from the influencing agent. From this two patterns can be discerned. First, it is clear that group members aligned their own attitudes more with in-group than with out-group others. Second, this in-group-based influence occurred even when the original view was a minority view. Indeed, we see that out-group members were unable to engender any minority influence at all.

These eight studies (and, indeed, others too, for example, Grace, David & Ryan, 2008; Oldmeadow, Platow & Foddy, 2005; Oldmeadow et al., 2003; Puhl, Schwartz & Bronwell, 2005; Sechrist & Young, 2011) provide clear evidence that supports self-categorisation theory's hypothesis that the primary mechanism through with social influence occurs is shared group membership between the would-be influencing agent and the targets of influence. The final question, however, is whether this in-group-based social influence represents sheep-like, thoughtless conformity, or whether would-be followers actually reflect actively upon the information provided. Mackie, Worth and Asuncion (1990) and McGarty et al. (1994) independently sought to answer this question, with both confirming the active cognitive processing of in-group communications; Mackie et al.'s work, in particular, was able to show the scope of this processing. In this study, when the issue at hand was relatively unimportant to the group members, participants were persuaded more by fellow in-group members than by out-group members, *regardless of the strength of the arguments put to them.* However, when the issue at hand was relatively important, a more complex pattern emerged. First, would-be influencing agents who were out-group members exerted little effect over participants' own attitudes, again, regardless of the strength of the arguments. However, in-group members were indeed influential – and substantially so – on this in-group relevant topic, but *only* when they put forward strong arguments; weak arguments actually caused participants to move away from the would-be influencing agent's views. The key point that this study makes is that when the issue is relevant to their in-group, group members will *not* blindly follow an in-group member; that in-group member still has to work for his or her leadership position. Again, though, out-group members remain largely incapable of exerting influence – regardless of the quality of their ideas.

Variability in 'in-groupness': Leadership and relative in-group prototypicality

Our argument thus far implies that, to be a leader, all one need to do is be an in-group member. Leadership, of course, is patently not so simple. We share group membership with many people, and not all are equally influential. A key factor that affects the relative degree of influence within a group is the relative in-group prototypicality of a person, idea or behaviour (McGarty, 1999; Turner et al., 1987). Relative in-group prototypicality is the self-categorisation theory concept used to capture relative 'in-groupness'. Defined formally through a meta-contrast ratio (e.g.

Turner, Wetherell & Hogg, 1989), it represents the degree to which, say, an individual group member is similar to all other in-group members while being different from contextually relevant out-group members. The greater this contrast is, the more in-group prototypical the person will be. Critically for leadership, the more in-group prototypical a group member is, the more influential he or she is hypothesised to be (Turner, 1991). Thus, to the degree that there is variability in relative in-group prototypicality among group members, there will be a relative influence gradient within the group. At any given time, and in any given intergroup context, the most prototypical group member is expected to be the most influential; this person is thus predicted to display the greatest leadership. Note too that changing the comparative *out-group* can change the relative prototypicality of one's in-group members (Turner & Haslam, 2001). In this way, relative in-group prototypicality – and, hence, leadership – is *not* considered to be a stable characteristic of an individual group member; instead, it is a dynamic outcome of group and intergroup processes.

One early demonstration of the role of relative in-group prototypicality in affecting ability to influence others was reported by McGarty et al. (1992). These researchers measured the in-group prototypical attitude among their participants along a variety of attitudinal domains (e.g. attitudes toward nuclear power, capital punishment, and legalisation of cannabis). Participants then took part in a face-to-face group discussion a week later. In two separate studies, with different attitudes and different participants, significant positive relationships between the post-discussion attitudes and the in-group prototypical positions were observed. Similarly, van Knippenberg, Lossie and Wilke (1994) presented law students with arguments for and against university entrance exams supposedly written by in-group prototypical or in-group non-prototypical group members. As expected, the participants aligned their own private attitudes more closely with the communications from the in-group prototypical source than with those from the in-group non-prototypical source, regardless of the position he or she was arguing for (i.e. for or against the exams).

Finally, Reid and Ng (2000) also examined the role of in-group prototypicality in face-to-face interactions. They brought groups of six people together for a 30-minute discussion about capital punishment. Three of these people had previously indicated that they supported capital punishment ('pro'), and three had indicated that they were against capital punishment ('anti'). Importantly, the experimenter identified these two groups of three people to participants, so that they knew who was in their opinion-based in-group and who was in the out-group (cf., Musgrove & McGarty, 2008). After the discussion, participants rated how influential each member of their in-group (themselves included) was in the overall discussion, and how in-group prototypical each person was. As expected, discussants who were seen as more in-group prototypical were also seen as more influential.

We have now put forward one more thesis in our analysis of leadership, this time with two associated corollaries:

> Thesis 3: Social influence takes place within of a psychological in-group.
>
> Corollary 3a: The more in-group prototypical someone is, the more influence that person will exert.
>
> Corollary 3b: The more in-group prototypical someone is, the more he or she will be able to display leadership.

In this manner, leaders are 'one of us', not different or separate from 'us'.

Leadership attributions as outcomes of psychological group membership

Our claim that leaders are not different or separate from 'us' may seem at odds with other literature that suggest that leadership entails the expression of specific traits, qualities, or behaviours (e.g. Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Ensari et al. (2011). In particular, research and theory within the social cognitive tradition that examines how people make attributions of leadership has identified characteristics such as trustworthiness, fairness, and charisma as being key attributes that potential followers look for when attributing (or not attributing) leadership to another person (Lord, Foti & De Vader, 1984; Lord, Foti & Phillips, 1982). This is certainly not unreasonable, as other work has demonstrated quite clearly that – at minimum – followers' perceptions that would-be leaders express these attributes are associated with a variety of positive personal and group-oriented outcomes (DeGroot, Kiker & Cross, 2000; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Koivisto, Lipponen & Platow, 2013). In our own analysis, we do not question the veracity of these data; they are powerful and undoubtedly true. Nevertheless, we do question whether we need to examine these attributes as belonging uniquely to individuals, setting them apart from those they seek to lead – or whether, in fact, they are actually outcomes of shared group membership (see Platow et al., 2003).

In-group-based trust

There is now strong evidence demonstrating that shared in-group membership provides the basis for establishing trust relationships. Indeed, people routinely report that they trust in-group members more than out-group members (Platow, McClintock & Liebrand, 1990). However, there is more direct evidence of this trust. For example, Foddy, Platow and Yamagishi (2009) conducted an experiment in which participants were allowed to place their fate in the hands of either an in-group stranger or an out-group stranger (with the groups based on university of attendance). In doing so, participants had the opportunity to choose one of two unknown amounts of money (between $0 and $16) donated by each of the strangers. When participants knew that the in-group and out-group donors *also* knew the participants' own group membership (referred to as a 'common knowledge' condition), 100 per cent placed their fate in the fellow in-group member's hands. However, when participants believed that the donors did *not* know participants' own group membership (i.e. under 'unilateral knowledge' conditions), this dropped to 53 per cent (i.e. effectively at chance levels). The researchers concluded that people trust in-group members to treat them well as *fellow in-group members.* It was not the case that people believed their fellow in-group member would be trustworthy to *all* people, only that he or she would be trustworthy to those in his or her own in-group. This pattern was replicated in a second study, extending the finding to demonstrate that trust was maintained even when the stereotype of the out-group was *more favourable* than the stereotype of the in-group. Out-group trust did seem to emerge under unilateral knowledge conditions when the out-group stereotype was more favourable than the in-group stereotype; here, when there was no chance that the donor could treat participants well as fellow in-group members (because of a lack of knowledge), people had to rely on group-based stereotypes to make their trust decisions.

Platow et al. (2012) extended this work by observing relative in-group trust under common knowledge conditions even when participants had the ability to opt out of the trust relationship for a known, assured positive outcome. Overall, the key point for our current analysis of leadership is that when participants believe that others with resource control over their (i.e. the participants') future outcomes, fellow in-group members are seen as more trustworthy than out-group members, *at least when these in-group and out-group members also know of the participants' own group membership.* Trust, then, can be understood to be an outcome of known, shared psychological group membership.

In-group-based charisma

Charisma is another quality stereotypically associated with leadership (DeGroot, et al., 2000; House, Spangler & Woycke, 1991), and seen to be an important aspect of transformational leadership (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013). This is because charismatic leaders are understood to inspire group members to transcend their own personal self-interests in pursuit of new possibilities for the greater good (sometimes referred to as idealised influence; Bass, 1985, 1999). To achieve charismatic leadership, some authors have outlined key sets of behaviours that would-be leaders ought to enact (e.g. Frese, Beimel & Schoenborn, 2003). However, two separate studies by Platow et al. (2006) demonstrated how the ascription of this attribute can also emerge from shared group membership. In this study, university students read about a supposed student leader. Although always described as sharing the same university in-group membership, the leader was described as being highly in-group prototypical or in-group non-prototypical. In Study 1, greater levels of charisma were attributed to the in-group prototypical than in-group non-prototypical leader *regardless of the self-oriented vs. group-oriented nature of a supposed speech* made by this leader. In Study 2, similar effects emerged using a different manipulation of relative in-group prototypicality. This time, however, the in-group non-prototypical leader was able to gain in perceived charisma with an in-group-oriented (rather than self-oriented) speech. Overall, these two studies demonstrate how enhancing one's in-group credentials either by being relatively high on in-group prototypicality or by pursuing group-oriented goals can lead to enhanced charisma as perceived by would-be followers. Like other leader attributes, we thus see that charisma too can be understood to be an outcome of shared psychological group membership.

In-group-based fairness

A third characteristic often attributed to leaders is that of fairness. Indeed, it is certainly the case that authorities perceived to be fair are more likely to encourage followership than those perceived as unfair (Tyler & Degoey, 1995; Tyler, Rasinski & McGraw, 1985). But the perennial question remains: how is fairness to be defined? In light of the complexities of group life, the philosopher, Oldenquist (1982, pp.180–181, emphasis added) made the following observation with regard to distributive fairness:

> Should university administrators, community leaders, mayors or presidents always adopt the so-called 'impartial' point of view regarding the allocation of goods? They often will be disloyal to their constituencies if they do, and they will be judged unethical, from the point of the 'general good', if they do not… It is not obvious that wider loyalties always take moral precedence over narrower ones… The demand for impartiality is never true impartiality, *it is merely an invitation to give one's loyalty to a larger whole with which someone identifies.*

Here, Oldenquist (1982) is rhetorically asking, *inter alia*, whether fair leaders will always be the ones who garner the greatest support. Experimental research suggests the answer is 'no.'

Speaking to this point, Platow et al. (1997) presented a series of studies in which an in-group leader made resource distributions between two fellow in-group members or between one in-group member and an out-group member. Research participants were then asked to judge the relative fairness of the leader in each context. As expected, when allocating within the in-group, perceptions of the leader's fairness were always greater following equal rather than unequal distributions. This finding is wholly consistent with the conclusions of the previous literature on leader fairness. Given that there was no equitable basis for inequality, the equal distributions were both normatively and subjectively fair. However, when the identical resource distributions were made between an in-group and an out-group member, the pattern of fairness perceptions changed dramatically. Critically, in all of these studies, the inequality between groups always favoured the in-group over the out-group member. Under these intergroup circumstances, the perception of greater fairness of the equal over unequal leader significantly decreased and, in one study, even reversed. In this latter study, participants actually perceived the unequal, in-group-favouring leader to be more fair than the leader who distributed equally between the two groups. Similar findings were observed by Platow et al. (1995). Overall, then, these findings support the conclusion that the perceived fairness of a leader is an outcome not only of his or her behaviour, but of potential followers' understanding of that behaviour with respect to salient psychological group membership.

In this section, we have thus outlined a fourth thesis regarding leadership processes: Thesis 4: Stereotypical leader attributes are outcomes of shared psychological group membership.

Leadership is more than just being

Up until this point, a reader could reasonably assume from our analysis that all one need to do to lead is simply be an in-group member, particularly a prototypical one. Leadership, though, is about more than just 'being', it is about 'doing' as well. There are at least two key aspects of behaviour that enhance the prospects of a group member emerging as a leader: engaging in behaviours that 'do it for us', and actively constructing and reconstructing the very meaning of 'us'. We consider each of these in turn.

Doing it for us: Social identity advancement

There is now a substantial body of literature demonstrating that would-be leaders receive stronger endorsements when they pursue group-oriented over self-oriented behaviours (van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005; Yorges, Weiss & Strickland, 1999). We saw some of this in our analysis of the group basis of charisma, where an in-group non-prototypical leader was able to gain in charismatic standing following a group-oriented speech. More recently, Grace and Platow (2015) demonstrated very clearly how an in-group member who is otherwise com-pletely anonymous to would-be followers can be seen to be showing leadership to a greater degree when he or she pursues activities (even counter-normative ones, such as graffiti writing) to advance the cause of the group more than him or herself personally.

Moreover, the research reviewed above in our analysis of fairness demonstrates precisely how leaders can promote followership by engaging in in-group-promoting behaviour. In their third study, for example, Platow et al. (1997) described the behaviour of a CEO of a local regional health authority. As described above, this leader's behaviour was seen as relatively fair when distributing resources equally between two in-group members, but was also seen as relatively fair when favouring an in-group member over an out-group member. Critically, these fairness perceptions translated into both leadership endorsement *and* social influence. Specifically, although an equally distributing leader received stronger endorsement and was able to influence potential followers more than an unequally-distributing leader *within the in-group*, this pattern reversed in an intergroup context and when the inequality was in-group favouring. Simply put, when the leader 'did it for us' – when the leader favoured 'us' over 'them' – he or she was able to garner the greatest followership. Haslam and Platow (2001) followed this up by showing that an in-group favouring leader was also able to enhance potential followers' willingness to enact his vision more than one who distributed resources equally between groups. In these studies, the leaders are not simply promoting the material welfare of in-group members, but are enhancing the social identity of participants by positively differentiating 'us' from 'them' (e.g. Platow et al., 2008). This leads to our fifth thesis, and its associated corollary:

> Thesis 5: Leadership is about 'doing it for us'.
>
> Corollary 5: Leadership involves social identity advancement.

Crafting a sense of us:
Social identity entrepreneurship

We have been writing, thus far, as if psychological groups, along with their meaning and content, came to people in some essentialised, pre-fabricated manner. We have been speaking about groups as if they somehow exist 'out there,' and people can choose to become members and/or subjectively identify with whatever the social context offers them. But groups are not simply prêt-à-porter, and leaders have a lot of say in the process of defining, creating, and re-creating psychological groups. Reicher, Hopkins and Condor (1997), for example, deconstruct the language used by various Scottish politicians from parties across the political spectrum. They demonstrate how these leaders, each vying for influence within the group as a whole, actively construct images of the group (in this case, Scots and Scotland) in a manner that situates their own political views as the most in-group prototypical. Those on the far right, for example, defined Scots' as having independent natures, while those on the left defined the very same Scot's as communitarian. In this way, each politician was actively constructing a meaning of Scots and Scotland that the Scottish populace would accept as accurate and true. The debate was, thus, less about specific political policies in the abstract, and more about the very meaning of 'us' (both who we are now and who we want to be in the future).

Similarly, Reicher and Hopkins (1996) analysed the speeches of the then British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and the Leader of the Opposition, Neil Kinnock, as they each defined, and constructed meanings around, group memberships associated with wide-spread industrial strikes. For Thatcher, who promoted an avid anti-union stance, it was 'us British' and 'them unions'. For the Labour opposition leader, however, it was 'us British' and 'them Thatcherites'. In each case, the leader was claiming ground for their political position as being essentially British, while those opposed to their positions were something clearly 'un-British'. More recently, Augoustinos and De Garis (2012) made a similar analysis of speeches by the United States President, Barack Obama. This leads to our sixth leadership thesis, and associated corollary:

> Thesis 6: Leadership is about defining and creating psychological in-groups.
>
> Corollary 6: Leadership involves identity entrepreneurship.

Moving from concepts to practice

Although our analysis of leadership is based strongly on empirical evidence, we recognise that it is highly conceptual as well. Readers can rightly say, 'Yes, this all seems reasonable, but how do I engage with these ideas in my own practice?' This is a reasonable question, as the practicalities of leadership as it plays out in real time and in *sociological* groups comprise the very domain for which people seek guidance. People's lives *are* lived in sociological groups as well as psychological groups, and managing one's way through the complexities of the two often can not only be frustrating, but can also lead to sub-optimal outcomes if not done well. Accordingly, in an attempt to move from the domain of concepts into the domain of practice, Steffens et al. (2014) recently developed a practical tool, referred to as the 'Identity Leadership Inventory' (ILI) to allow for assessment of the leadership processes outlined above. The ILI does *not* measure supposed context-independent qualities of would-be leaders; instead, it follows Thesis 2 above – in which the presence of followers is the *prima facie* evidence of leadership – in measuring potential followers' perceptions of potential leaders. In completing the ILI, group members are thus asked to make judgements of would-be leaders across four sub-scales, three of which follow directly from the theoretical analysis we have outlined thus far.

The first sub-scale is that of *Identity Prototypicality*, and follows from Thesis 3 and its associated corollaries. Example items include, 'This leader is representative of members of [the group]', and 'This leader exemplifies what it means to be a member of [the group]'. As can be seen with these examples (and the others to follow), framing the items with the words 'this leader' presupposes the target is, in fact, a leader. These words, however, can easily be replaced targets' names or roles (e.g. 'the manager') to ensure a unbiased measurement of perceived leadership. Following Thesis 5 and its Corollary, the second sub-scale measures perceptions of *Identity Advancement* (e.g. 'When this leader acts, he or she has [the group's] interests at heart', 'This leader promotes the interests of members of [the group]'). And the third sub-scale follows Thesis 6 and its Corollary, measuring perceptions of *Identity Entrepreneurship* (e.g. 'This leader develops an understanding of what it means to be a member of [the group]', 'This leader shapes members' perceptions of [the group's] values and ideals.').

The final sub-scale derives from principles outlined in a more detailed analysis of leadership by Haslam, Reicher and Platow (2011). This demonstrates how, for leadership to be sustained, leaders must imbed the very essence of 'us' into the activities, structures and symbols around which social identities are built, managed, and maintained. This *Identity Impresarioship* is closely aligned to the classic leadership construct of initiating structure (Judge, Piccolo & Ilies, 2004) – but makes the point that is not 'any-old structure' that leaders need to initiate. Rather, these structures need to be identity embedding. Accordingly, sub-scale items of the ILI include, 'This leader creates structures that are useful for [group members]' and 'This leader devises activities that bring [the group] together.'

Overall, the practical value of the ILI lies its ability to measure quantitatively leadership processes in on-going sociological groups. Its power can be enhanced by coupling it with one or another established scales that measure group members' relative levels of social identification with the group in question (e.g. Postmes, Jans & Haslam, 2013). By employing these latter scales, researchers and practitioners will be able to assess the degree to which the sociological group also represents a psychological group for the would-be followers. If levels of social identification with the group are low, then the group identified in the ILI is not likely to be serving as a meaningful psychological group for respondents. This would mean that expected group processes, including leadership, are not likely to unfold in the manner otherwise expected. It becomes incumbent, then, for users of the ILI to ensure that 'the group' identified in the ILI is, in fact, an appropriate psychological group.

Conclusions

In this article, we have presented an analysis of leadership as fundamentally a group process. In doing so, we have differentiated our analysis from others that focus on inherent attributes of would-be leaders. For us, leadership is a psychological group process in which it is followers who effectively make someone a leader. Indeed, Thesis 2 states this clearly, in observing that there can be no leadership if no one follows. Like other previous analyses, however, our focus on followership also highlights the key linchpin to all of leadership: social influence. It is for this reason that we devoted a considerable amount of time reviewing research which shows that social influence is, itself, a psychological in-group process. We then recognised that the broader literature on leadership has identified a number of qualities and attributes correlated with leadership, such as trustworthiness, charisma, and fairness. But in the end, we were able to demonstrate that these stereotypical leader attributes, too, are outcomes of shared psychological group membership. We ended our conceptual and empirical analysis by recognising that leadership is not simply about being, it is about doing as well and, in particular, it is about 'doing it for us' and about defining and creating psychological in-groups. Finally, the development of the Identity Leadership

Inventory informs us that our analysis does not simply comprise a series of abstract concepts, but evidence-based understandings of leadership as a social and psychological process. This has the important consequence that we can reliably measure our concepts in on-going group contexts to examine their relative validity and applied value – thereby lending applied as well as theoretical robustness to the psychological science of identity leadership.

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Paper

Differences between critical moments for clients, coaches, and sponsors of coaching

Erik de Haan & Christiane Nieß

Objectives: *Previous studies on the effectiveness of coaching have focused on positive outcomes that clients, coaches and organisational colleagues attribute to engaging in coaching overall. In this study descriptions of* critical moments of coaching *as experienced by executive coaching clients, their coaches and their sponsors are analysed and compared, to find out more about how coaching conversations are experienced. In this sense the objective of this research was to understand more about 'sub-outcomes' of coaching: mini-outcomes as they arise within the process and as a result of the coaching process.*

Design: *We extend previous studies in two ways. First, we take a process-oriented, qualitative approach by investigating which events are regarded as critical by clients and coaches* within *their coaching contracts to date. Second, we consider the perspective of* sponsors *of coaching who refer to the same coaching assignments as clients and coaches have done.*

Methods: *One-hundred-and-seventy-seven critical-moment descriptions were collected (49 from clients, 49 from coaches and 79 from sponsors of coaching), of which 147 could be matched between coach, client and sponsor working on the same assignment. They are coded with an existing and a new coding scheme and analysed with reference to a larger dataset comprising 555 critical moment descriptions from executive coaching assignments.*

Results: *Our results suggest that clients and coaches are considerably more aligned in what they regard as critical in their coaching assignments when compared to their alignment with sponsors' views. Whilst clients and coaches mainly refer to moments of new insight and attitudinal change as critical, sponsors underline changes in the clients' behaviour, such as their communication or interpersonal skills.*

Conclusions: *Alongside earlier studies we have found further indications that clients and coaches conducting normal coaching conversations seem to identify critical moments to a large extent with new learning, perspectives and insight, and they pick the same moments well above chance rates. At the same time, organisational sponsors of coaching seem to prioritise more new actions and changes initiated by coaching clients.*

Keywords: *executive coaching; critical moments; sponsors of coaching; effectiveness; change; qualitative data.*

ALTHOUGH THE TERM executive coaching refers to a diverse range of interventions relying on different paradigms and methodologies, most researchers and practitioners would probably agree that clients of coaching enter the process with learning and development goals, to increase their performance within their organisation, or to reflect upon their own behaviour (De Haan & Burger, 2005; Downey, 1999; Parsloe & Wray, 2000; Zeus & Skiffington, 2002). Most professionals would also agree that coaching is an organisational intervention, designed to benefit an organisation through working with a single individual (Smither et al., 2003). When clients are asked to evaluate coaching outcomes, they have been found to report higher goal attainment (Grant, 2003), greater self-efficacy (e.g. Baron & Morin, 2010; Evers, Brouwers & Tomic, 2006), improved social skills (Spence & Grant, 2005; Wasylyshyn, 2003), and better team performance (Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004) in response to coaching interventions. Although some of the coaching outcome studies have used feedback data from peers and managers (Peterson, 1993; Smither et al., 2003; Thach, 2002), what remains largely unexplored is the question of whether and how those

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positive outcomes are also visible to others in the organisation. With organisations spending billions of dollars on coaching interventions globally (Sherman & Freas, 2004), we need research that establishes whether those investments not just pay off for the client of coaching, but particularly for others whom the client interacts with at work. The present study, therefore, aims to extend previous research by examining the coaching process not only from the perspective of clients and coaches, but also from that of their sponsors in the organisation, who were the clients' direct line managers, partners or HR directors.

Making use of a qualitative methodology, we first aim to replicate existing findings on the critical moments of change that clients and their coaches attribute to their coaching assignments (De Haan, 2008a, 2008b; Day et al., 2008). Secondly, we build on those previous studies by including critical moments that organisational *sponsors* notice in response to those same coaching assignments. For this purpose we are imagining that in executive coaching there are two processes running concurrently: the coaching process with all its twists and turns, and indeed with critical moments as observed by the two partners; and the organisational processes where coachees collaborate with and work towards requirements of their colleagues, clients, and sponsors. In this research we are comparing the critical moments in this second process to the critical moments from within the coaching process. Our coding of such qualitative data will allow us to identify and quantify similarities and differences in clients', coaches', and sponsors' perceptions of critical moments both within and as a consequence of executive coaching conversations.

Clients' and coaches' critical moments in coaching

Despite the popularity of coaching interventions in organisations (Sherman & Freas, 2004), rigorous empirical studies on the outcomes of coaching are rather scarce. The research that has been conducted has generally focused on the clients' and partly on the coaches' perspectives concerning the beneficial outcomes that coaching entails (De Haan & Duckworth, 2013). Although we recognise the value of such quantitative outcome studies, we start with more qualitative data in this study. By analysing the qualitative data rigorously we aim to shed more light on the question of what happens *within* the coaching process, in other words we focus more on *sub-outcomes* than on overall outcomes. Rice and Greenberg (1984) define sub-outcomes as outcomes achieved within the process, from moment to moment, as distinct from outcomes which are generally the result of the process, that is, which can be measured after completing the full coaching assignment.

Several previous research projects have already investigated critical moments in coaching assignments for clients and coaches. More specifically, they have asked clients and coaches the following question: *'Describe briefly one critical moment (an exciting, tense, or significant moment) with your coach/client. Think about what was critical in the coaching journey, or a moment when you did not quite know what to do.'* Study participants were inexperienced coaches (De Haan, 2008a), experienced coaches (De Haan, 2008b; Day et al., 2008), coaching clients (De Haan et al., 2010a), dyads of coaches and clients that were interviewed directly after their sessions together (De Haan et al., 2010b), and, in a case study, a single dyad of client and coach (De Haan & Nieß, 2012). Collecting such descriptions of what had been found significant, tense, anxiety-provoking, exciting or pivotal in some way, confirmed that such descriptions of 'critical moments' tend to refer to mayor events in the coaching relationship and can therefore be defined as 'sub-outcomes' of that relationship: important outcomes or events on a moment-by-moment or session-by-session basis (Rice & Greenberg, 1984).

Table 1: Critical moments coding scheme as found in De Haan et al. (2010b) and used for this dataset as well as all earlier datasets of descriptions of critical moments in coaching.

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

The critical moment descriptions collected in those studies were coded by independent coders using the coding scheme displayed in Table 1, which is described in more detail in De Haan et al. (2010b). Broadly, the coding scheme refers to four categories:

1. Moments of learning (code 1 'New insight' and code 2 'New connection/perspective');
2. Moments of relational change in the coaching relationship (code 3 'Positive change in the relationship' and code 4 'Negative change in the relationship');
3. Moments of significant action (code 5 'Significance in doing in the moment, coach-led' and code 6 'Significance in doing in the moment, client-led'); and
4. Moments of significant emotional experience (code 7 'Joy, client', code 8 'Joy, coach', code 9 'Anxiety, client', code 10 'Anxiety, coach', code 11 'Doubt, client', and code 12 'Doubt, coach').

The main findings of those previous studies into critical moments of coaching suggest very broadly that while inexperienced coaches express mainly their own doubts as critical moments (De Haan, 2008a), more experienced coaches tend to refer to critical moments as sources of anxiety (De Haan et al., 2008b). It is important to note, however, that those coaches were asked for a critical moment with one of their clients, which they could well have interpreted as the most significant moment of their whole portfolio of work. It is, therefore, not surprising that these two groups of participants are biased towards reporting particularly dramatic and emotional moments. When on the other hand clients of coaching were asked for their critical moments of coaching (with the help of the same question above), they instead reported moments of new realisations and insights as particularly critical. Similar results are obtained when dyads of coaches and clients were interviewed independently after a joint coaching session: *both* parties had a tendency to report new realisations and insights as most critical to the session, and they were in substantial agreement in terms of which moments they selected as being critical in the session they had just completed.

These are important findings and worth testing with a new and wider dataset. The finding that clients are frequently referring to new realisations and insight in their critical-moment descriptions in combination with the fact that they are mostly selecting positive experiences of coaching (De Haan et al., 2010a), may indicate that coaching clients are particularly helped by acquiring new insight and learning. In other words it is possible that on a within-session, moment-by-moment level clients prefer to be served by insight-focused interventions and less by the other three main contributions in executive coaching: problem-focused, person-focused and solution-focused approaches (De Haan & Burger, 2005). It is important, however, to hold such an interpretation of the earlier findings lightly, because growing client insight will be common to all successful approaches and may, therefore, be one of many 'common factors' in professional coaching approaches. Nevertheless, our growing understanding of how clients describe their most critical moments in the coaching relationship may inform extensive debates in the coaching literature around which method or approach to offer to clients. Since the present study looks into critical-moment descriptions each from a single coaching assignment (rather than taken from a whole portfolio of client work), we would expect to replicate this; more specifically, we suggest:

> *Hypothesis 1:* Clients and coaches mostly refer to moments of insight and learning (Codes 1 and 2 in Table 1) in their critical-moment descriptions of coaching.

Sponsors' critical moments in coaching

Whilst rigorous studies concerning the outcomes of coaching interventions from the perspective of clients and coaches are limited to less than 20 (De Haan & Duckworth, 2013), even fewer studies have investigated whether *sponsors* notice any positive outcomes that they attribute to the effectiveness of coaching. Nevertheless, preliminary evidence suggests that the beneficial effects of executive coaching are also visible to others in the organisation. Studies which estimate the changes caused by executive coaching in terms of 360° feedback show that managers who worked with an executive coach receive better evaluations on the second 360° feedback instrument compared to those who did not work with an executive coach (Smither et al., 2003). Similarly, Thach (2002) found that leaders who were coached for an average of six months received more favourable evaluations through 360° feedback. Managers and HR partners of coaching clients have been found to report more effective leadership behaviours and better interpersonal skills among participants of a commissioned coaching programme (Wasylyshyn, Gronsky & Haas, 2006). Olivero, Bane and Kopelman (1997) found that managers who participated in a management development programme with additional coaching received higher ratings of productivity (an 88 per cent increase) compared to managers who participated in the management development programme alone (only a 22 per cent increase in productivity).

In sum, there are a few empirical studies which suggest that coaching interventions provide some benefits that are also visible to others in the organisation. The second aim of the present study is to extend this line of research by inquiring more deeply into the experience of line managers and sponsors of coaching clients. More specifically, we aim to identify critical moments for sponsors of coaching and to compare triads of clients, coaches, and sponsors in terms of what critical moments they notice in shared coaching assignments. To the best of our knowledge, only two published studies so far have also included clients', coaches', and sponsors' perceptions of coaching outcomes separately, albeit that in the second study they did not necessarily stem from the same assignments. Peterson (1993) studied N=370 leaders from various organisations at three points in time (pre-coaching, post-coaching, and follow-up) with outcome defined by their own coaching objectives and five standard 'control' items, rated by at least themselves, their manager and their coach (multi-source ratings). The coaching programme was intensive and long-term, with typically 50+ hours of individual coaching with a professional coach over at least a year. Peterson found that clients, on average, achieved significant improvement on all measures of outcome related to coaching objectives (effect sizes d>1.5). Schlosser et al. (2006) invited triads of clients, coaches, and the clients' managers to report outcomes they attributed to coaching engagements. These participants were asked to select from a list of 25 outcomes the ones that they believed had improved as a result of the coaching engagement. While only N=14 managers responded to the authors' request, results indicated that all three groups (clients, coaches, and managers) regarded employee 'engagement' and 'promotability' as the main outcomes of coaching. Managers, however, rated the effectiveness of coaching significantly lower than clients and coaches did.

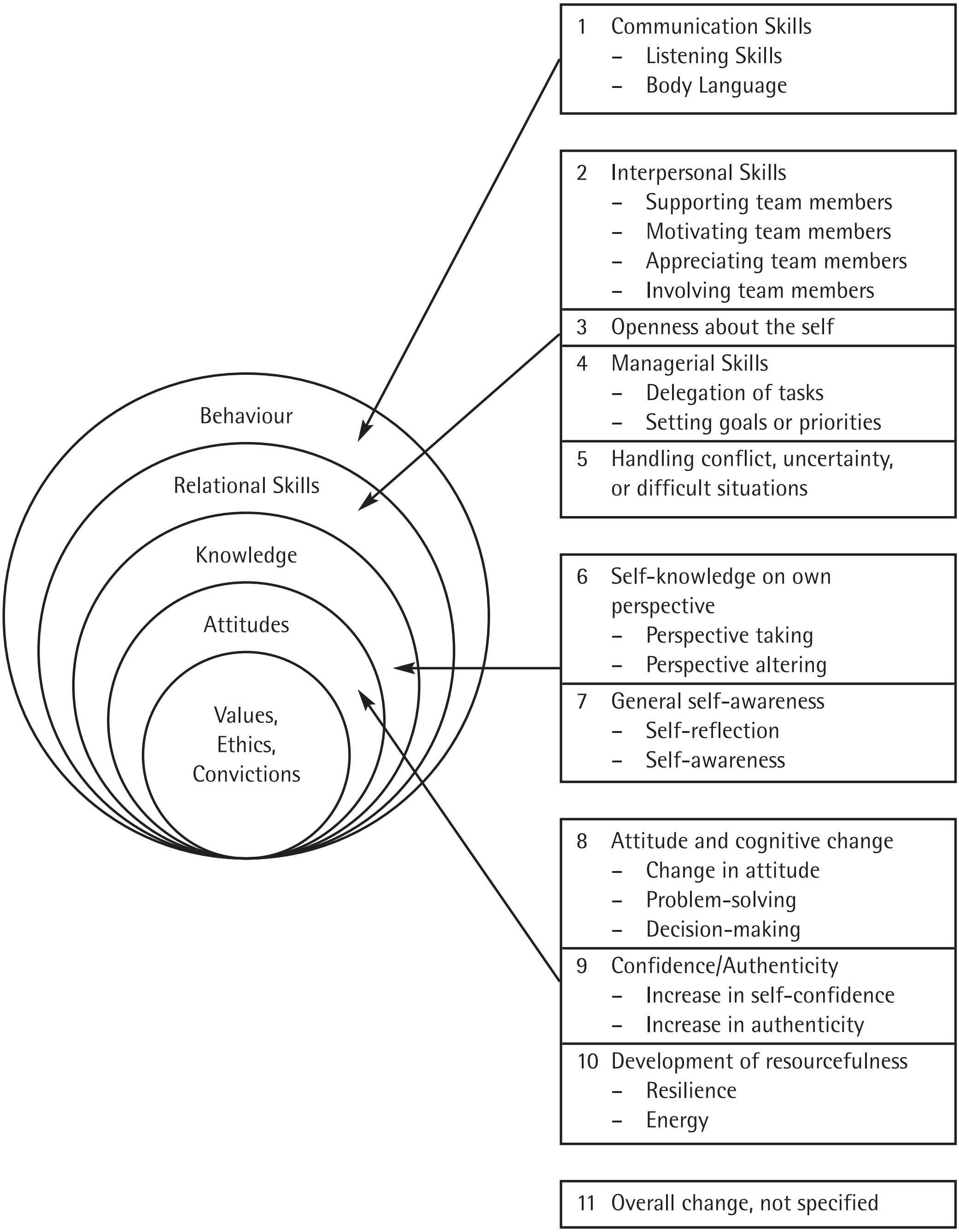
The present study extends these quantitative approaches by looking at the 'sub-outcome' level (Rice & Greenberg, 1984) for the first time, on the basis of critical-moment descriptions of triads of clients, coaches, and sponsors working together on the *same* coaching assignment. While we hypothesised that clients and coaches would refer primarily to moments of new insight and learning (codes 1 and 2; see Hypothesis 1), we would argue that such moments of new insight or realisation will be less relevant for the sponsors of those assignments who are only indirectly involved (or only involved directly at the contracting and review stages). For this reason we suggest that sponsors mainly report critical moments which refer to more readily observable moments of *change* (codes 3 and 4) and to *new actions* taken by clients (code 6). If this is confirmed we would have some preliminary evidence for sponsors operating more from a 'problem-focused' understanding of executive coaching (De Haan & Burger, 2005).

> *Hypothesis 2:* Sponsors mostly refer to moments of change in the relationship and significant action taken by the client (codes 3, 4, and 6) as critical ones.

The coding scheme which Hypotheses 1 and 2 refer to (see Table 1) was originally developed inductively for classifying many hundreds of clients' and coaches' critical moments of executive coaching. Several codes, therefore, refer to critical moments that are likely to arise within coaching sessions which may be less observable for sponsors of coaching, such as the codes referring to emotional states of coaches and clients (codes 7 through 12). Although we expect these codes of the earlier scheme to be less relevant here, we have chosen to retain the scheme as a whole as a first coding system, to allow a direct comparison with the earlier studies.

However, we also felt the need for a second more tailor-made coding scheme which could test this particular hypothesis.

Figure 1: Second critical moments coding scheme based on Schein's (1985) 'onion' model.


Behaviour
Relational Skills
Knowledge
Attitudes
Values,
Ethics,
Convictions
1 Communication Skills
– Listening Skills
– Body Language
2 Interpersonal Skills
– Supporting team members
– Motivating team members
– Appreciating team members
– Involving team members
3 Openness about the self
4 Managerial Skills
– Delegation of tasks
– Setting goals or priorities
5 Handling conflict, uncertainty, or difficult situations
6 Self-knowledge on own perspective
– Perspective taking
– Perspective altering
7 General self-awareness
– Self-reflection
– Self-awareness
8 Attitude and cognitive change
– Change in attitude
– Problem-solving
– Decision-making
9 Confidence/Authenticity
– Increase in self-confidence
– Increase in authenticity
10 Development of resourcefulness
– Resilience
– Energy
11 Overall change, not specified

For this reason we adopted a grounded theory approach (Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to develop a second coding scheme. The grounded-theory approach made use of 41 sponsors' critical-moment descriptions collected at an earlier date (De Haan & Nieß, 2011). In this inductive way we arrived at another scheme for classifying critical moments of change particularly from the sponsor perspective but usable for all three parties (clients, coaches, and sponsors). We noticed that our scheme turned out similar to Schein's (1985) conceptualisation of the 'onion' of organisational culture. This coding scheme, which is depicted in Figure 1, suggests that while 'outer layers' such as changes in behaviour and communication of coaching are visible to outsiders, 'inner layers' refer to invisible learning or personal change in, for example, attitudes and knowledge. Whilst clients and coaches directly involved in the coaching assignment may thus notice more of the inner levels of the 'onion' model, those inner layers may be less visible to sponsors of coaching. If coding would confirm that sponsors are more occupied with the 'outer layers' of the model, this would give support to the idea that sponsors describe their critical moments more from a 'problem-focused' perspective and less from an 'insight-focused' perspective (see De Haan & Burger, 2005), which we know has been more the perspective of clients and coaches in regular coaching sessions (De Haan et al., 2010b). We therefore propose:

> *Hypothesis 3:* Sponsors refer significantly more than others to moments of communication or change that are visible on the outer layers of the 'onion' model (codes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5), as critical ones.

Congruence between clients, coaches, and sponsors

Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 are concerned with the nature of the moments that clients, coaches, and sponsors refer to as critical with regard to the shared endeavour of the executive coaching work. What, however, remains unexplored so far is the extent to which those three parties actually refer to the *same* moments as being critical to them. More particularly, we were interested in finding out how often triplets of clients, coaches, and sponsors refer to the same moment of change that they notice during or as a result of coaching. This would be important as another way to understand the level of agreement between various participants in the coaching assignment, and also as a way to study the 'Rashomon conjecture' proposed and much debated by psychotherapists (Mintz et al., 1973; Weiss, Rabinowitz & Spiro, 1996).

Previous research has consistently shown that clients and coaches refer to the same moments as critical significantly above chance level, and thus that there is not much of a 'Rashomon effect' in executive coaching, which would be the case when participants in a coaching conversation leave the session with different, incommensurable accounts of their experience together (based on Kurosawa's movie *Rashomon* where a single event is recounted very differently from four different perspectives). De Haan et al. (2010b) showed that in a client-coach direct comparison study, clients and coaches referred to the same moment in 53 per cent of the descriptions, whilst in a longitudinal investigation where client and coach wrote down their critical moments after each coaching session they referred to the same moment in 47 per cent of the descriptions (De Haan & Nieß, 2012). Not only did clients and coaches refer to the same incidents at a frequency much higher than chance but they also tended to agree in their descriptions of their critical moments (De Haan et al., 2010b), thereby disconfirming the Rashomon conjecture.

In those two studies, clients and coaches were asked for their critical moments straight after shared coaching sessions, while participants in the present study referred to one coaching assignment consisting of many sessions and they did not normally answer straight after mutual sessions. For this reason we expect numbers of congruence between clients and coaches to be smaller than in those two previous studies, yet we suggest that they are still above chance. Since sponsors are not directly involved in the coaching assignments, we expect congruence between clients/coaches and sponsors to be smaller than between clients and coaches.

> *Hypothesis 4a:* The incidence of shared critical moments between clients and coaches, that is, the percentage of cases in which they both refer to the same shared incident, will again be well above chance level (chance level is below one per cent) but also significantly below the level found in earlier studies into a single coaching session (47 to 53 per cent).
>
> *Hypothesis 4b:* The number of times that sponsors and clients (and also sponsors and coaches) refer to the same moments as being critical is significantly smaller than the number of times that coaches and clients refer to the same critical moments.

Method

Sample

Participants of the present study (*N*=177) were recruited through two different sources. First, potential sponsors of coaching were approached at a Business School in Great Britain and as part of another study (De Haan & Wels, 2011), resulting in an initial sample from sponsors of *N*=30. Second, we made use of a large-scale online survey where clients, coaches, and sponsors of coaching who were involved *in the same coaching assignment* were recruited (De Haan & Page, 2013), adding *N*=49 clients, *N*=49 coaches, and *N*=49 sponsors of coaching from matching assignments. Sponsors were nominated by the clients as those work colleagues who sponsored their assignment, so they were mainly their line managers, though in some cases they were HR directors or more senior partners in professional services firms. One-hundred-and-thirty sponsors completed the overall research questionnaire (a response rate of around 20 per cent) and 49 of their answers to the open question could be matched with answers by coaches and clients (38 per cent). Participants were drawn from 22 different countries with the help of a wide network of 366 executive coaches who participated in this worldwide large coaching outcome study. Clients and sponsors had an almost equal gender split whilst coaches had an average experience of 13.31 years (*SD*=7.19), 67 per cent were female and 86 per cent were external coaches (with the remainder internal mainly in large public organisations), mostly conducting stand-alone executive coaching assignments.

Materials

Data for this study were obtained by asking participants whether they have 'experienced something that felt like a 'critical' moment (an exciting, tense, or significant moment) where they noticed a difference and to describe briefly one (or more) such critical moments'; in the case of clients we added 'during coaching'; in the case of coaches we added 'in your work with this client' and in the case of sponsors of coaching we added: 'with your colleague, where you were directly aware of the impact of executive coaching.' We highlighted direct awareness of executive coaching because we are looking for experiences which they somehow relate to the coaching work. We chose the word 'impact' here because it was the most general term we could think of: it could be interpreted as the sponsor wished without limiting the range of their answers. Clients, coaches, and sponsors were thus asked essentially the *same* question with small modifications, which was also the same as that in all earlier research programmes.

Procedure

After the 49 clients', 49 coaches', and 79 sponsors' critical moment descriptions had been collected, they were coded three times blindly and independently by four independent coders out of a group of eight coders one of whom being the first author (in the first two of these coding procedures critical-moment descriptions were drawn randomly and blindly from all three sources: clients, coaches and sponsors; in the third of the coding the source of the critical-moment description had to be revealed to the coder, by definition):

1. The coding was based on the original coding scheme that has already been used in previous studies (see Table 1). For this first coding, a forced-choice design was employed, forcing the coders to only attach one code to each critical-moment description. We knew from the earlier studies that coders had never asked for more categories. This was replicated in this study, so forced choice with these 12 codes was straightforward.
2. The second way of coding was developed inductively from moments collected from sponsors of coaching, by using a grounded theory approach which on second iteration could be linked with Schein's (1985) 'onion' model (see Figure 1). According to this model, organisational culture can be regarded as a metaphorical onion, where visible organisational *behaviours* are located on the outer layers of the onion, while organisational *knowledge* refers to less visible, middle layers, and underlying assumptions of the organisation are found in the inner layers. More specifically, 11 codes (see Figure 1) evolved from the sponsors' critical-moment descriptions collected prior to the present study, which naturally fitted into an 'onion' model similar to the one proposed by Schein (1985). The first code, namely changes in communication, such as listening skills or body language, refers to changes in behaviour (first layer of the 'onion' model). Codes 2 through 5 refer to changes in relational skills (second layer of the 'onion' model). They include interpersonal skills (code 2), such as supporting, motivating, appreciating, and involving members of the team, openness about self (code 3), managerial skills (code 4) such as delegating tasks and setting goals and priorities, and handling conflict, uncertainty, or difficult situations (code 5). Codes 6 (self-knowledge, such as perspective-taking and perspective-altering) and 7 (general self-awareness, and self-reflection) represent the middle layer of the 'onion' model, namely knowledge. Changes in attitude (fourth layer of the 'onion' model) are described by codes 8 through 10. Code 8 implies changes in attitude and cognitive change, such as problem-solving and decision-making, while code nine describes changes in self-confidence and authenticity. Code 10 refers to a development of resourcefulness, such as energy or resilience. Code 11 (overall change, not specified) was developed to fit the descriptions that did not mention a specific change. No code was developed to refer to the core of the 'onion' model (basic assumptions, ethics, and convictions), as none of the critical-moment descriptions referred to changes on that level. For the coding based on this second coding scheme, we again employed a forced-choice design in which coders were asked to only administer one code per critical-moment description – however, in this case the final code is a 'remainder' category (see Figure 1).
3. For the third way of coding, we asked the coders to indicate whether the critical-moment descriptions from the same assignment (i.e. triplets of client, coach, and sponsor; N=49) were congruent in that they were referring to the *same* moment or incident as being critical. More specifically, we asked them to indicate whether they thought there was a correspondence with regards to content between the client and the coach, between the client and the sponsor, between the coach and the sponsor, and between all three critical moment descriptions that came from the same coaching assignment.

To estimate the degree of agreement between coders, Cohen's Kappa was calculated for each of the three ways of coding. For the first coding scheme, which includes 12 codes, we found a Cohen's kappa of κ=.240. For the second coding scheme, using 11 codes, Cohen's kappa was slightly higher at κ=.318. Finally, the third way of coding (congruence), which has 5 codes, Cohen's kappa was κ=.282. All codings thus indicate fair agreement between coders (Landis & Koch, 1977). We averaged the codings by adding up the times each code was assigned to the critical moment descriptions by each coder and dividing through the number of coders and critical moments. This procedure ensured that none of the coders' assessments were lost.

Vignettes of raw data

In order to help the reader gain a basic understanding of the critical-moment descriptions collected from clients, coaches, and sponsors of coaching, we have chosen a number of short but representative vignettes, which can be found in Table 2. Those data show the range of critical moments that were mentioned by the participants of this study as well as the range of congruence (which is increasing towards the bottom of Table 2) between the three different parties.

Results

Clients' and coaches' critical moments in coaching

Hypothesis 1 suggests that clients and coaches mostly refer to moments of insight or learning (codes 1 and 2) as critical ones. It was tested based on the first coding scheme that was also used in previous studies. Figure 2 displays the proportion of codes assigned to clients', coaches', and sponsors' critical-moment descriptions based on this coding scheme. This graphical representation of the data shows that codes 1 and 2 were indeed used most frequently for coding both clients' and coaches' critical-moment descriptions. Paired samples *t*-tests were conducted to investigate whether this difference was statistically significant (see Appendix A). Results indicated that codes 1 and 2 were indeed used significantly more often than all the other codes at $p<.001$, except for code 5 where the difference was not significant. The results were thus mainly supportive of Hypothesis 1.

Results for sponsors' critical moments in coaching

Hypothesis 2 states that with respect to the same, original coding scheme, sponsors refer to moments of change and client-led action (codes 3, 4, and 6) as critical ones. Again, Figure 2 includes the graphical representation of the data based on this coding scheme. It shows that sponsors of coaching differ substantially from clients and coaches with respect to their critical-moment descriptions: Clients and coaches seem to be more aligned in their critical-moment descriptions when compared to sponsors (a similar alignment between clients and coaches straight after shared coaching conversations was also found in De Haan et al., 2010b, and De Haan & Nieß, 2012).

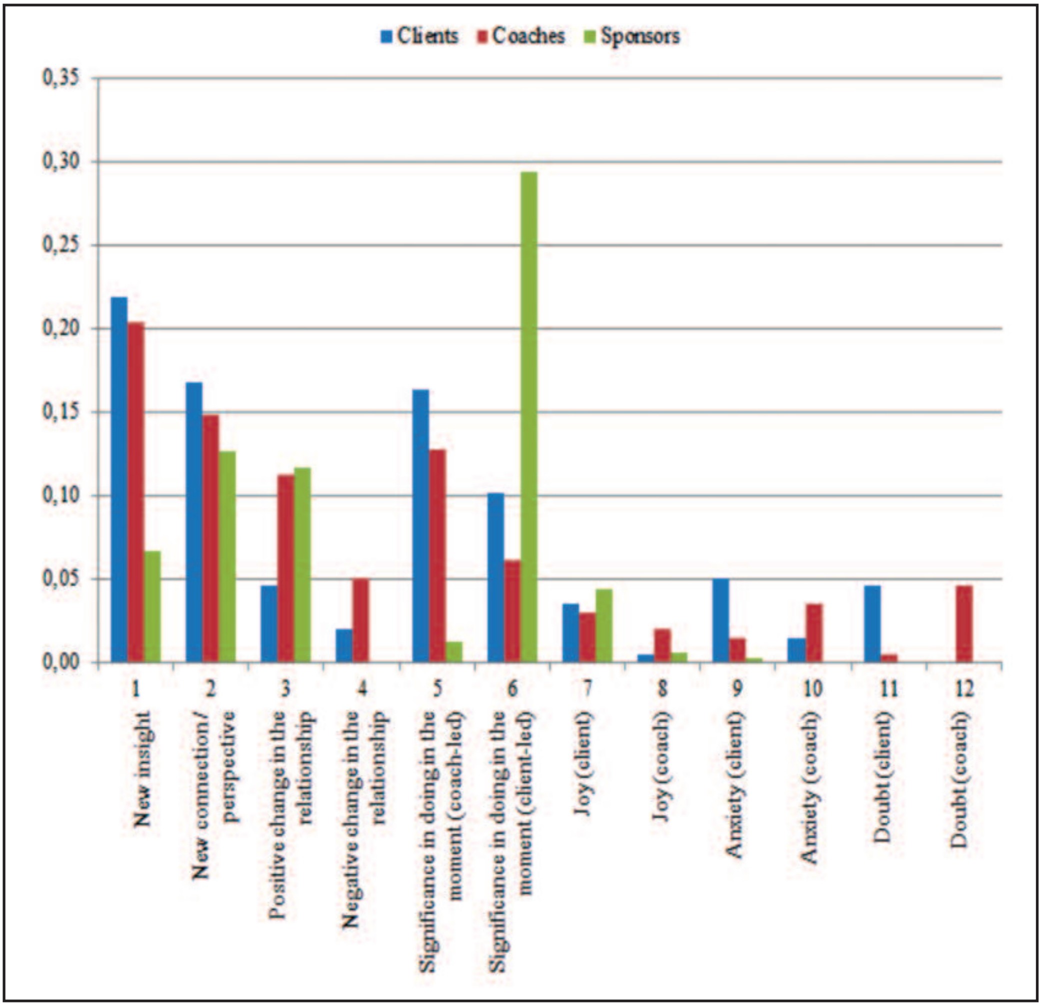
In order to statistically test Hypothesis 2, we again made use of paired sample *t*-tests, comparing the frequencies of codes 3, 4, and 6 to the frequencies of the other codes. Results indicated that codes 3 and 6 were indeed used significantly more often at a $p<.01$ level than any of the other codes (except for code 2, where the difference to code 3 was not significant; see Appendix B). Code 4 was, however, not used at all for coding of sponsors' critical moments, possibly because sponsors only reported positive changes as a result of coaching. The results offer strong but partial support for Hypothesis 2: while code 3 (positive change in the relationship) and code 6 (significance in doing in the moment, client-led) were indeed used significantly more to describe sponsors' critical moments, this was not the case for code 4 (negative change in the relationship).

Based on the second coding scheme grounded in the 'onion' model of organisational change, Hypothesis 3 states that sponsors mainly refer to moments of change that

Table 2: Vignettes of the critical moment descriptions with in each row data from the same coaching assignment. Towards the bottom of this table one can observe the degree of 'congruence' between the three parties increasing.

	Clients' critical moments	Coaches' critical moments	Sponsors' critical moments
1	Significant moment when I realised, through input from my coach, how a helping conviction can improve your confidence and behaviour.	Challenging was the fact that I didn't know if I was the right coach for her. I didn't feel comfortable […]	In general during interaction with other team members and the client, where my counselee was much more open and engaged in the discussions.
2	The moment I recognised, through my coaching, that I was the one of all my brothers and sisters who organised […]	I experienced a significant moment when this client realised that his behaviour as adult was still influenced by limiting believes from his youth […]	[…] Before the coaching my colleague usually had a big problem in dealing with difficult situations and put all his energy in defending the approach of his people. It was remarkable that he took his time to listen, ask, and analyse […]
3	Realising that my anxiety in groups was created by me most of the time by negative thought patterns and hence I also had the capacity to change that thinking (and hence the feelings).	When she tackled a long-standing area of concern with her partner and had a positive outcome […]	Increased confidence in conversing at multi professional meetings where there are strong dominating personalities.
4	There was a session when the coach let me talk to myself in a role playing game.	My client told me about a clash between her and a collegue of hers about her sub-assertive behaviour. She got emotional about being unable to gather the courage to stand up to her […]	She has made advantages especially in situations with a colleague that can be quite snappy. Before coaching, she was swiped off her feet or intimidated, after coaching she stands by her opinion […]
5	In one of the sessions I realised that I had the know-how in dealing with a confrontational situation, I just had to remain calm and deal with it in a calm manner […]	At the end of the second session I felt a marked shift in her attitude and confidence in moving forward effectively. She suddenly appeared in control and not just reacting emotionally.	My colleague appears to be more patient with those she manages and appears to be more approachable. There appears to be less conflict situations in the office […]

Figure 2: Proportions of codes assigned to clients', coaches', and sponsors' critical moment descriptions within original first coding scheme.



are visible as they are on the outer layers of the client-as-onion model (codes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) as critical ones. Figure 3 displays the proportions of codes from the second coding scheme assigned by coders to the critical-moment descriptions for clients, coaches, and sponsors of coaching. The graphical representation of the results suggests that codes 1 (communication skills) and 2 (interpersonal skills) were used very frequently for coding sponsors' critical-moment descriptions, especially when compared to the ratings for clients' and coaches' critical-moment descriptions. Codes 8 (attitude and cognitive change) and 9 (confidence/authenticity) were, however, also used frequently for coding sponsors' critical-moment descriptions. Paired sample *t*-tests were again conducted to test whether the differences in the frequencies of codes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 in comparison to the other codes were statistically significant. Results (see Appendix C) indicated that code 1 was only used significantly more frequently for coding sponsors' critical moments than code 6, but not more frequently than any of the other codes. Code 2 was used more frequently than codes 6, 10, and 11, but there was no difference to the other codes. Codes 3 and 4 were not used significantly more frequently than any of the other codes. Code 5 was used significantly more often than code 6 only. In sum, the results suggest that codes 1 (communication skills) and 2 (interpersonal skills) were indeed used more frequently than some of the other codes, offering only limited support for Hypothesis 3. However, some of the codes on the inner layers of the 'onion' model, such as codes 7 (general self-awareness), 8 (attitude or cognitive change), and 9 (confidence/authenticity) were not used significantly less frequently for coding sponsors' critical-moment descriptions.

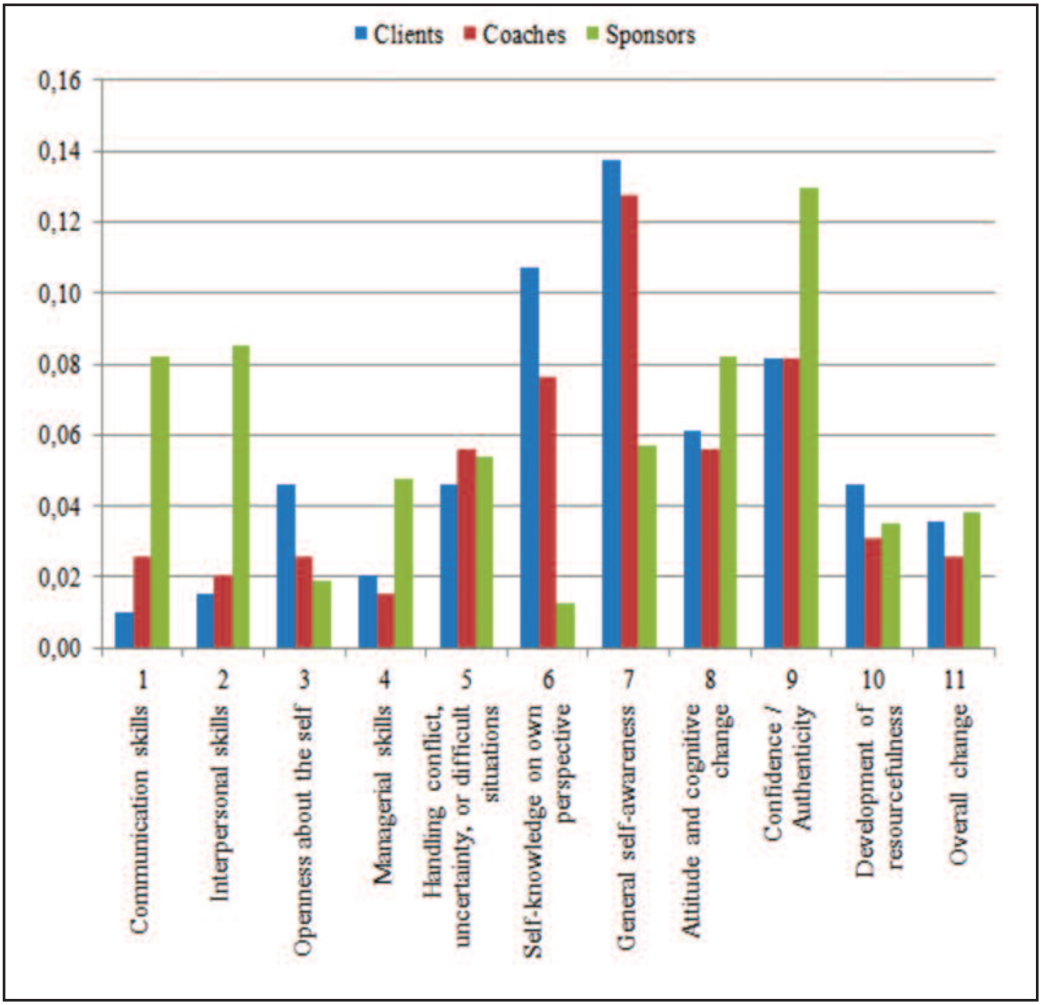
The results of both coding schemes thus suggest that clients and coaches are more aligned in what they regard as critical moments in their coaching assignments than sponsors are. With respect to the first, original coding scheme, we tested that finding with paired sample *t*-tests and our results indicate that sponsors of coaching reported fewer moments of new insights (code 1) and coach-led significance in doing in the moment (code 5) than clients and coaches did. Instead they reported more critical moments that were coded as client-led significance in doing in the moment (code 6) when compared to both clients and coaches. With respect to the second, newly-developed coding scheme, we found that sponsors of coaching referred to significantly more critical moments of communication skills (code 1) than clients, but the difference to coaches was only marginally significant. Sponsors furthermore referred significantly more often to critical moments that were coded as interpersonal skills (code 2) than clients and coaches. Sponsors, however, referred to significantly fewer critical moments that were coded as self-knowledge on own perspective (code 6) or general self-awareness (code 7). Sponsors thus refer to more changes in the outer layers of the 'onion' model (codes 1 and 2), while clients and coaches refer more frequently to changes on the inner layers of the onion (codes 6 and 7).

Results for congruence between clients, coaches, and sponsors

We were also interested in the degree of congruence between triplets of clients', coaches', and sponsors' critical-moment descriptions, as they were referring to the same coaching assignments. More specifically, we suggest that the degree to which both clients and coaches refer to the same moments as critical is above chance (Hypothesis 4a) and that the degree to which both sponsors and clients refer to the same moments as critical is smaller than the degree to which both coaches and clients refer to the same moments as critical (Hypothesis 4b). A graphical representation of the results pertaining to those two hypotheses can be found in Figure 4. It shows that in almost 40 per cent of the cases there is no congruence between any of the three parties in what moments they refer to as critical ones. Put differently, in almost 40 per cent of the critical-moment descriptions, none of the coders recognised a congruence. In almost half of the cases (46 per cent), clients and coaches, however, refer to the same critical moments of their coaching assignments. Given that these coaching assignments had lasted for an average of near eight sessions (a median of seven sessions), which would be more than 10 hours of coaching on average, this amounts to a correspondence which was well above chance and offers strong support for Hypothesis 4a. Figure 4 also shows that correspondence between clients and sponsors (26 per cent) as well as between coaches and sponsors (24 per cent) was considerably smaller, thus offering support for Hypothesis 4b.

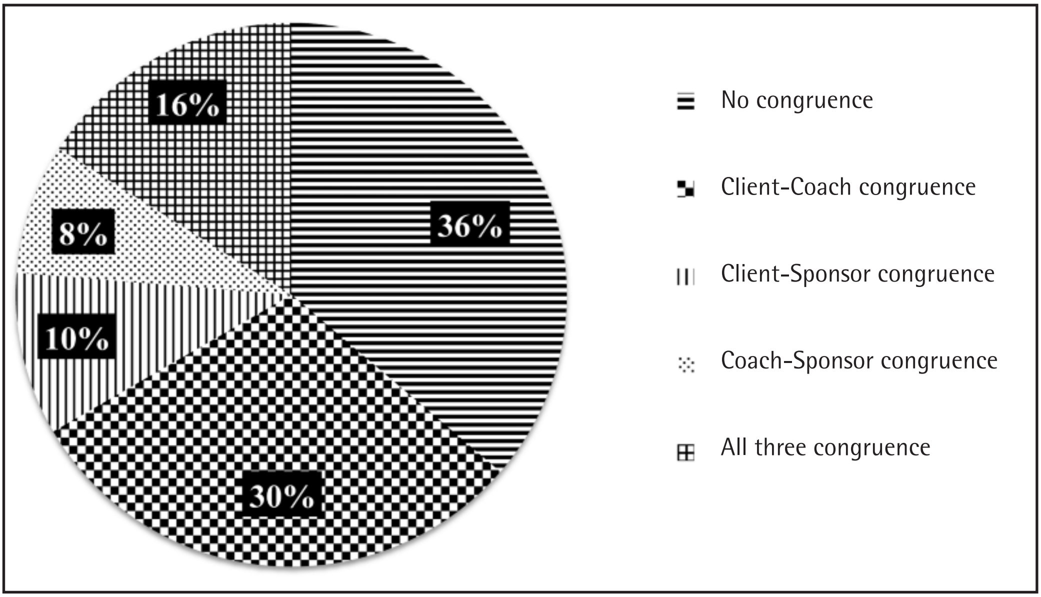
However, as this is narrative research we need to be careful with our interpretations: here, we seem to have found congruence between all three parties, and particularly between coaches and clients, a degree of congruence which is clearly above chance. On the other hand, any congruence we

Figure 3. Proportions of codes assigned to clients', coaches', and sponsors' critical-moment descriptions within second coding scheme based on Schein's (1985) 'onion' model.



found is not – and can never be – *full* congruence, because the critical-moment descriptions are by design independent and therefore different. They have only been recognised by coders as belonging to similar instances of the coaching work. Moreover, there is a sample of almost 40 per cent of all critical-moment descriptions remaining where the coders report no congruence across client, coach or sponsor perspectives. We do not know if in those descriptions completely incommensurable narratives were told, or rather narratives which other parties would easily recognise as well, simply because we have no means to test this retrospectively. So despite the surprisingly high agreement in both selection and nature of description of critical moments (compare Figure 2) between clients and coaches, we cannot rule out significant remaining 'Rashomon' phenomena where both parties tell very different stories indeed.

Figure 4: Congruence between clients, coaches, and sponsors referring to the same coaching assignments.



Discussion

The aim of the present study was to investigate critical moments of coaching for clients, coaches, and sponsors referring to the same coaching assignments. Our results suggest that overall clients and coaches are considerably more aligned in what they regard as critical moments than sponsors are, even when all three parties are referring to the same coaching assignment. More particularly, we find that clients and coaches mostly refer to moments of new realisations and insights as well as coach-led significance in doing in the moment as critical. They also frequently noticed changes on the inner layers of a metaphorical onion (i.e. understanding and self-awareness) and refer to the same moments as critical ones in almost half of their descriptions. Sponsors, on the other hand, mainly notice positive changes in the relationship with the client as well as client-led significance in doing in the moment as critical moments. Overall sponsors have been very positive in their descriptions which explains why there are no codes in ‘negative changes in the relationship’ (code 4; see Figure 2). This could be due to self-selection because a significant proportion of sponsors in the large-scale research project chose not to answer this question. Also, the changes in terms of the ‘onion’ model are noticed more frequently on the outer layers, such as in clients’ communication and interpersonal skills. Finally, coaches and clients seem to be much more congruent (a correspondence of 46 per cent) in terms of which moments they selected as being critical, than either sponsors and clients or sponsors and coaches (correspondences of 26 per cent and 24 per cent, respectively).

These findings become more convincing if they are compared directly with the original datasets of earlier studies, as we have done in Figure 5. We can then appreciate that blind coding of all seven datasets of critical-moment descriptions (a total of 555 critical-moment descriptions each coded by at least three coders of which one, AC, coded every dataset) collected from inexperienced coaches, experienced coaches (two datasets), clients of coaching, clients and coaches together after a shared session (two datasets), and sponsors of coaching assignments, are actually very distinct:

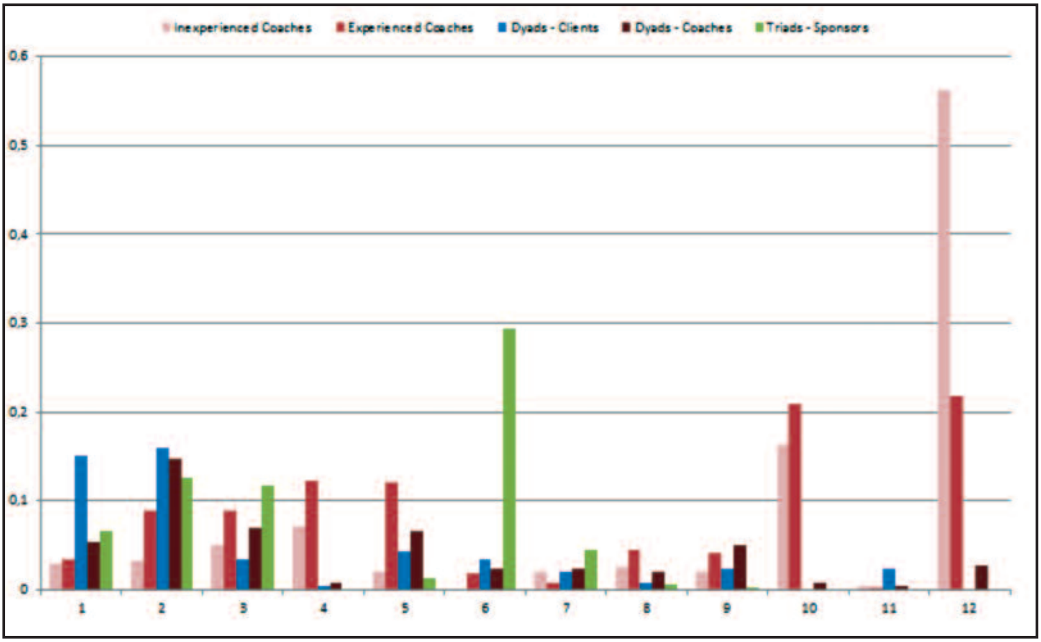
1. Critical moments from inexperienced coaches over their whole coaching experience are classified as 'doubts of the coach' (code 12) in more than half of cases. The coach's anxieties (code 10) are also prominent.
2. Critical moments from experienced coaches over their whole coaching experience peak at both 'doubts' and 'anxieties' of the coach (codes 10 and 12 in equal measure).
3. Critical moments from coaches and clients straight after sessions contain mainly new insights (code 1) and new perspectives (code 2).
4. Critical moments from sponsors of coaching (this research) are coded as 'significant action led by the client' (code 6) in almost a third of cases.

Compared with those earlier findings the data from the coaches as collected this time (which are visible in Figure 2 and not in Figure 5), are a mixture of the earlier patterns as one would expect. This dataset contains mostly experienced coaches but we have not excluded inexperienced coaches, and is based on assignments that have just started as well as assignments that have gone on for many hours (in fact we could reliably estimate that on average client and coach had already spent more than seven sessions together). In Figure 2 we can see that the coach data in fact contain a significant amount of anxiety and doubt, features we would only expect if either coaches were very inexperienced or if they are reporting the most significant moments of their careers (which was the case in De Haan, 2008a, 2008b; and Day et al., 2008). This may also contribute to the fact that the overlap between client moments and coach moments (46 per cent in this study) is marginally smaller than in the earlier studies (De Haan et al., 2010b, and De Haan & Nieß, 2012, where this degree of overlap was 53 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively). We would still consider that the fact that almost half of critical-moment selections overlap between client and coach is remarkable particularly as we know that they had an average of some eight sessions together before answering the questionnaire. Taken together, these findings mean that all earlier conclusions from critical moments in coaching studies that we could test are supported in this study.

The present study extends previous research by also including sponsors' critical-moment descriptions. Figure 5 embeds the sponsors' critical-moment descriptions obtained in the present study into previous research conducted with clients, coaches and coach-client dyads. The figure shows that more than a quarter of the critical-moment descriptions from sponsors have been categorised as containing changes in clients' behaviours (code 6), which is some first evidence that organisational sponsors and managers do attribute behavioural changes in their employees to coaching assignments undertaken.

Together with the earlier qualitative research into critical moments in real, contracted, executive-coaching assignments this study offers support for the presence of tangible change within and as a result of coaching conversations (e.g. we could confirm Hypothesis 3). We believe that we now have ample evidence that clients and coaches by and large agree on the kind of momentary changes through coaching, except in or near the presence of significant ruptures in the relationship where coaches report significantly more emotions in the form of anxiety and doubt (De Haan et al., 2010b). Finally, we have found further evidence that also sponsors can recognise significant change coming out of coaching conversations (Hypotheses 2 and 3). However, sponsors draw attention to a different aspect of these changes, namely the actions that the clients initiate as a result of coaching conversations. At this stage of research we are beginning to see evidence of the organisational experience of coaching

Figure 5: Comparison of sponsors' critical moments with earlier research findings.



conversations, and we are beginning to see consequences of those conversations through analysing critical moments experienced by third parties. This kind of scrutiny of critical moments in coaching conversations is giving us some idea of the differences in mind-sets engendered by the three roles taken in and around coaching sessions, those of client, coach and sponsor. These differences in mindsets are well described by the 'window on coaching' model put forward by Clutterbuck (1985) and De Haan and Burger (2005):

1. Clients and coaches conducting normal coaching conversations seem to have an 'insight-focused' ideology where significant moments are those of new learning: new perspectives and new insights related to self and coaching objectives and themes;
2. Coaches when in the presence of rare ruptures or dramatic events in coaching conversations seem to have a 'person-focused' ideology where the orientation is much more towards highly personal anxieties, emotions and doubts;
3. Organisational sponsors of coaching seem to have more of a 'problem-focused' or 'solution-focused' mindset which is more action-, behaviour- and future-oriented.

It is interesting that within these overall differences sponsors do mention deeper layers of personality, such as self-awareness, attitude, confidence and authenticity (see Figure 3), even as much as the coaches and clients are doing. The sponsors may be more interested in changes in their relationship with their colleagues (Figure 2), they still define those relationships as multi-layered and not just superficially in terms of communication and behaviour (Figure 3).

Knowing more about the ideology of the various partners that come to build the coaching relationship can be extremely helpful. Coaches can adapt their contracting to what the other parties find most critical in this helping relationship – and they can also adapt their style in the presence of misunderstandings and ruptures. All in all communication between the various parties working together in this essentially triangular endeavour can be improved by a deeper knowledge of likely default ideologies, such as their orientations towards emotions, problems, solutions, and insights. Finally, we may be discovering how change from executive coaching is being retranslated and refined through the various stakeholders involved: coaches may be focusing a lot on their own anxieties and doubts, yet at the same time translating this sensitivity into new insight for clients (by, for example, free association and making use of countertransference, as in insight-focused approaches – De Haan & Burger, 2005). Clients may then be able to translate new insight into new behaviour and a changed outlook within their organisations, translating their new learning into observable relational change with their sponsors and other counterparts (adapting to work environments which may be more action- and problem-oriented than coaching conversations), as well as, conversely, retranslating new organisational experiences into requests for new insight from coaching, etc. The substantive and measurable emerging changes from executive coaching conversations that are beginning to come to light in coaching outcome studies (De Haan & Duckworth, 2013) are well captured by the following words from Mahatma Gandhi: 'Carefully watch your thoughts, for they become your words. Manage and watch your words, for they will become your actions. Consider and judge your actions, for they have become your habits. Acknowledge and watch your habits, for they shall become your values. Understand and embrace your values, for they become your destiny.' It is as if a coaching conversation creates a 'ripple' in the mind which propagates, first between client and coach, and then in the form of new action into and within the organisational context of the coaching client.

Limitations

Limitations of the present study were

- Firstly, that the sponsor dataset is still quite limited (only 79 sponsor critical-moment descriptions of which 49 could be matched to both clients' and coaches' descriptions), despite our having access to a very large-scale research programme which has yielded more than 4000 questionnaires. We think that because of their more detached and supervisory role it is harder to collect usable data from organisational sponsors (compare De Haan & Nieß, 2011). A larger dataset would allow us to dig more deeply into the perceptions that organisational colleagues tend to develop towards coaching clients, in their roles of sponsors of executive coaching.
- Secondly, that the degrees of agreement between coders are still relatively small (Cohen's Kappa around κ=.3). Kappas are similar to those in previous studies and they are probably small because coders are collapsing whole narratives into single code descriptors. In our view both larger datasets and finer coding systems will need to be developed if we really want to understand what makes a difference in coaching conversations, and for each party to those conversations.
- Thirdly, and following from the previous point, coding in narrative research and the social sciences is bound to suffer from considerable overlap between coding categories and from differences in interpretation of the meaning of both the narratives (the critical-moment descriptions) and the coding categories. Such fuzziness around meaning is hard to avoid without losing the richness of the original experiences, but will further degrade agreement between coders.

Further research

Critical-moment descriptions have convincingly been shown to be a promising area of coaching process research, and we can only hope that more studies will appear in the future so that our understanding of 'critical incidents', 'sub-outcomes' or 'momentary changes' in coaching assignments deepens and expands further. In particular, it seems important to explore more deeply the area of (non-)congruence of critical-moments descriptions, by not just collecting descriptions of critical moments of coaching but also asking clients, coaches and perhaps even sponsors, to which degree they can recognise the narratives of the other parties in the common endeavour. Such research should be able to shine more light on the Rashomon conjecture, the question whether participants in shared sessions develop similar or essentially different narratives of their time spent together.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix A

Paired sample *t*-tests comparing code 1 to other codes in coding scheme 1; Hypothesis 1.

Pair	*mean*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Code 1 Code 3	.40 .21	2.52	97	.014
Code 1 Code 4	.40 .09	4.79	97	.000
Code 1 Code 5	.40 .32	1.13	97	.260
Code 1 Code 6	.40 .24	2.02	97	.046
Code 1 Code 7	.40 .09	5.06	97	.000
Code 1 Code 8	.40 .04	6.31	97	.000
Code 1 Code 9	.40 .09	5.01	97	.000
Code 1 Code 10	.40 .08	5.20	97	.000
Code 1 Code 11	.40 .10	4.78	97	.000
Code 1 Code 12	.40 .03	6.92	97	.000

Paired sample *t*-tests comparing code 2 to other codes in coding scheme 1; Hypothesis 1.

Pair	*mean*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Code 2 Code 3	.41 .21	2.69	97	.008
Code 2 Code 4	.41 .09	5.06	97	.000
Code 2 Code 5	.41 .32	1.24	97	.218
Code 2 Code 6	.41 .24	2.36	97	.020
Code 2 Code 7	.41 .09	5.20	97	.000
Code 2 Code 8	.41 .04	6.46	97	.000
Code 2 Code 9	.41 .09	5.20	97	.000
Code 2 Code 10	.41 .08	5.20	97	.000
Code 2 Code 11	.41 .10	5.01	97	.000
Code 2 Code 12	.41 .03	6.83	97	.000

Appendix B

Paired sample *t*-tests comparing code 3 to other codes in coding scheme 1; Hypothesis 2.

Pair	*mean*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Code 3 Code 1	.44 .20	3.13	78	.002
Code 3 Code 2	.44 .38	.74	78	.460
Code 3 Code 7	.44 .14	4.30	78	.000
Code 3 Code 8	.44 .03	7.12	78	.000
Code 3 Code 9	.44 .01	7.67	78	.000
Code 3 Code 10	.44 .00	7.88	78	.000
Code 3 Code 11	.44 .00	7.88	78	.000
Code 3 Code 12	.44 .00	7.88	78	.000

Paired sample *t*-tests comparing code 6 to other codes in coding scheme 1; Hypothesis 2.

Pair	*mean*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Code 6 Code 1	.75 .20	7.37	79	.000
Code 6 Code 2	.75 .38	4.54	79	.000
Code 6 Code 7	.75 .14	8.59	79	.000
Code 6 Code 8	.75 .03	14.22	79	.000
Code 6 Code 9	.75 .01	13.81	79	.000
Code 6 Code 10	.75 .00	15.17	79	.000
Code 6 Code 11	.75 .00	15.17	79	.000
Code 6 Code 12	.75 .00	15.17	79	.000

Appendix C

Paired sample *t*-tests comparing code 1 to other codes in coding scheme 2; Hypothesis 3.

Pair	*mean*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Code 1 Code 6	.18 .05	2.43	78	.017
Code 1 Code 7	.18 .15	.39	78	.698
Code 1 Code 8	.18 .23	–.75	78	.453
Code 1 Code 9	.18 .30	–1.79	78	.077
Code 1 Code 10	.18 .11	1.04	78	.300
Code 1 Code 11	.18 .11	1.04	78	.300

Paired sample *t*-tests comparing code 2 to other codes in coding scheme 2; Hypothesis 3.

Pair	*mean*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Code 2 Code 6	.24 .05	3.32	78	.001
Code 2 Code 7	.24 .15	1.35	78	.180
Code 2 Code 8	.24 .23	.17	78	.863
Code 2 Code 9	.24 .30	–.84	78	.401
Code 2 Code 10	.24 .11	2.00	78	.049
Code 2 Code 11	.24 .11	2.00	78	.049

Paired sample *t*-tests comparing code 3 to other codes in coding scheme 2; Hypothesis 3.

Pair	*mean*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Code 3 Code 6	.06 .05	.38	78	.71
Code 3 Code 7	.06 .15	–1.83	78	.070
Code 3 Code 8	.06 .23	–2.97	78	.004
Code 3 Code 9	.06 .30	–3.99	78	.000
Code 3 Code 10	.06 .11	–1.07	78	.288
Code 3 Code 11	.06 .11	–1.16	78	.251

Paired sample *t*-tests comparing code 4 to other codes in coding scheme 2; Hypothesis 3.

Pair	*mean*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Code 4 Code 6	.14 .05	1.98	78	.052
Code 4 Code 7	.14 .15	–.24	78	.810
Code 4 Code 8	.14 .23	–1.54	78	.127
Code 4 Code 9	.14 .30	–2.40	78	.019
Code 4 Code 10	.14 .11	.50	78	.620
Code 4 Code 11	.14 .11	.45	78	.658

Paired sample *t*-tests comparing code 5 to other codes in coding scheme 2; Hypothesis 3.

Pair	*mean*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Code 5	.15	2.19	78	.032
Code 6	.05			
Code 5	.15	.00	78	1.00
Code 7	.15			
Code 5	.15	−1.28	78	.203
Code 8	.23			
Code 5	.15	−2.24	78	.028
Code 9	.30			
Code 5	.15	.65	78	.516
Code 10	.11			
Code 5	.15	.69	78	.495
Code 11	.11			

Paper

Helping people to 'make things happen': A framework for proactivity at work

Sharon K. Parker & Ying Wang

Proactivity, which involves self-initiated change in oneself or change in the environment to bring about a better future, is an increasingly important behaviour at workplace. This paper summarises a model of proactivity at work. We first discuss the importance of proactivity, presenting empirical evidence about its benefits for individual and organisational performance. We then discuss current perspectives on proactivity, explaining it as a goal-directed process that involves, first, the setting of a proactive goal (proactive goal generation), and second, striving to achieve that proactive goal (proactive goal striving). We then present three motivational pathways of proactivity and the related 'can do,' 'reason to,' and 'energised to' motivational states that prompt proactive goal generation and goal striving. Next we present distal antecedents of proactivity that influence the proactive motivational states and thereby lead to proactive behaviours, including contextual variations in work design, leadership, and group climate, as well as individual characteristics such as personality and learning styles. We consider the potential dark side of proactivity and propose the expanded concept of wise proactivity to articulate the type of proactivity that is likely to be truly desirable within the workplace. We conclude the paper by discussing the applications of proactivity in the coaching context.

Keywords: *proactive; goal-directed; motivation; wise proactivity; work behaviour.*

THE WORLD OF WORK has changed. While in the past it was sufficient for individuals to merely focus on completing their core tasks as assigned by the organisation, in an uncertain and fast-changing environment this compliance-oriented approach is no longer enough. Employees are increasingly required to deal with complex and unexpected issues that are often not prescribed in job descriptions. A positive type of work behaviour – proactivity – is important given this change. Proactivity involves actively taking control of oneself and one's environment to 'make things happen'. It involves aspiring and striving to bring about positive change to achieve a different and more desirable future.

Much evidence shows that proactivity matters for individuals, organisations, and even societies. For instance, Deluga (1998) conducted research on 39 past US presidents from Washington to Reagan. By analysing their proactivity profile as rated by subject matter experts, and examining their proactivity against a large number of historians' rating of presidential performance, Deluga found that presidents who were more proactive were perceived as greater leaders for the country; they were also more likely to make great decisions and to avoid war. These results were held after controlling for presidents' cognitive ability and various personality attributes. Proactivity also has important implications for individuals' work performance and career success (for a meta-analysis see Fuller & Marler, 2009; for a review see Bindl & Parker, 2010). A study of real estate agents suggested that proactive agents sold more properties, generated more listings, and obtained higher commission income. This effect was potent even after controlled for a number of other individual characteristics including personality (Crant, 1995). Proactivity contributes not only to individuals' work performance but also to their

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career outcomes. In a longitudinal study, proactive people were found to take more initiative with their careers, have more ideas, and develop better knowledge about organisational politics, all of which accordingly lead to better salary progression and more promotions within a two-year time period. These proactive employees also enjoyed greater career satisfaction (Seibert, Kraimer & Crant, 2001). When placed in a job-searching context, proactive individuals tend to obtain employment more successfully than those less proactive (Kanfer, Wanberg & Kantrowitz, 2001).

Proactive also matters for change-related outcomes such as innovation, entrepreneurship, and intrapreneurship (the type of entrepreneurship that is within firms). First, leaders' proactivity is important. For instance, small business owners' proactivity predicted developing new and improved products for the market, using new methods to improve organisational systems, and integrating new finance and IT methods into organisations (Kickul & Gundry, 2002). Small company presidents who had higher proactivity were also found to be more entrepreneurial, starting more businesses, taking more ownership of the businesses and being more heavily involved in day-to-day business decisions (Bercherer & Maurer, 1999). But it is not just leaders' proactivity that matters. Employees who are more proactive at work tend to demonstrate more innovation behaviours such as generating creative ideas and promoting ideas to others (Parker & Collins, 2010) as well as engaging in intrapreneurship (Boon & Van der Klink (2013). Such proactivity from individual employees has the potential to engender broader organisational and societal impact. In the words of Helen Keller: *'The world is moved along, not only by the mighty shoved of its heroes but also by the aggregate of the tiny pushes of each honest worker.'*

Given evidence that proactivity matters, it is important to understand in more depth what this behaviour is, and how it might be fostered in the workplace. In this paper, we first discuss the importance of proactivity and how it has been conceptualised theoretically. We then present a model articulating how proactivity can be enabled by different types of motivation. After that, we discuss how proactivity can be shaped by work context as well as individual characteristics. Towards the end, we consider the question 'whether proactivity is always good' and discuss what type of proactivity is truly desirable. We conclude the paper with implications of applying proactivity principles in coaching practices.

What is proactivity?

Historically, within the fields of organisational behaviour and work psychology, employees tended to be considered as passive, reactive respondents to their work context. Much scholarly attention was given to how employees achieve the goals allocated to them as desired by their organisations. However, it was increasingly noted that, rather than simply accepting goals from organisations, employees can actively shape their jobs and their work environment. For instance, they can negotiate and redefine assigned goals, and they can come up with more challenging goals for themselves. Recognition of these 'active' work behaviours saw the emergence of various proactive concepts, such as *personal initiative, taking charge behaviour*, and *change-oriented citizenship.* At the same time, *proactive personality*, a trait that captures individuals' stable tendencies to enact changes in the environment (Bateman & Crant, 1993) was introduced and became popular.

Proactivity as a way of behaving

Our approach has been to move away from a personality-based approach and to consider proactivity as a way of behaving which can vary according to the situation. An implication of conceptualising proactivity in this way is that it recognises that, rather than being a fixed individual attribute, organisations, leaders and coaches are able to facilitate and shape individuals' proactivity within a particular situation. Specifically, we define proactivity as self-directed and future-focused behaviour in which an individual aims to bring about change, including change to the situation and/or change within oneself (Bindl & Parker, 2010; Parker, Bindl & Strauss, 2010). This definition highlights three defining elements of proactivity: it is self-starting, change-oriented and future-focused. Self-starting means that the action is self-initiated as opposed to required, coerced or enforced by management. Proactivity is also aimed at enacting and driving change rather than adapting to a situation. Finally proactivity is future-focused: it involves anticipating and thinking ahead, rather than merely reacting.

Proactivity as a goal-driven process

A further refinement to the idea that proactivity is a way of behaving is to recognise that it is a goal-directed way of behaving or a process (Bindl et al., 2012; Parker et al., 2010). From this perspective, proactivity involves two broad elements: *proactive goal generation* and *proactive goal striving*. The proactive goal generation stage involves setting, under one's own direction, a change goal. Researchers have suggested that there are at least two processes underpinning the proactive goal generation stage: envisioning and planning (Bindl et al., 2012). *Envisioning* is about perceiving and identifying a current or future problem or opportunity, and picturing a different future that can be achieved if the problem is resolved or the opportunity capitalised. Then, the next process, *planning*, is about working out actions plans in order to achieve this desired future state. The action plans for change can be targeted either at oneself, such as developing one's skills and building social networks; or targeted at the situation, such as influencing one's boss to negotiate roles and responsibilities. Either way, the changes need to be self-initiated such that individuals envision and plan the changes out of their own will rather than being directed by someone else. However, it should be pointed out that the degree of self-initiation will vary. Some proactive goals can be completely self-driven (e.g. coming up with a new goal for one's work) while in some other contexts, the goal may not be entirely self-driven yet the way it is enacted may contain proactivity (e.g. introducing a new product as requested by the boss but envisioning and planning it in a way that is proactive).

Proactive goal striving is the stage where the proactive goal is implemented. The goal striving stage is critical as it enables real change to be achieved. Researchers have suggested that this stage is also underpinned by at least two important processes, enacting and reflecting (Bindl et al., 2012). *Enacting* concerns the overt action individuals engage in achieving their proactive goal. For instance, an employee wishing to introduce a new work method will likely engage in gathering information that demonstrates the inefficiency of the current method and the advantage of the new method, and also persuading and influencing colleagues so that they are on board with this change. In the enacting process, individuals' self regulation is critical as it would allow individuals to stay focused on tasks, manage potential negative emotions from self and others, and remain resilient and flexible to accommodate unexpected setbacks and challenges. *Reflecting* concerns investing the time and effort to reflect what has happened so far, identifying the successes, failures, and consequences of one's proactive behaviour. Given proactivity involves creating something new that can be uncertain and ambiguous, reflection is an important step in helping individuals decide if they should sustain or modify the proactive goals that have been set, or the approach that have been adopted in achieving those proactive goals.

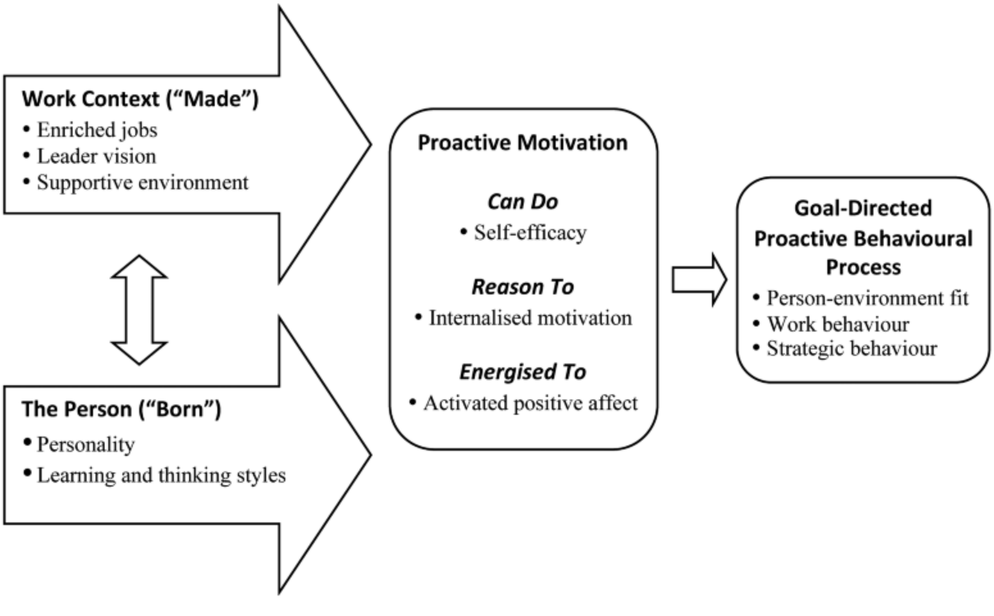
Different forms of proactivity

People at work can be proactive to achieve different ends, resulting in different forms of proactivity. Over the past few decades, much research focused on one or a few specific types of proactivity such as taking charge, innovation, job crafting, voicing, among others. Parker and Collins (2010) integrated the different forms of proactive behaviours that have been investigated in literature and argued that these behaviours can be subsumed under three broad categories including: proactive person-environment fit behaviour, proactive work behaviour and proactive strategic behaviour. *Proactive person-environment fit behaviour* includes those behaviours that are aimed at achieving a better fit between one's own attributes and those of one's work environment. For instance, an employee may negotiate and craft his/her job so that it fits better with his/her knowledge, skills or interests. *Proactive work behaviour* refers to setting proactive goals and taking actions to improve organisations' internal environment. For instance, an employee may find ways to improve the efficiency of his/her work by adopting a new technology. *Proactive strategic behaviour* involves taking charge and bringing changes to improve organisations' strategy so that it fits with the external environment. For example, a manager may notice an important issue that affects the positioning of the organisation in the market and actively sell it to the key decision makers. Empirical evidence supports the distinction of these three broad categories of proactive behaviour (Parker & Collins, 2010).

What motivates proactivity?

Having discussed the conceptualisation of proactivity, it is useful to understand what makes an individual proactive and taking the risks of implementing something new. In other words, what is the motivational process that leads to a proactive behaviour? We present a model of proactivity, developed by Parker et al. (2010), to delineate how proactive behaviours are shaped by proximal motivational states, which are in turn influenced by more distal attributes such as individual differences, work context and the interaction of these two (Figure 1). We discuss the proximal motivational states in this section. Parker et al. (2010) proposed three important motivational pathways that lead to proactivity and each of these pathways are supported by a unique type of moti-

Figure 1: Model of Proactive Motivation Process and Antecedents (adapted from Parker et al., 2010).


Work Context ("Made")
• Enriched jobs
• Leader vision
• Supportive environment
The Person ("Born")
• Personality
• Learning and thinking styles
Proactive Motivation
Can Do
• Self-efficacy
Reason To
• Internalised motivation
Energised To
• Activated positive affect
Goal-Directed Proactive Behavioural Process
• Person-environment fit
• Work behaviour
• Strategic behaviour

vational state: 'can do' motivation *(Can I do this?)*, 'reason to' motivation *(Why should I do this?)* and 'energised to' motivation *(Am I energised by this?)*. We elaborate each of these paths next.

'Can Do' motivation

A critical part of the 'can do' motivation state is the belief in oneself that one can be proactive, such as represented by self-efficacy perceptions. Being proactive is potentially uncertain and risky. For instance, proposing new organisational structure may be subject to resistance and scepticism from others; voicing one's opinions against an existing work procedure might hurt the feelings of those who implemented that procedure; and actively seeking for feedback from others risks one's ego and self-image. Therefore, individuals need to have the self-confidence to initiate proactive goals and deal with potential negative consequences induced by such proactivity. Indeed, many studies have supported the importance of self-efficacy for proactivity. Individuals' self-efficacy was found to be positively related to commonly measured proactive behaviours such as taking charge (Morrison & Phelps, 1999) and personal initiative (Frese, Garst & Fay, 2007). Furthermore, in a meta-analysis conducted by Kanfer et al. (2001), individuals' self-efficacy was found to positively relate to proactive job search behaviours, which subsequently led to better employment outcomes such as getting employment sooner and receiving more job offers.

One form of self-efficacy, 'role-breadth self-efficacy' which addresses one's perceived capability of carrying out a broader and more proactive role beyond prescribed technical requirements (Parker, 1998), appears to be particularly important for proactivity. For instance, role-breadth self-efficacy was positively related to proactive problem solving and proactive idea implementation (Parker, Williams & Turner, 2006). Ohly and Fritz (2007) further found that when general job self-efficacy and role-breadth self-efficacy were both considered, it was the latter that showed a unique effect in predicting proactive behaviour.

In addition to self-efficacy perceptions, 'can do' motivation also includes the belief that one can control the situation and will produce desired outcomes (control appraisals), as well as perceptions about the negative aspects of engaging in a task, such as fear of failure and worry about lacking the required resources (perceived cost of action).

'Reason To' motivation

If people feel confident about their ability to generate and implement something new (having 'can do' motivation), yet there is no compelling reason for them to do so (lacking a 'reason to' motivation), it is unlikely they will engage in proactivity. The second important motivational state that instigates proactive behaviours is the 'reason to' motivation. Unlike prescribed tasks where a reason is already given as part of one's job, proactive activities are self-initiated and thus the reason to engage in these activities cannot be assumed. Considering also the risk and uncertainty associated with proactivity, there needs to be a strong rationale that drives an individual to make new things happen.

A useful theory to help understand one's reason to motivation to proactivity is self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The self-determination theory posits that one's reason to engage in certain behaviours stands on continuum of controlled versus autonomous motivation. On the autonomous end of the continuum, the individual is driven by intrinsic interest and values that originate from oneself. On the controlled end of the continuum, the individual is driven by external contingencies outside of the person, such as rewards. Proactive behaviours should most often be autonomous as they originate from the individuals themselves (self-initiated). Drawing on the self-determination theory, Parker et al. (2010) proposed that there are three different forms of autonomous motivations that can potentially drive proactivity.

First, individuals can engage in proactive activities because they find such tasks interesting and enjoyable. For instance, an IT specialist may voluntarily invest in extra time and efforts to develop open-source software because he/she finds it intellectually stimulating. This *intrinsic* motivation is the most autonomous form of motivation. Second, individuals can engage in proactivity activities as they feel being proactive will help fulfil their life goals or express values that are central to them. For instance, individuals who integrate work as part of who they will be (e.g. their future work self-identity) tend to engage in more proactive career behaviours such as networking, career planning and career consultations (Strauss, Griffin & Parker, 2012). This is the *integrated* form of motivation. Third, individuals can engage in proactive behaviours because they feel the proactive goal they set is important and they assume a personal responsibility for achieving it. For instance, a university faculty might initiate a new course because he/she sees this new course as important in providing students necessary knowledge and skills. Research has indicated that those employees who feel stronger personal obligations to make positive changes are more likely to engage in proactive voice behaviours that are aimed at improving current work practices to benefit the organisation (Liang, Farh & Farh, 2012). This is the *identified* form of motivation where one consciously values a goal, accepting and owning it as one's own responsibility.

The three forms of autonomous motivation, including intrinsic, integrated, and identified motivations, provide a strong reason for individuals to be proactive. As to which motivational form is most powerful, Koestner and Losier (2002) suggested that when tasks are interesting, intrinsic motivation resulted in better performance; when tasks are not so interesting but important, the other two forms of motivations yielded better performance. In fact, it might be the case that multiple forms of motivations function together to stimulate proactive goals and sustain an individual's efforts in seeing things through.

'Energised To' motivation

A third motivational state for proactivity is affect-related. How people feel can provide an 'energising' fuel that motivates individuals to engage in proactive behaviour. Compared to the other two 'cold' motivations that are cognitively bound, this emotion-laden motivation is more of a 'hot' psychological force for proactivity.

Individuals' core affects are usually considered to be represented by an integral blend of two primary dimensions: pleasure – whether an affect is positive/pleasant or negative/unpleasant in its affective valence, and arousal – whether an affect is highly activated or lowly activated (Russell, 2003) in its arousal. It has been suggested that positive affect is important for proactivity as it acts as a resource to broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires (e.g. exploring, learning, creating) while negative affect would narrow the repertoires by urging people to behave defensively (Fredrickson, 2001). Accordingly, under the influence of positive affect people are more likely to reach out and set proactive goals, as well as remain open-minded and flexible when pursuing their proactive goals. This argument has received empirical support. In a diary study, Fritz and Sonnentag (2009) revealed that positive affect promotes taking charge behaviours on the same day; positive affect also produced a positive spill-over effect on taking charge behaviours on the following day.

Warr et al. (2014; see also Bindl et al., 2012) further discovered that it is the high activated positive affect (e.g. feeling enthusiastic, inspired) rather than the low activated positive affect (e.g. feeling calm, content) that stimulates proactive behaviour. This is because highly activated positive affect has more energising potential to facilitate approach-oriented behaviours such as proactivity, while lowly activated positive emotions such as feeling content may suggest a lack of impetus for action, and is thus more inductive to reflective behaviours rather than proactive behaviours.

Thus far, we have articulated the three motivation states that enable proactivity. Although the three motivations affect proactive behaviour, to what extent they will directly activate proactivity to happen will depend on organisational context. For instance, Parker et al. (2010) have argued that an organisational context that provides employees higher levels of job control and perceived justice is more likely to facilitate the translation of proactive motivation into proactive behaviours.

Is proactivity born or made?

Now that we have discussed the proximal factors that motivate people to be proactive, it is useful to understand the distal antecedents of proactivity, for instance, whether proactivity comes from an innate set of characteristic that some people but not others are born with, or is instead something that can be shaped over time through deliberate interventions or changing of the situation. We propose that like all other work behaviours, proactivity is both born and made, that is, it is both determined by who we are (e.g. our personality, values, knowledge, skills, abilities, among others) and by our work context (e.g. job design, leadership, organisational culture, among others). Next we discuss several ways that the work context can shape proactivity, as these are the areas that organisations can focus its attention on to shape and enhance employees' proactivity. We will then unpack the personal attributes of those more proactive individuals.

Proactivity is made: Work context as distal antecedents

Some work contexts are more conducive to proactivity than others. Here we focus on how organisations can shape employees' proactivity by designing enriched jobs, developing managers' transformational leadership capability, and creating a supportive work environment.

Work design

First, proactivity can be promoted by effective design of employees' jobs. The most important aspect of work design that enables proactivity is *job enrichment*, which focuses on increasing the autonomy and complexity of the job. Job enrichment can facilitate proactivity through all three motivational pathways, namely, the 'can do', 'reason to' and 'energised to' motivations. First, job enrichment provides employees the opportunity to acquire new skills and master new responsibilities; furthermore, the autonomy aspect of job enrichment can increase employees' perception of controllability over their work. Both the enhanced mastery and improved controllability would raise employees' self-efficacy ('can do' motivation), and subsequently leading to proactive behaviours such as generating new ideas and proactively solving problems (Parker et al., 2006). Second, job enrichment is likely to facilitate employees' 'reason to' motivation. With enriched jobs, employees may feel more challenged and experience more enjoyment, and are thus intrinsically motivated to be proactive. Enriched jobs can also allow employees to see the broader picture and understand the meaningfulness of their job, thereby creating integrated and identified motivations to be proactive. Third, job enrichment can also create 'energised to' motivation among employees. It was found that having more enriched jobs (e.g. job control, job variety) can lead to positive, energetic and inspired feelings, which subsequently generate proactive behaviours (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008).

Other aspects of work design can also affect employees' proactivity. *Job stressors* such as time pressure and situational constrains can potentially promote, rather than inhibit proactivity, as such constraints represent challenge stressors that motivate employees to find new ways to complete work on time. For instance, it has been found that when employees are under time pressure, they are more likely to innovate; this is especially true for those with high need for cognition, who may feel stimulated by the challenge (Wu, Parker & de Jong, 2014).

Leadership

The second area that organisations can shape proactivity is through effective leadership. *Transformational leadership*, the leadership style that effects effective change through creating vision as well as supporting, stimulating and inspiring subordinates, can lead to subordinates' proactive behaviours such as innovation (Rank et al., 2010) and taking initiative to help the organisation (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). This is because transformational leadership can enable both the 'can do', 'reason to' and 'energised to' motivations among subordinates. First, transformational leaders solicit subordinates' ideas, stimulate their innovation, and support them to be self-directed. These behaviours can foster subordinates' self-efficacy, such as their role-breadth self-efficacy ('can do' motivation), which subsequently leads to proactive behaviours towards team effectiveness (Strauss, Griffin & Rafferty, 2009). Second, transformational leaders link group mission to collective values and enhance subordinates' identification with the organisation. Therefore, they can enable subordinates' commitment to their organisation ('reason to' motivation), which subsequently leads to more proactive behaviours towards the improvement of the organisation (ditto). Third, transformational leadership has an intense emotional component and transformational leaders usually use positive emotions to convey their vision and influence subordinates. Such positive emotions are contagious in the workgroup, leading to positive affect being aroused among subordinates ('energised to' motivation); this could potentially generate positive work behaviours such as proactivity (Bono & Illies, 2006).

A specific aspect of transformational leadership, *leader vision*, has been found especially important in enhancing employees' proactivity over time. A longitudinal study suggested that leaders' vision predicted the increase of proactive behaviours among employees in 12 months' time, although this effect was only present for employees that have higher role-breadth self efficacy (Griffin, Parker & Mason, 2010). In other words, when shaping and developing employees' proactivity, both leadership styles and individual differences need to be taken into account. The interaction between contextual and individual antecedents will be briefly discussed later.

Group climate

The third area of contextual factors can shape proactivity is group culture and climate, especially at the local team level. Because proactivity is a risky behaviour, one needs to feel psychologically safe in their immediate work environment in order to initiate and implement something new. For this reason, a *supportive work environment* is critical for proactive behaviours to emerge, especially through the 'reason to' motivational pathway. Parker et al. (2006) found that trust in co-workers affects proactivity as this trust enables employees to feel more ownership of their job ('flexible role orientation'), thus providing enhanced integrated motivation – a reason for them to be proactive. The positive effect of supportive environment is also confirmed in other studies. For instance, initiating changes to improve team effectiveness is more likely to happen when in supportive teams where the team's work processes are openly discussed and reviewed (Griffin, Neal & Parker, 2007); and voice behaviours tend to be present in workgroups that have more positive relationships among the members (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998).

Proactivity is born: Individual characteristics as distal antecedents

Proactivity is also determined by who we are. Individual characteristics such as personality, values, thinking styles, among others, can influence one's level of proactivity. Due to space limit here we choose to focus on a few selected individual attributes; interested readers are recommended to refer to Parker et al. (2010) for a more comprehensive review.

Personality

Personality has perhaps been the most frequently investigated aspect of individual characteristics in relation to proactivity. In particular, *proactive personality*, which depicts an individual's tendency to take control of the situation and to effect change, is most often studied due to its conceptual linkage with proactive behaviours. Numerous studies have demonstrated that proactive personality predicts both proactive person-environment fit behaviours such as building network, taking career initiatives, proactive socialisation, as well as proactive work behaviours such as taking charge, voicing one's opinions, preventing problems, among others (Fuller & Marler, 2009; Parker & Collins, 2010). Additionally, it has been confirmed that proactive personality can exert its effect on proactive behaviours via proactive motivational states, for instance, via the 'can do' motivation (e.g. role-breadth self-efficacy, Parker et al., 2006), as well as the 'reason to' motivation (e.g. motivation to learn, Major, Turner & Fletcher, 2006).

In addition to proactive personality, other personality traits may also have an important and unique contribution to proactive behaviours. For instance, *conscientiousness*, one of the Big Five personality dimensions, was found to predict proactive feedback-seeking, one form of proactive person-environment fit behaviour, over and above proactive personality (Parker & Collins, 2010). This may be because conscientious individuals are more driven to perform their jobs well by obtaining performance feedback, and to achieve a good fit with their organisation.

Learning and thinking styles

Goal orientation depicts whether an individual is inclined to have a learning mindset and is willing to take risks and learn from mistakes, or whether he/she is more concerned about own performance and competence (Dweck, 1986). Given proactivity is a risky and uncertain behaviour, individuals with a high *learning goal orientation* are more willing to reach out of their comfort zones and try something new as a way to learn and improve. Indeed, such individuals were found to engage in more proactive behaviours, such as taking charge, innovating, and seeking for feedback (Parker & Collins, 2010).

Another aspect of thinking styles that was found to be important for proactivity is individuals' tendency in engaging in *future-oriented thinking*. By enabling an individual to put a strong focus on the future and to consider potential consequences, this attribute is meaningful for the future-focused behaviour of proactivity. Indeed, individuals who are more future-oriented tend to perform better on proactive strategic behaviours such as scanning environment and selling strategic issues to decision makers; they are also more likely to engage in proactive behaviours that improve the fit between themselves and their environment (Parker & Collins, 2010).

Furthermore, individuals' *need for cognition*, a tendency to engage in and enjoy thinking, is likely to elicit curiosity to seek for new information and opportunities, and would produce elaborate and flexible thoughts and ideas that are important for creating something new. As a result, it was found that need for cognition positively predicts individual innovation, a form of proactive work behaviour, after controlling for personality differences (Wu et al., 2014).

Summary

In sum, we have discussed the contextual and individual antecedents for proactive behaviours at work. Although presented separately, these two broad categories of antecedents do not operate in isolation but instead dynamically interact with each other in shaping proactivity. Indeed, there have been several studies that take this interactionistic perspective. For instance, even if employees may lack relevant dispositional characteristics to be proactive, this can be compensated by positive work context that is inductive to proactivity. LePine and Van Dyan (1998) showed that although individuals with low self-esteem were less likely to voice their opinions, this can be compensated by favourable situational characteristics such as high levels of group autonomy. Similarly, Wu et al. (2014) showed that employees who have less strong need for cognition are generally less likely to innovate, yet this can be compensated by increasing their job autonomy. Such dynamic interplays between individual and contextual characteristics provide important implications for organisations to design intervention strategies in shaping employees' proactivity.

Is proactivity always good?

At the beginning of this paper we presented research findings in supportive of the benefits of proactivity in that it is likely to bring positive outcomes for individuals, organisations and societies. Despite this solid research evidence, one may naturally ask whether proactivity is always desirable. Could there be some types of proactive behaviours that do more harm than good to the self or to their organisations?

The answer is yes. In fact, scholars have recognised that proactivity does not always lead to positive consequences. For instance, it has been found that when employees lack the motive to benefit others or the ability to appropriately judge work situations, their proactivity does not lead to positive performance outcomes (Chan, 2006; Grant, Parker & Collins, 2009). Proactivity may also harm individuals' psychological well-being. As proactivity is a resource-consuming behaviour, proactivity may deplete individuals' psychological resources, leading to job stress, role overload, and work family conflict. Furthermore, proactivity may bring tensions between the more proactive employees and the less proactive employees, as the latter may feel threatened by proactive employees' acquisition of resources and may perceive their proactivity as self-serving (for a comprehensive summary of such potential negative impacts of proactivity, see Bolino, Valcea & Harvey, 2010). In sum, there is evidence suggesting that proactivity is not always desirable; it is thus important to focus not just on the quantity of proactivity behaviour but also its quality.

Although it has been recognised that proactivity can vary in its quality and its effectiveness, there lacks an integrating theoretical framework to provide clearer guidance as to what forms of proactivity are truly desirable. To address this issue, Parker, Liao and Wang (2015) drew on the concept of wisdom to propose the concept of 'wise proactivity'. Wise proactivity is defined as enacting and implementing self-initiated and future-focused change that is contextually-sound, personally-sound, and other-focused. Like proactivity, wise proactivity is change-oriented, yet what makes a proactive behaviour wise depends on three elements. The first element concerns whether a proactive behaviour is appropriate for the broad context *(contextually sound).* A manager who seeks to impress the boss might introduce a new technology that is not appropriate for his/her organisation, thus this proactivity is not considered wise. The second element concerns whether a proactive behaviour is the right thing to do for the initiator and will benefit the initiator's personal growth *(personally sound).* A proactive behaviour that depletes personal resources and leads to burnout is not considered wise. The third element concerns whether a proactive behaviour will benefit others and serve others' needs *(other focused).* An employee that puts oneself forward for leading a change yet resulting in his work being allocated to already overburdened colleagues is not considered wise.

Although still at the early stage of this research, our preliminary analysis has demonstrated that wise proactivity is indeed distinct from proactivity. Wise proactivity was found to be underpinned by different individual antecedents such as social astuteness and humility, and it predicted individuals' overall work performance over and above proactivity (Parker & Wang, 2014). More empirical studies are currently underway to further unpack the psychological process that leads to wise proactive behaviours and the implications of this behaviour on a wider range of work and career outcomes.

Summary and implications for coaching

Thus far, we have articulated that proactivity is important for individuals themselves, their teams, organisations and beyond, and it can lead to a wide range of positive outcomes. Proactivity should be understood as a self-initiated, future-oriented behavioural process that is aimed at bringing about future change. Furthermore, we discussed what makes individuals proactive, presenting both the proximal motivational enablers of proactivity, and distal organisational and individual factors that jointly shape proactivity. We also discussed the potential dark side of proactivity, and presented a new concept, wise proactivity, which provides a theoretical framework to conceptualise the nature of those truly desired proactive behaviours. In this concluding section, we will briefly discuss how the proactivity concept and some of the existing theories and empirical findings can inform coaching practices. In light of what has been discussed, we will focus on three implications.

First, the positive impact of proactivity suggests that it is useful to help coachees develop a proactive mindset to take charge of their life and work. Coaches can encourage coachees to actively reflect on areas where they could have more control, proactively anticipate future problems, and brainstorm for options to resolve potential issues. For example, coaches could measure coachees' proactive work behaviour, proactive strategic behaviour, and proactive career behaviour (Parker & Collins, 2010) and compare themselves against benchmarks[1]. Because proactivity can be targeted both at oneself and at situations, it is also useful to facilitate coachees' reflection about when is the best time to change themselves and when is the best time to change their situation. Often, it is the strategic decision between these two options that determines whether a proactive behaviour is effective. For instance, it has been found that when there is not enough personal control at the workplace, it is more effective to engage in proactive behaviours aimed at changing oneself, such as by seeking for feedback to improve own work, rather than taking charge and changing one's environment (Tangirala et al., 2014).

Second, understanding the motivational factors that enable proactivity suggests that coaches can delve into coachees' self-evaluations, interests, values, emotions, among others, to understand whether they have the 'can do', 'reason to' and 'energised to' motivations for proactivity to occur. Our framework suggests that individuals need to first feel confident that they have the ability to make a change. Thus if a coachee feels lacking of 'can do' motivation, we can identify ways to boost their self-confidence, such as discussing a psychologically safe way where their innovative ideas can be heard by a trusted colleague, before presented to the boss. Our framework also suggests that individuals need to have a reason for them to be proactive, for instance, the change needs to be perceived as either intrinsically interesting, or part of their identity, or important for their work and their career. Therefore, by facilitating coachees' reflection on their values and interests, we can help them identify and take control of the areas that are personally meaningful to them. This is in line with what we proposed for wise proactivity, which specifically emphasises that changes need to be meaningful for the individuals and to fulfil their needs of personal growth. Furthermore, our model suggests that having positive affect is an important impetus for proactivity as it broadens one's cognition. Therefore, if we encourage coachees to identify areas of changes where they find energised and inspired by, they will be more likely to engage in those proactive behaviours.

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[1] Further information on assessing proactivity can be found at: https://sites.google.com/site/profsharonparker/proactivity-research/measuring-proactive-behaviour

Third, by unpacking the organisational and individual factors that are inductive to proactivity, our proposed framework lends insights to both individual coachees who intend to improve their own effectiveness, and to leaders and managers who seek to enhance their employees' proactivity. For individual employees, it is useful that they understand whether their innate psychological attributes are likely to lead to proactivity, and if not, if this may be compensated by working in the right environment. For instance, an individual with less confidence in voicing one's opinions and initiating something new may still be proactive when being placed in an environment where there is high level of trust and support from team members. For managers and leaders who seek to create and sustain proactivity amongst their workforce, they can be encouraged to consider engaging in various levels of organisational interventions. They can consider designing and re-designing employees' jobs so that people have more autonomy and control over their work. They can select and develop frontline managers and supervisors so that those managers have more transformational leadership styles in stimulating, motivating and inspiring employees. They can also work on creating an organisational climate where individuals' voices are valued and encouraged, risk-taking behaviours with the aim to improve work process and outcomes are allowed, and innovation and positive change is acknowledged and rewarded. As coaches, if we can allow executive coachees to understand the value of proactivity and use research evidence to inform their intervention strategies, we can potentially help them build more effective teams and achieve better work outcomes.

Individuals are not passive respondents to situations. Rather than just waiting to be told what to do or respond only when problems occur, they can take charge, anticipate problems and opportunities, and actively change themselves or their situation to bring about a different, more desirable future. By understanding proactivity and actively promoting this behaviour, coaches can make a positive difference not only to their coachees, but also to work places, organisations and societies as a whole.

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Paper

The experience of cognitive behavioural group coaching with college students: An IPA study exploring its effectiveness

Pepita Torbrand & Vicky Ellam-Dyson

Objectives: *This pilot study aimed to investigate whether Cognitive Behavioural Coaching (CBC) can be used with A-level students in order to reduce procrastination and avoidance behaviours. Group coaching was used to promote more adaptive thinking patterns, leading to enhanced performance and well-being.*
Design: *A qualitative approach was taken, using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in order to explore the meaning making and personal experiences of CBC. A quantitative measure in the form of a 12-item procrastination questionnaire assessed pre- and post-coaching was also used.*
Methods: *The study took place at a Further Education college in London with one Sixth-Form Psychology class consisting of seven students. Based upon levels of procrastination, students were selected for four one-hour long coaching sessions. Students receiving coaching were compared to students with similar levels of procrastination, not receiving coaching.*
Results: *The study found four main themes emerging as based upon the experience of coaching. These were Feeling Supported, Raising Awareness, Increased Motivation, and Improved Performance. Quantitative measures showed a reduction in procrastination levels for students receiving CBC. This did not occur for procrastinators not receiving coaching.*
Conclusion: *This study suggests that coaching can be a time and cost-effective tool to use with low performing A-level students, to increase performance and well-being. This is an important finding, as there is a strong demand to reduce procrastination in a situation where resources are limited. Consideration is given to future research, including larger samples, and to training teachers in how to deliver group-coaching with students.*
Keywords: *group coaching in high school; student perfectionism; coaching in education; reducing student procrastination; CBC in education.*

ONE OF THE biggest challenges for schools is knowing how best to assist students in developing/maintaining strong performance in order to benefit the students, but also help the school to hold a competitive edge. Schools are ranked according to student performance and it is in their interest to provide means for improving results (Department for Education, 2013). Extracurricular support-strategies and one to one time with support staff can help in identifying factors that may be interfering with student performance, and in developing specific strategies for improvement (*Extended Services: End of Year 1 Report*, Department for Education, 2012). However, increasing pressures on teaching staff (e.g. increased administrative tasks outside of the teaching role) have resulted in ever decreasing opportunities for spending time with students outside of the classroom on a one-to-one basis. Student performance can often be influenced by psychological factors (e.g. unhelpful thinking patterns, perfectionism; see Flett et al., 2012; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984), which cannot easily be addressed in the classroom environment and ideally require a more personalised approach, such as one-to-one interaction (Schruder, Curwen & Sharpe, 2014). As well as having limited time to spend with students individually, teachers are not typically equipped to know how to work with psychological challenges such as perfectionist

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thinking (Schruder et al., 2014). This paper discusses psychological and behavioural aspects that can interfere with student performance, with particular attention given to performance anxiety, perfectionism and procrastination. It describes a pilot study that involved using cognitive behavioural group coaching with students to assist them in adapting performance hindering thinking and behaviours. Based on the findings, it is suggested that teachers can be trained to use the principles of Cognitive Behavioural Coaching (CBC) to work with students using group-coaching to identify and work on cognitive barriers in order to improve and sustain performance.

In previous research, student performance has shown to be affected by levels of self-efficacy, perceived academic-competence, self-regulation, resilience and intrinsic motivation (Doron et al., 2010; Felicidad, Villavivecencio & Bernado, 2013; Helle et al., 2013; Putwain & Symes, 2012). With specific focus on self-efficacy, Doron et al. (2010) demonstrated how incremental beliefs about self-ability strongly influenced students' coping strategies, effective planning and ability to seek social support as methods to cope with examination stress. A study by Prat-Sala and Redford (2010) highlighted how intrinsic motivation and perceived levels of self-efficacy affect learning as well as undergraduate students approaches to studying. Students with high levels of self-efficacy were more likely to continuously use deep learning approaches, such as engaging with materials, building links to previous knowledge and challenge arguments and conclusions presented. Students with low levels of self-efficacy, on the other hand, were more likely to adopt surface approaches, such as simply recalling and reproducing materials presented without engaging with the text at a deeper level (Marton & Saljo, 1976). Notably, students' surface learning approach has been linked to a fear of failure, whereas students' deeper learning approach is linked to a need for achievement and success (Entwistle, 1988a, 1988b; Entwistle et al., 2000; Tait et al., 1998).

In addition to issues with self-efficacy, perfectionism and fear of failure have also been highlighted as specific factors affecting student performance (see Schruder, Curwen & Sharpe, 2014, for a review). Indeed, low self-efficacy, perfectionism and fear of failure have all shown to result in performance hindering behaviours such as self-handicapping and increased procrastination (Martin, Marsh Williamson & Debus, 2003). Procrastination is a form of avoidance that is described as 'the tendency to put off or completely avoid an activity under one's control' (Tuckman, 1991, p.474). Steel (2007, p.66) refers to it as '…a postponing, delaying, or putting off of a task or decision'. Others refer to it as the delay in beginning or completing an intended course of action (Beswick & Mann, 1994; Lay & Silverman, 1996). Procrastination is said to be linked with anxiety and fear, particularly where there is a real or imagined possibility of rejection or harsh appraisal (Aitken, 1982; Beck et al., 2000; Ellis, 1973). Ellis and Knaus (1977) suggested that 95 per cent of students engage in procrastination behaviours, whilst Semb, Glick and Spencer (1979) provided evidence that procrastination was detrimental to academic performance, often resulting in poor grades as well as drop out from courses.

A recent Canadian study conducted by Flett et al. (2012) examined the role of procrastination-related automatic thoughts on procrastination levels in higher-education students. Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs) related to procrastination tend to include 'should' statements (e.g. I should have started earlier, I should be more responsible). A strong association was found between ANTs, maladaptive perfectionist-beliefs and procrastination, as assessed by the Procrastinatory Cognitions Inventory (PCI; Stainton, Lay & Flett, 2000), resulting in avoidance behaviours and high negative stress levels. High levels of procrastinatory cognitions were also linked to trepidation and fear about essay writing, low self-actualisation and feelings of being a fraud. As a result of the findings, Flett et al. (2012) highlighted the need to implement approaches such as cognitive behavioural interventions to challenge ANTs, avoidance behaviours and to reduce procrastination.

Solomon and Rothblum (1984) suggested that student procrastination is often used to delay a perceived fear of failure and that student avoidance behaviours are often implemented to avoid self-set excessive and maladaptive perfectionist performance standards (Frost et al., 1990). Indeed, several studies have looked specifically at the effects of perfectionism on student performance (e.g. Bieling et al., 2003; Flett, Blankenstein & Hewitt, 2009; Nugent, 2000; Shih, 2011). Maladaptive perfectionism involves setting high personal standards, and anxiety when those standards are not met (Flett et al., 1991; Frost et al., 1990); a combination that has been linked to poor academic performance. Students experiencing maladaptive perfectionism often suffer with low self-esteem, low mood, and stress (Grzegorek et al., 2004; Shih, 2011). To avoid situations where they may be at risk of failure and negative affect students may use self-handicapping strategies (such as procrastination) (Jones & Berglas, 1978; Shih, 2011). Jones and Berglas (1978) use the term 'self-handicapping' to describe how individuals create barriers to achieving their goals or reaching their full potential as a result of an underlying fear of failure. These self-handicapping behaviours can understandably lead to academic underachievement (Zuckerman, Kieffer & Knee, 1998).

Thus far, clear links have been made between cognitive difficulties, such as low self-efficacy, perfectionism, and fear of failure, with behaviours such as procrastination and self-handicapping, and with outcomes such as anxiety and poor academic performance (e.g. Flett et al., 2012; Jones & Berglas, 1978; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). It is important, therefore, to consider how cognitive approaches could help with reducing unhelpful thinking and behaviours. Kearns, Forbes and Gardiner (2007) conducted a study with doctorate research students and measured the effects of cognitive behavioural coaching to reduce perfectionism and self-handicapping behaviours such as procrastination. The intervention was a rigorously structured, intense course which involved a series of coaching based workshops held over six weeks. This is one of few empirical studies investigating the treatment of maladaptive perfectionist beliefs in a non-clinical student population using the principles of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) in coaching. Results showed that levels of perfectionism and self-handicapping behaviours were significantly reduced for those taking part in the workshops. Interestingly, in another study, a web-based CBT intervention was designed to reduce perfectionism in students and also showed promising results (Radhu et al., 2012). However, a further study found that students using a workbook-based self-help approach to perfectionism experienced increases in depression in a three-month follow-up compared to a group receiving weekly guided self-help using CBT (Pleva & Wade, 2007). This presents an argument for interventions that involve direct support from other professionals (e.g. teachers, lecturers, counsellors, coaches). Based on a systematic review of studies of student perfectionism, Schruder and colleagues (2014) provide a list of suggestions of ways in which teachers can assist students in developing coping strategies for perfectionist tendencies. These include; having a direct dialogue with students to identify triggers, helping students to develop and implement strategies, have students keep and maintain a reflexive journal, encourage student to explore self-help groups, and help students identify and put in to practice mood stabilising activities (e.g. music, deep breathing, physical fitness). Although their paper is useful in raising the awareness with teachers of how perfectionism can manifest, and how they may be able to assist students, their suggestions rely on working with students on a one-to-one basis; as discussed at the beginning of this article, this is becoming increasingly difficult due to time constraints. Their suggestions are also largely based on students using methods of self-help without direct support for cognitive restructuring, which has shown have to adverse effects. As discussed above, supported cognitive restructuring in coaching may be a better approach to help with reducing perfectionism and procrastination and improve performance (Kearns, Forbes & Gardiner, 2007); the current researchers suggest this approach as a preferred method with students to minimise risks of adverse effects.

The research question of the current qualitative study was whether cognitive behavioural group coaching with college students is effective in reducing perfectionism and procrastination? The effectiveness of group-coaching to help challenge students' thinking-errors, and encourage a more flexible and rational thinking was researched. Key focus was also placed on implementing CBC to reduce performance barriers; increasing students' perceived self-efficacy, well-being and performance.

Method

Design

This was largely a qualitative study, using transcendental phenomenology to gain an 'insider perspective' (Conrad, 1978) of the students personal experiences of brief CBC (Smith, Flower & Larkin, 2009; Willig, 2001). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was chosen as the qualitative method as it is well suited for new, novel and ongoing research studies aiming to investigate the unique experiences of a small number of individuals. Focus was placed on retrospective descriptions of how students perceived their specific experience of group-coaching, using semi structured interviews (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003; Smith, Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999).

As phenomenology is concerned with individuals' idiosyncratic, unique engagement with their life-world, the epistemological position taken is that of a naïve realist (Willig, 2001). Students' were assumed able to reflect upon experiences and to give a coherent account of them (Parker, 2001; Smith et al., 2009; Willig, 2001).

Thus, the key aim of the present research was to get as close as possible to the students' experiences, focusing upon communicating, exploring and analysing their *meaning making* (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006).

In addition to the qualitative data, there was a small quantitative element. All students were asked to complete a 12-item procrastination questionnaire before and after coaching. Differences between ratings were observed, and comparisons were made between the students displaying scores of procrastination receiving coaching and the students with similar (although not identical) scores not receiving coaching. However, they were not statistically analysed due to small numbers.

Participants

One upper sixth form psychology class consisting of seven students (N=2 males, N=5 females) with an age range of 18 to 27 years (M=20.43) took part in this study.

All students came from London and attended a large Further Education college. One student had joined the college in the second year. One student was a retake student who had decided to redo the course. Three students (two male and one female) had completed their first year at the college and had received average or slightly below average grades. Two female students both achieved high grades for their lower sixth form (first year) course, although the pressure of the upper sixth form (second year) course had reduced their performance and increased the procrastination levels noticeably.

Materials

All students were asked to fill in a 12-item procrastination questionnaire assessing six underlying cognitive constructs linked to student performance (anxiety, self-efficacy, avoidance, automatic negative thoughts, self-doubt, perfectionism) with each underlying construct assessed twice for consistency. This questionnaire was based upon the Ran-One Online People Procrastination Questionnaire (Walker Dunnett, 2013) but was amended in order to assess the specific underlying cognitive constructs linked to student performance. Students were asked to assign a rating to each item on a scale from 1 to 3, where 1 indicated rarely, 2 indicated sometimes and 3 indicated typically. The scale was designed so that a response of 24 to 36 indicated procrastination, a sore of 13 to 23 indicated occasional procrastination, and a score of 12 indicated very little or no procrastination; although a continuum was used to allow for nuances of the specific underlying constructs which affected each student most as a trigger for procrastination. Hence, a student may score high on specific constructs but not on others affecting the overall procrastination score. As a result of this, the scores were used as a guide only.

Based upon the indicated scores from the 12-item procrastination questionnaire, and in addition to the teacher's in-depth knowledge of each student's level of procrastination, students were divided into Procrastinators or Occasional Procrastinators, with approximately one-third being Occasional Procrastinators (two students, with a procrastination score of 19 and 21) and five students being Procrastinators, (with a procrastination score of 27, 27, 29, 33 and 23). The Procrastinators were then randomly assigned to two groups, coaching and no coaching. Hence, three Procrastinators were receiving group-coaching and two acted as a control group. None of the Occasional Procrastinators received coaching.

For the qualitative data analysis, a semi-structured interview schedule was used. This was chosen at it allows for some structure and objectivity whilst still promoting a conversational flow and possibilities of prompting new and potentially interesting areas (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2003; Willig, 2001).

The interview questions were aimed at inviting a rich, personal and detailed account from the students' coaching experiences, giving students the space to reflect upon their experiences and to speak freely about anything coming to mind during the interview, involving feelings, thoughts and experiences (Smith et al., 2009).

Table 1: Example questions from the 12-item questionnaire.

Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs)	*'I sometimes tell myself that I am a loser for not being able to get the assignments ready on time.'*
Anxiety	*'I experience anxiety when I come up to a deadline which prevents me from working effectively on my assignment.'*
Perfectionism	*'If my assignment is not perfect, I do not feel like submitting it.'*
Self-efficacy	*'I sometimes feel as if I cannot persist with writing up an assignment and, therefore, don't get round doing it.'*
Avoidance	*'I usually avoid assignment demands and time pressure for deadlines by doing something else.'*
Self-doubt	*'Although I want to achieve good grades, I usually have trouble getting started as I tend to doubt my skills in writing up assignments.'*

As the idea of IPA is to gather information for the research question by approaching it ‘sideways’ (Smith et al., 2009, p.58) interview questions should be broad, facilitating a dialogue, in which the research question can be answered through subsequent reading and analysis. Due to this, the set interview questions were descriptive and open ended (Smith et al, 2009).

An interview schedule was developed focusing upon three overall areas: The coaching process; positive/negative aspects of coaching and learning outcomes. The interview was based upon 10 core questions, involving probes and prompts to facilitate a deeper understanding. All interviews were conducted by a researcher not involved in the coaching sessions to reduce bias and demand characteristics. A section of example questions are shown below.

1. How would you describe your specific coaching experience? What did your coaching involve?
2. How do you think the coaching process has impacted on your levels of procrastination identified?
3. Could you please tell me whether you perceived any negative effects of receiving coaching? How/In what way? Can you elaborate a little?
4. Can you please tell me what you perceived the most positive or satisfying experience of receiving coaching? Why/In what way? Can you elaborate on that a little?
5. Can you please tell me whether there were any specific areas of the coaching experience that you found more useful than others and what those areas were? Why?
6. Do you think there have been any changes as to how you study and revise as a result of the coaching? Can you elaborate?

Procedure

All students (N=7) completed the 12-item procrastination questionnaire before coaching and approximately two weeks after the coaching had ended. This was done to to assess whether the subjective procrastination levels had changed amongst Procrastinators receiving coaching, and whether it had remained the same in the Procrastinators and Occasional Procrastinators not receiving coaching. Focus was also placed upon exploring whether the identified cognitive constructs, (anxiety, self-efficacy, avoidance, automatic negative thoughts, self-doubt, and perfectionism) linked to student performance, had changed as a result of group-coaching.

Prior to filling in the questionnaire, students gave their informed written consent to take part in the study and should they be selected to participate in coaching, they were informed about their right to withdraw at any time, and the right to have their collected data withdrawn at any point upon their request.

A brief CBC intervention was designed and implemented as four (one-hour long) sessions, to investigate whether brief CBC is useful in this context. Each coaching sessions followed RE-GROW, an updated structure of a CBT/CBC session (Grant, 2011), starting with Reviewing and Evaluating new learning and actions completed since the last session as based on the weekly reflections/homework given. This was then followed by setting Goals, reflecting upon Reality and discussing desired Options. Each session was Wrapped-up, setting new weekly reflections (or sub-goals). Those were chosen by the students to promote intrinsic motivation and self-regulation.

Implementation: Session 1–4

The first session focused on ‘Increasing awareness and challenging disruptive thinking’. Students rated their current procrastination level on a scale from 1 to 10 and stated where they perceived themselves to be now, and where they wanted to be at the end of coaching.

Ellis’ (1962) and Burns’ (1980) thinking errors were introduced and students explored which they tended to engage in. Examples identified were ‘all or nothing thinking’ (I’ve got to do it perfect, or I might just not do it at all), catastrophising (I made so many errors in the essay, it will be a 'fail', I might just as well give up!) and mental filters (focusing overly on the negative aspects of teacher feedback and disqualifying the positive).

Students were also introduced and fed back information about *their own specific underlying cognitive constructs* as assessed by the questionnaires filled in prior to coaching. Based upon reflective group discussion, the most essential constructs for the group appeared to be avoidance, self-doubt, anxiety and perfectionism. Hence, in agreement with the students, key focus in the session was placed upon these.

Thinking about unique and specific learning-barriers, in pairs, students were invited to engage in a Socratic dialogue focusing on challenging the usefulness, logic and evidence (Beck et al., 1979; Curwen, Palmer & Ruddell, 2000) for their perceived learning-barrier and their underlying thinking patterns that they tended to use when experiencing work related negative stress (distress). Students reflected upon their 'thinking-errors' introduced earlier in the session and helped each other to challenge those reoccurring irrational beliefs, using Socratic questions such as: Is it logical? Where is the evidence for your belief? Where is this belief/thought getting you? Is this belief helping you to attain your goals? Are you agonising about how you think things are instead of dealing with them effectively? Are you thinking in all-or-nothing terms? (taken from Curven, Palmer & Ruddell, 2000, p.21).

The use of the Socratic challenges proved exceptionally effective with this group of learners and all learners wanted to take one printed copy home with them to put at their workspace in order to help challenge their irrational thoughts and increase their motivation.

Students were then set weekly homework/reflections. The first session's task was to reflect upon 'how are we disturbing ourselves' and take brief notes/entries on *how, where and why* it happens and the form of avoidance behaviour displayed, such as, social media. This was subsequently focused upon in the second session, in accordance with the RE-GROW model (see Table 3).

The second session focused upon 'changing our irrational thoughts through the use of peer-coaching using the SPACE model (see Edgerton & Palmer, 2005) as illustrated in Table 2.

The third session focused on Whitmore's (2007) 'GROW-model to set specific, achievable and positively stated sub-goals' which were implemented and reflected upon in the fourth session.

In the final session, students reflected upon their goals and perfectionist-beliefs, key focus was placed upon 'changing maladaptive perfectionist beliefs into success enhancing performance using Performance Interfering Thoughts (PITs) and Performance Enhancing Thoughts (PETs) (see Neenan & Palmer, 2001; Palmer & Szymanska, 2007).

Analysis/Results

All interviews were transcribed verbatim; lines in the transcript were numbered for ease of referencing. The transcripts were then analysed in three stages using IPA. The researcher firstly conducted an initial coding by reading and re-reading the interview line by line, noting down anything interesting occurring in the data (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). As some parts of the transcripts were richer in data; more notes and initial coding were needed at those units of texts (Smith et al., 2009). Students' reflections were then re-read in-depth; notes were made of any repetitions and 'echoes' of anything continuously re-appearing that seemed particularly important, exploring connections across themes. This was then repeated with the next interview, and connections between the three interviews were given key focus.

In some instances, only one student discussed a particular area of their coaching experience, which was unique to them. As the focus in IPA is both the ideographic as well as identifying emergent themes for the

Table 2: SPACE model with A-level students.

SPACE model – Freeze time	
Social Context:	Essay writing
Cognitions:	I can't do it perfect enough, I can't make it perfect *straight away*. Others can do it better than I can…
Emotions:	Anxiety, Fear, Guilt, Self-blame, Embarrassment, Potential loss of motivation
Physiology	Stress, Arousal, Tension, Breathing (shallow)
Actions:	I won't do it now (but soon…) leads to anxiety reduction (temporarily). But as we have to do the work later (but in a much shorter time frame!) this leads to significantly *increased anxiety* (vicious circle) as a rushed piece of work confirms our negative thinking…
SPACE model – Challenging ANTs	
Social Context:	Essay writing
Cognitions:	I can't do it perfectly straight away, no one can! I can try to write something to the very best of my ability and ask my teacher to have a look at it…
Emotions:	Determination, Motivation, Locus of Control
Physiology	Eustress, Being on a 'flow'
Actions:	No point delaying. Better just get on with it. Just do it! Not trying to do it *perfectly* all at once, but planning work to decrease negative stress.

Table 3: Session outline.

Session 1 *Homework diary/ Weekly reflection*	**Increasing awareness and challenging disruptive thinking** *How, where and why are we disturbing ourselves?*
Session 2 *Homework diary/ Weekly reflection*	**SPACE Model – changing our irrational thoughts through the use of peer-coaching** *Identify and change our PITs to PETs, using the SPACE model and practicing engaging in coping self-talk.*
Session 3 *Homework diary/ Weekly reflection*	**GROW model to set specific, achievable & positively stated sub-goals** *Implementation of one positively stated sub-goals set in group session*
Session 4 *Homework diary/ Weekly reflection*	**Changing maladaptive perfectionist beliefs into success enhancing performance using PITs and PETs** *Promote maintenance strategies to prevent relapse*

group as a whole, individual themes considered to be of key value were included in the analysis despite them not recurring in other cases (Smith et al, 2009). However, it is important to note that identifying the final themes to be included required some level of prioritising of the data. Themes were selected upon factors such as their frequency in the interviews, capacity to elucidate important facets of the interviews and the richness of text (Smith & Osborne, 2003).

A total of four themes emerged, believed to capture the key aspects of the students' experiences. Themes were then named in a more condensed form.

A shortened summary table of themes is shown below (see Table 4). Main cluster/themes are placed to the left, extracts in the middle, and examples from the transcript in line numbers to the right.

The concept of experiencing feeling supported and the increased self-awareness resulting from the coaching process was a very strong and reoccurring experience which all three students mentioned repeatedly.

Moreover, the positive experiences of coaching, seeing it as an individualised and useful method to increase motivation, release potential, and challenging negative thinking and unhelpful behaviours, appeared a gradual and continuous learning process.

In addition, all students repeatedly pointed out how coaching had challenged their unhelpful thinking patterns and how this raised awareness has made them more positive and confident which was a welcomed change, as they had not been able to identify this prior to coaching. As one learner puts it:

> *'After the first couple of sessions where you realise okay, this is not right, you need to change, it does motivate you to do better because you realise you can do better, and it's just about how much work and effort you put in.'* Student 2

Furthermore, all three students receiving coaching had slight variations in their negative underlying cognitive constructs. One student had an extreme fear of failure and rejection, which had continuously decreased her performance since taking her GSCEs as a result of her engaging in self-handicapping behaviours, but which she started to work on with resilience and determination:

> *'…so, for example, before, mine was rejection, that was my biggest thing. I wasn't putting so much effort into something, because I never actually sat down and put my full effort into anything. Even GCSEs or anything, like full effort. Because the fear was like, if I do half half, I can always improve, but if I give my full effort and I get a really rubbish grade, that damages my self-esteem a lot.'* Student 3

For another learner, the most prevalent thinking error was constant negative comparison and maladaptive perfectionism which she focussed on in the four sessions:

> *'…and it (the coaching) has definitely had a more positive outlook on my work. More like, I can do this, not so much, I'm not as good as her, my answers aren't as good as her answers, and just deal with it! There is room for improvement, you don't always have to get it right first time.'* Student 2

For the third student maladaptive perfectionism and high levels of anxiety were a big issue leading to high levels of procrastinatory and self-handicapping behaviours, again something which she challenged through coaching:

> *'…and if you are going to do something, do it perfectly. Like, I am a perfectionist, I know, but my teacher knows that, and that's, we just needed to make it productive rather than, you know, make it less negative in a way, that's it.'* Student 1

An interesting point is that in addition to the very positive effects of coaching, all three students pointed out that the raised awareness coming from the first coaching session had initially led them to feel a little depressed or weary about coming to terms with the fact that they were 'victims' of their own negative and irrational thinking:

> *'…so first session it was a bit… sort of depressing, you know because you tend to know about, yes, what your shortcomings are, like where you're wrong and all…'* Student 1

Table 4: Table of themes showing summary of qualitative analysis.

Main cluster 1	Feeling Supported	
Not feeling alone	‘…listening to the other two girls talk about their experiences, because it feels like you’re not alone… and you’re not abnormal […] am I the only one that revision doesn’t work for?’	Student 2, 205–208
A chance to talk	‘I’ve never like sat down just like with just like, say three people, or even, you know just a teacher. And then, when you talk about things […] Because I think when you talk about problems you tend to dissect it, and then of course you go to the root of it’	Student 1, 27–33
	‘…people (teachers) don’t tend to ask you these kind of questions. Do you believe in yourself? Do you feel that your work is good enough? They just give you grades and then expect you to better them…’	Student 2, 26–29
	‘It was like talking to a therapist *because we all knew what was wrong with us but we didn’t know how to talk about it, we didn’t have no one to talk about it with*.’	Student 3, 85–86
Main cluster 2	Raising Awareness	
Becoming self-aware	‘…because we did talk about, you know when she was talking with us, it was just that sort of realisation that strikes you’ […] ‘Oh Yes this is what I should be doing!’	Student 1, 165–172
	‘It definitely made me more aware of my thought patters and how mine work.’	Student 2, 3–4
	‘I think it was really effective because in a way for me personally, I wasn’t really aware of downfalls, in a sense of what was stopping me from, let’s say revision […] but it also made us aware of tackling it as well.’	Student 3, 15–19
Taking responsibility	‘…when somebody tells you to think, start form there […] so you think, Yes, well why not? I think I have to start taking responsibility a bit more.’	Student 1, 159–161
	‘I think maybe becoming a bit more responsible for my own actions.’	Student 2, 190
Changing negative thinking	‘…it really makes you aware that how you are thinking affects what you do […] and it has definitely had a more positive outlook on my work,’	Student 2, 8–10
	‘getting rid of the obstacles and blocks in our mind which are stopping us from getting where we want to be in life.’	Student 3, 6–7
Main cluster 3	Increased Motivation	
Increased confidence	‘Before I would be like: No I can’t do it because I wasn’t taught this, or I can’t do it because my teacher didn’t teach me this. But now it’s like: No, you can’t do it because you haven’t read about it, so you need to start reading and just get on with it!’	Student 2, 192–195

Continued

Table 4: Table of themes showing summary of qualitative analysis *(continued)*.

	'So that fear of rejection, or not getting that grade, it was my biggest aspect. But then it was like (after coaching) some people who do badly just take it as criticism and something to build upon'.	Student 3, 105–107
Releasing potential	'…it definitely does motivate you to do better because you realise you can do better, and it's just about how much work and effort you put in.'	Student 2, 237–239
	'…at the end of the day, we all have a very similar average intelligence, and it's just about how we are able to conquer our minds'	Student 3, 10–11
Main cluster 4	Improving Performance	
Changing unhelpful behaviour	'I've stuck that piece of paper (Socratic challenges) above my desk, so every time I do start to think like that, I just go back to that and just think 'is this thought logical?' 'Is it helping me in any way?' […] you're just like, No, carry on!'	Student 2, 36–39
	'I could sit at a desk for five hours and have this right in front of me and I still wouldn't do it, something was so stronger than me…It sounds crazy. But now I'm just doing it fine.'	Student 3, 112–115
Setting and achieving goals	'I think the fact that I can use these skills in the future […] say, for example, if I come across something that I can't do, I probably will continue to try and try again until I can feel like I can do it.'	Student 2, 170–172
	'All or nothing' (irrational-thinking) was changed to like the PETs was changed to at least get started on it. You know so that's what I've done, that is what has proper changed.'	Student 1, 182–183

> *'…I was so sure what I was doing was right, but talking to my teacher it made me aware No! What you are thinking is actually really wrong, and it's really quite negative. I remember leaving the first session really quite depressed because, yes, it really makes you aware that how you are thinking affects what you do.'* Student 2
>
> *'I mean it depends what kind of person you are, if you're very sensitive and you start crying because you've found that you're thinking is not very rational, then perhaps… But for me, it's just more awareness, just awareness of putting this thinking into places where you can actually do something about it.'* Student 3

However, it is important to highlight that despite experiencing this sense of increased awareness, realising that grades often are a result of one's own input and that the students themselves were in control of challenging unhelpful behaviours, this also helped them to understand their own potentials, which was perceived as very motivating and exciting.

An additional important finding was that the students highlighted how they had implemented their new, more rational and adaptive thinking in a variety of context ranging from planning for university, keeping food-diaries to taking control over junk-food and improve revision tables. This resonates with the strengths of CBC, as once skills are learnt they can be used in a range of situations facilitating independent problem solving and self-coaching (Neenan & Palmer, 2012; Palmer & Szymanska, 2007), something that again might prove very beneficial for high school students.

Quantitative analysis

Quantitative scores from the 12-item procrastination questionnaires pre- and post-coaching and self-ratings provided at the first and the fourth coaching session, were observed. However, this was done for exploratory reasons only, to look at trends in the data collected.

Calculated means of students' quantitative procrastination self-ratings, as based upon the 12-item questionnaire pre- and post-coaching are shown in Figure 1. Procrastination-levels in Procrastinators reduced markedly after receiving CBC (from *M*=29 to *M*=19.6) compared to the Procrastinators not receiving coaching for which procrastination increased very slightly (for one student) in the last month before exam (from *M*=26 to *M*=27). This might have been expected, given that the Procrastinators not receiving coaching were lacking effective methods to decrease their distress, anxiety, self-handicapping behaviours and perceived low levels of self-efficacy, thus resulting in potential avoidance behaviours.

Moreover, an interesting finding was that Occasional Procrastinators' levels of procrastination reduced in the last month before examination without any additional teacher support (from *M*=20 to *M*=14.5), suggesting that students with lower levels of procrastination have sufficient capability to change unhelpful behaviours when the situation demands.

In terms of the specific underlying cognitive constructs linked to student performance, a common feature amongst the students receiving coaching was that they did initially score high on avoidance, self-doubt, anxiety and perfectionism. After coaching, most students scored lower on these constructs, moving from initially scoring a 3 (typically), to scoring a 2 (sometimes) and even a 1 (rarely) after coaching had ended. However, one student's score for perfectionism did not change (she scored 2 before coaching for both test items on the questionnaire and 2 after coaching on both items). Similarly, a second student's score for anxiety did not change (she scored 2 before coaching for both items on the questionnaire and 2 after coaching on both test items).

Furthermore, for the three students receiving coaching, their self-ratings of their perceived procrastination levels as assessed in the first and last session was also calculated and is shown in Figure 2.

These self-assessed procrastination scores highlight how the group-coaching helped the students, as learner 1 moved from a high procrastination score of 9 to 4, learner 2 moved from a procrastination score of 7.5 to 5 and learner 3 moved from a procrastination score of 7 to 3.

As the sample of this study was very small, and as one Procrastinator not selected for coaching dropped off the A-level course making exact comparisons difficult, no inferential statistical analyses were conducted. Subsequent studies with larger samples allowing for statistical tests are required to assess whether any significant differences between the groups' procrastination levels, have been achieved.

Discussion – moving forward with CBC

This study aimed to explore whether cognitive behavioural coaching can be an effective tool to reduce high levels of procrastination, negative stress and avoidance behaviours in A-level college students. The decision to focus on negative thinking and irrational beliefs was based upon recent research (Flett et al., 2012) showing that degree level students procrastinate as a result of underlying cognitive constructs, where maladaptive perfectionist beliefs and automatic negative thoughts (ANTs) increased avoidance behaviours. The present study was also inspired by the research of Kearns et al. (2007) who reported links between cognitive constructs and performance hindering behaviours in doctorate students. They used a cognitive behavioural workshop intervention as a means of adapting beliefs and behaviours with positive shifts in cognitions and performance related behaviours.

Figure 1: Bar chart showing the mean score of procrastination levels as assessed by the 12-item questionnaire where ≥24–36 indicates procrastination and a score of 13 to 23 indicates occasional procrastination.

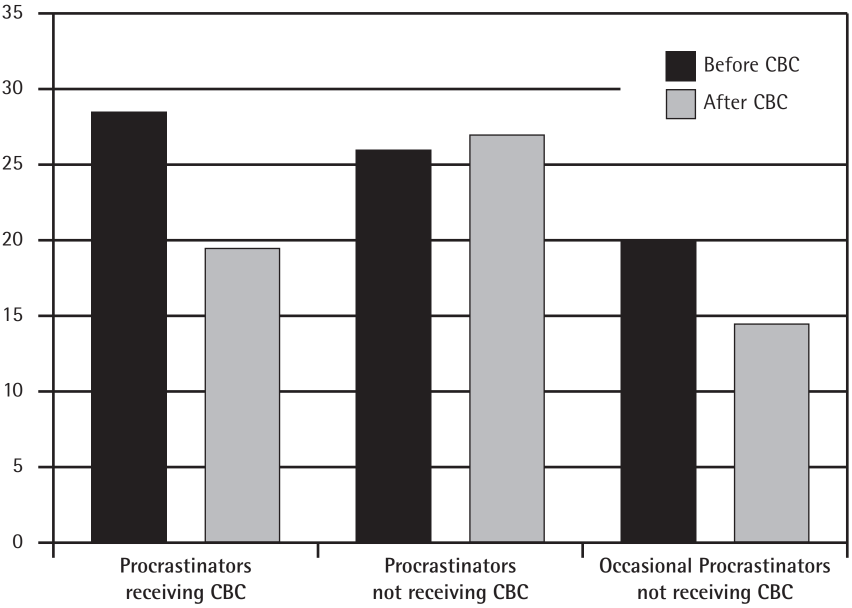
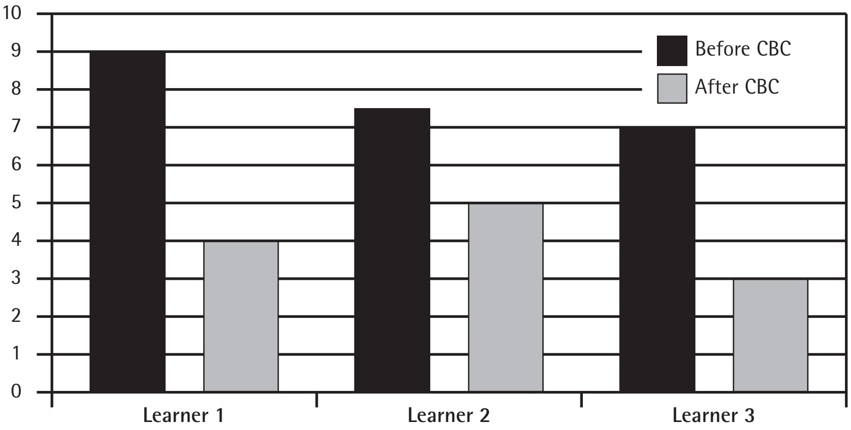


Figure 2: Estimated levels of procrastination before and after CBC on a continuum where 10 indicates high level of procrastination and 1 indicates low level of procrastination.



At the beginning of the present study a number of A-level students reported experiencing unhelpful patterns of thinking that led them to experience anxiety and to procrastinate as a consequence. This is in line with the findings of Flett et al. (2012) and Kearns et al. (2007). Kearns et al. found that procrastinating students engaged in automatic perfectionist thoughts, and self-handicapping behaviours, which were significantly reduced as a result the Cognitive Behavioural Coaching intervention.

Results from the qualitative data analysis (post-coaching) in the present study showed very promising results for using cognitive behavioural coaching with A-level college students. Students experienced the coaching process to have been a very positive, and more importantly, very effective method to increase awareness, challenge unhelpful thinking, and reduce self-handicapping avoidance behaviours and procrastination. The dialogue offered by students during the interviews adds an interesting and useful qualitative aspect to what we know from previous studies (e.g. Flett et al., 20012; Kearns et al., 2007).

Four main themes emerged from the qualitative data-analysis highlighting the importance of how group coaching made students *feel supported*, in a way that they had not experienced in the classroom through differentiation or questioning strategies. Students also experienced that the cognitive behavioural coaching had *raised their awareness* both in terms of becoming conscious of their recurring negative thinking, but also how it had increased their awareness about their own potential. This is in line with the different stages outlined by Dryden (2000) where the importance of becoming *aware* of procrastination is the first key step in order to improve performance, setting and following through with goals and staying committed in this process.

Students also explained how coaching had *increased their motivation* for enhanced performance as they now had found a structured tool or a method that worked effectively to challenge their negative and unhelpful thinking even when the teacher/coach was not present. This is in line with the work of Palmer and Szymanska (2007) outlining ways to support the coachee to become their own self-coach, and shows how the group coaching increased students' ability to self-reflect and implement the methods practiced in sessions, leading to increased motivation.

The use of Socratic Challenges (Padesky & Greenberger, 1995) was adopted by all students. One of the students reported that she found it especially helpful to put the Socratic questions in front of her work desk to effectively challenge negative thoughts leading to avoidance and self-handicapping behaviours whilst revising. The effectiveness of the Socratic questions to challenge ANTs practised within the sessions (and between sessions), shows its importance as a tool to reduce self-handicapping behaviours, often leading to procrastination, anxiety and reduced academic performance (Flett et al., 2012; Frost et al., 1990; Zuckerman et al., 1998).

The results from the qualitative data-analysis were supported by the quantitative analysis, which was included for exploratory reasons only, to highlight trends in the data. The quantitative data showed a decrease in procrastination for students receiving group-coaching. This decrease was not observed in the students with a similar high level of procrastination not receiving coaching.

An interesting finding was that low level procrastinators had the capacity to reduce their own procrastination in the run up to the examination (as observed in the questionnaire data), indicating that these students' self-regulation and higher levels of self-efficacy may make them more equipped to take control over their time management and revision skills. This lends support for future interventions of cognitive behavioural group coaching to reduce procrastination in high school students that have been identified by their teachers to engage in self-handicapping behaviours, procrastination, maladaptive perfectionist beliefs, and fear of failure, and to effectively assist these students in developing a strong performance and help schools to hold a competitive edge.

Based upon the results from this initial study, brief group CBC could be suggested to be a cost-effective and learner-focused method seen as an alternative to one-to-one coaching for increasing student performance and well-being which teachers can be trained to use. The effectiveness of group-coaching as a method used in schools is planned to be further researched and developed in a future, larger scale study.

One point of reflection is whether group coaching is effective enough to be implemented nationally with low performing, self-handicapping students. Further, large-scale comparison studies are needed in order to answer this. However, the procrastination ratings before and after coaching (and compared to procrastinators not receiving coaching) provide a good starting point, with positive results echoed in the in-depth interviews conducted with each student.

A weakness with the current study is that the student ratings were collected using subjective self-report tools in the form of the 12-item questionnaire and self-ratings of perceived level of procrastination. To address this, further research is planned, using teacher feedback (in addition to student focus groups) to assess time management skills, quality of written work, procrastination and classroom performance before and after coaching. This study is also planned to be a blind study, in that the teachers providing the ratings at the different time points are not informed as to whether the students have received coaching or not.

Future quantitative research is also needed, comparing exam results for end of year examinations before and after coaching, to see whether the coaching has made a difference in actual performance amongst the students receiving group-coaching.

An important question is whether all students are equally suitable to receive coaching? Again, as the current study was based upon one class of seven upper sixth form students, where only three students received coaching, further research with bigger sample sizes is needed in order to answer this. This is planned for the larger scale study where a larger sample of students will take part.

Moreover, as the current study was carried out with upper sixth form students only, it would be interesting to see whether coaching can be an effective tool with younger students preparing for their GCSEs. This is planned for the larger scale study, where a sample of Year 9 (aged 14) students will receive cognitive behavioural group coaching, in addition to the sixth form students (aged 17) receiving coaching in small groups.

Finally, as the present study assessed levels of procrastination and negative underlying constructs before and approximately two weeks after coaching, it would be interesting to assess the sustainability of the group coaching over a longer time frame. Again, this is currently being planned for the follow up study where teacher's ratings will take place at three time points, pre coaching, post coaching and two months after coaching, to allow for sustainability to be assessed.

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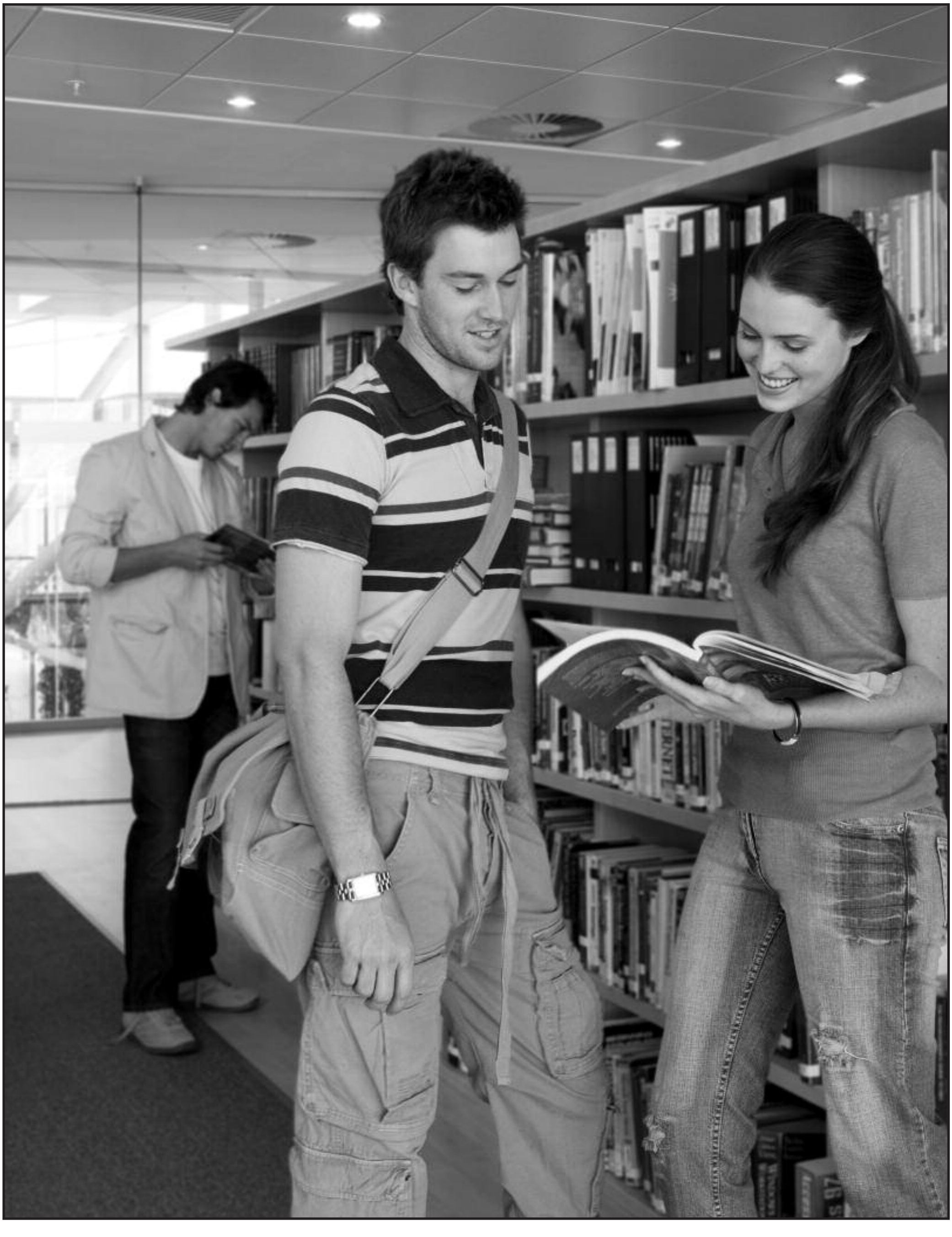

Paper

Clients' experiences of intentional personality change coaching

Lesley S. Martin, Lindsay G. Oades & Peter Caputi

Purpose: *The main objective of this study was to explore clients' experiences of participating in a structured intentional personality change coaching programme designed to facilitate change on client chosen personality facets.*

Design: *A qualitative design, using inductive thematic analysis was employed to explore participants' experiences with as few pre-conceptions as possible.*

Method: *The current study used semi-structured, face-to-face interviews to collect data from 32 participants at the conclusion of a 10-week structured intentional personality change coaching programme. Transcribed interview data was then coded and analysed for themes, using steps and processes outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006).*

Results: *Thematic analysis revealed four key themes. First, personality coaching promoted reflection, leading to greater self-awareness. Second, it fostered an authentic self and values consistent way of living, without loss of valued aspects of identity. Third, it produced tangible and practical life benefits including enhanced confidence and competence, and strengthened ability to relate to others. Finally, most clients viewed the structured personality change coaching programme as enjoyable, positive and beneficial.*

Conclusion: *This study suggests personality change coaching is perceived by clients as providing opportunities for developing greater self-awareness, authenticity, and a values consistent way of living. Whereas personality change is the goal of such coaching, this translates into practical benefits, and is perceived by clients as a positive experience. Professional implications of expanding coaching into this relatively new area are identified.*

Keywords: *personality; intentional; change; coaching; Big Five; Five Factor; clients' experiences.*

AS A LEAD INTO THIS ARTICLE, it is useful to discuss the key terms intentional, personality and change. *The Dictionary of Psychology* (Reber & Reber, 2001) defines intention as, 'any desire, plan, purpose, aim or belief that is oriented towards some goal, some end state'. The term is used by most with the connotation that such striving is conscious' (p.362). Hence, intentional personality change involves consciously working towards changing personality in a goal oriented manner, with a clear end state in mind, and developing strategies to support such change. For change to be intentional, we first need to identify what we want to change from a personality perspective.

Defining personality is a widely recognised challenge, with Reber and Reber (2001) cautioning that personality, 'is a term so resistant to definition and so broad in usage that no coherent simple statement about it can be made' (p.525). Hence, in this article personality change will be discussed within the context of one theory, the Five-Factor/Big Five Mode of Personality, as assessed by one measure, the NEO PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Hence we will be exploring clients' perception of intentionally changing aspects of their personality as assessed by the NEO PI-R (using a structured coaching process).

Whereas intentional personality change exploration is relatively recent, literature has developed over the last decade around more generic intentional change processes, particularly as applied to increasing emotional intelligence. Boyatzis (2006) proposed that

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change can be facilitated through a sequence of personal discoveries, including reflecting on the ideal self and the current self, with a view to developing a plan to move towards the ideal self. Strategies of aligning the current self with the ideal self included identifying strengths and weakness and a related learning agenda, and establishing relationships that support progression towards the ideal self. Boyatzis et al. (2004) proposed that coaching can play a key role in this process.

More recently, Martin, Oades and Caputi (2012, 2013, 2014a) proposed that intentional change of client[1] chosen personality traits (domains) appeared possible, provided the client was motivated and had appropriate professional support to achieve such change. Martin et al. (2014a) subsequently developed intentional personality change coaching resources to explore this possibility. A step-wise process of intentional personality change coaching was developed, based on these resources (Martin et al., 2014a). The authors then conducted an empirical study, using these resources, and found that individuals could change selected facets of their personality with 10 sessions of coaching (Martin, Oades & Caputi, 2014). Pre-coaching analysis of participants' personality profiles further suggested that at the commencement of coaching they were significantly higher on domains openness and emotionality (Allan, Leeson & Martin, 2014), compared to NEO PI-R norms (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

The literature suggests that reflection, leading to greater self-awareness, is an important element of change processes in a coaching context (Boyatzis et al., 2004; Day et al., 2008; Hanft, Rush & Shelden, 2004; Kristal, 2010). For example, Hanft, Rush and Shelden (2004) propose that coaching is a reflective process, and a way of reaching a deeper understanding of ourselves, and thus expands self-awareness. Reflection on how we think and behave are key components of intentional change theory proposed by Boyatzis (2006), and assumed to be an important factor in facilitating change in a coaching context by many authors (Gyllensten et al., 2010; Kemp, 2005; Kristal, 2010).

The coaching literature further suggests that reflection can lead to intense moments of insight (e.g. ah-huh moments or revelations) that may be turning points in the coaching relationship (Day et al., 2008; De Haan et al., 2010). Day et al. (2008) suggested that combining such critical intense moments with reflexivity can enhance change outcomes and deepen the coaching relationship. Specifically, they suggested that linking what occurs in the coaching relationship with client experiences can be used to heighten self awareness.

The coaching literature contains numerous references to self-awareness being an important component of understanding one's unique identity and living (and leading others) in an authentic, values consistent way (Fusco, Palmer & O'Riordan, 2011a, 2011b; Gardner et al., 2005). Martin et al. (2014a) extended consideration of values to a personality change context, and proposed that assessment and exploration of values was an important aspect of personality change processes, as it helped ensure that personality change goals were consistent with the client's values. The authors further proposed that client motivated, values consistent personality change was likely to be associated with tangible benefits, as associations between personality and consequential outcomes were well established (for a review see Ozer & Benet-Martinez (2006)). Martin et al. (2012) suggested that coaching may provide an appropriate context to further explore this possibility. Nevertheless they acknowledged that the boundaries between coaching and therapy/counselling were not clear cut, and personality change interventions could arguably fit within either. The mental health of the client was identified as one factor affecting whether personality change interventions should sit within a coaching or therapy context. However, the level of psychological functioning is not always apparent at the commencement of the coaching relationship.

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[1] The terms participant and client are used interchangeably.

Buckley (2010) proposes that a number of factors should be taken into account when mental health issues arise in a coaching context, (e.g. the client's understanding of the nature of the professional relationship, the training and competence of the professional to work with mental health issues, ethics/good practice guidelines of professional membership organisations, indemnity insurance and other legal and third party considerations). Consideration of these factors will help determine whether the coaching context is appropriate for working with individual clients, or whether referring on to other professionals is required.

A number of studies have found that coaching fosters tangible benefits. Tooth, Higgs and Armstrong (2008) explored executives' perspective of coaching and found that a valued benefit was 'that coaching enabled them to focus on real issues' (p.107). De Haan and Neib (2011) reported that third parties noticed observable practical positive changes in executive after coaching, including enhanced communication and interpersonal skills, management abilities, self-confidence and authenticity. Similarly, DeVaux (2010) found that coaching fostered a range of benefits including enhanced career decisions, planning and management skills, work life balance, and interpersonal skills. Furthermore, an International Coach Federation survey of 155,000 coachees found the vast majority reported coaching had facilitated positive changes. They were pleased with the overall coaching experience, and would be happy to engage in coaching again.

In combination, these findings suggest that client motivated, values consistent intentional personality change coaching is likely be associated with tangible benefits, and be perceived as a positive experience. However, as the concept of personality change coaching is in its infancy, no studies were identified that explored clients' experiences of this type of coaching. As the literature suggests that researchers and practitioners can better understand change processes if they understand the clients' perspective of such change (Hodgetts & Wright, 2007; Passmore, 2010), the current study aims to explore clients' experience of engaging in 10 sessions of personality change coaching.

Method

Participants

Thirty-two individuals were interviewed, ranging in age from 18 to 65 years (*M*=42.18, *SD*=12.44). Twenty-six participants were female and six were male. The participants were recruited for a personality change coaching programme, via local media interviews and a university research web page. Subsequently, major psychopathology was excluded by asking those participants who had one or more emotionality facets on the NEO PI-R (Costa & McCrae,1992) (i.e. anxiety, anger, depression, vulnerability, impulsivity or self-conscientiousness) in the very high range to also complete a Millon MCMI III (Millon, Davis & Millon, 1997). The Millon MCMI III is an inventory which assesses for *DSM-IV* diagnoses. Those individuals with Axis II disorders, significant current alcohol and drug abuse, active psychosis or bipolar disorder were excluded from the study, and referred to other services. This exclusion criteria was used as the excluded disorders may have required more specialist skills and training than would be available through this programme (e.g. psychiatric input).

Of the 54 participants in the personality change coaching programme, 32 were randomly selected and interviewed for the current study until saturation was reached (i.e. additional interviews were no longer contributing novel ideas) . No sub-theme was based on data derived from just one client's transcript.

Personality change coaches and adherence to protocols

Nine coaches (eight females and one male) delivered the personality change coaching programme. Ages ranged from 23 to 57 years (with six of the nine coaches being in their 20s). The majority of the coaches (seven) were provisionally registered Master's level clinical psychology students at a regional Australian university. One coach was a registered general psychologist and PhD student, and one coach was a registered clinical psychologist. As a minimum, clinical psychology students were in their fifth year of full-time training, and had 60 hours or more of face-to-face client contact. The primary orientation of training in this programme was cognitive behavioural techniques.

In addition to their training in psychology, coaches were trained in personality change coaching by way of: (a) attendance at a one-day workshop; (b) provision of a personality change coaching manual; (c) completion of a research fidelity checklist after each coaching session; and (d) weekly one-hour one-to-one supervision sessions, which included review of videoed coaching sessions. The two supervisors were registered psychologists, experienced in using the personality change coaching resources with a number of clients. One supervisor was the lead researcher in developing the step-wise process of intentional personality change used in the programme, and focused more on adherence to coaching protocols. The second supervisor was the director of a university placement clinic, and a Psychology Board of Australia approved supervisor, who provided broader supervision skills.

Qualitative researchers

The two coders in the current study were the supervisors of the clinical students undertaking the coaching. One was the first author in the current study (a registered psychologist and PhD candidate), experienced in personality change coaching. The second coder was a clinical psychologist and academic, also with experience with personality change coaching. The academic research supervisor for the current study was also consulted weekly to resolve any queries that arose (e.g. coding issues). Interviews were conducted by the primary researcher and a second PhD clinical psychology student (not associated with the current study). Interview processes were supervised by the academic research supervisor of the current study.

Data collection

At the conclusion of the 10 sessions of coaching, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 32 participants who were asked the following question: How would you describe your experience of personality coaching? Further probing of responses encouraged elaboration. This approach was chosen to allow the participants the flexibility to identify and share relevant experiences, while maintaining some degree of focus.

Personality change coaching intervention procedure

Prior to being interviewed for the current study, participants attended 10 one-to-one coaching sessions designed to increase or decrease client selected personality facets. Prior to beginning the coaching sessions, participants completed: (1) a 240-item self-report NEO PI-R questionnaire (Costa & McCrae, 1992), based on the Five Factor Model of Personality (McCrae, 1991); (2) a values inventory (Wilson, 2002); and (3) a readiness to change assessment. At the first coaching session, a detailed personality profile was provided to, and discussed with the participant. The profile indicated in what range (and percentile) the participant scored in terms of five broad personality domains, and 30 facets, relative to established NEO PI-R norms. Discussion focused on whether increasing or decreasing certain facets would be beneficial (e.g. lead to a more values consistent meaningful life and/or modify facets that had been experienced by the client as problematic in the past). Readiness to change concepts, including timeliness of change, internal and external motivation to change, importance of change, and confidence in ability to change were each assessed (by ranking each on a scale from 1 to 10) and discussed, relative to each proposed facet change. If at the end of this process (completed in the second of 10 coaching sessions) the client wished to change (increase or decrease) one or more facets, these facet changes became the unifying goal for the 10 personality change coaching sessions. (If no personality change goals were identified, the client withdrew from the study.)

Personality change was facilitated using a structured step-wise personality change process outlined in Martin et al. (2014a). The related resource material provided a menu of change interventions uniquely tailored to each of the 30 facets. These interventions were developed in an earlier phase of the research, in consultation with a panel of registered psychologists/coaches, with experience in coaching and good familiarity with the Big Five Model of Personality. The interventions incorporated a range of approaches and theoretical influences, including cognitive behavioural, positive psychology, solution focused, and acceptance and commitment. Progress toward personality change goals was measured at sessions five and 10, with a follow-up measure taken three months after the 10 sessions of coaching were completed.

The step-wise process of personality change employed in this programme is illustrated in Figure 1.

Approach to data analysis

Transcripts were analysed and themes generated using an inductive thematic analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and with analysis conducted at the semantic level. Semantic analysis focuses on the explicit or surface meaning in the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that thematic analysis ‘is a technique for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data’ (p.79). As a minimum, it organises and describes data, but often also includes interpretation. Inductive denotes a ‘bottom up’ approach, where themes are determined by the data, rather than being developed around theoretical interests. As it is not tied to a particular theory or epistemology, it offers greater freedom and flexibility to capture stories with as few pre-conceived ideas as possible.

The analysis followed the steps outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006), and employed a consensual decision making approach, involving a three person research team. Initially two coders gained familiarisation with the data, by reading, re-reading and discussing transcripts. They then jointly generated descriptive codes relevant to the research question, by delineating and discussing the chunks of text in the transcripts in turn. This was followed by a brainstorming or hashing out of themes, and defining and naming them. Relationships between these themes were also identified. At each of these stages, feedback was sought, and queries and differences of opinion resolved, through input from the academic research supervisor of the current study. The first author then interpreted and reported themes, with feedback and further refinement of ideas being sought from the two other members of the research team. This consensual generation of themes was used as the research team considered it could facilitate the development and challenging of ideas in a more interactive evolving manner than more structured processes (e.g. coders independently coding chunks of text, followed by assessment of inter-rater reliability). In so doing it incorporated consensual theme generation ideas discussed in the qualitative literature (Hill, Thompson & Williams, 1997; Marcus et al., 2011; Oleson et al., 1994).

A key issue in evaluating the rigor of qualitative research is trustworthiness (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). It is hoped the current study achieved this through: (a) use of a research team, which encouraged tossing around

Figure 1: A step-wise process of intentional personality change coaching.

Step 1. **Assess personality and client values.**	● Complete personality inventory and develop report. ● Complete values inventory.
Step 2. **Discover the current self.**	● Explore what is positive and problematic in the client's life. ● Review client values questionnaire findings. ● Review personality report.
Step 3. **Explore gaps between the current and ideal self.**	● Clarify client's ideal self. ● Reflect on how current and ideal personality differ. ● Explore what facet changes could help narrow this gap.
Step 4. **Choose personality facet change goals.**	● Shortlist facets targeted for change. ● Review consistency of proposed changes with values.
Step 5. **Assess attitudes towards change.**	● Assess motivation, importance, confidence and timeliness. ● Manage ambivalent attitudes and/or review change goals. ● Finalise list of facets to target for change.
Step 6. **Design and implement coaching plan.**	● Choose change intervention options for targeted facets. ● Develop and implement a coaching plan.
Step 7. **Re-assess personality and review progress.**	● Re-administer personality inventory (session 5). ● Review progress and revise coaching plan (if necessary).
Step 8. **Implement remaining coaching sessions.**	● Implement remaining coaching sessions, incorporating coaching plan revisions.
Step 9. **Re-assess, review and maintain.**	● Re-administer personality inventory (session 10). ● Review progress towards personality change goals. ● Develop a maintenance plan for targeted sub-trait change.
Step 10. **Follow-up, review and refinement.**	● Re-administer personality inventory (3 months later). ● Refine maintenence strategies for targeted facet change.

ideas and approaches; (b) key team members journaling thoughts and reactions, and discussing potential researcher bias; (c) regular collaboration with the academic research supervisor; and (d) negative case analysis to identify and discuss cases that did not fit the researchers' initial interpretations.

Results and discussion

Four themes emerged from the research data: personality change coaching: (1) facilitates reflection leading to greater self-awareness; (2) promotes an authentic self and values consistent living; (3) produces tangible and practical life benefits; and (4) is an enjoyable, positive and useful experience. These themes are discussed in turn, with relevant quotes identified by participant number (p) and line number (l).

Theme One: Personality change facilitates reflection leading to greater self-awareness

The first theme revealed that intentional personality change coaching facilitated reflection, which in turn fostered greater self-awareness. An important component of the step-wise process of the intentional personality change coaching programme was reflection. This began with participants completing a 240-item personality inventory before the coaching sessions started. One participant likened this first stage to soul searching.

> *The experience of filling out the questionnaire I can recall was very soul searching.* (p.15:l4)[2]

After the personality report was prepared and shared with the participant, the early sessions encouraged reflection on 'who am I?', and 'who do I want to be?' This was followed by the client deciding what personality facet change goals they wanted to set. The value of this reflective process is illustrated by the following quote:

> *It was useful not only to look at the broader traits but also going through all the sub-traits and thinking is that me, and do I want to change that?* (p.8:l11)

The process of reflecting on the current self and the ideal self mirrors components of the theory of intentional change developed by Boyatzis (2006). One element of this theory involves moving towards the ideal self through being aware of and experimenting with new thoughts and behaviours. In a similar vein, several participants reported that the personality coaching helped them be more aware of how (and why) they thought and behaved in certain ways.

> *OK, I've found the experience positive, yeah. And I found it very educational. A lot of stuff we've gone through is about my critical thinking processes. Some things that never really dawned on me before, I ended up reflecting on. Like reflecting on why I say and do things, and where exactly is it coming from. Yeah, so I learned to reflect on how I'm thinking and behaving and to then critically analyse it. And it's something I have never done before.* (p.7:l4)

The cognitive behavioural orientation evident in the reflective processes may have resulted from most coaches' training being predominantly in cognitive behavioural techniques. Although a range of non-cognitive behavioural change options were included in the coaching resources, it is likely that practitioners in the early stages of their professional life favoured familiar change methodologies. To date there has been limited exploration of cognitive behavioural processes in a personality change context, as this literature is still in its infancy. However, personality change inevitably involves reflection on our thinking and behavioural patterns, as our thoughts and behaviours help mould who we are, and who we become. Hence, the current study extends our understanding of cognitive behavioural processes to a personality change coaching context.

Some participants spoke of experiencing ah-huh or moments of realisation, and the practical translation of these realisations into their lives. The following quote is from a participant who wished to reduce conflictual aspects of her personality (evidenced by a low score on the facet Compliance).

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[2] In the bracketed reference at the end of each quote, p refers to the page and l refers to line in the transcripts.

> *Coaching helped me change some behaviours I have wished to modify for years. Through the sessions there were a couple of 'ah-huh moments'. Those realisations in life can come and pass. Coaching helped me focus on the consciousness of the ah-huh and then develop methods and steps to take the ah-huh knowledge into my own life. Coaching made the ah-huh a reality through weekly commitment to goals and discussion of challenges… It was very insightful and I think it's really changed me in terms of how I have been doing things, and how I will do things in the future, because now I will stop and think about how's that going to be received.* (p.17:l61)

Yet another participant spoke of an ah-huh moment amid the chaos of a challenging week, leading to the discovery of a deeper self.

> *It was the week that things had been in kind of chaos and it was… it was like that was one of those ah-huh moments of the universe aligning… It was kind of like uncovering a part of me, I guess, that was not unknown, but was very deep seated, and also one of those things I had kept hidden from the world and myself, yeah.* (p.18:l11)

The current study suggests that moments of realisation about oneself can occur in the personality change coaching process, and foster deeper self-awareness and change. These findings are consistent with previous findings that critical moments in coaching can be pivotal to the growth and development of the client (De Haan et al., 2010) and provide opportunities for insight and change (Day et al., 2008).

Reflection during the 10-week programme enabled participants to better understand themselves, not only in terms of what they wanted to change, and how they wanted to grow, but also what they chose to accept, as illustrated below.

> *It has been a great opportunity to just really analyse the things that I do, and understand the thoughts that I have when I do things, or when I'm feeling stressed… and working on being able to tap into those and work out how to change them, and let go of them if that works best, so I guess overall my experience has been really positive. It has been a really good opportunity to understand myself and grow.* (p.21:l4)
>
> *It's helped me look at areas of my personality that I'm not entirely happy with, and look at trying to improve those qualities, and accept some of them too.* (p.12:l6)

These findings extend the existing personality change literature by shedding light on how reflection (leading to self-awareness) informs our understanding of: (a) who we are, and who we want to be; (b) how we currently think and behave; (c) the relevance of ah-huh moments; and (d) the aspects of self/personality we chose to accept or to change.

The processes of reflecting on one's current self and the ideal self inevitably facilitates consideration of both the authentic self, and what one values in life (Gardner et al., 2005). This links with the second theme evident in the current study; that personality change coaching (assisted by greater self-awareness) promotes an authentic, values consistent way of living.

Theme Two: Personality change coaching promotes authentic, values consistent living

Although the concept of personality change is likely to have an appeal to some, others may fear that changing their personality would be akin to losing their identity, and abandoning their true selves. Hence, it is interesting to explore the authentic identity theme (and related values concepts) that emerged in the current study, and links with previous literature.

Consistent with previous coaching literature (Fusco et al., 2011a, 2011b; Gardner et al., 2005) transcripts suggested that the personality change coaching programme, with a focus on self-awareness, had promoted personal authenticity, and values-consistent living. No transcripts alluded to having lost valued components of identity, and some participants actually refuted this, as illustrated by the following quote.

> *I knew I wasn't going to change unrecognisably, and I'm certainly not going to change overnight unrecognisably, and go, well who is this woman in my house and in my body? It isn't going to be like that, so I didn't have that fear anymore, so it was easy just to make the switch.* (p.10.l14)

Participants spoke of achieving a more values-consistent way of behaving and living, as illustrated by the following quote:

> *Yeah, that values exercise is a really good anchor. Like I made up this stuff, and I've put it on my corkboard. Whenever I see a behaviour that I don't want, I just relate it back to the values, and the coaching, and I'm getting more and more confident that it's not going to go back to what it was before, because I have a bit more experience. And also noticing when you're doing something that you want, and when you're not. I think that was the big thing, just the self knowledge of what you want and what you don't want.* (p.9:l14)

Similarly, the following interview extract describes how one participant (who targeted emotionality facets) experienced the personality change coaching as helping her be more connected to her values, and expressing a more authentic self.

> *It's been very helpful in that the anxiety and depression were changing my personality in ways that I didn't like, and in some sense all of these other things were part of my personality being suppressed. It's almost like it (the coaching) was more bringing me back to who I was 10 years ago, but with more maturity. I think the anxiety took over, so now I'm closer to the values that matter to me, and were important when I was younger and growing up, and have always been important values to me, but got lost in this vicious downward spiral. But more so, I am more connected with them now because I understand them, and I understand how my mind works better, so I can actually change it… I'm making decisions more based on those values and beliefs rather than how I am feeling moment to moment.* (p.6:l6)

Components of the step-wise process of intentional personality change likely contributed to promoting values consistent change, and in turn protected clients against losing valued aspects of their identity. First, completion of a values inventory, and evaluating contemplated personality changes against these values, ensured that changes were values consistent. Second, the choice of a limited number of facets to target for change, (i.e. an average of three out of a total of 30) suggested that the aim of the coaching was to fine tune, rather than radically change personality. Third, the participant driven nature of change goals meant that interventions were only directed to making changes that the client wanted. Furthermore, once a facet was shortlisted for change, the following factors were assessed and discussed; readiness to change, internal and external motivation to change, importance of change, and confidence in ability to change. If, at the end of this process, the client realised he or she did not wish to change a shortlisted facet, it was not targeted for change. Hence, the personality change process incorporated a number of ways of ensuring that the client's identity and values were not negatively affected.

Overall, transcripts indicated the personality change coaching had helped participants be who they wanted to be. In many cases this involved reducing emotionality facets. Of the 164 facets chosen by clients to change, emotionality facets accounted for 79. Hence, in nearly half the cases, 'being who they wanted to be' focused on being less emotionally reactive. This point is illustrated in an extract from a client who had struggled with depression for much of her life.

> *Yeah, just a feeling of empowerment to be who I want to be rather than who the depression was making me. And that's all still a work in progress, but I can see the potential, whereas before the future looked very bleak.* (p5.l19)

In many cases participants and coaches facilitated personality change through mastering better ways to cope with life's challenges. The following interview extract (from a client living with chronic illness) illustrates this.

> *Um, my experience of personality coaching is that it's been useful to have tools to put into my everyday life, and particularly to help with my illness, and to help deal with functioning as best as I can.* (p.12:l4)

These coping strategies translated into reduced emotionality, and enhanced resilience, as illustrated by a quote from a client who targeted and reduced anxiety, depression and impulsiveness during the 10 sessions of coaching.

> *It's just made me feel much more relaxed which has been noticeable. I've been able to notice it in how I think about things and respond to things, especially when things don't go right. The holiday that we had recently had some ups and downs in it, right, and I just sailed through it.* (p.3:l19)

These findings suggest that personality change coaching can have a positive impact on emotionality and coping skills. The impact of personality change coaching on individuals with high scores on the domain emotionality is also currently being investigated qualitatively by researchers (including the first author). Consistent with the current study, preliminary findings from this quantitative analysis suggest that personality change coaching was successful in reducing high emotionality, consistent with the goals of the clients.

These results suggest that personality change coaching can be effectively utilised with individuals who have high levels of emotionality in certain circumstances (e.g. when the coach is trained to work with both psychopathology and personality coaching, and is receiving regular supervision by a clinical psychologist). The results also suggest that the boundaries between coaching and therapy/counselling can be complex, and that personality change could arguably fit within either a coaching or therapy/counselling context. For example, if the client wished to reduce anxiety (the most commonly targeted facet), the interventions employed are likely to be more akin to counselling/therapy, whereas if the client wished to increase self-discipline (the second most commonly targeted facet), then the approach taken may be more akin to coaching. (For a discussion of what facets client chose to change, see Allan, Leeson & Martin (2014).) As at the outset of the relationship a decision has not yet been made on which facets to target, it would appear appropriate that professionals undertaking personality coaching should have training in both coaching and therapy.

The current study's findings tentatively suggest that personality change coaching may be effective with clients that are commonly excluded from coaching (i.e. due to high levels of emotionality, including anxiety, depression and anger). Further exploration of the implications of expanding the boundaries of coaching to include such clients (in terms of implications, risks and benefits) would usefully inform the literature. If personality change coaching is likely to engage clients that have high levels of emotionality (who would commonly be excluded from coaching), then a range of factors identified in Buckley (2010) need consideration (e.g. the training, competence and supervision of the coach).

Theme Three: Personality coaching facilitates tangible and practical life benefits

While changing scores on personality inventories may be a measurable and therefore relatively objective measure of personality change, an important question is; does this translate into meaningful life changes? The theme that emerged in this respect was that many participants cited tangible benefits that accrued from the coaching, as illustrated below.

> *You sort of learn this stuff about yourself, and you think, so what, how is this going to relate to everyday life. How's this going to change me? And then you can actually see this sort of change.* (p.9:l48)
>
> *There were areas of my life that I felt were holding me back or not working for me anymore, so for me to not only see positive change on the [NEO PI-R] scores, but also to have it reflected back to me in real life increases my motivation to keep it up.* (p1.l49)

The importance of coaching being relevant to practical and salient issues was discussed in Tooth, Higgs and Armstrong (2008). Hence the current study extends our awareness of the desirability and benefit of ensuring that coaching outcomes translate into practical benefits. The specific nature of the practical changes cited in the current study were wide ranging, but often related to two key concepts, (i.e. enhanced confidence and competence, and improved relating to others). For example, some participants noticed enhanced abilities and confidence at work or in study, as illustrated in the following extracts.

> *My confidence overall has increased which has allowed me to perform much better at work. I just feel sounder in my judgement.* (p.4.135)

> *The main areas we focused on were like self discipline and those sorts of areas, especially to do with uni work and I really found the advice that [the coach] gave me helpful. Personally I think I've improved a lot in the areas we were trying to improve, so it was a really great experience, you know.* (p.2.16)

The positive impact on enhanced self-awareness in turn positively impacted on how participants related to others. This included gaining a better understanding of others' feelings, being more connected with family, friends and work colleagues, and facilitating a calmer home environment. The following quotes illustrate these concepts.

> *I think the assessments scores over time became quite different. I think 90 per cent of the change was around change in my self-understanding. And 10 per cent might be actual change in behaviour. But the change in self-understanding is a change in personality, in the sense that it relates to one's own personality, it changes the way you think and feel, but also self-understanding as it relates to other people. It affected the way I relate to other people, and I could say yes, I now understand people's emotions better than I thought I could.* (p.7:115)

> *I'm more connected with my family and friends, and I'm engaging better with work.* (p.6:116)

> *It was about me, it wasn't about everybody else, and it was about, probably about making me a better mum, a better wife. I set the mood in my house so… and life can be very stressful with my hectic life. I've found that the tone in the house has come down just by my sitting there, thinking, removing myself from the situation, breathing it out and walking back in and going just… right, think about it logically, whereas before I have just snapped, yeah. So that's been the most beneficial thing, yep.* (p.27:145)

The findings of the current study reinforce and expand previous findings that coaching commonly fosters practical benefits in the career arena (DeVaux, 2010), self-confidence (DeVaux, 2010; De Haan, 2011), and interpersonal and communication skills (De Haan, 2010). Hence personality change coaching (as with other forms of coaching) appears to translate into meaningful benefits for the majority of clients.

Theme Four: Personality change coaching is enjoyable, positive and beneficial

A dominant theme in the interview transcripts was that intentional personality change coaching had been an enjoyable, positive and useful experience.

> *I've really enjoyed it. It's been fabulous and I'm sad it's come to an end. It's been fantastic and it's been very, very helpful. It's been great.* (p11:114)

> *I really can't convey enough how much I've looked forward to the sessions, yes.* (p.24:115)

> *It was an enjoyable experience… relaxing. It made me sit and think about what I wanted to do and how I wanted to do it… you know. I just enjoyed it. I thought it was very worthwhile.* (p.32:13)

Some participants expressed their gratitude for having found the advertisements for the personality change coaching.

> *I'm just so grateful that I got to be involved. Like… thank you Mum for finding this on the internet! It was really fantastic and I will definitely miss having my session every week.* (p.2:111)

> *Well I don't often read the Mercury (newspaper) but I'm glad I read it that week. Laughs. It was*

> *wonderful. An absolutely terrific opportunity.* (p.15:l81)

A small number of participants indicated that, while there were benefits, at times the process was frustrating or uncomfortable.

> *Well its gone through kind of waves I think. Like the first couple of weeks it started off exciting, and thinking this is great… And a couple of times I have though why am I doing this? It's not happening, we're going nowhere, this is a waste of time. And then towards the end it became really meaningful and some stuff come out that I hadn't expected that was really quite eye opening, and has given me some real structure for the future, yeah… No it didn't feel comfortable, but I felt like it was a secure place to do it – but it certainly didn't feel comfortable. Yeah, yeah. But it was really, really useful, I would say.* (p.18:l1)

Nevertheless, the overall sentiment of the participants was that the process had been enjoyable, positive and beneficial, and in some cases life changing, as illustrated below:

> *I just feel so grateful to have been able to be a part of this. Um, it been very useful, it's been life changing.* (p.4:l67

The current study's theme of personality change coaching being enjoyable, positive and useful is consistent with previous findings based on coaching in general. DeVaux (2010) found that the majority of the 155,000 coaching clients surveyed reported that coaching had facilitated positive changes, they were pleased with the overall coaching experience, and they would be happy to engage in coaching again.

Conclusions and implications

Figure 2 summarises the conclusions of the current study by illustrating themes found, and sequential relationships between themes.

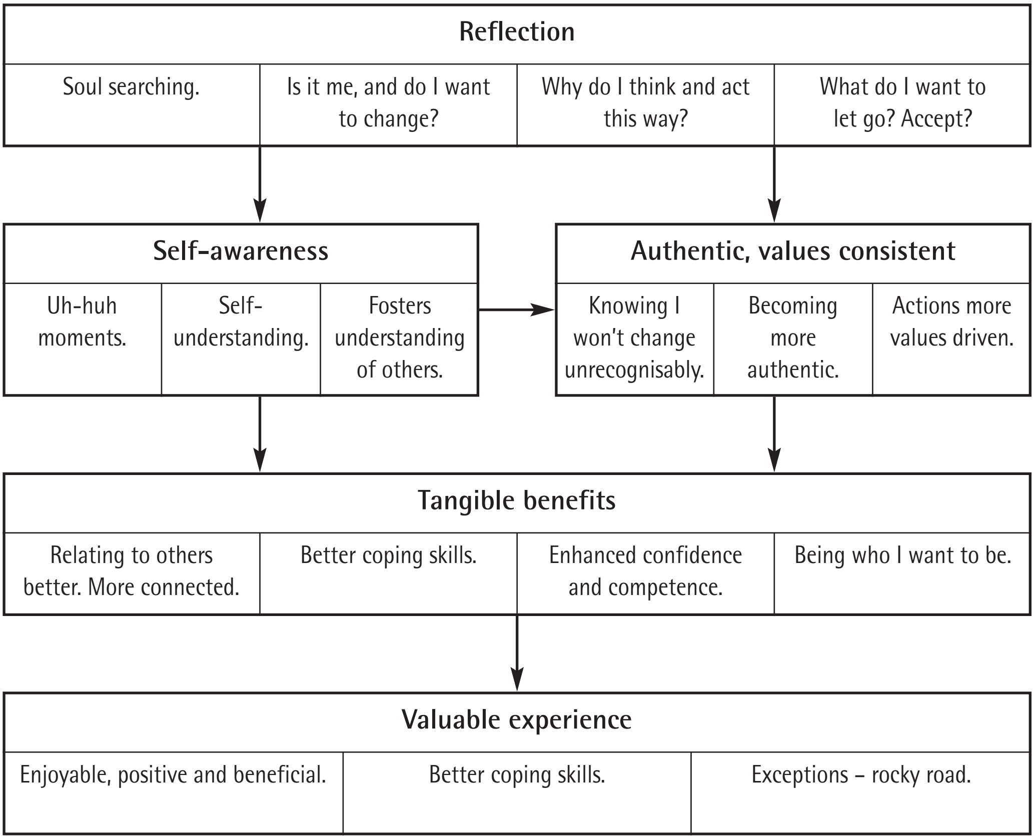
In the results and discussion section of the present study, reflection and self-awareness are combined under one theme, as participant quotes and related literature often blend these two concepts, making it difficult to discuss them separately from a results point of view. However, they have been separated out in Figure 2 in order to also illustrate the sequential nature of their relationship (i.e. the sequential flow from reflection to self-awareness). In essence the current study suggests that personality change coaching is a reflective process which leads to enhanced self-awareness and a more authentic, values consistent way of living. This in turn leads to practical benefits. Hence the process is viewed as beneficial by the client.

The findings of the current study have implications for both practice and research. From a coaching practice perspective, it suggests that clients who wish to change aspects of their personality may benefit from a structured coaching programme designed to achieve this. This offers the potential to extend coaching into a relatively new arena. From a research point of view, it fills a gap in the coaching, intentional change and personality literature by providing a clients' perspective of the personality change coaching process.

Limitations and future directions

The current study has a number of limitations. First, the group of participants that engaged in the personality change programme were self-selected. Analysis of their personality profiles found they were high on domain openness (Allan, Leeson & Martin, 2014), suggesting they may be more open to, and, therefore, more positive about change processes, compared to the general population. Some of the interviews were conducted by the first author. It would have been preferable for individual/s independent of the research project to conduct all interviews, in order to reduce possible researcher bias. Furthermore, the generation of codes and themes via negotiated consensually agreement could potentially lead to stronger views in the research team dominating, and could be viewed as less rigorous than some other approaches (e.g. those incorporating structured inter-rater reliability processes). Hence the current study's findings should be viewed as preliminary.

Figure 2: Process of clients' experiences of personality change coaching.


Reflection
Soul searching.
Is it me, and do I want to change?
Why do I think and act this way?
What do I want to let go? Accept?
Self-awareness
Uh-huh moments.
Self-understanding.
Fosters understanding of others.
Authentic, values consistent
Knowing I won't change unrecognisably.
Becoming more authentic.
Actions more values driven.
Tangible benefits
Relating to others better. More connected.
Better coping skills.
Enhanced confidence and competence.
Being who I want to be.
Valuable experience
Enjoyable, positive and beneficial.
Better coping skills.
Exceptions – rocky road.

The study suggests a number of areas worthy of further investigation. Given the coaching/counselling/therapy boundary queries raised, it would be useful to further explore what professionals, under what conditions (e.g. professional affiliations, supervision) should conduct personality change coaching. It would also be useful to better understand clients attitudes toward naming of the process (e.g. coaching, counselling or therapy), and engagement implications. For example, it would be useful to explore which term best describes the process from the perspective of clients and coaches experienced in the personality change intervention, and how naming of the process would likely influence client engagement, (e.g. whether participants who choose to enrol in the personality change coaching intervention would have enrolled if the intervention had been called counselling or therapy). Moreover, it would be useful to know if personality change coaching is more or less effective with individuals with higher levels of emotionality (who are commonly excluded from coaching).

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Report

Special Group in Coaching Psychology News

Dasha Grajfoner

AS I AM TAKING ON the role of Chair of the Special Group in Coaching Psychology I would like to say hello and a warm welcome from the Committee and myself.

To begin with I must mention our 4th International Congress in December. What a superb and a diverse event! A big thank you to everyone who helped shape it and to all participants who attended and made it possible.

The number of streams and the variety of speakers were just fantastic. We had presenters and attendees from 25 different countries and a range of backgrounds. The Congress really celebrated diversity and inclusivity of our profession and people who work in it.

The event was also a good indicator of how we aim to take the SGCP forward. The Special Group of Coaching Psychology is – now more than ever – open, inclusive, collaborative and welcoming.

As we are looking forward – inclusivity is at the centre of my message.

- First of all – inclusivity within the SGCP. We are a Special Group for a reason. We are incredibly lucky to have such a diverse membership. The wealth of knowledge and experience is immense and we must make the most of it. I would like to take this opportunity to invite our members to come forward and to contribute to the work of the Committee. Please let us know how you would like your Special Group to be shaped and what you expect from it. We will soon send out a short survey asking you about different aspects of the SGCP – please take time to tell us how you feel and what you think.

- Secondly – inclusivity within the British Psychological Society. The Society is making a major move towards collaboration between the member networks. And we are at the forefront of it. The International Congress was a good example of demonstrating our links between coaching and mental health, occupational, sports, clinical and neuropsychology. Our group is still young, but one of our aims is to explore and set training routes that respect diversity of backgrounds and welcome people who have achieved their accreditations via other divisions or other professional bodies.
- Last but not least – inclusivity outside the Society and outside psychology. The Congress was celebrating collaborations with groups and professions outside psychology – sport, law and politics to name a few. I strongly believe that what matters is how we can be useful in real life situations. I also believe that our identity

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will strengthen by being open and inclusive rather than closed and exclusive. The second aim is, therefore, to establish links and collaborations with other professional bodies that are relevant for coaching but do not necessarily fall under psychology.

In the spirit of collaborations, I am very pleased to say that we organised an inaugural meeting of the International Coaching Psychology Research Network, which took place at the Congress. This will shortly be followed up with a research network workshop and collaborative research projects, hopefully resulting in good quality coaching psychology data and evidence. If you are interested in research collaborations, please get in touch.

While what lies ahead of us is ambitious, we must not forget that coaching psychology is about realising one's true potential – including our potential and the potential of the SGCP.

Finally, I would like to invite you to our SGCP Annual Conference on the 10–11 December 2015 in London. Please watch this space for more information and looking forward to seeing you all then.

Dr Dasha Grajfoner
Email: sgcpchair@bps.org.uk

Report

Interest Group in Coaching Psychology News

Nic Eddy

THIS REPORT offers a timely opportunity to review the success of the 4th International Congress on Coaching Psychology (ICCP) in Melbourne, 13–15 November: an event that was at the forefront of the work of the National Committee throughout 2014.

And by 'review', I mean a step beyond post-event immediate reactions and feedback such as,

- did all the presenters turn up?
- did the vast majority of attendees' verbal and written feedback report satisfaction (or stronger) with the relevance of and standard of presentations offered?, and
- did we achieve the positive collegiate atmosphere we sought throughout the three days? *(I'm happy to report yes.)*

Rather, I wish to explore a little how the 4th ICCP contributed towards more strategic goals that emerged from our National Committee's re-consideration of our approach to the positioning of coaching psychology in the marketplace as well as our continuing efforts to influence the standards of coaching practice generally (see my March 2014 report, *ICPR, 9*(1), 109–110).

This re-consideration led us to conclude the necessity for a strategic marketing shift in emphasis,

- **away** from continuing what has often been a difficult task of directly promoting coaching psychologists or coaching psychology *per se*. This has frequently resulted in a conversation that has relatively little meaning, relevance or interest for the majority of our marketplace as well as having been construed by many in the coaching industry as elitist. The result? Lost opportunities to influence.

- **to** a focus on the promotion of the essential contribution of psychology to best practice coaching – with the emphasis on the practice of psycholog*y* rather than psycholog*ists*.

Therefore, we are endeavouring to develop an increasingly inclusive approach to work with and influence,

- all coaches who aspire to best practice coaching on behalf of their clients, and who understand the importance of high quality, continuing professional development in creating this, as well as
- HR professionals and executives responsible for purchasing and evaluating coaching programmes in both the private and public sectors: those seeking to identify factors that drive coaching programme effectiveness and hence how they assess coaching providers.

Not surprisingly, this thinking is reflected in our measures of success in terms of how the 4th ICCP contributed to more strategic goals such as:

- contributing to coaching best practice – through offering insight into and access

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to best practice coaching psychology research and practice through the provision of high quality, professional development;
- promoting a better insight into the compounding benefits of psychology across the coaching process (see March report, op. cit.);
- realising a wider engagement with the broader coaching community (rather than just psychologists who coach); and
- broadening the programme content to consider the potential contribution of coaching in different and increasingly complex organisational contexts.

Under the Congress theme, *'Coaching excellence in practice'*, we added two personal measures of success for attendees:
- usefulness – the extent to which attendees report finishing with 'takeaway' practical techniques and knowledge that have ready application in the workplace; and
- networking – the opportunity to mix with like-minded colleagues.

The Congress programme of keynotes, workshops and panels assisted us in exploring the contribution of coaching psychology in the areas of: Leadership; Performance; Well-being; What constitutes coaching excellence in practice?; and Determining client needs and evaluating outcome – from the client's perspective.

The result?

By all measures above, we met and exceeded our expectations leaving the Coaching Psychology Interest Group with a soundly based momentum to engage with 2015.

For the 4th ICCP congress programme information, go to:
www.coachingcongress.org.au

Congress presentations can be accessed at:
https://groups.psychology.org.au/GroupContent.aspx?ID=6270

Thanks

The success of the Congress capped off a busy 2014 for the Coaching Psychology Interest Group. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those on the National and State Committees for their contribution throughout the year.

I would also like to record my personal thanks in particular to the National Treasurer and then Victorian State Convener, Vicki Crabb, as well as David Heap: their efforts in organising the Congress were crucial to its success.

Cheers.

Nic Eddy
National Convener
Interest Group on Coaching Psychology
Australian Psychological Society
Email: niced@bigpond.net.au

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Stephen Palmer (UK): s.palmer-1@city.ac.uk
Sandy Gordon (Australia): sandy.gordon@uwa.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.
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- Overall, the presentation of papers should conform to the British Psychological Society's Style Guide (available at www.bps.org.uk/publications/publications_home.cfm in PDF format). Non-discriminatory language should be used throughout. Spelling should be Anglicised when appropriate. Text should be concise and written for an international readership of applied psychologists. Sensationalist and unsubstantiated views are discouraged. Abbreviations, acronyms and unfamiliar specialist terms should be explained in the text on first use.
- Particular care should be taken to ensure that references are accurate and complete. Give all journal titles in full. Referencing should follow BPS formats. For example:
  Billington, T. (2000). *Separating, losing and excluding children: Narratives of difference*. London: Routledge/Falmer.
  Elliott, J.G. (2000). Dynamic assessment in educational contexts: Purpose and promise. In C. Lidz & J.G. Elliott (Eds.), *Dynamic assessment: Prevailing models and applications* (pp.713–740). New York: J.A.I. Press.
  Palmer, S. & Whybrow, A. (2006). The coaching psychology movement and its development within the British Psychological Society. *International Coaching Psychology Review 1*(1), 5–11.
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- In normal circumstances, effect size should be incorporated.
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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.

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- Full article text (double-spaced with numbered pages and anonymised).
- References (see above). Authors are responsible for bibliographic accuracy and must check every reference in the manuscript and proofread again in the page proofs.
- Tables, figures, captions placed at the end of the article or attached as separate files.

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