The Australian Psychological Society Ltd

Interest Group in Coaching Psychology

The British Psychological Society

Special Group in Coaching Psychology

International Coaching Psychology Review

Volume 11 No. 2 September 2016

ISSN: 1750-2764

International Coaching Psychology Review

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

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

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Continued on inside back cover.

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Editorial

Roger Hamill & Sandy Gordon

This issue of the *International Coaching Psychology Review (ICPR)* begins with an article by Tony Fusco, Siobhain O'Riordan and Stephen Palmer in which they report on a series of three-month long Authentic Leadership group-coaching interventions run over a period of two years. Building on their previous *ICPR* paper on this topic (Vol 10, No 2), the authors adopt a repeated measures design and find significant pre and post group differences on two validated authentic leadership measures, the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) and the Authentic Leadership Inventory (ALI). They conclude that such a short term group intervention is effective in promoting authentic leadership development.

In our second article, Angela Mouton tackles a broad sweep of past, present and future practice and theory in performance coaching. She begins by exploring some popular 'lay-method' approaches adopted by coaches in sport, music and business over previous years, before discussing key scientific theory, principles and methods that inform performance coaching today. Finally she considers the potential contribution that positive psychology can make going forward with regards to developing new theories and practice in performance coaching across various domains.

In the next article Lee Hulbert-Williams and his colleagues briefly review Cognitive Behavioural Science (CBS), its evidence base and link with Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) interventions. They also provide a case for the suitability of CBS as a coaching framework and present a case study that illustrates the guiding principles of Cognitive Behavioural Coaching (CBC).

In article four, Phillip de Prez adopts an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach to explore participants' lived experience of challenge in team-based organisational settings. He identifies four super-ordinate themes relating to core components of the participants' experience of challenge (i.e., Temporal, Emotive, Achievable and Motivation). From these he develops a four-factor TEAM model which he concludes can be a useful framework for coaching psychologists working with clients in a context of challenge.

Bruce Grimley provides the final substantive article of the current issue with his description of his action research journey exploring definitions and perceptions of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) within coaching psychology. Using a grounded theory approach he analyses the textual data emerging from a discussion amongst nineteen NLP professionals regarding the authenticity of NLP, and suggests a number of implications for the use of this approach within coaching psychology.

We finish with Neil Atkinson's review of *The Coaching Relationship Practice* by Geoff Pelham, and reports from the BPS SGCP Chair and the APS IGCP Convenor.

As this is my (RH) last issue as UK Co-ordinating editor, I wanted to end by thanking the various authors and peer reviewers who have contributed so much to the *ICPR* over this past year. The publication stands or falls on their efforts and I would encourage all readers to consider submitting relevant articles for future consideration as a way to disseminate best practice and promote the development of Coaching Psychology as a theory-rich, evidence-based discipline. I am handing over the UK reins to my colleague and friend Dasha Grajfoner, the immediate past-Chair of the SGCP. I wish her all the very best in the Co-ordinating edi-

tor role safe in the knowledge that her vast expertise in coaching psychology research and practice makes her the ideal person for the job. Finally, I wish to record my deep gratitude for all the helpful support and wise counsel provided by our editorial assistant, Tracy White, who works away quietly and efficiently in the background to ensure that the often complex review and publication process runs smoothly from issue to issue. She is without doubt the unsung hero of the whole *ICPR* enterprise.

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Assessing the efficacy of Authentic Leadership group-coaching

Tony Fusco, Siobhain O'Riordan & Stephen Palmer

Introduction: *National survey data from the US suggests that over the last decade there has been a growing crisis in confidence in business and political leadership, which is possibly one reason for the increased scientific research into the emerging field of Authentic Leadership – AL. Much evidence is starting to accumulate into both a conceptualisation of AL and its potential organisational benefits. However, what seems slow to follow is a scientific approach to Authentic Leadership Development – ALD. This study reports on the efficacy of one particular form of ALD, namely authentic leadership group-coaching.*

Design: *Five 3-month long group-coaching interventions were run over a period of two years and a repeated measures design was employed to evaluate whether these AL coaching groups had an impact on the scores of two scientifically validated AL measures; the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) and the Authentic Leadership Inventory (ALI).*

Results: *Analysis of the ALQ and ALI results found significant differences in the scores of both of these instruments. ALQ: $t(24)=2.83$, $p<.009$ & ALI: $t(24)=3.84$, $p<.001$.*

Conclusion: *It was therefore concluded that the relatively short-term Authentic Leadership coaching group is an effective form of Authentic Leadership Development.*

Keywords: *Authentic leadership/group coaching/coaching psychology/executive coaching/leadership Development.*

Introduction

IN 2007 HARVARD UNIVERSITY conducted a national study to assess the confidence Americans had in their leaders. 77 per cent of participants *agreed/strongly agreed* that there was a crisis of confidence in leadership in the US, (Rosenthal, Pittinsky, Purvin & Montoya, 2007). Specifically, respondents indicated they had either 'moderate' or 'no' trust in their business and political leaders. Such concern about business leadership in the US even prompted a group of Harvard MBA staff and students to establish an oath to the ethical leadership of the organisations that they go on to lead. Other global business school initiatives in responsible leadership have also emerged over the last decade, for example; PRIME – Principles for Responsible Management Education (www.unprme.org) and GRLI – the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative (www.grli.org). This could be in response to Ghosal's criticism that business schools propagate amoral business models which '*… free their students from any sense of moral responsibility'* (Ghosal, 2005 p.76). Outside of the business school environment a US poll in 2004 showed only a third of the working population thought their leaders were authentic and less than a quarter of respondents thought their leaders would be capable of self-sacrifice for the good of their organisation. Also, in 2009 the US National Leadership Index showed that nearly two thirds of respondents said they didn't trust what business leaders said and over 80 per cent believed that these leaders only work to benefit themselves and close associates rather than society in general (Rosenthal et al, 2007). This climate of mistrust in leadership has provided the backdrop and impetus for researchers (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans & May, 2004) to begin the path of scientific inquiry into a more transparent and ethical approach to leadership known as Authentic Leadership (AL) and Authentic Leadership Development (ALD).

Authentic leadership

In terms of what actually constitutes authentic leadership, it is the work of Avolio and associates that has produced the conceptualisation that dominates the field thus far, (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2005; Walumbwa, Wang, Wamg, Schaubroeck, & Avolio, 2010). Their conceptualisation of authentic leadership is a higher-order construct compromising four individual but connected components; self-awareness (a deep understanding of oneself); internalised moral perspective (strong internal standards and values); relational transparency (presentation of a genuine self); and balanced processing (objective data analysis & decision making). In summary, *'Authentic Leaders are guided by sound moral convictions and act in concordance with their deeply held values. They are keenly aware of their strengths and weaknesses and strive to understand how their leadership impacts others',* (Peus, Wesche, Streicher, Braun, & Frey, 2012, p.332). This multi-component conceptualisation of AL has been further refined and operationalised into the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) used in this research and described in more detail below, (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008).

Benefits of authentic leadership

Although still in relative infancy there is a growing body of evidence illustrating the potential value of authentic leadership to groups and organisations in terms of employee engagement, satisfaction, performance and wellbeing. For example, Clapp-Smith, Vogelgesang and Avey (2009), found authentic leadership positively affects group performance as measured by sales growth. Peus and associates (2012), Rego, Vitoria, Marques and Cunha (2012a & 2012b), Leroy, Palanski and Simons (2012), Peterson, Walumbwa, Avolio and Hannah (2012) and Walumbwa, Luthans, Avey and Okey (2011), all found that authentic leadership increases role performance and team effectiveness. Hmieleski, Cole and Bacon (2012) even found this indirectly extended to overall organisation performance. In addition, there is also research supporting the link between authentic leadership and work engagement and satisfaction, (Hassen & Ahmed, 2011; Jensen & Luthans, 2006; Walumbwa et al, 2011 and Wong & Cummins, 2009). It would seem then that emerging evidence is starting to demonstrate a connection between authentic leadership and a broad range of organisational benefits and positive *organisational citizenship behaviours,* (Walumbwa et al, 2010).

Authentic leadership development

By contrast, the actual *development* of authentic leadership is a pursuit that has been led less by leadership scientists and more by leadership practitioners, (George & Simms 2007 and Goffee & Jones 2005). While this focus by the business community is welcomed, it does mean there is a danger of authentic leadership development taking the same unscientific route that leadership development has taken generally and which has led the likes of Avolio to comment *'...what I believe is the next challenging frontier for both the science and practise of leadership is defining what constitutes genuine leadership development',* (Avolio 2010, p.721). After undertaking a three year long assessment of the entire history of academic leadership development research, Avolio (2010) concluded *'….the science of leadership development is at best in its infancy'* (p.737) and that *'…one of the least researched areas in the science of leadership is in fact the science of leadership development'* (p.722). This appears just the case in the field of authentic leadership. While the scientific development of authentic leadership is becoming more established and increasing evidence for its positive effects is also emerging through the leadership literature, what is missing is a scientific examination of how authentic leadership is actually developed. Due to the demands of globalisation, Avolio believes we are on the precipice of *a war*

for leadership talent and urges a closer collaboration between leadership scientists and practitioners to address such issues. Commenting on authentic leadership specifically, Gardner, Cogliser, Davis and Dickens (2011) call for '*…greater attention to the design and implementation of intervention strategies intended to foster the development of authentic leaders'* or '*…we run the risk of underutilizing the considerable promise of the AL construct and the leverage it provides for producing veritable and sustained improvements in individual, group and organizational performance*' (p.23). The aim of this research was to address this exact issue by designing and evaluating a leadership intervention that was aimed specifically at authentic leadership development.

Authentic leadership group coaching

Various researchers and writers have commented that authentic leadership is not something that can be developed in a training room (Avolio, 2005; Shamir & Eilam, 2005 and Sparrowe, 2005), but is more something that occurs as a result of life experience. So the first challenge of this research was to identify an intervention that would help individuals *learn* about themselves as leaders, more than simply being *taught* directly about leadership. Leadership is ultimately a social phenomena, (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995 and Uhl-Bien, 2006) and so it was hypothesised that it would need to be some form of social experience that would help achieve the deep self-learning required for leaders to lead in a way that is authentically *conscious and congruent*, (Fusco, O'Riordan & Palmer, 2015). One such vehicle considered as having potential for achieving such insight and self-understanding through a social process, was the format of group-coaching.

Team coaching v group coaching

Although group interventions have been used extensively in the field of organisational development, such as team facilitation, (Fischer, 1993), process consultation, (Schein & Bennis, 1965) and action learning (Revans, 1980), there is very little in the organisational leadership literature specifically about group coaching, (Brown, 2010). Far more has been written about specific applications of team coaching, for example; executive team development, (Diedrich, 2001), strategy-driven team interventions, (Kralj, 2001), government team leadership, (Carr & Peters, 2013), team decision-making, (Ben-Hur et al, 2012), team-innovation, (Rousseau, Aube & Tremblay, 2013), product-development teams, (Reich, Ullmann, Van der Loos & Leifer, 2009) and research & development teams, (Liu, Pirola-Merlo, Yang & Haung, 2009). There can sometimes be confusion over the difference between group and team coaching but Clutterbuck (2013, p.19) offers a variety of team-coaching definitions which give a sense of what the team coaching studies above may entail, for example: *A direct intervention with a team intended to help members make coordinated and task-appropriate use of their collective resources in accomplishing the team's work,* (Hackman & Wageman, 2005); *Facilitating problem solving and conflict management, monitoring team performance and coordinating between the team and a more senior management sponsor*, (Skiffington & Zeus, 2000); *A process, by which a team coach works with a whole team…in order to help them improve their collective performance… and develop their collective leadership*, (Hawkins, 2011). Finally, team-coaching as defined by Thornton (2010) is '*Coaching a team to achieve a common goal, paying attention to both individual performance and to group collaboration and performance.'*

This clearly illustrates that the main emphasis in team-coaching is quite rightly focused on team performance and task achievement. However, the group coaching discussed here does not have a mutual group outcome to focus on. It is usually conducted within an environment in which there is no common leadership and no common organisational context. This group format could be thought of as more akin to group therapy in that each individual is there primarily for

themselves. The individuals work as a group, serving both themselves and each other in the process, however they are not focused on a group 'deliverable' such as a team goal. While referring to the group coaching work of Ward (2008), that involves different leaders from different organisations, Brown & Grant (2010) offer a group coaching definition that encapsulates this, '*…a single group setting…which is primarily focussed on the development of the individual within the group, while leveraging input from a range of varying peer perspectives and experiences*', (p.32).

Although it may have similarities to both group-therapy and team-coaching, group-coaching occupies a unique place between the two. For example, it has more structure than group-therapy, but it doesn't have a tangible task related output, as usually found in team-coaching. In essence it is a group of individuals who have convened for the purpose of exploring a particular and personally-relevant subject, in this case authentic leadership development. As such, this type of coaching can be considered more developmental coaching than goal focused coaching, as discussed in Ives, (2008). The latter might be more appropriate for team-coaching while the former is more about creating a psychological space for reflective development and learning, (West & Milan, 2001). To help achieve this reflective learning various psychotherapeutic frameworks are sometimes used that might see goals emerge rather than emphasising predetermined goals as is often the case in team coaching. For example, Kets de Vries (2005) describes a psychodynamic approach to group-coaching which involves completing various psychometric and 360 instruments and discussing the results within the group. He suggests the group-coaching approach has considerable power because individuals internalise the group and its related emotions. He claims these group emotions, such as their approval of progress, their hope and optimism for each other's future and their support and acceptance can all be great facilitators of change. He says, this experience can be a great facilitator of self-insight and understanding and provides powerful learning for all group members.

In addition to a psychodynamic approach, Ward (2008) also talks about the use of other short term psychotherapy interventions in group-coaching such as solution focused therapy, (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007) and motivational interviewing, (Miller & Rolnick, 2001; Prochaska & DiClemente, 1994). These are based upon well-researched and developed cognitive behavioural models used within individual coaching and counselling and are now beginning to be applied to group work in the context of life-coaching, (Green, Oades & Grant, 2006) and wellbeing, (Hultgren, Palmer & O'Riodan, 2013).

So it would appear there is emerging empirical evidence to suggest group-coaching *works* for a variety of applications and our hypothesis for this research was that group coaching would also *work* as an effective form of authentic leadership development.

Method

Authentic leadership coaching-groups

The authentic leadership coaching groups studied in this research were formed of a small number of senior leaders from different organisations and industries. They met for one day a month over three months to undertake relevant discussion exercises facilitated by the group coach. The discussions over the three days were entitled; Past, Present, Future and each individual shared their reflections on topics relevant to each of these domains, such as; how has your life experience informed your leadership; what is the purpose of your leadership, where is your growth as a leader and what legacy do you want to create. Each individual was then in turn coached by the entire group under close supervision of the group coaching psychologist. It is worth highlighting here one quite profound difference between this type of group coaching and other group development exercises. There was no common

group goal to be attained in these groups and therefore the group did not have to work together in the traditional sense of group-working, i.e. problem solving, decision-making or action planning. Also, despite the considerable life and leadership experience represented in each group, participants were asked to refrain from giving each other direct advice or guidance. They were invited to use their experience to help them ask intelligent and pertinent questions and offer considered and thoughtful observations and feedback. It is in this fundamental respect that the leadership coaching groups discussed here differ from a leadership training class, a leadership workshop group or an action learning set.

Participants and design

This research used a within-participants repeated measures design, with five groups of 5 or 6 participants run over a two year period, totalling 25 participants. The group sessions were run one day a month over three months and all participants were senior leaders in their organisations, representing roles such as; CEO, MD, Director, Assistant Director, Heads of Profession and Senior Managers. Sectors represented included; Energy, Finance, IT, Manufacturing, Health Care and Social Care. Purposive sampling (Tongco, 2007) was used in a bid to populate each group with participants who considered themselves both willing and able to work within the intense small group format. Kets de Vries (2008) has discussed the importance of this approach to sampling in group coaching and believes consent is of paramount importance on ethical grounds in group coaching '*…particularly where discourses of a personal nature may occur*', (Brown & Grant, 2010 p.34). In authentic leadership group coaching, where issues relating to values, principles, life histories and experiences, are key, such personal discourses are core to the process. Therefore potential participants were interviewed by the researcher prior to joining a group, where the process was detailed to them and they were able to agree to participate or not. The result of this 'screening process' was that the groups were populated by willing participants who understood the nature of the work to be done within the process. This enabled the groups to effectively get underway in the shortest of time, which was critical in this time constrained intervention. It was also for this reason that the study was a within participants design and not a randomised control group design. Such is the nature of group work it is not an effective medium for everyone. This is well-known in therapy where it is accepted that some individuals are more suited to individual therapy than group therapy, (Yalom, 1995). Therefore, this research was not concerned whether it is form of development applicable across the board, but whether it is an effective form of intervention for those chosen to participate. Although N=30 is usually considered an appropriate sample size for t-tests, with this less critical issue of generalisability, the sample size of N=25 was considered sufficient. In addition, the assumption of normally distributed difference scores was examined and the assumption was considered satisfied as the skew and kurtosis levels were estimated at below the maximum allowable value of skew <2.0 and kurtosis <9.0, (Posten, Misra, Sahai, Gore & Garrett, 1987). N=25. Male=15 & Female=10, age range 30 to 56, average age 46.

Measures

Measures used to ascertain if there was an increase in authentic leadership included both of the scientifically validated AL measures available; the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire, (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardener, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008) and the Authentic Leadership Inventory, (Neider & Schriesheim, 2011) detailed below.

ALQ – Authentic Leadership Questionnaire confirmatory factor analysis supports the higher order, multidimensional model of the authentic leadership construct that

the instrument is based on, comprising; self-awareness, relational transparency, internalised moral perspective and balanced processing. Structural equation modelling has demonstrated the predictive validity of the ALQ measure for important work related attitudes and behaviours, beyond what ethical leadership (Brown, 2005) and transformational leadership (Avolio, 1999) has offered. The 16 item, 5 point scale has internal consistency reliability for each of its scales as follows: self-awareness .73, relational transparency .77, internalised moral perspective .73, balanced processing .70.

The authentic leadership inventory is a new measure but based on the same theoretical framework and dimensions of the existing ALQ. The 14 item, 5 point scale has content validity, reliability, factor structure and convergent and discriminant validity and it has greater internal consistency reliabilities than the ALQ with the lowest coefficient alpha being .74 and the highest .85 and it is for this reason that it was included as an additional measure in this study.

Both assessment questionnaires (ALQ & ALI) were completed by all participants at the beginning of day 1 and at the end of day 3, three months later.

Results

Authentic leadership measures

To test the hypothesis that the pre-coaching and post-coaching authentic leadership scores would be different a paired-samples t-test was performed to compare the pre- & post-scores of the two authentic leadership instruments used; ALQ pre-coaching (M=48.20 and SD=5.82) and post-coaching (M=50.88 and SD=5.56); and ALI pre-coaching (M=52.76 and SD=4.93) and post-coaching (M=56.40 and SD=4.33).

Both sets of scores showed statistical significance at $p<.001$ therefore the hypothesis was accepted. In addition, the Cohen d effect size was calculated which showed a moderate effect for both. Authentic Leadership Questionnaire: $t(24)=2.83$, $p<.01$, $d=0.57$; Authentic Leadership Inventory: $t(24)=3.84$, $p<.01$, $d=0.77$.

Table 1: Pre- & Post-coaching ALQ & ALI mean and standard deviation scores

	Pre-coaching	Pre-coaching	Post-coaching	Post-coaching
Authentic Leadership Measure	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
ALQ total score	48.20	5.82	50.88	5.56
ALI total score	52.76	4.93	56.40	4.33

Table 2: ALQ & ALI – Paired samples T-Test

AL Measures	Mean	Standard deviation	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
ALQ	2.68	4.72	2.837	24	.009
ALI	3.64	4.73	3.845	24	.001

Authentic leadership constructs

The four constructs within the two Authentic Leadership instruments were also examined with one of the constructs showing significance at $p<.05$ and a further two constructs at $p<.01$.

Relational Transparency – pre-coaching (M=15.16 and SD=2.27) and post-coaching (M=16.20 and SD=2.52), $t(24)=2.61$, $p<.05$.

Moral Perspective – pre-coaching (M=12.84 and SD=2.11) and post-coaching (M=13.72 and SD=1.64), $t(24)=2.60$, $p<.01$.

Self-Awareness – pre-coaching (M=10.24 and SD=1.94) and post-coaching (M=11.48 and SD=1.71), $t(24)=3.78$, $p<.01$.

The results reported here support the hypothesis that leadership coaching-groups are an effective form of authentic leadership development. Of the two validated authentic leadership measures available, both have shown significant score increases at $p<.009$ and $p<.001$ respectively, along with a moderate effect size for the ALQ of .57 and the ALI of .77. In addition three of the four individual AL constructs also showed significance; self-Awareness $p<.002$, moral perspective $p<.008$ & relational transparency $p<.015$. The construct of balanced information processing showed significance of $p<.061$ in the ALI but only of $p<.892$ in the ALQ giving a combined total of $p<.141$. Based on these overall results we are able to accept the hypothesis and propose that group-coaching is an effective method of authentic leadership development.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to design and evaluate a leadership development intervention with the specific objective of developing authentic leadership as measured by the two existing validated AL measures, the ALQ and the ALI. The first challenge was to design a developmental intervention that would go sufficiently 'deep' as to address issues relating to individual authenticity, such as a person's values, meaning and purpose. Traditional training methods are generally considered ineffective for such a pursuit (Avolio, 2005; Sparrowe & Eilam, 2005 and Shamir, 2005) so the intervention had to take place outside of the traditional confines of the classroom. Another consideration was how to create a format that tapped into the social nature of leadership, (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005). With these two factors in mind and based on the established efficacy of group therapy (Rogers, 1951 and Yalom, 1995) and the emerging evidence for group coaching (Ket de Vries, 2005 and Ward, 2008), it was hypothesised that group coaching would provide an effective vehicle for authentic leadership development. The statistically significant increase in both the ALQ and the ALI scores appear to support this hypothesis. Although this group intervention is undoubtedly not the only effective form of ALD, we are proposing it is one of very few approaches to authentic leadership development that has been scientifically eval-

Table 3: Authentic leadership constructs – paired samples T-Test

AL constructs	Mean	Standard deviation	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Rel. transparency	1.04	1.99	2.61	24	.015
Moral perspective	0.88	1.69	1.58	24	.008
Self-awareness	1.24	1.64	3.78	24	.002

uated and reported. One exception to this however, is the work of Baron (2012) who evaluated the ALQ scores of participants on a large scale corporate leadership training program. This was a long-term intervention that attempted to replicate the complexity of organisational life and involved 3 cohorts working together for 45 days over a three year period. The focus of this program was on several leadership skills, including; influencing, developing others, achieving results, along with leader authenticity. The research did yield a significant increase in ALQ scores measured between years one, two and three of the program. While this is very encouraging research, the main difference between that program and the one reported here is the complexity of content and structure and the duration. Their program was a wide leadership development intervention that achieved increased ALQ scores over a significant time period. The AL coaching groups discussed here, similarly achieved significant ALQ (& ALI) scores but in just three months. This would suggest it is an effective method of ALD that can be applied to leadership groups within a relatively short time span.

The format of these groups are very different from typical leadership training groups and could be considered more akin to what Palus & Drath (1995) call a *development program*. Such development programs emphasise the questioning and challenging of leaders existing meaning-making systems and operate as *communities-of-practice* that act as a type of holding environment which facilitates authentic development and growth. They are distinct from leadership skills training groups and are designed to help participants collectively explore their own *operating principles*, experiencing their potential limitations and enabling them to start experimenting with increasingly authentic ways of relating to themselves and their leadership roles. The AL coaching groups discussed here act as just such communities-of-practice and it may well be that which enables them to work as such effective facilitators of authentic leadership development.

Limitations and future research

There are three potential limitations to the present study that should be considered for future research, concerning; sampling, measurement and duration. Firstly, the sampling for this research involved purposive sampling, which for the reasons already discussed, was considered highly appropriate. Although the gold-standard of quantitative research is the randomised control group design, the nature of the small group coaching process obliged the inclusion of participants who would work effectively, and quickly, within this format. The small group environment is not one that everyone works effectively within and the short-term nature of this intervention required groups to be populated such that they could operate constructively from the very first session. There are also ethical issues that need to be considered, particularly if there are contra-indications of this being a suitable medium for particular individuals, (Kets de Vries, 2008). This means that this form of ALD may not be effective or applicable for the general leadership population. This of course, will have implications for the generalisability of the findings reported here, and indeed the practical application of the group format. Secondly, both the ALQ and the ALI are designed so they can also be used as a 360 instrument. In this research, purely for access and logistical reasons, they were used only as a self-assessment tool. While this allowed evaluation of the changes individual leaders believed had occurred, what is also of crucial importance in authentic leadership is the assessment of those they lead. Therefore future research would be made more robust with the inclusion of peers and subordinates in the 360 assessment process. Finally, a longitudinal evaluation would help assess whether any of the reported changes are subject to atrophy, so an additional Time-3 assessment at 18 or 24 months may yield val-

uable additional data regarding this. While consideration of these factors may enhance future research, we still believe the results presented here offer a strong indication of the potential efficacy of authentic leadership group coaching and its ability to help participants develop as authentic leaders who *'…act in concordance with their deeply held values…are keenly aware of their strengths and weaknesses and strive to understand how their leadership impacts others',* (Peus et al 2012, p.332).

Conclusion

We suggest that the AL group coaching research presented here addresses the issue stated by Avolio (2005) that '*There are so many programs out there that profess to develop leadership and so few that have any evidence to support their claims*', (p.xiii). Also we believe it is a first step towards answering the call for *'…greater attention to the design and implementation of intervention strategies intended to foster the development of authentic leaders',* (Gardener et al, 2011). In so doing, it establishes a new, effective and evidenced-based method of authentic leadership development, representing a significant contribution to both coaching science and leadership coaching practice.

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Performance coaching in sport, music, and business: From Gallwey to Grant, and the promise of positive psychology

Angela R. Mouton

The purpose of this paper is to explore performance coaching in sport, music, and business. The paper begins by describing some of the popular, lay methods used by coaches in each field, many influenced by The Inner Game books of Timothy Gallwey. Next, the paper discusses the scientifically grounded theories, principles, and methods that underlie performance coaching today, primarily derived from sport psychology, music psychology, organisational psychology, and coaching psychology. Finally, the paper examines the contribution that positive psychology has and could make by providing new theories, constructs, perspectives, and methods to the art and science of performance coaching in sport, music, and business.

Keywords: *Coaching, coaching psychology, executive coaching, music psychology, organisational psychology, positive psychology, sport psychology.*

HOW CAN WE best coach athletes, performing artists, and executives to reach peak performance? In 1974 Timothy Gallwey published *The Inner Game of Tennis* (Gallwey, 1974). As a tennis coach, Gallwey incorporated Western (Humanist) psychology as well as mindfulness into his coaching. Gallwey proposed that people could improve their performance by attending to their psychology or 'inner game' (Gallwey, 1974, p.xix), and examined the role that coaches could play in facilitating this process. The book was a raging success, with more than a million copies now in print. Gallwey followed this seminal work with *The Inner Game of Golf* (Gallwey, 1981), *The Inner Game of Music* (Green & Gallwey, 1986), and *The Inner Game of Work* (Gallwey, 2000), among others, and continues to write, speak, and consult on *The Inner Game* principles to this day (www.theinnergame.com). More than four decades after the first *Inner Game* book was published, interest in the psychological underpinnings of performance, and the role of coaching in performance, has grown exponentially. There has been a proliferation of coaching services for sport, business, education, health, and life, with the coaching industry now estimated to be worth billions of dollars (Grant & Cavanagh, 2011). Some of these coaching services are grounded in science, while others are not (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007).

The aim of this paper is to explore the theories, principles, and practices that underpin performance coaching in sport, music, and business. The paper begins by describing some of the popular, lay methods used by coaches in each discipline, many of which have been influenced by *The Inner Game* principles. Next, this paper examines scientifically grounded coaching practices that draw on disciplines such as sport psychology, music psychology, organisational psychology, and coaching psychology. The paper concludes by exploring the contribution that positive psychology, the science of positive traits, states, and organisations (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), has made and could make to the art and science of performance coaching in sport, music, and business.

Definitions and history of coaching and coaching psychology

There are many different definitions of coaching (in the broad sense), including definitions that emphasise the unlocking of human potential and the improvement of performance (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007). Coaching may be instructional (e.g., teaching, training, or tutoring) or facilitative such that a coach seeks to harness the coachee's potential, helping them to learn through experience (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007). Coaching psychology, as distinguished from coaching more broadly, is grounded in scientifically valid theory, methodology, and empiricism (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007). This field draws on a wealth of psychological disciplines, including sport, organisational, clinical, cognitive, social, and educational psychology (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007; Palmer & Whybrow, 2007). The coach assists the coachee to identify the outcomes they desire, set specific goals, pinpoint their strengths, build motivation and self-efficacy, identify resources available to them, establish action plans, monitor and evaluate progress, and modify action plans accordingly (Grant & Cavanagh, 2011).

Some might suggest that Gallwey is the father of modern coaching, although others point to Sir John Whitmore and Dr Anthony Grant as the pioneers of modern coaching (see Scoular, 2011). However, interest in coaching and the psychology of coaching goes back considerably further than the last four decades. In 1925, Dr Colman Griffith established the Laboratory for Research in Athletics at the University of Illinois. Shortly afterwards he published *The Psychology of Coaching* (Griffith, 1926), quickly followed by *Psychology and Athletics* (Griffith, 1928; Palmer & Whybrow, 2007). Griffith based his approach to coaching on learning theory. It was his contention that a coach was 'more than an instructor. He is a teacher, in the ancient sense of the word…a character builder' (Griffith, 1926, p.2). Although Griffith published prolifically until the early 1930s, the laboratory was closed in 1932, and his ideas on the psychology of coaching waned until picked up thirty years later, when humanist psychology and the cognitive behavioral therapies began to emerge (Palmer, & Whybrow, 2007). Coaching and coaching psychology have developed and evolved considerably since then, not least due to the efforts of Dr Anthony Grant who has continued to develop the scientific legs of the field. Coaching psychology, as a defined and accepted field of psychology, is generally said to have started with the publication of Grant's Ph.D. thesis, and the establishment of the Coaching Psychology Unit at the University of Sydney in 2000 (Grant, 2007).

However, despite these important scientific advances, coaching is still frequently practiced without the underpinnings of psychological theory (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007). More than 20 years ago, Sir. John Whitmore argued:

> In too many cases [coaches] have not fully understood the performance-related psychological principles on which coaching is based. Without this understanding they may go through the motions of coaching, or use behaviors associated with coaching…but fail to achieve the intended results (Whitmore, 1992, p.2).

The same criticisms remain today. As Grant puts it, 'Eclectic pragmatic utilitarianism, the "use whatever works, and if it works, do more of it" philosophy, heavily influenced the early development of the contemporary commercial coaching industry' (Grant, 2007, p.24). Although Grant acknowledges that eclecticism provided coaching with diversity, he also critiques the anti-intellectualism of the field. Tensions between non-psychologist and psychologist coaches may be decreasing, and a thriving professional coaching industry may require both. However, there is arguably 'unequivocal consensus,' at least among veteran psychologists, that in order for coaching to thrive as a profession,

coaches (whether psychologists or not) must base their practices on coherent theory and empirical evidence (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007, p.239).

We turn now to some of the typical theories, principles, and practices that underpin performance coaching in sport, music, and business today, both popular, lay methods, and those grounded in behavioral science.

Performance coaching in sport

The Inner Game of Tennis (Gallwey, 1974) was one of the first popular books to discuss coaching the mental aspects of performance. Based on his observations as a tennis player and coach, Gallwey (1974) suggested:

> Every game is composed of two parts, an outer game and an inner game. The outer game is played against an external opponent to overcome external obstacles, and to reach an external goal… the inner game…is the game that takes place in the mind of the player, and it is played against such obstacles as lapses in concentration, nervousness, self-doubt and self-condemnation…it is played to overcome all habits of mind which inhibit excellence in performance (p.xix).

Gallwey noticed that typical instructional coaching was often ineffective in improving performance because players got in their own way, being distracted and discouraged by the inner critic that Gallwey termed 'Self 1.' Failure to deal with 'Self 1' meant that 'Self 2,' the player's body and subconscious mind, was not able to execute what it knew to do instinctively (Gallwey, 1974, p.10). Gallwey argued that willpower and positive thinking were not enough to manage Self 1, and that trying too hard to control it often led to worse (not better) results. Gallwey suggested that players who entered 'the zone' being fully absorbed in the game with total focus and awareness in the moment, would perform better than those distracted by Self 1 (Gallwey, 1974, p.14). Gallwey proposed that winning the inner game was about quieting Self 1 through focus and awareness, which would allow for a state of relaxed concentration in which Self 2 could operate at its optimum. He described the sequence of winning the inner game as non-judgemental observation, visualising the desired outcome, trusting the self, and non-judgemental observation of change and results.

Based on this theory, Gallwey suggested that the role of the coach was to facilitate the player's concentration, awareness, focus, and total absorption in the game. He suggested that coaches use a facilitative rather than an instructional approach, so as to avoid activating Self 1 (the inner critic) and to allow Self 2 (the instinctive doer) to express the player's 'embodied potential' (Gallwey, 1974, p.12). The player should be allowed to observe demonstration, and explore different ways of executing a task, learning through experience rather than trying to get it right. He advised players to develop their own model of performance, rather than try to conform to an external model. Gallwey followed up with additional *Inner Game* books on winning the inner game of skiing and of golf (Gallwey & Kriegel, 1977; Gallwey, 1981). A number of high profile, highly successful professional coaches are known to use *The Inner Game* principles in their coaching, including Steve Kerr and Pete Carroll (Ballard, 2016). Steve Kerr is currently head coach of the Golden State Warriors in the National Basketball Association league, and is a six time NBA champion, having won five championships as a player and one as coach of the Warriors in 2015. He was the NBA Coach of the Year in 2015–2016. Pete Carroll is currently head coach of the Seattle Seahawks in the National Football League and in 2014 his team won the NFL championship. In addition, as head coach of the University of Southern California football team, Carroll's team won two National Collegiate Athletic Association National Football Championships in 2003 and 2004. Both coaches have reported having had success applying *The Inner Game* principles in

their coaching (Ballard, 2016). Other popular lay books on coaching have been written by coaches in professional sports, such as Phil Jackson's *Sacred Hoops* (Jackson, 1995) and Pat Summit's *Reach for the Summit* (Summit & Jenkins, 1998).

In terms of the scientific literature, coaching psychology and sports psychology began formally in the 1920s with the publication of *The Psychology of Coaching* (Griffith, 1926) and *Psychology and Athletics* (Griffith, 1928), as mentioned. Today, sports psychologists use many of the same principles and techniques as their lay counterparts do, but the former's practices are necessarily grounded in science. Just as Gallwey did, sports psychologists tend to stress the importance of athletes being in a relaxed state of concentration such that the athlete is 'totally immersed in the present moment' with full awareness of the surrounding environment and what is happening in it (Ravizza & Statler, 2007, p.61). In the sport and performance psychology literature, this state is typically referred to as flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Flow is a state characterised by complete absorption in a task, present mindedness, lack of self-consciousness or fear of failure, the merging of action and awareness, time distortion, the paradox of control (feeling in control while letting go), and knowing precisely what to do moment by moment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Flow is predicated upon three antecedents, namely having clear and proximate goals, immediate and unambiguous feedback, and a perception of skill-challenge balance (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). While there have been more studies on the wellbeing outcomes of flow than there have been on the impact of flow on performance (Aubé, Brunelle, & Rousseau, 2014), flow has been associated with peak performance in the sport psychology and positive psychology literature (e.g., Jackson, Thomas, Marsh & Smethurst, 2001; Schüler & Brunner, 2009).

Contemporary sports psychology literature also tends to focus on goal setting, mental imagery, relaxation techniques, and regulation of performance anxiety (e.g., Porter, 2003; Wang & Zhang, 2015), as well as playing from instinct and intuition rather than via the critical, rational mind (reminiscent of Gallwey's Self 1 and Self 2):

> 'There is no interference from your thoughts or emotions. Things are just happening, both without protest and without consent. You are on autopilot – just reacting to whatever comes your way. Your body just seems to know what to do without any directive from you. There is no conscious thought involved; you're going strictly on your instincts.' (Sugarman, 1999, p.22)

Similarly, Dr. Ken Ravizza counsels athletes facing a big competition 'to do what they do, because that is what is familiar and where they draw their confidence from' (Fifer, Henschen, Gould, & Ravizza, 2008, p.373). In short, the parallels between Gallwey's *Inner Game* principles and sports psychology are evident.

In terms of the modern sports coach-coachee relationship, sports psychologists such as Ravizza and Statler (2007) suggest that coaches act as models for the mental skills that they teach, have patience and wait for the right moment to coach, build an athletes' confidence and resilience, and ensure a cultural fit between coach and coachee. Others suggest that coaches facilitate an athlete's regulation of destructive internal states by changing their environment, reframing challenging situations, having them listen to music, and encouraging positive self-talk (Sugarman, 1999). A recent paper described the approach of China's freestyle aerial-jump coaches, which contributed to the success of the Chinese team over three successive Olympic Games. Their approach included focusing on an athlete's strengths and opponents' weaknesses, promoting process rather than outcome goals, avoiding fear of failure,

and ensuring that athletes were not given too many instructions at once (Wang & Zhang, 2015).

In summary, performance coaching in sport, from a popular, lay perspective and a sport psychology viewpoint, typically involves facilitating a performer's goals, focus, awareness, flow, mental imagery, self-efficacy, regulation of anxiety, positive thinking/reframing, and playing from instinct. The similarities between Gallwey's *Inner Game* principles and the science of sports psychology are evident, and a number of current professional coaches refer to both (Ballard, 2016). However, there is still much to discover in terms of enhancing performance coaching in sport.

Performance coaching in music

There are few lay publications on performance coaching in music. One of the most popular is *A Soprano on Her Head* by Eloise Ristad (1982), who was influenced by *The Inner Game of Tennis* (Gallwey, 1974). As a music teacher, Ristad added her own observations to Gallwey's *Inner Game* principles. She argued that music teachers should de-emphasise instruction and allow musicians to discover and express their voices in a natural and holistic manner, thereby avoiding negative emotions and neuroses. Ristad's approach included silencing the inner critic (Self 1), surrendering control to the subconscious mind (Self 2), and releasing the need to get a performance right. Ristad suggested that coaches should provide musicians with a variety of techniques to shift their focus from concerns they might have to the present moment, thereby facilitating a natural and spontaneous performance. These techniques included laughter, role-play, parody, visualisation, and the famous story of a soprano who found her voice while standing on her head.

Barry Green, a former professional bassist with the Cincinnati and California Symphonies, and lecturer in music at the University of California Santa Cruz, wrote *The Inner Game of Music* in collaboration with Timothy Gallwey (Green & Gallwey, 1986). Green believed that the conditions that allowed for peak performance in sport and in music were similar, given that each involved playing, often in front of an audience, which allowed a performer to share their talents but could also produce pressure and fear. Like Ristad, Green added his own observations to Gallwey's principles, summing up *The Inner Game* in the formula P=p – i, where P was performance, p was the potential of the player (Self 2), and i was mental interference (Self 1) during performance. Green's book followed the example of Gallwey and Ristad by suggesting techniques for reducing Self 1 interference (i) so that Performance (P) ultimately equalled Self 2 potential (p). For example, Green advised musicians to focus on the essential elements of the music, including its visual elements (such as notes on the page), aural elements (such as camber and pitch), feeling elements (such as the tactile nature of the instrument, and feelings experienced by the player), and knowledge elements (an understanding of the meaning and intention of the musical piece). In Green's experience, coaching that emphasised technical aspects of performance or suggested that there was a right way to perform inhibited natural musical expression since the musician would try to control their performance, would focus on a large number of complex instructions, would fear disappointing the instructor, and would forget to simply do what they knew to do instinctively (Green & Gallwey, 1986).

The scientific literature on performance coaching in music has tended to focus heavily on achieving technical excellence, cognition and perception, and management of performance anxiety (cf. anxiety disorders that require clinical treatment rather than coaching for non-clinical anxiety). *The Science and Psychology of Music Performance: Creative Strategies for Teaching and Learning* (Parncutt & McPherson, 2002), for example, is illustrative of this trend. In this text,

the authors describe performance anxiety as a social phobia that is usually derived from fear of humiliation and accompanying negative self-talk. They suggest that the most effective 'psychological treatments' appear to be 'those that combine relaxation training with anxiety inoculation (developing realistic expectations of what will be felt during performance) and cognitive restructuring (modifying habitual thoughts and attitudes that are self-handicapping, regardless of their origins)' (Parncutt & McPherson, 2002, p.47). Many music psychology texts have followed suit, addressing the regulation of anxiety experienced by musicians before and during performances (e.g., Lehmann & Sloboda, 2007). Again, the parallels between techniques for managing performance anxiety and silencing Gallwey's inner critic (Self 1) are evident.

However, performing arts psychology addresses factors other than performance anxiety. Dr Gene Moyle, who specialises in performance psychology for the creative arts, notes that, 'within the performing arts, often it is assumed that one's work takes a psychopathological approach and is only centred on the problems of these "vulnerable, creative, sensitive and artistic creatures"' (Moyle, 2012, para 11). Moyle acknowledges that the challenges that performing arts psychologists assist with often fall toward the psychopathology end of the spectrum, including performance anxiety, loss of motivation, burnout, choking, low self-confidence, substance abuse, eating disorders, destructive team dynamics, and conflict. However, performing arts psychologists also deal with topics at the other end of the psychological spectrum, including goal setting, focus, mindfulness, motivation, mental imagery, and self-efficacy (Moyle, 2012). Flow has also emerged as a popular topic in performing arts psychology given that the arts (like sports) frequently provide the conditions that allow for the flow state to emerge, namely clear and proximate goals, immediate feedback, and a perceived balance of skill and challenge (Jackson, 2012). A number of researchers have explored the role of flow in musical performance, including as a counterbalance to performance anxiety (Kirchner, 2011), as a facilitator of group creativity in music composition (MacDonald, Byrne & Carlton, 2006), and as a state that appears to pass from music teachers to their students via a contagion effect (Bakker, 2005).

In summary, performance coaching in music and in sport have much in common, both typically emphasising goals, focus, awareness, flow, mental imagery, self-efficacy, and regulation of anxiety. This is unsurprising in the lay context given the influence that Gallwey had on music theorists and practitioners such as Ristad and Green, and in the scientific context given the intersections between sports and performing arts psychology. However, as is the case for sport, there is an opportunity for researchers to further ground the field of performance coaching for music in scientific theory and research, and to expand the topics studied beyond those typically explored.

Performance coaching in business

A walk through any airport bookshop will reveal a plethora of popular, lay books promising the secret to performance in business. Some of the most popular or impactful over the last 100 years have been Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (Carnegie, 2006), Jim Collins' *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001) and, more recently, Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In* (Sandberg, 2013), to name a few. Following on from his earlier successes, Timothy Gallwey published *The Inner Game of Work* (Gallwey, 2000) at the turn of the millennium. In this book Gallwey examined the tension between achieving a meaningful existence at work (the inner game) while also satisfying the performance requirements of the job (the outer game). As in earlier *Inner Game* books, Gallwey suggested that if managers focused on an employee's innate, natural ability to learn

from direct experience, performance against external objectives would naturally follow. As before, Gallwey promoted facilitative rather than instructional coaching (or management), which would allow employees to learn by doing via non-judgmental observation, awareness, and present mindedness. Gallwey suggested that performance was predicated upon a worker freeing themselves from the inner critic (Self 1) responsible for stress, fear of failure, boredom, and resistance to change, and unleashing the untapped potential of the worker to learn, enjoy work, and perform (Self 2).

Today the lay industry that provides performance coaching in business is usually included under the umbrella term 'executive coaching', recently defined as:

> [A] helping relationship formed between a client (the coachee) who has leadership, managerial, or supervisory authority and responsibility in an organisation, and a coach who uses a range of cognitive and behavioural techniques in order to help the client achieve a mutually defined set of goals with the aim of improving his or her leadership skills, professional performance, and wellbeing and the effectiveness of the organization (Grant, 2014, p.259).

Executive coaching has its roots in executive consulting which has been with us for many decades but emerged as a clear sub-discipline in the 1980s following an increase in formal executive assessment and development programs (Kilburg, 2007). Today, the industry is reportedly worth billions of dollars, with more than 90 per cent of US-based Global 100 companies and almost the same percentage of UK organizations now using executive coaches (Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh & Parker, 2010). Originally many of the principles upon which executive coaching was based were non-scientific, and today the field remains pragmatic (Whybrow & Henderson, 2007). Typically, executive coaches are expected to understand the business of their clients and to add value by facilitating practical and relevant change during the coaching intervention (Stern, 2007). There has also been a move towards systems based models such that an executive coach will consider the structures required to support the coaching relationship (e.g., sponsors, change agents, stakeholders, and the organisational culture; Whybrow & Henderson, 2007).

Although the vast majority of books in the field still fail to include academic references (Palmer & Whybrow, 2007), in the mid-1990s psychological theory and empirical research began to appear in publications on executive coaching (Grant, 2014). The scientific basis of executive coaching today is eclectic, drawing on cognitive behavioral traditions, psychodynamics, behavior change models, developmental psychology, and organisational development and change principles (Kilburg & Diedrich, 2007). In addition, coaching psychology theories and principles are increasingly applied to the executive coaching space (Grant, 2014; Grant & Hartley, 2014), promoting wellbeing and engagement (not simply return on investment) in organisations (Grant, 2012). Over the last 15 years, positive psychology has also been incorporated into executive coaching via the developing fields of positive organisational behavior (Luthans & Church, 2002), positive organisational scholarship (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003), positive organisational psychology (Bakker, 2013; Ko & Donaldson, 2011), and positive leadership (Cameron, 2008). *Flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and *Good Work* (Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, & Damon, 2001), the latter of which explores the importance of excellence, ethics, and engagement (i.e., flow) at work, are examples of positive psychology texts that have influenced the field. Space precludes a detailed discussion of the scientific literature underlying performance coaching in business. Suffice it to say that the field is well established and growing rapidly.

The methods of executive coaching

are even more varied than its theoretical and empirical underpinnings. Executive coaches may be external consultants or internal managers (who may or may not have a background in psychology). Coaching may be instructive or facilitative, although is usually the latter when using professional coaches and coaching psychologists (Whybrow & Henderson, 2007). Executive coaches use any combination of assessment and feedback, education and training, modeling and demonstration, rehearsal and practice, role-playing, brainstorming, conflict and crisis management, active-empathic listening, free association, verbal interventions, journaling, reading assignments, among many other techniques (Kilburg, 2007). Bono and colleagues surveyed the field and found this eclectic methodology to be true of both psychologist and non-psychologist executive coaches (Bono, Purvanova, Towler & Peterson, 2009). A recent paper reviewed the literature and suggested that the following were key factors required for a successful executive coaching engagement: trust, confidentiality, empathy, the coach's communication skills, commitment and vocation, and the coachee's need, motivation, and willingness to take responsibility for their own development (Rekalde, Landeta, & Albizu, 2015).

In summary, while performance coaching in business may employ some of the principles and methods that are typical in the fields of sport and music (e.g., goal setting), it is arguably more varied, both in terms of the theories upon which it is based, and the methods used by coaches in this field. Given the pragmatism of executive coaching, there is much overlap between the lay and scientific arms of this field, and numerous academics and practitioners have noted the need for more robust theory and empirical data to support the practice of executive coaching (e.g., Kilburg, 2007). There is therefore an important opportunity for executive coaching to embrace the breadth of evidence-based research and practice available to the field.

The promise of positive psychology in performance coaching

From the preceding discussion, three themes emerge. First, there are overlaps between theories and practices of performance coaching in sport, music, and business. Gallwey was at pains to point out that *The Inner Game of Tennis* (Gallwey, 1974) was less about tennis than it was about learning the inner game of any discipline that an individual might choose to engage in. Other performance coaches and psychologists have also stressed the transferability of coaching principles and techniques across domains (e.g., Gordon, 2007; Green & Gallwey, 1986; Ievleva & Terry, 2008). Second, while many parallels can be drawn between lay practices and the scientific literature (and popular texts can be an important source of observations, case studies, and ideas for the scientific community to test and validate), performance coaching is enhanced in terms of credibility and effectiveness when underpinned by scientific theory, empiricism, and validated methods. While some performance coaching draws on the scientific literature, coaching as a whole has not been as scientifically rigorous as many members of the coaching psychology profession would like it to be (Grant et al., 2010). Third, coaching psychology draws on and develops a variety of psychological disciplines, and this theoretical and methodological diversity ensures that coaching is client-centered and contextually relevant (Grant, 2007). As such, performance coaching would benefit from continued injection of new scientific theories, constructs, principles, and methods.

Positive psychology is a promising source of additional theories, constructs, principles, and methods that could be used in the coaching field, including performance coaching (Linley & Harrington, 2007). Positive psychology and coaching psychology share 'common historical roots' (Grant & Cavanagh, 2011, p.294) and 'common aims and objectives, being the enhancement of optimal functioning and wellbeing' (Green, Oades, & Robinson, 2012, p.116). However, while

cross-fertilisation between these fields is growing (Leach, Green & Grant, 2011), there is still much to learn about the application of positive and coaching psychology in combination, and an opportunity for the two to intersect in the performance context specifically. It is suggested that positive psychology can make a significant contribution to performance coaching by deepening our understanding of positive traits, states, and organisations that predict, facilitate, or otherwise affect performance, knowledge that could be reworked into a coaching relationship (Biswas-Diener, 2010; Linley & Harrington, 2007). It is true that positive psychology has already provided performance coaches with evidence-based suggestions for amplifying performance. For example, in terms of positive traits, identification and use of strengths has been shown to promote goal progress (Linley, Nielsen, Gillett & Biswas-Diener, 2010). In terms of positive states, the facilitation of flow (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999) and the development of psychological capital or PsyCap (comprised of hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism) have been shown to predict performance (Luthans, Avolio, Avey & Norman, 2007). In terms of positive organisations, workplaces that employ positive psychology interventions have shown promising results in terms of employee engagement and performance (Meyers, van Woerkom & Bakker, 2013).

However, there is much more that positive psychology can contribute to performance coaching. Four lines of inquiry are suggested for further exploration. First, positive psychology introduces and examines a large number of psychological constructs that may impact performance. The author recently explored developable positive psychology predictors of performance in sport, business, and academics (Mouton, 2015). These predictors included realistic optimism (Schneider, 2001), defensive pessimism (Norem, 2008), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), meaning and purpose (Emmons, 1999; Steger, 2009), harmonious passion (Vallerand, Salvy, Mageau, Elliot, Denis, Grouzet, & Blanchard, 2007), flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), deliberate practice (Ericsson, 2003), hope (Snyder, 2000), resilience aspects of PsyCap (Luthans et al., 2007), growth mindset (Dweck, 2006), among others. The results indicated that harmonious passion, flow, and hope were among the key predictors of performance across the three domains, with hope often the strongest correlate of the three. These variables were also typically positively and significantly related to each other (as far as the author is aware, this is the first study to report a significant and positive link between harmonious passion and hope, and between flow and hope). The author concluded, 'There remains an important opportunity for higher education institutions, workplaces, and athletic environments to…create the conditions that allow for passion, flow, hope, and performance to emerge in concert' (Mouton, 2015, p. 117). Arguably this is true of any environment in which performance coaching takes place, whether for sport, music, or business. In short, positive psychology provides performance coaches and psychologists with a wealth of variables, mediators, moderators, and higher order constructs (e.g., PsyCap) that might (or do) predict performance in various domains.

Second, positive psychology sheds light on the facilitators of wellbeing, which will be of interest to athletes, musicians, and executives, and their coaches, teachers, and managers. Importantly, positive psychology suggests that mental health is more than an absence of mental illness, and that mental health falls along a spectrum from languishing, to moderate, to flourishing mental health (Keyes, 2009; see also Lomas & Ivtzan, 2015). Since mental health (and illness) affect human functioning (Keyes, 2009), this body of research will be of interest to those looking to facilitate *optimal* human functioning, including peak performance.

Third, positive psychology explores the science of positive relationships (e.g., Ragins, 2012) and positive leadership (e.g., Cam-

eron, 2008), which could be instructive in terms of coach-coachee dynamics, as well as dynamics in teams, families, and peer mentoring groups. At the broader level, positive psychology provides insights into the conditions that allow for thriving organisations (e.g., Cameron et al., 2003). This body of research could assist in creating flourishing athletics departments, Olympic teams, bands, orchestras, choirs, theatre and dance companies, and a variety of workplaces (i.e. environments in which performance coaches might operate).

Finally, positive psychology considers the elements of thriving societies (e.g., Donaldson, Csikszentmihalyi & Nakamura, 2011), and the influence of culture and context on positive outcomes (e.g., Knoop & Delle Fave, 2013; Mouton & Montijo, in press). Understanding these factors would arm performance coaches with much needed ecological and cultural context as they seek to facilitate performance among diverse coachees (Wang & Zhang, 2015).

The ideas presented here are just a few of many possible avenues to explore. Performance coaches have a large and growing body of evidence-based knowledge to draw on as they facilitate the development of positive traits, states, and organisations that amplify performance in sport, music, business, and beyond. It is hoped that the fields of performance, coaching, and positive psychology continue to collaborate and learn from each other as we strive for new and enhanced ways to facilitate peak performance across domains.

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Contextual behavioural coaching: An evidence-based model for supporting behaviour change

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As coaching psychology finds its feet, demands for evidence-based approaches are increasing both from inside and outside of the industry. There is an opportunity in the many evidence-based interventions in other areas of applied psychology that are of direct relevance to coaching psychology. However, there may too be risks associated with unprincipled eclecticism. Existing approaches that are gaining popularity in the coaching field such as dialectic behavioural therapy and mindfulness enjoy close affiliation with Contextual Behavioral Science (CBS). In this article, we provide a brief overview of CBS as a coherent philosophical, scientific, and practice framework for empirically supported coaching work. We review its evidence base, and its direct applicability to coaching by describing CBS's most explicitly linked intervention – Acceptance and Commitment Therapy/Training (ACT). We highlight key strengths of ACT including: its great flexibility in regard of the kinds of client change it can support; the variety of materials and exercises available; and, the varied modes of delivery through which it has been shown to work. The article lays out guiding principles and provides a brief illustrative case study of contextual behavioural coaching.

Keywords: *Acceptance, mindfulness, contextual behavioural science, behaviour analysis, relational frame theory.*

Introduction

COACHING PSYCHOLOGISTS are, by and large, pragmatists. We have a knack for learning from those parts of the discipline of psychology with a longer pedigree. To a very considerable extent, this has resulted in the borrowing and translating of intervention techniques from educational psychology, occupational psychology, and most notably, from psychotherapy. Coaching psychologists report using theories and intervention techniques from various schools including psychodynamic, humanistic, problem-focused, behavioural, cognitive, and so on (Whybrow & Palmer, 2006). In this article, we give a brief history and overview of contextual behavioural science (CBS) and explain its direct relevance to the work of coaching psychologists. In doing so, we aim to elucidate a philosophically and scientifically coherent, evidence-based framework for practice that we call Contextual Behavioural Coaching (CBC).

Two influences have brought us to write this article. First, there is a growing interest in translating therapeutic techniques that are closely affiliated with CBS. Recent articles have outlined the applicability of specific intervention packages such as dialectical behaviour therapy (Palmer & Dunkley, 2010) and mindfulness-based stress reduction (Virgili, 2013) to the practice of coaching psychology. These approaches are undoubtedly valuable and hint at a paradigm shift which is taking place across the applied psychological disciplines (Hayes, 2004). Second, there have been calls for the development of a stronger evidence base in coaching psychology (e.g. Jones, 2012; Olson, 2008). Where robustly evidence-based principles of behaviour change can be found elsewhere in psychology, it seems to us wise to bring these into coaching psychology work.

Informed by the published work on how

coaches and coaching psychologists distinguish their work from psychological therapy (Bluckert, 2005; Hart, Blattner & Leipsic, 2001; e.g. Price, 2009), we are inclined to believe that the distinctiveness of coaching psychology lies primarily in the nature of the coaching relationship, the style of the coach-client interaction, and the fact that coaching psychologists (*qua* coaching psychologists) do not seek to work with clients on the basis of their diagnosable mental health problems. It has been argued that evidence-based practice relies on close integration with fundamental research in psychology, and an emphasis on evidence-based principles of behaviour change, rather than an over-reliance on pre-constructed intervention packages (see Rosen & Davison, 2003 for a review).

It is encouraging to see the theoretical insights and intervention strategies comprised by Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) making the transition into coaching practice (e.g. Palmer, 2014). CBT enjoys considerable evidence for its efficacy in a range of clinical presentations (McMain, Newman, Segal & DeRubeis, 2015). The behavioural components, such as graduated exposure, are closely tied to decades of research in experimental behaviour analysis (see Myers & Davis, 2006). The cognitive components are likewise informed by fundamental work in cognitive psychology, though in a somewhat different way (see Longmore & Worrell, 2007 for a critique). Since the 1980s there has been considerable growth in mindfulness, acceptance, and related approaches. In grouping these approaches, scholars have applied various labels including *contextual behavioural approaches* (Hayes, Villatte, Levin & Hildebrandt, 2011), and *third wave therapies* (S.C. Hayes, 2004). First wave behaviour therapy relied most heavily on operant and respondent conditioning techniques, such as exposure paradigms and extrinsic reinforcement for behaviour change. In the second wave, according to Hayes, CBT emerged through the integration of behavioural therapy with Beckian cognitive therapy; this aims to modify dysfunctional thoughts (Beck, 1993). Most recently, third wave approaches seek to alter the relationship between thoughts and other behaviours (Hayes et al., 2011). This effect has been referred to as *decoupling* (Levin, Luoma & Haeger, 2015). A simple example is that certain types of mindfulness training appear to decouple the link between subjective hunger and the consumption of unhealthy foods (Marchiori & Papies, 2014).

While CBS is rooted in Skinner's radical behaviourism, it extends considerably beyond it (Dymond, May, Munnelly & Hoon, 2010). The cognitive revolution in both basic science and therapy was precipitated by the apparent inability of behaviour analysis to account adequately for human language and cognition. In essence, Skinner propounded the view that the human capacity for language and complex thought could, in the main, be accounted for through extant learning principles such as operant conditioning. Whilst Chomsky's critique of Skinner's *Verbal Behavior* made numerous errors (MacCorquodale, 1970), Skinner's account of verbal behaviour never lead to any vibrant programme of empirical research on human language (Hayes, Barnes-Holmes & Roche, 2001).

In the intervening years since Skinner's attempt at an experimental analysis of complex human behaviour, a number of notable advances have been made. Epistemological assumptions were clarified and this has supported the development of more adequate theories of human language and cognition from a contextual behavioural perspective (Hayes, Hayes, & Reese, 1988). Much of this work pertains to the conditions under which humans learn to respond to the relationships between stimuli, and has been given the name *Relational Frame Theory* (RFT, Hayes et al., 2001). Taken together, these advances seem to be leading us toward a coherent and comprehensive behavioural account of human cognition. Already the account is useful and is producing considerable innovation in the fields of psychotherapy and education.

It is beyond the scope of this article to summarise the history of contextual behavioural research. Instead, we aim to provide an overview of the current state of affairs, and to illustrate the direct applicability of CBS to the domain of coaching psychology.

Foundational science in CBS

Contextual behavioural science is designed, from its basic philosophical assumptions upwards, to permit psychologists to predict and influence behaviour. Contextualists take as the basic unit of analysis the act in context. Thus, CBS takes as foundational those analyses which start in the *context* of the individual. Put another way, it privileges theoretical accounts which posit manipulable variables outside the person's skin. This is not because of a 'blank slate' or 'black box' mentality, but because, of necessity, all interventions must in fact work from the context of the individual – that's where the coach or therapist is to be found. Functionalism refers to the fact that contextual behavioural scientists are concerned with analyses which not only predict but which *afford influence over* the phenomena they describe (Hayes et al., 2012). CBS also admits 'mid-level terms' which previous generations of behaviour analysts would have dismissed as being 'mentalistic'. These terms, such as *psychological flexibility* (see Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010), serve as a convenient shorthand for researchers and applied psychologists alike; they are recognised as providing a quick and easy analysis of various psychological processes, but not a technical one. Such terms may, if one is not careful, promote circular logic: The psychologist explains John's adaptive response to stress by reference to his high psychological flexibility. If challenged, she provides evidence of John's psychological flexibility by reference to his response to stressors. The contextual behavioural scientist is ever vigilant against models which reflect this error of thinking, and is aware that theories which ascribe causation to interior psychological traits are of limited use in the design of interventions.

Humans are capable of using language to learn very quickly, without an extensive reinforcement history. An instruction like 'don't touch the hot stove' might result in an immediate change in a child if that child's previous experience has taught her that following such instructions generally leads to desirable outcomes. Early on, such behaviour was called 'rule-governed' and whilst this term has been deprecated as the component processes have come to be understood, it is a convenient shorthand for the newcomer.

Hayes and Brownstein (Hayes, Brownstein, Zettle, Rosenfarb & Korn, 1986) were amongst a number of researchers to find that rule-governed behaviour is inflexible; that is, in the presence of verbal rules, human behaviour can often fail to respond to other contingencies of reinforcement. Such findings might seem to be far away from the applied settings of coaching psychology, but in fact they are highly relevant. Indeed, this finding has been replicated and shown to generalise, and has led to the development of the concept of *fusion*, in which a person believes their own stories rigidly and to too great a degree (Luciano, Ruiz & Vizcaíno-Torres, 2011). This leads to fixed patterns of behaviour which can be unworkable in the context of client values and desired goals. Techniques which encourage *defusion* can be helpful especially when clients describe feeling stuck in a given pattern of behaviour.

The recent uptake of acceptance-based approaches provides another excellent example of the connection between fundamental science and applied work. For instance, a common-sense approach to difficult thoughts and images is to deliberately avoid thinking about these things. There is now a considerable literature on the deleterious effects of thought suppression (Wenzlaff & Wegner, 2000). The most notable findings are that trying to suppress or avoid a thought can lead to that thought becoming more frequent and more believable. More recently, RFT researchers have demonstrated with experimental analogues that avoiding

an undesirable thought requires the avoidance of related thoughts, and that the effort required to sustain this gets in the way of values-congruent or goal-directed behaviour (for instance, Hooper, Stewart, Duffy, Freegard & McHugh, 2012).

Our third and final example pertains to the type of language used by coaches. RFT provides the coach with insight into the effects of different modes of interaction. For instance, RFT provides a model for understanding how coaches can make good use of metaphors to enhance and accelerate client learning (Foody et al., 2014). Having a robust understanding of such basic behavioural principles can be enormously freeing for coaches. For example, physical metaphors, where a physical action in the room (walking to the door, throwing paper balls, etc) provide a metaphor for psychological phenomena. Such techniques allow for a more dynamic coaching interaction, make more active use of the environment, and help to break away from the confines of highly verbal counselling-style interaction.

The last 30 years has seen a deluge of basic studies of this type, examining the relationship between cognition and other behaviours (Dymond & Roche, 2013), mostly under the aegis of RFT (for an accessible overview see Törneke, 2010). These findings from basic lab science are actively being translated into the latest intervention packages. We will outline next one such approach which the authors use in their applied work, and which one author (KW) co-developed.

Acceptance and commitment training

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT, said as the word 'act') was first published as a semi-manualised intervention in a book-length treatment manual in 1999 (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 1999). Since then it has undergone an impressive process of active development in a manner similar to the open-source software movement; an international community of collaborators develop and share materials, testing them both in practice and experimentally. ACT is based not on a model of deficit or disability, but rather on learning processes fundamental to all verbal human beings (Hayes et al., 1999). This makes ACT an especially pertinent model of therapy to be translated to the coaching context. Indeed, rather little translation is necessary.

ACT researchers have published extensively on the importance of experiential avoidance in maladaptive behaviours (Hayes & Wilson, 1994). From the ACT perspective, the direct pursuit of hedonic outcomes is often incompatible with reaching self-actualisation (Hayes et al., 1999). With clients, one might be inclined to say 'nothing worthwhile comes easily'. Of equal importance is having clear and personally meaningful values (Wilson, Sandoz & Kitchens, 2010). ACT provides clients with the tools to pursue valued life directions even when this means facing up to stress, anxiety, and so on. This is referred to by ACT practitioners as *psychological flexibility*.

Take for instance one of the biggest problems facing coaching psychologists, that of 'behaviour incompatible with goals' (Palmer & Dunkley, 2010) whereby a client states an intention to change or to achieve some goal, but then maintains behaviours incompatible with this stated preference. Often this is because clients hold process goals which are incompatible with outcome goals. An outcome goal might be, 'I would like to lose weight'. Process goals are often less well articulated and may not be discussed at all: 'I don't want to feel hungry because I hate that.' Someone for whom the second goal has greater influence will find they struggle to lose weight; feeling hungry occasionally is a natural part of going into a slight calorie deficit. ACT incorporates a number of techniques, including mindfulness, to help the client build willingness to experience the avoided content associated with the incompatible process goal, thereby increasing the likelihood of attaining the desired outcome.

Because ACT is based on some basic prin-

ciples and is not merely defined at the level of technique, it is highly fluid and can be tailored by the coach. Indeed, ACT includes a number of techniques borrowed in an integrative fashion from other psychotherapeutic schools. Coaches can even use the basic principles to generate novel exercises and materials for client use. However, in order to prevent this from becoming either overwhelming for the practitioner, or utterly chaotic, a number of tools exist for helping ACT practitioners to conceptualise a case and select appropriate techniques. The hexagon model, or *hexaflex*, is one such model and is presented in Figure 1.

Over the last few years, ACT has been repackaged as Acceptance and Commitment Training and is being delivered in a number of occupational, educational, and health settings. The differences between therapy and training versions of the model are not well specified, but anecdotal evidence suggests little more is necessary than a re-writing of materials to refer to the normal challenges of life rather than recognisable mental health problems (Flaxman, Bond & Livheim, 2013).

Evidence base

Over 125 randomised controlled trials have been conducted comparing ACT with wait-list control, placebo intervention, and other therapies, including CBT. A number of meta-analyses have shown that ACT performs on par with, and sometimes better than, other evidence-based cognitive and behavioural therapies, across a wide range of client presentations (A-Tjak et al., 2015; Jiménez, 2012; Ost, 2008; Öst, 2014; Powers & Vörde Sive Vörding, 2009; Smout, Hayes, Atkins, Klausen & Duguid, 2012; Veehof, Oskam, Schreurs & Bohlmeijer, 2011). Authors tend to agree that ACT has an established track record for

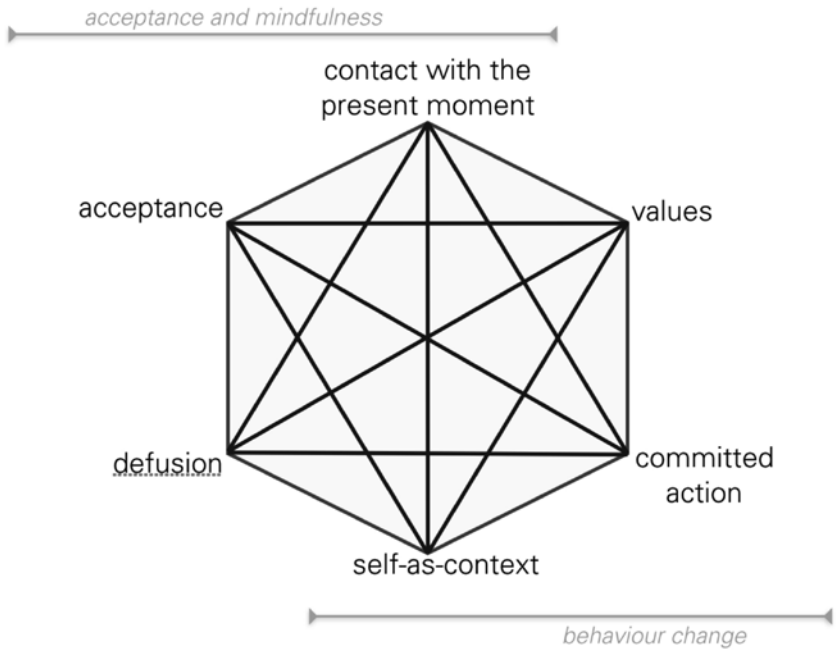

Figure 1: The ACT Hexaflex diagram, illustrating six mid-level constructs often found useful in conceptualising client problems

a range of clinical problems, and for occupational stress. The reviews conclude that as yet there is little evidence that ACT is consistently outperforming CBT, though it does well in comparisons against other 'treatments as usual'. The ACT model is highly flexible in terms of delivery, for example there is tentative evidence that brief packages can be effective even with difficult presentations such as psychosis (Bach & Hayes, 2002).

In excess of 60 laboratory studies have been conducted testing the effectiveness of individual ACT intervention components (Levin, Hildebrandt, Lillis & Hayes, 2012). These demonstrate the wide range of heterogeneous and efficacious techniques available which are based on the ACT principles. Furthermore, the fundamental science with which ACT has co-evolved, RFT, has now generated approximately 200 peer-reviewed articles (Dymond et al., 2010). There is even tentative evidence that RFT might lead to ways to intervene with phenomena erstwhile thought difficult to alter, such as the fundamental attribution bias (Hooper, Erdogan, Keen, Lawton & McHugh, 2015).

Non-clinical settings and problems

The robust principles which underpin ACT have permitted its extension to a range of problems outside of clinical psychology and psychotherapy. This literature demonstrates both the effectiveness of this approach for diverse issues, and its direct applicability to coaching psychology.

In the work setting, psychological flexibility has been shown to be predictive of job performance (Bond & Flaxman, 2006), attitudes toward learning new skills (ibid.), job satisfaction (Donaldso-feilder & Bond, 2004), and lower absenteeism (Bond, Flaxman & Bunce, 2008). In intervention studies, ACT has successfully improved acceptance and engagement with a work redesign intervention (Bond et al., 2008), and has reduced both workplace stress (Flaxman & Bond, 2010b; 2010a) and burnout (Vilardaga et al., 2011). An ACT intervention has been shown to reduce absenteeism in those considered at risk for long-term disability (Dahl, Wilson & Nilsson, 2004). ACT is currently being applied in order to improve workplace safety (Moran, 2015) and crisis-resilience (Moran, 2010). A number of practitioners have developed ACT-based protocols to help with procrastination (Scent & Boes, 2014) and though it is early days, there is tentative cross-sectional data supporting such a usage (Glick, Millstein, & Orsillo, 2014).

Coaching psychologists are taking an increasing interest in promoting the physical health and wellbeing of their coachees, work that is often termed health coaching (Gale, 2007; Whybrow & Palmer, 2006). There are a number of studies testing out such approaches (e.g. Ivanova, Yaakoba-Zohar, Jensen, Cassoff & Knäuper, 2015). The published evaluations of ACT-based weight management are somewhat promising (Forman & Butryn, 2015), and there is some work exploring the putative mechanisms of change, such as improved coping with food cravings (Forman, Hoffman, Juarascio & Butryn, 2013). While general mindful acceptance approaches have been used for weight management (Daubenmier, Kristeller & Hecht, 2011), evidence suggests that willingness to experience hunger, urges, cravings and so on, as promoted by the ACT model, are of greater predictive value in weight management. This suggests that ACT may be a better fit for this client group than mindfulness alone (Juarascio, Forman, Timko, Butryn & Goodwin, 2011).

ACT has also recently been applied to smoking cessation with promising results, and interestingly, these have been achieved through a variety of delivery media, including telephone (Schimmel-Bristow, Bricker, & Comstock, 2012), web (Bricker, Wyszynski, Comstock & Heffner, 2013), and smartphone app (Bricker et al., 2014).

The following section presents a brief and slightly fictionalised case study involving the application of ACT in a coaching setting. The case study is based on a client one

of us (RA) worked with, and quotations have been edited for brevity. This should be read as an illustration, rather than as the verbatim reporting of a scientific investigation.

Case study

Issue

Carla, a solicitor in her mid-30s doesn't hate her job, but feels stuck and trapped in her career. She has a nagging sense that the choices she has made were not really hers. She drifted into law almost by default. Whilst she is successful and even enjoys elements of the job, she is lacking meaning and senses that life is slipping away. She feels drained, yet simultaneously the thoughts of changing her role or stepping off the treadmill terrified her:

> *'I felt as though I'm living someone else's life, and yet at the same time that I owed it to those around me to keep providing. I don't want to disappoint anyone and worry about providing for my elderly parents. I can't let them down.'*

Carla feels stuck between feelings of meaninglessness and frustration at her inability to change. Many of her difficulties seem to stem from fusion with her own (verbal) thoughts.

Challenges

Carla lacked time and energy to take stock. She was wedded to her career for the financial stability it afforded and it was an integral part of her identify – a respectable profession which she thought made her parents proud. At the onset of coaching her health was poor following a recent health scare when she had had a dizzy spell in the office. Her firm's HR had considered her at severe risk of stress-related illness and lacking in engagement.

Approach

Carla was a perfect candidate for ACT coaching. She felt she had tried everything to no avail and had reached unaided what ACT calls 'creative hopelessness'. Carla received 5x90mins coaching sessions over 6 months, as well as regular e-mail discussion between sessions.

ACT combines six continuous processes, summarised in the hexaflex (see Figure 1), with each point helping to demonstrate how ACT coaching works in practice:

Present moment focus. By mindfully focusing on the present, we were able to contact Carla's feelings of stuckness, and the accompanying thoughts of failure, and the physiological sense of panic that Carla was experiencing. We could trace how she would numb these feelings with busyness (and occasionally, wine). Such behaviours seemed to be serving the function of experiential avoidance. Carla was avoiding the emotional challenge associated with reflecting on one's life in this way. By mindfully exploring her feelings we were able to deepen Carla's understanding of herself and what was driving her behaviour:

> *'It's like driving up to a red traffic light. It's so easy to get frustrated – but actually the light is a signal for something. If you don't pay attention to the signal it could kill you. I was not listening to the signals in my life, and I was paying the price.'*

Defusion. In ACT, fusion is a term for when we become fused with, or stuck to, our thoughts. In a state of fusion it can be hard to separate ourselves from our thoughts. Carla was highly fused to thoughts about how hopeless it felt to think about alternative directions. When fused to this idea, all she could see was hopelessness.

From this perspective, it is easy to *act* as if the thought is true. This is often when people drift away from coaching. Then they can easily fuse to a new story: *I* am hopeless…

From an ACT perspective, Carla was fused to her identity as a lawyer and so could be hard on herself when she attempted to change this identity. Rather than trying to battle with these thoughts, the focus was on noticing them and being curious about them – 'defusing' from them so as to provide a little psychological breathing space between herself and her thoughts.

Self-as-context. This can be thought of

as developing a more flexible sense of self. In Carla's case, she had quite a rigid identity. In ACT terms, she had lots of 'I am' stories which helped her to make sense of the world, but were not always helpful in terms of functioning effectively. This is something we worked on by considering the many different selves Carla had. There was her lawyer self, her artistic self, her kind self, her mean self. By seeing that she was actually the container for all of these 'selves,' Carla found she was able to behave more flexibly.

Acceptance. In ACT, instead of trying to eliminate distressing thoughts or feelings, we focus on altering the struggle itself, with the goal of helping clients to behave in ways they would choose *in the presence* of whatever they are thinking and feeling.

One of the most effective metaphors for Carla was one we physically re-enacted in session: *Tug of War with the anxiety monster.* This metaphor is about being locked in a draining tug of war with an anxiety monster (played by the coach). Your mind tells you that you must win this battle otherwise you will be dragged into the pit of despair. So you pour huge amounts of time and energy into winning this battle, yet every time you pull, the monster pulls back. What's the answer?

Drop the rope!

When I physically acted this out with Carla, she would drop the rope, but then pick it back up again as soon as I threw it to her. Again and again I threw it to her. But eventually she learned not to respond and to just accept the presence of the monster. But without the struggle, the monster loses power. Using this metaphor as an aide memoire in her daily life, Carla gained time and energy to focus on other things.

Values. In ACT, values are seen as ongoing qualities of action. In other words, they describe *how* we want to behave rather than what we do. For Carla, a value that resonated with her deeply was about being kind to others. However, by seeing the value as an ongoing quality of action, it became less about what she was doing – i.e. providing financially for others – but *how* she was behaving with other people, moment to moment.

Committed action. The ACT model emphasises the importance of action; of moving with one's hands and feet in the direction of one's values. In Carla's case, an actual career change was likely to take years, not months. However, a direction was emerging – something about helping others, especially children, of learning more about psychology and having more time for cooking and being in nature. We devised small life experiments, designed to broaden her horizons and contact the parts of her 'self' that had been neglected. By taking small steps of committed action, a new Carla emerged.

Outcome

Carla began by connecting to things that brought her joy more often; children, cooking, handiwork. This had an energising effect which brought positive outcomes in other areas of her life. She negotiated a four day week and used her newfound time to explore alternative careers. She became less fused with her identify as a lawyer and is now exploring opportunities to work with children.

Six months after coaching, her HR team no longer pegged her at high risk of stress-related illness and deemed Carla more engaged. Her anxiety about the future remained, and yet she was no longer paralysed by this anxiety. This is a perfect fit with ACT theory – we were not aiming for symptom reduction but rather a different relationship with difficult thoughts and feelings, and a richer, more vital, meaningful life in return.

> *'Coaching forced me to create time for myself, and I learned to focus more on the things and people I am passionate about and less on how scary change can be. I know it's a long road ahead, but…it's the right one. I still struggle with some of my demons, but they have less power over me these days. I feel more in touch with myself and I finally feel I'm creating the person I want to become.'*

The benefits of a framework approach

Contextual behavioural science is more than just ACT, though it does make up a large proportion of the activity of the international CBS community. Inspired partly by the recent loss of faith in cognitive change techniques (Longmore & Worrell, 2007), CBS aims not to develop monolithic treatment packages, but instead to test out the effectiveness of each component. Moreover, it aims to establish behavioural principles with high precision, scope and depth, so that practitioners can develop bespoke intervention strategies for clients in an evidence-based manner. The reader can get a sense for how this project is panning out by examining the outcomes of a recent meta-analyses of ACT component studies (Levin et al., 2012) and clinical trials (A-Tjak et al., 2015).

Indeed, contextual behavioural scientists tend to have a good deal of sympathy for the view that 'psychology should list empirically supported principles of change and not credential trademarked therapies or other treatment packages' (cf Rosen & Davison, 2003). Given that packages, such as CBT ones, are often specialised for a given range of diagnosable psychological disorders, the CBS approach would seem to be more applicable for the wide range of issues and challenges that might face a coaching psychologist. CBS reflects what one might call a sort of principled eclecticism. Behavioural principles allow the practitioner and intervention scientist to seek technologies from any and all traditions, so long as they comport with basic principles (Hayes et al., 2012). Indeed, CBS not only holds to behavioural principles, but also to a robust philosophical pragmatism – the idea that a scientific theory can be said to be 'true' if it guides the practitioner and client reliably to achieve shared aims. This pragmatic approach comes across to the client too. A focus on what works in the present moment, rather than on fixing old wounds, fits with clients' desire for coaching rather than psychotherapy, in our experience.

The application of CBS as a comprehensive and coherent framework for coaching practice – which we call contextual behavioural coaching – offers a multitude of advantages. Whilst ACT is the most studied approach in the CBS stable, other approaches are closely related and some enjoy good deal of empirical evidence. Of particular note are dialectical behaviour therapy and functional analytic psychotherapy.

Coaching psychologists have recently taken a number of models and frameworks for practice from the clinical and psychotherapeutic domains. It is sometimes necessary to translate the tools and techniques of a given approach to suit the style and client base of coaching psychology. With interventions rooted in contextual behavioural science, and most particularly with ACT, almost no translation is necessary. CBS is not concerned with a deficit model to explain behaviours usually labelled as psychological ill health. Hayes et al. (2012 page 11) express the view that key topics for contextual behavioural scientists to work on include 'theories of human wellbeing and happiness.' It seems that the parallels with coaching psychology are already abundant.

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A TEAM Model of challenge: Coaching individuals in organisations to meet their challenges

Phillip J. de Prez

Objectives: *The objective of this study was to discover the individual's beliefs surrounding challenge in a team based setting and to examine the notion of challenge in depth by investigating the complexity of components that constitutes what challenge means to the individual.*

Design: *A qualitative approach was taken utilising Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to explore and describe in the participants' own words how they view and make sense of challenge as a key motivation.*

Methods: *The study took place in a university in North Wales with fourteen participants. Part of the inclusion process was to ensure that all participants had or have experience of working in organisations with a strong team based work structure.*

Results: *From the study four themes emerged and together these areas form a new definition of challenge which states that challenge is not a singular construct but comprises numerous components which together are grouped into four distinct elements. The model comprises a Temporal component of challenge, an Emotive component of challenge, an Achievable component of challenge and a Motivational component of challenge (TEAM).*

Conclusion: *By taking the findings of this study into consideration it is suggested that coaching psychology interventions can be implemented which will benefit both the organisation and employee.*

Keywords: *Challenge, organisational behaviour, teams, team structures, team effectiveness, team work, collaborative working, team, dynamics, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation.*

COACHING according to Wang (2013) is an effective empowering process which can help the client to reach their goals and increase their performance in organisations. In a similar stance Gyllensten & Palmer, (2014) also argue that a main focus of coaching is to enhance the individual's workplace performance. One barrier to performance however can be a lack of motivation therefore this paper explores the notion of challenge as an important motivational factor for the individual working in a team based organisational setting and then discusses coaching and its function with regards to challenge.

Challenge as a singular concept is at present a phenomenon that has attracted little attention from a research perspective (Preenen, (2010)). For example Neilson & Daniels, (2012) argue that there is a lack of research carried out into the area of training managers to ensure that individuals are given the opportunity to feel challenged at work, although the limited research carried out into this area has concluded that challenge as a motivational factor has advantages for both the organisation and the individual. It has been shown that challenge can be beneficial to the organisation in many areas from recruiting employees (Boswell et al., 2003; and Slaughter et al., 2006), efficiency and effectiveness of task engagement (Berlew

& Hall, 1966), encouraging creativity (Sacrameto et al., 2013), maintaining employee motivation (Giancola, 2011), and the development of managerial staff (DeRue & Wellman, 2009).

Benefits for the individual of being provided with challenging opportunities as part of their work include the opportunity to develop new skills and competencies (Elliot & Dweck, 2005) with positive outcomes for the individual's career prospects (De Pater et al., 2009), and as an opportunity for the individual to strive for mastery in a given area (Kawachi, 2003). Research carried out by James & Jones, (1980) and Kirk-Brown & Wallace, (2004) suggests that employees who feel challenged in their roles display a more positive attitude towards their work, while Fine, (2007) furthers the notion proposed by Jacobson, (2011) by claiming that if the individual is not challenged and able to use their skills and experiences in a work environment they may become bored or dissatisfied, feel less positive towards the role (James & Jones, 2009) and feel less motivated (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

The importance of challenge across these diverse yet interconnected areas can be directly linked to a requisite for coaching interventions. Passmore & Mortimer, (2011) state that coaching '*helps the individual to explore and make decisions based on the construction of the environment they find themselves in'* (p37) and from an organisational perspective there are several advantages of coaching. For example Olivero et al. (1997) argue coaching can increase leadership effectiveness in recruitment managers, employees and managers, coaching can enhance the individual's positivity and engagement (Barr & van Nieuwerburgh, 2015) and through coaching, managers and executives can develop their skills, (Ketys De Vries et al., 2016) discuss this particularly in respect to the area of coaching and gender diversity in organisations).

From an individual perspective the benefits of applying coaching to focus on challenge can be directly linked to the advancement of the individual. Linley et al. (2010) refer to this as strength. Strength comprises of development, optimal functioning, and performance and increased performance learning (de Haan et al., 2013). Coaching can also assist the individual to focus on their own goals, values and ambitions for the future (Boyatzis, 2008). Challenge can however be viewed in both positive and negative terms. The notion of stress, challenge and wellbeing has been emphasised in the literature and in particular the Challenge Hindrance Model (LePine et al., 2005). Widmer et al., (2012) have also examined challenge from the perspective of stress and these stressors are described as being either positive or negative in relation to well-being. From a coaching perspective Linley et al. (2010) argue that strength coaching can be directly associated with wellbeing and especially the ability of the individual to reach their goals, further maintaining that coaching psychology can be an important factor in the process by which an individual strives to meet their goals. Roche & Hefferon, (2013) support this notion emphasising the important link between coaching and wellbeing, and from a practitioner's perspective Hultgren et al., (2013) describe cognitive behavioural coaching (CBC) as an excellent way to address well-being and goal attainment with clients.

Whilst it could be reasoned that individuals may view challenge from a negative stress perspective, Csikszentmihalyi, (2014) takes a slightly different approach and espouses the importance of challenge and happiness. Csikszentmihalyi, (1991) emphasises this point by stating that when skill and challenge are at a high level, this is both enjoyable for the individual and encourages them to engage in further challenging experiences. This has the benefit for the individual to learn new skills and increase self-esteem. Csikszentmihalyi, (1991) describes this concept as flow which is described as *'a holistic sensation people feel when they act in total involvement in an activity'* (p36). Wesson & Boniwell, (2007) examined the application of flow

theory and developed a flow enhancement model which emphasises the importance of the role of the coach in helping a client to maximise their potential. Based on Csikszentmihalyi et al's. (1991) work the flow enhancement model is constructed of three stages; firstly to establish flow in the first session focusing client and coach, secondly to assist the client to stay motivated between sessions and thirdly to ensure the client is aware of any barriers that would restrict flow.

Wesson & Boniwell (2007) argue there is a great demand for coaching and this may be because individuals are realising that they possess great potential but as yet this potential has not been reached. Coaching clients to help them to meet their challenges and therefore reach their full potential is arguably therefore an important area and has clear advantages from both an organisational and individual perspective.

Method

The choice of IPA for data analysis

The present study used Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The rationale to use this method can be postulated most succinctly by Torbrand & Ellam-Dyson, (2015) who claim that IPA is *'well suited for new, novel and ongoing research studies aiming to investigate the unique experiences of a small number of individuals'* (p79). IPA according to Smith *et al.,* (2011) *is 'concerned with the detailed examination of human lived experience and aims to conduct this examination in a way, which as far as possible enables that experience to be expressed in its own terms, rather than according to a predefined category system'* (p32). Furthermore Brocki & Wearden, (2006) argue IPA is fundamentally a method that focuses on the individual's subjective experiences and is not concerned with objective accounts of beliefs and experiences.

Participants

The sampling of the fourteen participants was purposeful and part of the inclusion process was to ensure that all Participants had or have experience of working in organisations with a strong team based work structure. Each was given a letter of introduc-

Table: 1: Interviewed participant information

Participant	Gender	Age (years)
1	Female	37
2	Female	19
3	Female	42
4	Female	39
5	Female	30
6	Female	37
7	Female	44
8	Male	58
9	Female	40
10	Male	48
11	Male	52
12	Female	22
13	Male	45
14	Female	25

tion, consent form and the contact details of the researcher for further information if required. Table 1 displays the relevant participant information.

Data collection

A semi structured interview schedule was used to collect the data and interviews lasted between 50 minutes and 1 hour 30 minutes. The interviews were recorded on a digital dictaphone which were then transcribed shortly after the interview with transcripts printed off to make notes on by the researcher with regards to developing themes. In line with the recommendations by Smith et al. (2011) and to address the question of validity of this study, all the documents created to analyse the data were collated and kept in a separate folder to be available for an independent audit by a fellow colleague to ensure validity of the data in this study from both a methodological and interpretive stance.

Analysis

Within an IPA approach, Cooper et al. (2015) insist there are several stages of data analysis. They suggest that these multi stages should include; *'movement from what is unique to a Participant to what is shared amongst Participants, description of the experience which moves to an interpretation of the experience, commitment to understanding the Participant's point of view and finally, psychological focus on personal meaning-making within a particular context'* (p5).

Smith et al. (2011) outline six steps to analysing data:

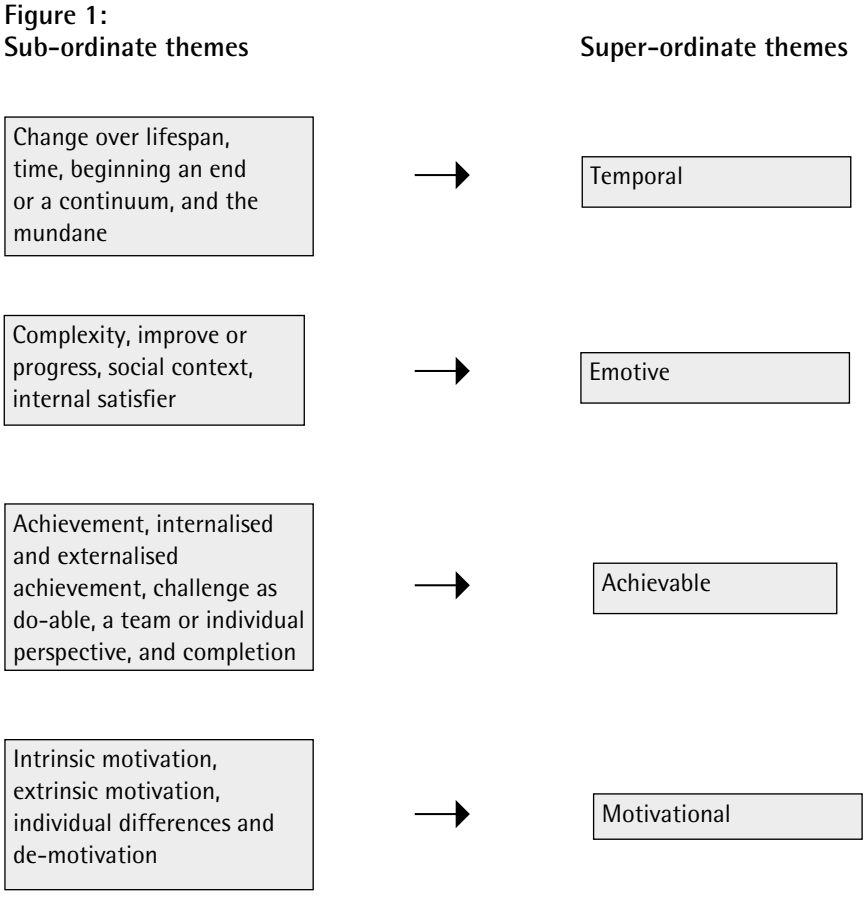
- Step one includes repeated reading of all the transcripts.
- Step two focuses on taking notes on any information within the data that appears to be relevant to the research questions and amalgamating the thoughts and beliefs of the participants.
- Step three identifies themes that emerged from the interviews and were further analysed in more depth.
- Step four signals part of the re-constructing stage and in essence is explorative in that the aim is to link any connections between themes, to decide to include or exclude material. In this step, in some instances, steps one to three were repeated.
- Step five requires the start of the whole process again, however this time looking at the next participant's transcript (in effect for this study this process will be repeated fourteen times).
- Step six, required detailed examination of all the emergent themes. In this stage the emphasis was ostensibly focussed on the interpretation of the data. It was at this point that the sub-ordinate themes were investigated in far greater depth.

From exploring the transcripts from a deeper interpretive stance it was observed that the original three super-ordinate themes were not sufficient and that a fourth super-ordinate theme became evident. In this final step the fourth super-ordinate theme was added and the quotes from the transcripts re-ordered in light of this addition. The names of these super-ordinate themes were also changed several times in step six in order to represent the content of that theme. At this point in the analysis it also became apparent that within some of the individual quotes from the participants' transcripts, there were comments that could be attributed to more than one super-ordinate theme. The decision was made to include these quotes into the separate super-ordinate themes even if replicated, however they would be interpreted and analysed within the context of that super-ordinate theme. Any of the comments made by the participants and not integrated into the super-ordinate themes were collated and will be used in another context for future research.

Results

The narratives from these participants were analysed to develop sub-ordinate themes with four super-ordinate themes emerging.

Figure 1:



The four super-ordinate themes were consistent across all fourteen participants and these super-ordinate themes are; Temporal, Emotive, Achievable and Motivational. (See Figure 1).

Temporal component

In their interviews many of the Participants discussed challenge in highly impassioned terms, for example when talking about time, they highlight the link between challenge and time;

> '*Look at it as a challenge in a timeframe, look at final outcome; I look at what needs to be done*' (P6).

Participant 10 (P10) takes a very similar stance to P6 emphasising the need for information about the task or more specifically what needs to be done to meet the challenge in a timely manner;

> *'you can identify what needs to be done and the challenge then is to, to actually deliver that within the timeframe you have set, because obviously that is an important element of the challenge is time'* (P10).

P14 looks at the biggest timeframe of all the participants claiming that;

> *'If you can see a light at the end of the tunnel, even if it is a million miles away, you are still chasing it, aren't you, so to me that is an incentive to keep going'* (P14).

One of the participants whilst mentioning time as an element of challenge, takes a more generic perspective with regards to challenge, time and endings;

> *'I like a challenge and I like to see it finished through'* (P12).

Emotive component

All participants reported that emotive factors were an important component of challenge for them. For example when talking about being in a role where they are not challenged P6 very solemnly tells how they feel de-humanised;

> '*I become robotic and automatic and nothing is actually getting done'* (P6).

Participant 7 (P7) emphasises how to them challenge is a strong feeling that surpasses both other people's and their own expectations;

> *'Challenge means to me going beyond possibility, going beyond what you believe possible, going beyond what everyone else thinks is possible, going, blowing apart all the boundaries that other people put in place'* (P7).

Participant 8 reported that they found challenge to be a pleasing experience;

> *'That is probably what I think is the single rule. Challenge is enjoyable, and challenge because you have to stretch yourself, if you are leading, you have got to challenge and stretch those around you, urr... so challenge is enjoyable'* (P8).

For participant 7 challenge also evoked very strong emotions;

> *'There has got to be passion. There has got to be, umm it is not so much belief, it is passion. It is a feeling. It is not a logical thought; it is not sitting down and writing a list of all the reasons why I should do it. It is not becoming consciously aware of what is making me or driving me to do this. It is the burning desire and passion that doesn't go away.'* (P7).

Achievable component

The achievable aspect of challenge was universally mentioned by the 14 participants, for example when talking about challenge and achievement one participant holds the deeply held belief that;

> *'Challenge, an arduous task or hurdle that you know, once you have achieved it, you get some kind of like, it is just some kind of personal achievement'* (P11).

In a similar stance participant 13 talks about challenge as a need to push boundaries;

> *'so, erm, yes challenge is something that pushes you right to the edge of what you're currently capable of and as a result achieving it' (*P13).

Participant 14 postulates the difficulties in setting achievable challenges and the negative impact on setting too high a goal;

> *'You can set yourself a challenge that is never going to be achievable and then you are always going to be chasing yourself and get nowhere and it becomes quite disheartening and then to a point I suppose where it could demotivate myself if it was far too hard, if it was a totally unreachable goal'* (P14).

Motivational component

Throughout the interviews participants referred to motivation as a component of challenge, for example when talking about challenge and motivation one participant made the comment*;*

> *'Well I like a challenge, I like to succeed and motivation I have got to admit, I am motivated by being different, or better, than the average person'* (P11).

Participant 8 voices how they feel it applies to the whole team within a large organisational setting;

> *'Challenge: But it has got to stretch and it has got to motivate, and it's got to pull the team together'* (P8).

In the extract below participant 10 explains how challenge and motivation can manifest itself in their workplace;

> *'For example a whole manufacturing operation, a challenge is something that you can, you can put in front of the workforce, erm something that involves them, that they can contribute to and can see the tangible benefit to the business and to them, but also as well to erm enable them to identify what it is that they need to contribute to to erm tap in that challenge'* (P10).

For one participant challenge is a major motivation, stating that;

> *'Challenge; Challenge is something that makes me want to go to work'* (P8).

Discussion

The aim of this study is to highlight challenge as an important motivational factor for individuals working in a team based organisational setting, and the role coaching psychology can take to work with individuals to help them to meet their challenges. This discussion integrates the theories highlighted in the literature review with the results from this study and highlights the limitations of this study and how the results from this study may inform practice.

Olivero et al. (1997) argue that coaching can increase leadership effectiveness in recruitment managers. Therefore managers should arguably be aware of the importance of challenge to the individual from both a personal and leadership stance. Participant 8 highlights this importance by stating that *'Challenge; Challenge is something that makes me want to go to work'* (P8). In the workplace the coaching psychologist can enable the individual to increase positivity and engagement in their work (Barr & van Nieuwerburgh, 2015) by recognising how challenge is linked to these areas. For example participants 6 and 12 discuss how the lack of challenge creates a situation where they become dis-engaged, *'I think that if I go into a job role and I am not challenged, I get really bored and fed up very easily'* (P6), and participant 12 *'But I would say about, with challenge, I think that it is a good thing to have, because it keeps you motivated and it keeps you interested, doesn't it? Because if, and the reason I am doing what I am doing now, is because with my old job I got completely fed up, I wasn't stimulated at all, and everything became really repetitive'.*

Linley, (2008) refers to strength and this comprises of development, optimal functioning and performance, increased performance learning (de Haan et al., 2011). In this instance coaching can facilitate the individual to focus on their own goals, values and ambitions for the future (Boyatzis, 2008). For example participant 5 '*Eventually I am to be more family focused and then challenge is obviously going to change. I think there is going to be almost the long game, at the moment challenge for me is very short term, it is a set of small challenges to complete in order to get to exactly where I want to be in terms of whether it's career or personal life'.*

The Challenge Hindrance Model (LePine et al., (2005)) and Widmer et al. (2012)) have also examined challenge from the perspective of stress and these stressors are described as being either positive or negative in relation to well-being. From a coaching perspective Linley et al. (2010) argue that strength coaching can be directly associated with well-being and especially the ability of the individual to reach their goals, maintaining that coaching psychology can be an important factor in the process by which an individual strives to meet their goals for satisfaction and wellbeing. Participant 6 maintains that *'Challenge I see as like having a go at something, something to have a go at, a bit like a goal. I see challenge as something quite exciting although saying that, challenge can sometimes be quite difficult as well. But if you see it as a challenge and you get through it then it gives such a boost to get the*

other side'. Roche & Hefferon, (2013) support this notion emphasising the important link between coaching and wellbeing, a point Participant 12 reflected;

> '*and that is when I think something is challenging, when I start feeling stressed about it not that, if I don't get stressed, I don't get motivated. This is all making sense to me now, if I don't get stressed I won't get motivated to do it, but then if I get too stressed I can't do it'* (P12).

Challenge should not be stressful for an individual but be a positive motivation and participant 2 makes similar comments as highlighted by Csikszentmihalyi, (1991) regarding flow, but instead refers to pushing themselves to attain a higher challenge. This notion of moving forward was highlighted in the findings and relates to how participant 2 explains tentatively that *'I think pushing above what you think you can do, do you know what I mean? I mean you think you can do a certain amount and then if you are challenged you push yourself further to what you can do but didn't think you could do'*. Here a coaching intervention such as the Flow enhancement model (Wesson & Boniwell, 2007) could assist the client to focus on their goals, remain motivated over time and be aware of any issues that may restrict their ambitions.

From all of the participant interviews, the comments from participant 9 seem to give the most succinct overview of challenge.

> *'Challenge is something we are immersed in from an early age but the nature and context of challenge is not explicit but implicit as we are given no formal explanation of challenge as a concept, why are we challenged does anyone explain it or is it an innate drive to strive to succeed and expand our experience'*.

Conclusion

This study explored the notion of challenge and the role coaching may take to help individuals increase their performance, well-being and to reach their goals. From the findings reported in this study a new definition and model of challenge has been originated. The de Prez (2016) definition of challenge is that challenge is not a singular construct but comprises numerous components which together are grouped into four distinct elements, these four elements are based on the individual's perception of challenge as;

- Temporal, challenges can change over time and be short-term, medium-term or long-term.
- Emotive, challenges have an affective component (i.e. passion, fire, or boredom)
- Achievable, challenges that are not too easy but not too difficult, the key factor connected to challenge is that it is considered by the individual to be *'do-able'*
- Motivational, challenges that are more than *'ordinary'* or day-to-day tasks. They are obstacles to overcome with a reward that is meaningful to the individual.

De Prez (2016) TEAM Model

This is a holistic approach and each of these elements should be present in order for the role or task to be considered as a challenge. It is suggested that this model can be a useful tool for coaching psychologists working with clients who wish to make the most of any challenges they encounter.

Limitations of this study

When analysing the data it was noted that for some participants there was a possibility that some of their answers could have been explored in more depth by the interviewer, for example certain ideas and lines of narratives from the participants could have been expanded upon with more open and probing questions utilised. The interpretation of this data will be considered in light of my own experiences and beliefs and therefore other readers may arrive at different interpretations and conclusions.

Implications for practice and future research

Throughout this study there has been forwarded a coherent argument stating that there is a limitation to the coaching interventions, teaching and training in motivation with regards to challenge. For example Neilson & Daniels, (2012) argue that there is a lack of research carried out into the area of training managers to ensure that individuals are given the opportunity to feel challenged at work, while Scaramento et al. (2013) points out that if there is inconsistency between theories of the link between challenge stressors and areas such as job demands and role tensions, organisations will not be employing individuals who are working effectively, further to this point consultants do not have the knowledge at present to advise on training sessions to rectify this situation. It is therefore suggested that the de Prez (2016) definition of challenge used in conjunction with the de Prez (2016) TEAM model can be implemented into coaching and training sessions within organisations and form the basis of further research.

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What is NLP? The development of a grounded theory of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, (NLP), within an action research journey. Implications for the use of NLP in coaching psychology

Bruce Nerli Grimley

Despite the wide use of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, (NLP), within coaching psychology very little literature of a critical nature examines what NLP is, how it works and whether it works. This paper seeks to address that void by asking 15 subject matter experts what their definition of NLP is. In order to develop a theory of NLP that was not skewed, data from a discussion between 19 NLP informed professionals concerning the authenticity of NLP, (44,000 words), was also used in the coding process to generate a grounded theory of NLP. The emerging theory was recycled back to the 15 subject matter experts and 19 informed professionals a number of times and compared and contrasted with the extant literature before the final theory emerged and became somewhat substantiated as a result of saturation. This paper examines the use of NLP within coaching psychology in the context of such a new theory of NLP and suggests developments in the light of such an examination.

Keywords: *Neuro-Linguistic Programming, research, theory, epistemology, methodology, evidence, testing, definition, coaching psychology.*

Introduction

It is suggested by Grant (2001) that the claims of Tony Robbins to empower the individual through the approach to behavioural change known as Neuro-Associative Conditioning™ (NAC) is unjustified and that the unsubstantiated claims made by Robbins raise serious ethical issues.

However it is possible that NAC is only one of the many proprietary coaching labels to describe techniques that have emerged from the practice of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, (NLP). Other proprietary NLP coaching labels would be meta-coaching, clean coaching and provocative coaching to name but a few.

The relevance of this exploration for coaching psychology is the scenario where the coaching psychologist cites the practice of NLP as a part of their coaching approach. Would they truly know what they were talking about and would their description be consistent with what others say?

This paper presents a grounded theory of NLP generated as part of a PhD thesis, (School of Psychology, University of Nicaragua).

The academic journey incorporated the learning principles of action research and a key motivation in undertaking the research was to obtain what I regarded as a comprehensive and valid definition of NLP to assist me to improve my practice as a chartered psychologist.

Literature search

A search through back copies of *The Coaching Psychologist*, *International Coaching Psychology Review* and *Coaching* showed many coaching

modalities are engaging with the academic community in an attempt to develop and refine both coaching techniques and theoretical orientation through the peer review process.

Coaching for example, published by Routledge showed this was so for; Mindfulness, (Spence, Cavanagh, & Grant 2008) existential approaches, (Spinelli, 2008), self-determination theory, (Pearson, 2011), narrative coaching, (Stelter, Nielsen, & Wikman, 2011), emotional intelligence and coaching, (Cremona, 2010), cognitive-developmental approaches to coaching, (Bachkirova, 2009) and cognitive-behavioural approaches to coaching, (Karas & Spada, 2009). Also such coaching tools as the GROW model and GROUP model, (Brown & Grant, 2010) the mastery window, (Drake, 2011), and the cultural orientations framework, (Gilbert & Rosinski, 2008), were present as well as the use of psychometrics within the coaching context, (Passmore, 2008). This is just a selection of what was available for critical review and discussion. However the pattern of an absence of NLP was matched in both of the other journals, with one exception being the contribution of Linder-Pelz & Hall (2007) and replies to that paper from Grimley (2007, 2012) and Rowan (2008).

Methodology

In understanding and researching NLP it was important to pay attention to the suggestions of the little there was in the critical academic literature.

Tosey & Mathison, (2009) in suggesting NLP is at a crossroads put forward a number of ways NLP practitioners could usefully conduct research into NLP to move it forwards from its current state which they regarded as being an entropic recycling of old proprietary NLP materials. A summary of the research methods put forward are:

1. Action research
2. Case studies and evaluations
3. Modelling projects
4. Testing and review of specific NLP models and techniques
5. Surveys of the incidence of NLP
6. Critique and elaboration of the epistemology of NLP
7. Studies of NLP as a social phenomenon
8. The use of NLP to enhance existing research methods.

In using action research supported by a grounded theory approach this research took a very specific epistemological standpoint. Action researchers always see themselves in relation to others in terms of their practice and ideas. Their world is a dynamic world and it is always probabilistic. They can divide it into apparently systematic and non-systematic components and consequently improve on prediction, however, there will always be a significant amount of non-systematic variation. This means that even the predictions they make are probabilistic. This anti-positivist approach assumes an open system which is consistently reinventing itself. This is to be contrasted with the world of the positivist who sees the world more in terms of a closed system. For the positivist, the fact that our world, and especially our social world, is not entirely predictable is only due to stochastic variation that we as yet have no explanation for. When we do have an explanation for it, as our understanding develops, then we too will have greater predictive power, until eventually we can predict everything perfectly. King, Keohane & Verba, (1994) make the point that these two perspectives can be regarded as observationally equivalent. Because of this equivalence a choice between the two perspectives depends rather on faith or belief rather than on empirical verification. My methodological concern was positioning myself thus, this research could be misinterpreted by those with a more positivist persuasion who assumed an unbiased and passive observer, the separation of fact from value, the existence of an external world separate from scientific observers and their methods. Such a stance inevitably leads to a quest for valid instruments, replicable research designs,

and reliable findings. In my research even though a dynamic process of inquiry needs to occur within a stable structure of rules, and the rules of both grounded theory and action research needed to be adhered to in order to render the results as valid as possible, the results are not regarded as objective truth, but rather a subjective truth and the validation is found in the integrity of enquiry as one reads through the 90,000 word dissertation, Grimley (2015).

Sampling considerations

One characteristic of NLP is the fracturing of opinions concerning both the co-founders and also other practitioners who are regarded as the first generation. Originally a snowball methodology was adopted to select participants, however quickly this method returned a skewed sample.

As an alternative expert purposive sampling seemed to meet all needs of this research. By using insider knowledge to talk with experts representing different sectors within NLP I could realistically reduce the number down from the 'total population' without missing anything. My operational assumption was individual experts with over 20 years practicing NLP would collectively cover the huge scope of activity within the NLP community, without the need to talk, hierarchically speaking with people lower down on account of less experience and possibly less understanding. Ensuring the resulting 15 participants came from around the world to account for culture bias was another consideration which was met.

A characteristic of both action research and grounded theory is that it is carried out by those with insider knowledge. This interpretive style of research calls for creativity, closeness to the respondents and their claims, immersion in the field and an ability to interpret situations and statements, (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Such insider knowledge inevitably creates personal biases, or as Blumer, (1969) calls them sensitising concepts. However this knowledge is useful to appreciate the territory of the research topic more thoroughly than outsiders and make appropriate distinctions, whilst rigor in coding can assist prevent any sensitising concept bias arising in the emergence of theory from the data.

In order to obtain further balancing perspectives on what NLP is, I asked permission to code 44,000 words of 19 professionals who discussed the authenticity of NLP on a psychology LinkedIn forum, (Munro 2013).

Definition of NLP

The variety of current definitions within NLP can be seen by looking at a selection:

a) 'Defies easy description' (Overdurf & Silverton, 1998, viii)
b) 'The unexpected by-product of the collaboration of John Grinder and Richard Bandler to formalise impactful patterns of communication' (Dilts, Grinder, Bandler, & DeLozier. 1980, ii)
c) 'In some respects it is simple. An internationally prominent practice in business, management development and professional education, a method used by facilitators of various kinds – coaches, trainers and consultants – who claim to offer some innovative and highly effective approaches to human development…in other respects NLP resembles more of a mystery story.' (Tosey & Mathison 2009, p3).
d) 'An explicit and powerful model of human experience and communication' (Andreas 1979, i).
e) 'The study of the structure of subjectivity' (Dilts et al. 1980, ii).
f) 'A behavioural model that consists of a series of tools and techniques modelled on performance excellence' (Wake 2010, p7).
g) 'A model from cognitive psychology' (James & Woodsmall 1988, p3).
h) 'The art and science of personal excellence' (Alder & Heather, 1998, xii).
i) 'An extension of linguistics, neurology or psychology' (Dilts et al, 1980, i).

j) 'The Frankenstein Grandchild of Post Ericksonian Hypnosis' (Brown, 2007, p128).
k) 'It is not a set of techniques it is an attitude.' (Bandler, 1985, p155).
l) 'Whatever works' (Attributed to Robert Dilts by www. GrassRoots.com, 2013).
m) 'A user oriented metaphor designed to generate behavioural options quickly and effectively' (Dilts et al, 1980, 12).
n) 'A modelling technology whose specific subject matter is the set of differences that makes the difference between the performance of geniuses and that of average performers in the same field or activity' (Bostic St Clair & Grinder, 2001, p50).

The above list of 14 definitions is by no means exhaustive; however it demonstrates the problem of being able to accurately define NLP.

Richard Churches in talking about researching NLP and in particular one of the NLP Models, the Milton Model says; 'Just this aspect of NLP alone, the fact that it has been a largely oral tradition for the last 30 years and a "community of practice", provides enough ammunition for the critical academic to dismiss NLP' (Churches, 2013).

It seems logical that if we cannot effectively define something we cannot research it. This is because the nature of our research will be shaped by the definition of that which we are researching. If what we are researching keeps on changing according to whom we talk, then the paradigm becomes incapable of either falsification or validation.

The importance of defining NLP in a standardised way is to allow us to research it effectively. This is brought into a clearer focus when public money is at stake. Professor Sturt makes a point after a Freedom of Information request revealed that the NHS in the United Kingdom spent over £800,000 on NLP from 2006–9, and a further estimated £105,000 on training staff. She says; 'the very fact that there is no agreed definition of NLP indicates how little evidence we have of its benefits.' (Sturt, 2012). Concerning the use of NLP within the context of the first NLP modeling projects, namely counselling and therapy, Sturt concluded: 'This systematic review demonstrates that there is little evidence that NLP interventions improve health-related outcomes. The study conclusion reflects the limited quantity and quality of NLP research' (Sturt et al, 2012b, p762).

Indeed the research of Sturt could only use 10 of 1459 NLP citations as a result of her review. The low quality of NLP publication is also an observation of Witkowski in his review of NLP, (Witkowski, 2010).

The emphasis on paying attention to the testing of claims made by NLP practitioners when public money is at stake is recently reiterated in the Sports and Exercise context by Tod who points out,

> 'If practitioners can make money offering NLP services that is fine, if they are not violating laws or ethical codes of practice. Within these constraints, caveat emptor. On some levels, however, I am uncomfortable with my position. If the athlete, coach, or sport is spending public money, for example, I hope there are checks to ensure that sensible evidence-based decisions are being made.' (Tod, 2015, p73).

What is a theory?

This research journey started with a very different question, and a necessary skill for a grounded theory researcher is to suspend personal bias, (sensitising concepts), and allow the data to inform the emerging theory. After initial scoping interviews and during the initial interviews I needed to reduce considerably the scope of enquiry to simply, 'What is NLP?' Another research consideration is to position the emerging theory within the context of enquiry. When recursively presenting the emerging theory to participants for fine tuning as a result of feedback, participant 2 pointed out:

> 'I do not think you have presented a theory of NLP at all. Without a set of princi-

> ples on which the practice of an activity is based there is no theory. A theory of education provides guidelines to produce "educational activities". Your description of NLP's practice as "commercial, controversial, and unproven" are good facts about many of its current practitioners, their motivation, their professional standing as well as the basic reason for that professional standing, but it fails to set forth a set of principles on which the practice of NLP is based and does not comprise a theory.'

I therefore believed it was important to emphasise and articulate precisely what I meant by the word theory in this research.

A theory for the purpose of this research was regarded as a coherent group of tested general propositions, commonly regarded as correct, that can be used as principles of explanation and prediction for a class of phenomena. From this research the 8 'propositions' or categories which emerged from the substantive and theoretical coding are regarded as both interacting and stable, thus the theory is not only explanatory and descriptive but it is also predictive of NLP practice in the future. The propositions are regarded as tested in the sense that not only did they emerge from the source data but were fed back to those who provided the data for both clarification and amendment before saturation of the data was reached.

Coding

It is felt that it is not within the scope of this paper to go into detail concerning how the coding of transcripts and saturation of data was arrived at. NVivo version 10 was used to facilitate both substantive and theoretical coding and to make comparisons and contrasts. A coding diary helped me log my own reactions and responses and the relevance of such to the coding process. For the interested reader more can be found in chapters 3 and 4 of Grimley, (2015). Below are very brief descriptions of the 8 interacting propositions (categories) which emerged from the coding process with examples of transcript which contributed to the development of the category.

Findings

1. NLP is commercially motivated

What threw this category so much into the fore was the lack of evidenced educational material within the appropriate academic literature. NLP claims to be able to make explicit the unconscious patterns of those who are excellent and after testing and coding, then transfer these skills to other people. Excellence is quantifiable in many domains and is characterised by being at least 3 standard deviations from the norm, however there is no empirical evidence an NLP model which is a collection of NLP patterns has ever provided such a transition within any population.

> *'Yes well what you are talking about is interest and funding I think NLP has not been interested in that because we see it working every day in people's lives and our purpose has been to do business instead of doing research so there's not been that much interest in it and somebody has to collaborate'.* (Participant 7, 21:05)

2. NLP is saturated in anecdotal evidence

When asking many of the NLP practitioners for evidence of what they called NLP working, almost exclusively personal experience was cited. For some signposts were to the grey literature, (conference papers, PhD theses etc.) and there was an acknowledgement that NLP is not represented in peer reviewed literature.

> ***'Researcher**: When you mention the "swifter intervention", is it important to have the empirical evidence to support those claims?*
> ***Participant 6**: I think it is, I think it's essential, because otherwise it's just anecdotal and it's just us saying, "It's this, it's that," or whatever. It just doesn't stand up. We have to have some empirical evidence.'* (Participant 6, 34:10)

3. Lacking in published empirical evidence

Just because a practice is saturated in anecdotal evidence does not mean it necessarily lacks good published empirical evidence. However in the case of NLP I found this to be the case and a defining feature.

> *'One of the things which I got from NLP, and especially Bandler was that what satisfies people is what satisfies them it doesn't have to be true, it doesn't have to be proved, it just has to be plausible to them and therefore a lot of the NLP trainings give stuff that satisfies the answer when, even though it's rubbish, they give that and it satisfies people. That's fine, but what you are discovering is that won't satisfy the academic community and what we haven't addressed is what we need to do to satisfy them and it isn't necessarily any more true, it just has different criteria. NLP could have been an established methodology by now, but the reason it couldn't is historical, we know because the founders had an anti-academic position, and mummy and daddy have influenced the entire field ever since, and they went further they even rubbed academics noses in it, they rubbished academia they made fun of professors, so you don't win friends like that.'* (Participant 9 25:10)

4. Historical and current disagreement

NLP practice is defined by an inability to work together as a team for the greater good. The split between Bandler and Grinder and the characterological components which Bostic St Clair & Grinder, (2001), saw as present in them both, notably egotistical and arrogant seem to have framed the NLP world. Tosey & Mathison, (2009) liken NLP to a pseudo religion for some, with no accountability and providing confidence as a main outcome. They continue to paint the picture of adherents sometimes displaying unquestioning commitment to their leaders, with some trainers insisting they alone follow the true party line. They also in the first critical appreciation of the NLP phenomenon surmise that the NLP body is so fractured that it is difficult to imagine it recovering from its self-inflicted injuries.

> *'The concern I have about that is I talk to various NLP trainers and a lot of trainers I've spoken to don't even have a definition of NLP that fits with my understanding of what it is.'* (Participant 5, 16:10).

5. Wanting to be 'accepted', but disappointed with the continual pattern of not being accepted by 'mainstream'

This dynamic represents the sense that within NLP there is sometimes the application of good practical psychology and a frustration that others cannot see the effects of NLP at work. In talking with participants it seemed either to represent an inability or lack of desire to match and pace the academic rigour which is needed to demonstrate validity in 'mainstream' or an acceptance that the market place is the best place to test ideas. Whilst people still sign up to NLP courses, the face validity which that represents to them that NLP works suffices. What threw this category into focus as a defining feature was the consistent unease NLP practitioners felt when reminded that their practice talks about making the implicit explicit and training others so they can become better, yet at the same time having never been able to demonstrate this for any of their NLP patterns using the accepted academic protocols of social science.

> *'I'd like to see NLP nicely established as a distinct discipline and secondly from that as a profession and for that to be achieved I think there needs to be an agreed-upon, first of all definition of what NLP actually is.'* (Participant 5, 18:00).

6. Development of break out groups, dissatisfied with the culture of disagreement within NLP sometimes using a different brand

The diversity within NLP has created many patterns and products, however what char-

acterises NLP is breakaway groups who wish to separate from what the three letters NLP have come to stand for.

> *'We don't really want to call it NLP. We are not going to market it under NLP. We are going to call it something different. We will honour where it came from.'* (Participant 12, 20:21).

7. Lack of standardised definition, curriculum and professional practice code

One of the many changes which took place during the course of this research as a result of listening to the 15 NLP practitioners was to change the research title from 'What is the Definition of NLP?' to 'What is NLP?' The word definition was regarded by some NLP practitioners as restrictive. Concerning the lack of NLP definition, a similar idea to that of Sturt (2012) was recorded in the words of O'Connor in the LinkedIn group; 'Such is the circularity of arguing evidence when we haven't looked at "Evidence for what?" A question which might be more important than its easier cousin, "Evidence of what?"' (O'Connor in Munro, 2013). On pressing O'Connor on what he meant by this in private communication he did so by reference to 'a common error in psychology – that of confusing explanandum with explanans (the phenomenon that needs explanation and the explanation itself)', (Reicher & Haslam, 2015). This theory of NLP seeks to address a perceived need that if NLP is to be used by professional coaching psychologists it needs a more comprehensive, cohesive and consistent definition than is presently current. As to the explanation of this new definition it is for others to discern its validity. What is believed to be beyond dispute by the author is such a discussion needs to be had at this juncture in the development of the coaching industry. Ouellette (2013) seems to mirror such sentiments when he says:

> *'The mere fact of bringing together techniques based on several theoretical backgrounds does not make it a theory; it just makes it a bunch of techniques. Moreover, the NLP "practitioner" does not have a theoretical background to substantiate their "techniques"'* (Ouellette in Munro, 2013).

Other portions of transcript which contributed to the emergence of this category are below.

> *'One of the ways the academic community builds its quality is through self-criticism. I think it can take it too far and I think it can be horribly painful, but the bottom line is if you don't examine the holes or the false statements, or the statements that don't have any backing then they just carry on, and that's kind of low quality. A lot of the statements which are made about NLP and are trundled out under the guise of NLP have no basis whatsoever they are nice marketing statements, no wonder NLP is accused of psychobabble.'* (Participant 9, 24:30).

> *'What it's missing is the fourth condition which is some form of aggregation.' (The first three being diversity, autonomy and decentralisation)* (Participant 15 2:01:56)

> *'That's okay that's how I see NLP now, I see it as being a bit of a dog's breakfast.'* (Participant 5 24:30)

8. All practice generally being associated with worst practice

Often what NLP participants regarded as good NLP practice could not get traction because those outside of the NLP community would immediately associate their professional practice with the worst that NLP had to offer which was often much more visible to the professional and general public. This was a consistent theme.

> *'So most NLP people don't miss-market but there's enough who do that create the bad publicity for us and so what we lack is a community that can police itself and kick out those who are doing the misrepresentations.'* (Participant 7, 24:30).

'Once we're in a situation where it's more acceptable, there will be more people looking at it as an option who, maybe haven't even heard of NLP at the moment, but it will be more available from an educational perspective and they won't go on Wikipedia and see a negative story on there, which is what we've got at the moment, of course.' (Participant 6 18:15)

'Peter's point though is valid. There is a real sense of "fake" associated with the founders and many of the enthusiasts of NLP – and it is an issue. Try typing: how do I become a master NLP practitioner into Google.' (Munro in Munro 2013)

'Although the originators of NLP didn't view "constructed" thoughts as lies, this notion has become commonplace, leading many NLP practitioners to claim that it is possible to gain a useful insight into whether someone is lying from their eye-movements.' Wiseman, Watt, Ten Brinke, Porter, Couper, & Rankin. (2012).

Implications for the use of NLP in coaching psychology

Participant 12 made the very interesting point that the fragmentation of NLP and many aspects outlined in this theory whilst problematical from one perspective are also directly responsible for its continuing popularity.

'While the nature of NLP has led to the fragmentation and issues that the field currently has, I believe it may have also been directly responsible for NLP being a huge and successful field. I say this to mean that NLP was always commercial, eschewed science (while borrowing eclectically and heavily from it) and didn't try to self-regulate. This meant it has really become quite a big field over the last 40 years. There aren't many other personal development modalities that have quite so many trainers, so many practitioners and made such a huge impact across so many domains. You find NLP now being used in or accepted by HR, Leadership, Coaching, Psychotherapy, Training, Education, Negotiation etc. etc. Indeed, I can't think of another Personal Development modality that is as big or as extant. So while the commercialisation etc. of NLP has been bad from one perspective it has helped the promulgation of NLP, it's take up by Trainers (looking to make a buck doing something they've become infatuated in) and its spread around the world.' (Personal communication, 15 June, 2015 00:48)

I was asked by my supervisors to account for this popularity of NLP in my dissertation after my theory of NLP had emerged from the research. Using my own understanding both from 20 years of NLP practice and this research I developed the acronym P.E.A.S. NLP thus has continued, I believe, despite its inconsistency on account of the following attractive variables which indeed 'satisfy' customers:

P. **P**rocess oriented, **P**ragmatic, **P**ositive, **P**layful, **P**henomenological, eliciting **P**atterns, and **P**racticing within the **P**resuppositions of NLP.

E. **E**clectic, **E**xperimental, **E**xperiential, with a focus on obtaining **E**legance/ **E**cology in all practitioners do.

A. Focused on **A**pplication rather than theorising, however evidence for the effectiveness of such application is mainly **A**necdotal.

S. **S**ystemic in orientation with a strong emphasis on **S**ales in the market place for ideas and utility. A focus on **S**tructure rather than content.

This grounded theory of NLP can be represented very generally as a Venn diagram, see Figure 1. If as this theory suggests the interaction of these defining variables is stable and therefore predictive of NLP practice in the future, when using NLP as a coaching psychologist there are certain themes one should be aware of.

1. Without a standard definition of what constitutes NLP and what does not, as

well as a standard curriculum which supports such a definition, the term NLP is effectively meaningless.

2. NLP continues to be both epistemologically and methodologically incoherent. Burgess, (2014) attempts to explicate exactly what NLP modelling is. In pointing out the 'real' NLP modeling of Co-Founder John Grinder is only one of thirteen methods of NLP modeling, she is concerned her work will only interest a fraction within the global NLP community. Such intuition concerning the culture of NLP is reflected by participant 1 who said; *'I didn't get anything back, nobody is ready willing to really grapple with the serious questions in NLP.'* (Participant 1, 18:40). Any coaching psychologist wish-

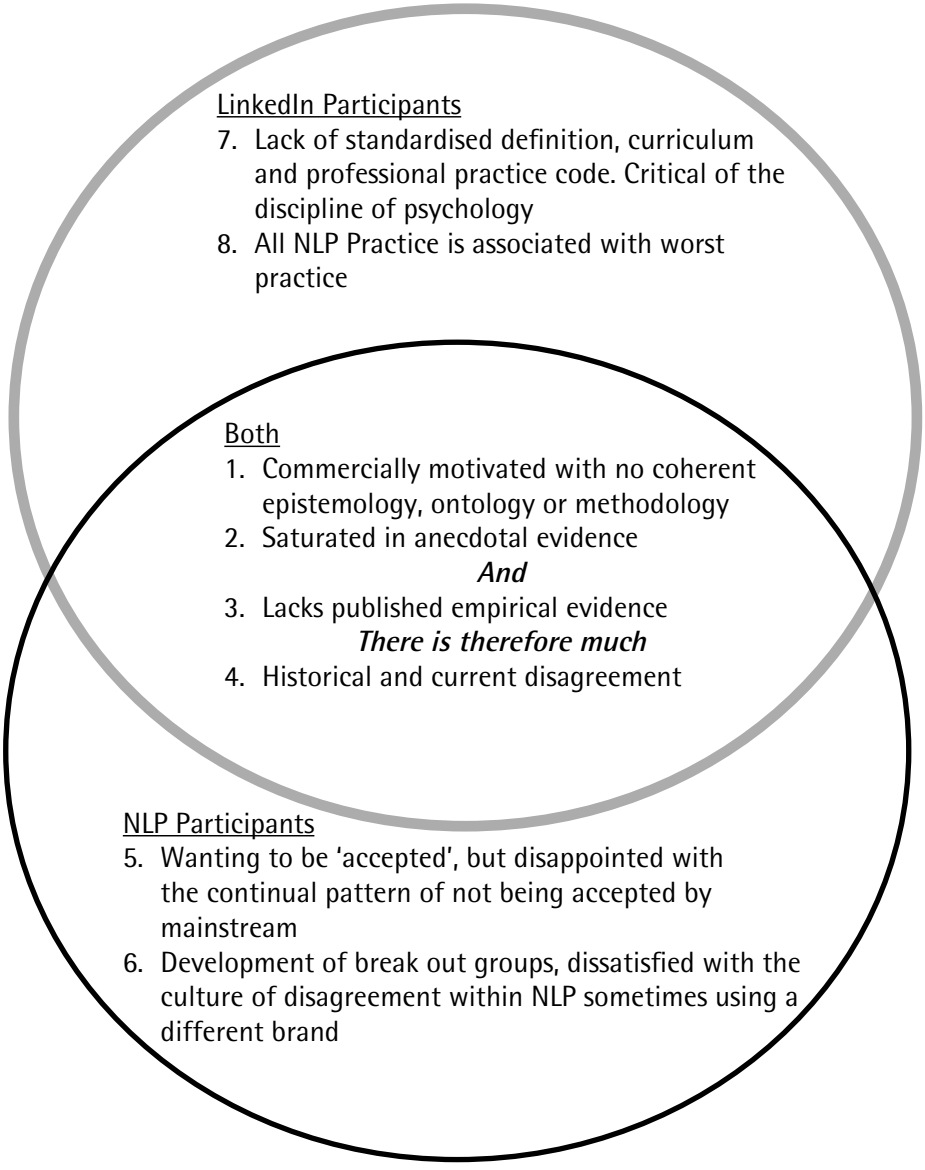

Figure 1: Venn diagram showing 8 defining categories of NLP

ing to cite their practice as NLP would need to do so from a standpoint of much greater epistemological and methodological coherence than is current within the NLP community.

3. Whilst Briner points out concerning the coaching industry generally: 'Given the limited evidence for coaching, some of the claims made by the coaching industry as a whole are fairly incredible.' (Briner, 2012, p9) he is unequivocal concerning the need to test the claims we make publically, pointing out; 'So, does coaching work or is it dodgy? I don't think we yet have a clear answer to that question. But I do know what's really dodgy. And that's not to care.' (Briner, 2012, p11). This theory of NLP suggests that despite the rhetoric concerning the testing of NLP patterns robustly and such processes being an implicit part of the methodology of modeling, no such activity takes place within the NLP community currently on a regular basis.

Conclusion

The special group in coaching psychology in the UK was formed in response to concerns about untrained or poorly trained coaches, and the related need to promote improved standards of practice for the benefit of the profession of coaching, coaches, their clients and the public at large. It is little surprise that so much of NLP coaching practice 'satisfies' as it is based in psychology. As Derks points out:

> *'Before "NLP" existed, people were confronted with the Meta Model, the 4Tuple, the Milton Model and the Satir categories. But after putting these inside the magical box, it was the box that drew all the attention. Now people started to argue about the box, its color, its size, how it compared to other boxes and whether it was really new and whether it was ethical. For instance, instead of asking if the use of anchors is supported by scientific research, people wonder if "NLP" is scientifically sound. But anchors are just another name for classical conditioning, something based on the Pavlovian paradigm'* (Derks, 2000).

Coaching modalities/communities such as meta coaching and clean coaching have emerged from NLP, however have made more precise distinctions ensuring they are not aligned with NLP coaching and the possible adverse effects that could have. These new modalities have already begun to flirt with the academic community and have demonstrated not just the ability to publish, but also the intention to support their modalities with a much more coherent epistemology and methodology.

When a coaching psychologist makes use of NLP patterns outside of such modalities he or she would do well to align such work with that which has been more thoroughly discussed in the academic literature and indeed as Einspruch and Forman suggested '… these practitioners would provide a service to the field by presenting their data in the literature so they may be critically evaluated.' (Einspruch & Forman, 1985. p.590)

The fact that NLP as a modality has followed both 'mummy and daddy', and ever since the Sharpley reviews of the 1980s chosen to avoid the difficult discussions and not publish findings in the appropriate academic journals is problematical for the modern coaching psychologist. It could also be interpreted as compelling evidence the NLP coaching community does 'not care' to use Briner's words concerning the important task of validating our coaching interventions and discussing the parameters of such validation within the academic coaching literature.

Indeed one of Sharpley's conclusions following his reviews of NLP in the 1980's still seems incredibly fair and to the point:

> 'Perhaps NLP principles are not amenable to research evaluation. This does not necessarily reduce NLP to worthlessness for counselling practice. Rather, it puts NLP in the same category as psychoa-

> nalysis, that is, with principles not easily demonstrated in laboratory settings but, nevertheless, strongly supported by clinicians in the field. Not every therapy has to undergo the rigorous testing that is characteristic of the more behavioural approaches to counseling to be of use to the therapeutic community, but failure to produce data that support a particular theory from controlled studies does relegate that theory to questionable status in terms of professional accountability.' (Sharpley, 1987, p.105).

As a piece of action research it became clear to me at the end as a chartered psychologist I needed to step up to the mark on this account. However unless NLP as a modality does so too the future, though commercially attractive, will always be ethically and professionally problematical.

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The British Psychological Society.
Master trainer of NLP with International Association of NLP Institutes.
Accredited Master Executive Coach with Association for Coaching.

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Book Review

The Coaching Relationship in Practice
Geoff Pelham
Sage Publications Ltd, London 2016
ISBN: 978-1446275-122
Reviewed by Neil Atkinson

Dr Geoff Pelham aims to provide a foundation resource for anyone who wishes to explore the psychology of coaching. It could be a core text for those in training to be a coach or extending their practice from psychotherapy or counselling into coaching; it will equally be of interest to qualified coaches or for anyone interested in how people grow and develop.

The book takes the reader on a journey through a developing understanding of psychological aspects of the relationship between coach and coachee, covering key areas and concepts that the author has distilled from a lifetime of study and experience. Dr Pelham brings a deep understanding and personal insights to the subject from his study, training and practice in psychotherapy (especially Gestalt, psychodynamic and existential approaches) and through his teaching and supervision of coaching.

From the start the book is written in an engaging, down-to-earth, person-to-person style that creates a 'relationship' with the reader by a refreshing use of personal experience and prompting questions to stimulate the reader's reflections. An important caveat appears early on about the need for the prospective coach to commit to personal learning and development in order to engage in this kind of deeper practice: 'personal development work sets the bar for professional practice at the relational level'.

The first two chapters start with the basics of preparing for coaching practice and introduce a Gestalt framework as a way of understanding and structuring the process. Chapters 3 and 4 move deeper into psychological aspects of the relationship between coach and coachee pointing up how the coachee can be made more aware of themselves and the importance of self-awareness also for the coach. There is a good discussion of the difference between counselling/psychotherapy and coaching. The idea of 'felt sense' (after Gendlin 2003) is introduced as an important source of 'data' or insight for both coach and coachee. This is developed further in chapter 5 presenting a fascinating exposition of some ideas set out by Heidegger: although a notoriously difficult philosophy the author here presents in an accessible way key ideas about 'mood' as conditioning perception and understanding.

Chapters 5 and 6 broaden out into the wider context of relationships with others, culture and diversity and chapter 7 explores the contextual relationship with organisations in which the coachee may be working. Two further chapters discuss the value of supervision for personal development of the coach and their developing coaching practice and consideration of evidence-based practice. The conclusion 'Putting your signature on it' encourages the coach to find their own authentic style, to relate to the coachee in their own way, deploying their skills and understanding of the coachee in a way that resonates with them.

Dr Pelham draws predominantly from a Gestalt perspective and those trained in the person centred approach may find that there is less here on the influence of Carl Rogers. A passing reference to Rogers' concept of 'congruence' in the therapeutic relationship, characterised as 'being real in the relationship' possibly glosses over the complexity of this central idea as it was developed by Rogers and subsequently. For example Cornelius-White (2007) in explaining congruence points to presence and spontaneous

responsiveness, as well as bodily awareness, of the therapist.

The focus on the relationship, in the humanistic psychology tradition, has a great deal to offer coaching practice, but there is also a potential pitfall that possibly deserves more attention: the danger of empathy becoming collusion with the coachee (Blakey and Day 2012). There will sometimes be the need for a reality check and challenge to the coachee's construction of their situation and recognition that they are engaged in co-creation of their relationships, both with the coach and with others, including their work organisation.

At 160 pages this book provides a stimulating introduction to the field of relationship in coaching practice. Its value is enhanced by illustrative case studies, the personal reflections of the author, questions for consideration at the end of each chapter and a comprehensive collection of references to further reading that cover a good, representative proportion of current literature. It is particularly interesting for some of the key ideas that Dr Pelham introduces and the way in which he puts across complex psychological understanding in everyday language. It merits close and careful reading.

The Reviewer

Neil Atkinson, BA, MSc is a part time consultant and coach working with people facing work-life issues that affect their well-being and success. He studied psychology at University College North Wales Bangor and at Birkbeck College, London. After spending most of his career in public service management he trained in coaching psychology at the Metanoia Institute, London and business coaching at Henley Business School.

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Report

Special Group in Coaching Psychology Chair's Note

David Webster

Thank you, Dasha

IT IS A real pleasure to be taking over as Chair of the SGCP. I wish to thank Dasha and my committee colleagues who have made my induction so enjoyable and useful as I get to understand how things work and how we can continue to make a real difference. Dasha herself has made an invaluable contribution to the field and discipline of coaching psychology both as an academic as well as Chair of the SGCP – a huge thank you to her. We will continue to benefit from her expertise – and wish her all the very best in her future role as ICPR UK Co-ordinating Editor.

Our leadership role

What drew me to become more involved in the SGCP and with the committee is the need for a greater rigor, accountability and continued integrity to the way in which we as coaching psychologists work with clients; and the aspiration we all have to more firmly connect theory with practice, in ways which are helpful to us and those we support. In some areas of the coaching profession these things are sorely lacking and this is why, as coaching psychologists we need continue to take a leadership role.

Our rich resource: we need you

For us all to continue this leadership work, we as a committee, need your help. We need to make the most of the rich resources present in the SGCP. The network of which you are a part is over 2200 strong and our LinkedIn Group stands at around 5000. This reflects the broad appeal the SGCP has for

psychologists across the professional spectrum and non-psychologists with a strong professional interest in coaching. This is a rich resource from which we can all draw.

So, how can you get involved and contribute to this leadership imperative? This is, of course, an ongoing question for all of us, yet here are a three suggestions that your Committee might make:

- **Come together for the SGCP Conference on 8-9 December 2016 in London.** The theme this year is 'Creating a new sustainability in uncertain times'. For many of our clients – and whatever kinds of clients they are – how to create and sustain good mental and emotional health is a common concern. Their contexts are increasingly complex and dynamic – whether they are affected by war, economic and social upheaval, or are leading systems change in organisations. Retaining our own wellbeing, as we help others, is also critical. We shall be offering two practical workshops on 8 December and an all-day conference on 9 December with streams on wellbeing, leadership and research.

We look forward to you coming along to the conference and indeed submitting your work, thinking and experiences from which others can learn.

- **Come and join the SGCP Committee.** We are actively seeking new members with the skills, ideas and enthusiasm to help us lead. It is, as I have found already myself, a great way to learn and understand more about our discipline but also to help shape and guide it, as it evolves. You could be a student, an experienced psychologist, or a business person with leadership experience – all are welcome. You could find yourself at the centre of our effort to create an evidence base from which we can all draw, through the SGCP Research Programme & Network, which Sarah Corrie so expertly leads; contributing to a vibrant social media presence; organisation events which bring our network and community closer together; or creating a clear development pathway for coaching psychologists. If you are interested in finding out more, do get in touch. We can share more about committee work, and the specific needs we have, as well as the process by which committee members are elected by the membership. We look forward to hearing from you.
- **Get involved in some great learning opportunities**: the Peer Practice Groups led by Margaret MacAfee are an active and thriving community; and Andy Colville has doubled the number of workshops available to us – now 15 across the country – with topics as diverse as improvisation and change management. Once again, we look forward hearing from you or seeing you there.

There is much to do to deliver on our strategic plans and respond to the feedback you have shared with us over the last year and we look forward to reporting more progress as 2016/17 unfolds. In the meantime, we look forward to hearing from you.

David Webster

Report

Interest Group in Coaching Psychology News

Vicki de Prazer

I HAVE NOW BEEN in the Convenor role for almost six months and am very pleased to report on the achievements of Australian Coaching Psychology Interest Group (CPIG), National committee to date.

In line with our Strategic Vision for, 'Excellence in Coaching', and our mission to explore and expand the contribution of psychology to best practice coaching within all areas of coaching; we have two Panel Symposiums in the APS 50th Anniversary Congress program. The key message presented and explored in each symposium is outlined below.

'This forum will explore the unique contribution of coaching to leadership development, and how coaching might develop to meet the new and emerging needs of leaders, organisations and society into the future. The role of systemic, developmental and multidisciplinary approaches to coaching will be considered. The implications for coach training, evidence based practice, and the development of knowledge and research will be discussed. In an uncertain, ambiguous and volatile world, the role of professional change agents as expert bearers of proprietary knowledge is likely to diminish. Those involved in assisting others to meet complex challenges will need to be adept at collaboratively exploring novel problem landscapes, designing experimental interventions and assessing impact in an ongoing and iterative way.'

'This forum will explore the unique contribution of coaching in enhancing health and wellbeing, leadership development, etc. in an age of complexity and rapid change;

and how coaching psychology contributes to an understanding of what drives us to achieve in all these diverse areas. How exploring cognitions, emotions and behaviour through a different lens, a coaching lens brings psychologist working across different domains into a space where a dialogue advancing the role of psychologist can thrive. In line with the Congress theme 'Psychology United for the Future', Psychologists, utilising the skills, knowledge base and competencies that inform the process of coaching; are drawing on evidence from across a range psychological domains; building a united professional future.'

http://www.2016congress.com.au/
13-16 September 2016

CPIG has further pursued our goal of marketing psychology in coaching practice and established a relationship with a leading National Australian newspaper the Financial Review and will be contributing an article each month for a year.

International networking

While we have been working on marketing coaching psychology in Australia, we continue to be committed to enhancing our relations with coaching globally; relationship building, seeking collaboration and communication around ideas, projects, research, innovation and professional development with the ICPR community.

We are very pleased to have now signed a memorandum of understanding with ICP and look forward to expanding communication between our organisations.

We have also started communications with the Coaching Institute at Harvard Medical School to explore networking and professional exchange.

Again I make a call to you to consider contributing to the ICPR itself. The value of this journal is only as great as its contributions – and I encourage you to make contact either with myself or with our Australian ICPR editor, Prof Sandy Gordon at sandy.gordon@uwa.edu.au. We would warmly welcome an enquiry.

Best wishes to all,

Vicki de Prazer
National Convener
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Achievement Award for Distinguished Contributions to Coaching Psychology

Call for Nominations. Closing date 14 October 2016.

This high profile achievement award is aimed at psychologists who have made an outstanding contribution to coaching psychology.

The award is open to any psychologist working in the area of coaching psychology.

The award is made in recognition of the achievements of a psychologist who is either currently making, or who has already made, an unusually significant contribution to the field of coaching psychology.

The winner of the Distinguished Contributions Award winner will receive:

- A complimentary place at the SGCP 6th European Coaching Psychology Conference 2016[1] where the award will be presented
- A £200 prize

The nomination process:

- Nominees need to be a member of the SGCP and have at least Graduate Basis for Chartership with the Society
- Nominations will only be accepted for named individuals
- Nominations for this award can be made by a member of the SGCP. However, people cannot nominate themselves
- Nominations should take the form of a narrative (max. 250 words) supported by two referees prepared to provide testimony if the nomination is short-listed

Please note:

- An individual can only receive this award once
- Up to one award winner only will be selected to receive this award in any one year
- An unsuccessful nominee will not be reconsidered for two years after the initial nomination (for example, a person nominated in 2016 would not be eligible for reconsideration until 2018).
- Individuals will not be considered for more than one SGCP award in any one year

The award winner will be selected by an Awards Committee whose decision is final.

The award will be presented at the SGCP 6th European Coaching Psychology Conference which will take place on 9 December 2016. The recipient should ensure that they are able to attend the Conference.

Nomination forms are available from www.sgcp.org.uk

Submissions should be sent to annjanette.wells@bps.org.uk

[1]NB: Attendance at the conference will be free of charge for the award winner. However, it will be the responsibility of the award winner to cover their travel costs, accommodation and any other expenses incurred.

Special Group in Coaching Psychology Research Awards

Call for Nominations. Closing date 14 October 2016.

As part of our commitment to encouraging and supporting coaching psychology research, the Special Group in Coaching Psychology offers two research awards: (i) an award for academic or practitioner coaching psychologists, and (ii) a student project award. The awards are made in recognition of a distinguished, completed research project in coaching psychology.

The winners will receive:

- A complimentary place at the SGCP 6th European Coaching Psychology Conference 2016[1] where the award will be presented
- The opportunity to present their research at the conference
- The opportunity to promote their research through the publications edited by the SGCP
- A £200 prize

The recipient of the academic or practitioner award is likely to be a member of the SGCP (although this is not essential). The recipient of the student award will be eligible for student status of the British Psychological Society and membership of the SGCP and is currently, or has been within the last two years on an undergraduate, postgraduate or doctoral programme of study.

Submissions

Submissions for these awards can be made by the person who has completed the research study or by a third party who wishes to recommend the individual for the research award. Nominations will only be accepted for named individuals.

The awards will be made to the persons whose research is deemed to make the most valuable contribution to the field of coaching psychology. Innovation will be considered alongside scientific rigour in the conception, design and analysis of the study. The award winner will be selected by an Awards Committee whose decision is final.

Nominations

Nominations should consist of a succinct summary of the project (approximately 2,000 words) with a clear indication of the results obtained as well as a statement relating to impact. The judges reserve the right to request data to substantiate the findings reported. Nominations should also state why the project is worthy of consideration for the relevant award. If you are the proposer of your own research study, you will need to provide contact details of a third party who can verify the details of the project you are submitting.

The project must represent the independent work of the researcher. In the case of the student award the submission must be accompanied by a reference from the student's supervisor.

The winners will be notified by late October 2016. The awards will be presented at the Conference and the recipients should ensure that they are able to attend.

Nomination forms are available from www.sgcp.org.uk

Submissions should be sent to annjanette.wells@bps.org.uk

Please note that individuals will not be considered for more than one SGCP award in any one year.

[1]NB: Attendance at the conference will be free of charge for the award winner. However, it will be the responsibility of the award winner to cover their travel costs, accommodation and any other expenses incurred.

4. Online submission process

(1) All manuscripts must be submitted to a Co-ordinating Editor by email to:
Roger Hamill (UK): icpreditoruk@gmail.com
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.
- Figures can be included at the end of the document or attached as separate files, carefully labelled in initial capital/lower case lettering with symbols in a form consistent with text use. Unnecessary background patterns, lines and shading should be avoided. Captions should be listed on a separate page. The resolution of digital images must be at least 300 dpi.
- For articles containing original scientific research, a structured abstract of up to 250 words should be included with the headings: Objectives, Design, Methods, Results, Conclusions. Review articles should use these headings: Purpose, Methods, Results, Conclusions.
- Overall, the presentation of papers should conform to the British Psychological Society's Style Guide (available at www.bps.org.uk/publications/publications_home.cfm in PDF format). Non-discriminatory language should be used throughout. Spelling should be Anglicised when appropriate. Text should be concise and written for an international readership of applied psychologists. Sensationalist and unsubstantiated views are discouraged. Abbreviations, acronyms and unfamiliar specialist terms should be explained in the text on first use.
- Particular care should be taken to ensure that references are accurate and complete. Give all journal titles in full. Referencing should follow BPS formats. For example:
  Billington, T. (2000). *Separating, losing and excluding children: Narratives of difference*. London: Routledge/Falmer.
  Elliott, J.G. (2000). Dynamic assessment in educational contexts: Purpose and promise. In C. Lidz & J.G. Elliott (Eds.), *Dynamic assessment: Prevailing models and applications* (pp.713–740). New York: J.A.I. Press.
  Palmer, S. & Whybrow, A. (2006). The coaching psychology movement and its development within the British Psychological Society. *International Coaching Psychology Review 1*(1), 5–11.
- SI units must be used for all measurements, rounded off to practical values if appropriate, with the Imperial equivalent in parentheses.
- In normal circumstances, effect size should be incorporated.
- Authors are requested to avoid the use of sexist language.
- Authors are responsible for acquiring written permission to publish lengthy quotations, illustrations, etc. for which they do not own copyright.

6. Brief reports

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

7. Publication ethics

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

8. Supplementary data

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

9. Post acceptance

PDF page proofs are sent to authors via email for correction of typesetting but not for rewriting or the introduction of new material. Corrections at this stage in production due to errors made by an author may incur a fee payable by the author or their institution.

10. Copyright

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

11. Checklist of requirements

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

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9 771750 276007 01
ISSN 1750-2764