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Continued on inside back cover.

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Editorial

Roger Hamill & Sandy Gordon

TO PARAPHRASE Mark Twain, it transpires that the report of my (RH) retirement was an exaggeration! Due to a set of unforeseen circumstances it turns out that I will remain in the role of UK Coordinating Editor a little longer than anticipated when I announced that I was handing over the reins in the September 2016 issue. I count it a privilege to continue this involvement as it gives me such an insight in to the hard work and commitment provided by our authors, reviewers and print preparation teams alike to ensure the continued successful publication of the *International Coaching Psychology Review*.

This editorial is being written in the days after the 2016 Annual Conference of the BPS Special Group in Coaching Psychology which took place on 8 and 9 December at the Bloomsbury Holiday Inn, London. The theme of the conference was 'Creating Sustainability in Uncertain Times', and delegates were engaged and informed by a range of presentations on topics of great relevance to those concerned about caring for clients and the self when coaching in an increasingly VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world.

It is interesting to note that each of the articles in this current issue address a very similar theme of promoting sustainability in challenging circumstances, whether that be proactively by considering how to build resilience or develop effective supervision dynamics, or more reactively in the face of unexpected downturns in career trajectories. For example, in our first article, Carmelina Lawton-Smith adopts a qualitative, grounded theory approach to explore perspectives on coaching for leadership resilience. On the basis of her findings from semi-structured interviews with eight senior leaders she recommends that the concept of coaching for resilience be widened to include a leader's resilience *capacity* (i.e. a transient resource described as the 'fuel' for resilience) as well as well as the more traditional focus on their longer term *capabilities* (i.e. attributes, skills and strategies). She argues persuasively that to focus solely on the latter is to limit the benefit that coaching may bring to enhancing leadership resilience that is truly sustainable.

Our second article is a qualitative study by Lynne McCormack, Sleiman Abou-Hamdan and Stephen Joseph in which they use an interpretative phenomenological analysis approach to examine the responses of four high functioning executives who experienced 'career derailment' (i.e. involuntary demotion or redundancy). McCormack et al. identify superordinate themes that illuminate the participants' lived experience of moving through the 'derailment' process from early phases of self-doubt, blame and feeling victimised, to a place where internal agency can be reclaimed through a process of re-appraisal and personal growth. The authors argue that better understanding of these later phases of reframing and repurposing will allow coaching psychologists to be all the more effective in guiding their clients through times of challenge and psychological distress.

Next comes Erik De Haan's large-scale international survey on trust and safety in coaching supervision. Developing a strong supervision alliance is key to promoting best coaching practice in a number of ways, not least in providing a safe space in which the supervisee coach can critically reflect upon their own practice as a step towards sustaining professional and personal development. However, as De Haan points out,

there are many obstacles to supervisees feeling truly safe to reveal key issues and vulnerabilities in such a context. This article provides some fascinating insights into how differences in gender, age and coaching experience may influence perceptions of trust and safety in supervision.

The last substantive article in this issue is another thought-provoking piece on supervision, in which J. Thomas Tkach and Joel DiGirolamo provide a fascinating review of the relevant literature to provide an international overview of the state of coaching supervision today. They introduce a number of different supervision models, discuss potential barriers to good supervision and offer interesting thoughts on potential future directions for supervision practice and research.

We finish, as usual, with the reports from David Webster, the BPS Special Group in Coaching Psychology Chair, and Vicki dePrazer, APS Interest Group in Coaching Convenor.

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Coaching for leadership resilience: An integrated approach

Carmelina Lawton Smith

Objectives: *Existing approaches to coaching leaders for resilience are fragmented and often drawn from the developmental or clinical context but little empirical research has investigated the leadership perspective on resilience. The objective of this study was to establish how leaders conceptualise resilience in their context in order to inform approaches to enhancing and supporting the growth of resilience by coaches working with this target group.*

Design: *This constructivist grounded theory study was set within a pragmatic paradigm and gathered qualitative interview data to examine the concept of resilience from a leadership perspective.*

Methods: *Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight senior leaders who had been coached by seven different coaches to gather their perspective on the meaning of resilience in leadership.*

Results: *Resilience emerged as operating differently in relation to the past, the present and the future. Leaders in this study also described resilience as a 'resource' or fuel, which suggests that working with skills alone may not be sufficient to enhance resilience. A wider conceptualisation of resilience is proposed that includes both capabilities and the capacity for resilience. Capabilities encompass skills or strategies, while capacity is a more transient resource. Values emerged as important and may be an area for future investigation.*

Conclusions: *Conceptualising resilience as having a stable capability component and a more transient capacity element has implications for coaching practices aimed at enhancing resilience in the leadership context. It suggests that working with capabilities alone may have a limited impact and that coaches wishing to enhance resilience may want to address the more transient 'capacity' element as well as values.*

Keywords: *Resilience, coaching, leadership, resources, values, time perspective*

COACHING for resilience has become a topic of considerable interest in recent years as a way to support leaders in dealing with the challenging working environment and often highly volatile organisational settings (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Heifetz et al., 2009). Resilience has been identified as a valuable characteristic in leadership (Elle, 2011), and a number of coaching approaches have been shown to influence resilience. Grant et al. (2009) found that a solution focused coaching programme enhanced manager resilience, and Sherlock-Storey et al. (2013) implemented a coaching programme with middle-managers which led to increases in reported resilience post coaching. Both these studies used very different approaches and the field remains fragmented, with many outstanding issues. Two issues are especially pertinent to coaching and are the focus of this study.

The first is that most existing resilience research is drawn from the developmental or clinical field and little work addresses the leadership clients who more commonly take up coaching. Resilience in adult non-clinical groups has only recently become of wider interest and often builds on the work from other sectors (Luthans et al., 2006), yet it is uncertain if all research from these contexts is equally applicable to the leadership population. For example, the concept of mental toughness is often researched in the sporting context, yet lessons are frequently extrapolated to organisational settings (Clough & Strycharczyk, 2012). In organisational settings

much of the existing work is confined to military or nursing literature (Tusaie & Dyer, 2004; Bartone, 2006; Maddi, 2007; Seligman, 2011) and deals with adversity and coping skills. However, there has been limited primary research on resilience with leaders specifically, especially with individuals who are not defined as 'under stress' or subject to a clinical diagnosis. As a result, it is not clear to what degree existing methods and understanding of resilience are appropriate for the coaching of leaders in organisational settings. It would be of value to gather more focused data about how the leadership population conceptualise resilience, in order to generate potential new approaches that might more effectively address this particular group when being coached.

The second problem for coaches is the varied definitions and conceptualisations of resilience that exist. Luthans (2002, p.702) proposes that resilience in leadership is defined as 'the capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, conflict, failure, or even positive events, progress and increased responsibility'. This idea of 'bounce-back' is common, yet authors are often vague in defining if this bounce-back reflects emotional stability, performance or something else. Zautra et al. (2008) highlight two potential definitions of resilience, the first being 'recovery' and the second being 'sustainability'. They argue that while recovery ensures survival it may not be enough to support wellbeing, and that sustainability, with a focus on the continued positive pursuit of goals, is essential to resilience. A similar point is made by Bonnano (2004, p.20), arguing that 'resilience reflects the ability to maintain a stable equilibrium' and should be distinguished from the idea of recovery. It might be argued that a sustainability conceptualisation is more appropriate for the scope of coaching than the recovery definition.

There are also significant ambiguities in how researchers approach the concept of resilience (Zautra et al., 2008; Luthar et al., 2000) as research on resilience sometimes measures the process and sometimes the outcome. For example, Smith et al. (2008) included questionnaire items that clearly asked about outcomes (e.g. 'I tend to bounce back quickly from hard times'). Yet others measure the processes that might increase the chances of such an outcome, asking questions such as 'I feel that I am optimistic and concentrate on the positives in most situations' (Baruth & Carroll, 2002). This led Zautra et al. (2008) to call for resilient 'outcomes' to be clearly differentiated from the 'processes' that are likely to increase the 'likelihood of those outcomes' (p.45). Coaching impact studies show similar disparities. Franklin & Doran (2009) employed the Resilience Scale for Adults (RSA) (Friborg et al., 2005), Sherlock–Storey et al. (2013) used the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PsyCap) (Luthans et al., 2007), and Grant et al. (2009) employed the Cognitive Hardiness Scale (Nowack, 1990). Each of these scales reflects a very different conception of resilience as the RSA has a strong focus on social aspects while the PsyCap addresses the internal factors of confidence (self-efficacy), optimism, hope and resilience.

The situation is further confused by the breadth of attributes often linked to resilience that frequently include attitudes, skills, traits, some that might be considered states, and even virtues (Richardson, 2002). Such broad scope can prove confusing for the coach looking to work with resilience. In organisational settings the focus has often been on developing scales to measure the presence or absence of resilience or to define the attributes of the resilient leader (Bartone, 2006; Reivich & Shatté, 2002; Clough et al., 2002). This means that much research treats resilience purely as a quantifiable and measurable attribute. Conger (1998) highlights how an over-reliance on quantitative approaches to leadership studies imposes potential limitations such as the failure to appreciate the

impact of context. It is argued that qualitative data can shed light on such situations, and in the coaching context this may provide valuable insights into how to work with resilience by gaining a perspective on leadership meaning-making of the construct. Luthar and Brown (2007) highlight the need for additional qualitative research into resilience, which represents a clear gap in existing literature. Recent research by Lawton Smith (2015) and Timson (2015) has started to rectify this situation in order to inform coaching practice, and this study aims to further contribute to our understanding of leadership resilience by gathering qualitative data from leaders in organisations about their experiences of resilience. This will help to enlighten how coaching clients actually conceptualise and define resilience, this may enable coaches to communicate more effectively with leadership clients on this topic.

The aim of the study was therefore to understand how leaders experience and conceptualise resilience to help inform potential coaching approaches to enhancing leadership resilience.

The paper will begin with a review of three alternative conceptions of resilience and critically assess their value in a leadership context. It will then describe a grounded theory study that gathered experiences from leaders in relation to resilience. The emergent data will be discussed and an integrated model will be proposed that reflects how leaders experience resilience. Recommendations for coaching practice will then be explored and limitations highlighted.

Approaches to resilience

The breadth of debate on how to define resilience (Cooper et al., 2013) has caused some to criticise the concept as being 'poorly defined' (Luthar et al., 2000) and existing literature can be divided broadly into three strands asset, systemic and developmental. While not mutually exclusive, these present three perspectives on how to work with resilience.

Asset approaches attempt to identify the personal attributes within the individual that support resilience, and suggest that working with these attributes can increase resilience. By contrast, systemic approaches often include external factors beyond the individual and highlight the need to include such things as positive relationships (Masten & Reed, 2005) and contextual factors, stressing the importance of dynamic interactions between elements inside and outside the individual. Both asset and systemic approaches try to sub-divide resilience into component parts, in contrast to the developmental approach that takes a more holistic perspective. From a developmental perspective, resilience is conceived as evolution that brings greater adaptability for future adversity (Henning, 2011). The following section summarises some of the research within each of these areas so that coaching can learn lessons from other perspectives.

The asset approach

Asset approaches often rely on quantitative measures, the implication being that resilience can be measured by defining the component parts. The resulting measure can identify potential gaps which can be addressed through interventions such as coaching to enhance resilience. The main issue for coaches is defining which attributes to work with. Reivich and Shatté (2002) suggested that self-efficacy, emotion regulation, impulse control, causal analysis, realistic optimism, empathy and 'reaching out' are the seven critical factors to build to enhance resilience. Among the assets identified by others are cognitive flexibility, optimism, positive future orientation, hardiness, self-understanding, interpersonal understanding, internal locus of control, high self-esteem, emotional control, sociability, active coping, spirituality and many more (Skodol, 2010; Kent & Davis, 2010). The Mental Toughness Questionnaire has also been linked to resilience and measures the attitudes of commitment, con-

trol, challenge and confidence (Clough et al., 2002). Wanberg and Banas (2000) studied the degree to which resilience was a predictor of openness to organisational change and measured resilience as a composite of self-esteem, optimism and perceived control. This exemplifies the difficulties of gaining a clear understanding of what is meant by resilience, yet this 'list-like' approach is common. In fact, the list of relevant attributes seems almost endless when different authors and contexts are reviewed.

This fragmentation means that coaching studies show great variability in what is measured as an indicator of resilience and these measures are often drawn from different fields of research. Spence et al. (2008) were able to combine mindfulness training with coaching, and participants who received mindfulness training before coaching reported decreases in depression and anxiety as measured by the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). By contrast, Sherlock-Storey et al. (2013) implemented a brief coaching programme to develop seven resilience areas: goal setting; explanatory style; using strengths; social support; self-care; self-efficacy; and attaining perspective. The programme consisted of three 90-minute coaching sessions over a six-week period and increases were found in resilience post coaching, measured using the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (Luthans et al., 2007). It is clear that a number of alternative coaching paradigms can show an impact on resilience, but research studies show wide variations in what they actually measure, despite all claiming to measure resilience. Such variability can make it difficult to discuss and address this concept with the leadership population, who may find the inconsistency confusing. If coaching seeks a joint meaning-making with clients, it would seem important to understand the client's perspective so that coaches 'can speak the same language' as their clients.

Conceptualising resilience as a set of assets that can be defined and measured raises two potential issues. Firstly, there appears to be little consensus on what attributes, characteristics or traits should form part of the measure. This can create confusion with the intended audience and limit their potential engagement. The language is often inaccessible and the construct becomes a basket of attributes with little coherence or meaning to the population being addressed.

Secondly, such an approach implies that these assets, once gained, should endure. The premise that test–retest can prove an increase in resilience is founded on a belief that the skills of resilience are permanent and not context specific. This would mean that an individual with 'a high resilience score' should be resilient in all contexts, but also that resilience would be consistent over time. One might then question if this is always the case.

From an organisational perspective, reducing resilience to a defined list of attributes does bring apparent clarity to a complex concept. On the other hand, making resilience quantifiable and simple may be convenient but prove ineffective. Coaching based only on a defined list of assets may have limited impact if the language does not reflect the phenomenological nature of how the construct is experienced and perceived by the leadership population, who may not identify with the often directive model presented.

The systemic approach

Despite the extensive work on individual characteristics many argue for a more dynamic approach as evidence suggests resilience involves the integration and interaction of not only internal psychological and biological indicators, but also factors external to the individual such as social support (Tusaie & Dyer, 2004; Kent & Davis, 2010). Some asset models do include social support together with confidence, purposefulness, adaptability (Cooper et al.,

2013), but the potential interactions are not elaborated. One approach that seeks to explain such dynamic interrelationships is the 'conservation of resources model' (Hobfoll, 2002). In proposing a theory to explain diverse reactions to stress Hobfoll (1989) suggests that individuals act to build and conserve 'resources'. Resources are aspects important to the individual and can include such things as mastery, self-esteem or socio-economic status. If the environment threatens the depletion of such resources then it is experienced as stress. This more dynamic model therefore treats resilience as part of the wider process of maintaining wellbeing.

Such a perspective aligns well with the complex adaptive systems (CAS) perspective (O'Conner & Cavanagh, 2013) that was used to evaluate a leadership coaching programme where wellbeing, goal attainment and transformational leadership behaviours all saw rises after coaching. The evaluation showed a 'ripple effect', where secondary gains were evident from those not actually being coached. Such effects suggest that simple linear relationships of cause and effect are inadequate when addressing wellbeing and resilience. This might imply that trying to deconstruct, list and measure a set of attributes is an inappropriate way to address resilience.

While seeing resilience as a dynamic process helps represent the interactions, there is a danger that a CAS perspective is too complex to be useful to practice. However, this lens may explain why apparently resilient individuals can still face issues. If resilience were a simple basket of skills and attributes, then once learnt these should always be capable of being engaged. Yet a resources perspective could explain how normally resilient individuals might experience depletion of resources due to a failure to recover and replenish the normal balance of resources. This would suggest that resilience is more transient, which might therefore question the value and use of measures.

Developmental approach

A more holistic systemic and dynamic approach is advanced from a developmental perspective. Resilience is seen as 'relative, emerging and changing in transaction with specific circumstances and challenges' (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003). The entity does not just adapt to new circumstances and add new skills; rather, it learns to become more adaptable when it meets new challenges. The process of reconstruction itself becomes easier with experience as the system becomes more malleable.

Richardson (2002) describes this holistic view of resilience as a self-actualising force grounded in transpersonal psychology, integrating the body, the mind and the spirit. According to this perspective resilience is best characterised as a self-organising system. Such approaches do not see development as an 'additive affair'; human development is 'transformational' (Henning, 2011). Such a view shows synergy with the cognitive-developmental approach to coaching (Bachkirova, 2011).

Henning refers to a 'disruption' (2011, p.445) as 'disequilibrium' that marks a transition between adult developmental stages and is characterised by a 'dilemma – and the desire to solve it'. Resilience, she argues, is the ability to weather this developmental disequilibrium. This requires a breaking down of the existing meaning-making structures and she suggests four ways to support the development of resilience: acknowledging the current developmental stage, healing the past, maintaining helpful relationships, and learning about oneself and the surrounding world. Such a perspective would suggest working with awareness, and perhaps core beliefs and values, with a greater focus on identity and the self.

It is clear that at present there is little shared understanding of how resilience is conceptualised, and this presents potential challenges for coaches. While a number of coaching approaches have been shown to be successful, they often measure resil-

ience using a tool borrowed from other disciplines and it is unclear how appropriate these may be for the leadership coaching population. Definitions and conceptualisations remain confused and, given the joint meaning-making that takes place in the coaching relationship, it would be valuable to establish how leaders who experience coaching would define resilience in their context. Such understanding would help coaches working with leadership resilience to build a common language with their clients, and this understanding might generate potentially new approaches to working with resilience in the coaching context. This research therefore aimed to establish how leaders experience and describe resilience in their world to help inform coaching decisions about how leaders can best be supported to develop greater resilience.

Research objectives

The research objective was to establish how leaders conceptualise and experience resilience to help inform coaching practice aimed at supporting the growth of leadership resilience. This would make two contributions to existing knowledge. The first was to illuminate what language leaders use when referring to resilience (this might help coaches when addressing this construct and inform potential interventions that would have resonance with their client's meaning-making); the second was to evaluate the degree of synergy with existing approaches from other areas to establish their relevance in the leadership organisational context.

Methodology

This constructivist grounded theory (GT) study was set within a pragmatic paradigm. Grounded theory has been proposed as a valuable approach to investigate leadership (Kempster & Parry, 2011) because it can 'produce a social theory of a particular phenomenon from the relational experiences of participants' (p.108). However, there remains an ongoing debate about the true nature of GT (Bryant, 2009). Mills et al. (2006) distinguish between traditional and evolved GT, identifying a number of key differences between the two. Traditional GT has an embedded assumption of discovering a 'real' reality that emerges from the data. By contrast, evolved GT takes a constructivist position and reflects the pragmatic philosophical tradition, and was considered most aligned with the philosophical position guiding this study. The aim of the research was to gather the leadership perspective on resilience, so was more aligned with a constructivist position. In adopting the constructivist GT position there is an assumption that 'society, reality and self are constructed' (Charmaz, 2006, p.7) by the actors. The actors in this process are leaders who have had coaching, and it is their meaning-making that was the focus of this study. By investigating the language and constructed meaning it was hoped to help provide coaches with knowledge that could be useful in working with leaders on resilience. Suddaby (2006) has described GT as a 'pragmatic approach' and most suited 'to efforts to understand the process by which actors construct meaning out of inter-subjective experience' (p.634). 'Usefulness' is also highlighted as a key element for a GT study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This alignment with usefulness and the construction of meaning showed a clear synergy with the pragmatic constructivist position of this study and allowed for an inductive approach.

Charmaz (2006) highlights that 'a finished grounded theory explains the studied process in new theoretical terms' (p.7). While there was significant work on resilience, there was no coherent theory that could be used by coaches from a variety of conceptual standpoints. GT would also allow the study to move beyond the pure description provided by phenomenology and produce some 'explanatory theoretical frameworks, thereby providing abstract, conceptual understanding of the studied phenomena' (Charmaz, 2006, p.6). This

might help to create a shared understanding between coaches and leaders. The aim was to gather qualitative data in order to understand the realities of leadership meaning-making and appreciate the role that context (Bryman, 2004) plays in our understanding of resilience.

Participants

Bryman advises to 'sample in terms of what is relevant to, and meaningful for your theory' (2008, p.416). This meant it was important that participants had experience of the phenomena under consideration (Morse, 2007), so that they could discuss their own experiences and thus contribute to a theory truly 'grounded' in reality. The initial request was therefore made through coaches to identify potential participants who were, or had been, in leadership positions and who:

- Completed coaching at least six months before data collection was due to start.
- Might have had experiences that required resilience.
- Had the time and interest to take part in face-to-face interviews.

The gap between completion of coaching and data collection was felt important to allow for potential resilience events to have occurred. Each of the leaders had experienced a long-term coaching engagement that was not focused on resilience *per se*. Therefore, this study was not aiming to evaluate a particular type or length of coaching; rather, it was aimed at gathering knowledge and understanding of how leaders construct their own meaning of resilience, so that in future coaches might be able to use and apply this understanding to support the growth of resilience in leaders.

A non-probability sampling approach was adopted using a snowballing approach (Bryman, 2008). Such a sample aims to identify a small number of individuals with the requisite experience to contribute to theory building, so can be considered a purposive sample (Robson, 2002). Initial requests were made by coaches to determine interest, and only after agreement did the researcher then contact the participant to give further details of what was required. Following further information, eight leaders consented to take part in one-to-one in depth interviews. The leaders were all senior managers (department manager to chief executive) working across the private and public sector in the UK, who had completed a coaching engagement with seven different coaches. Each leader had taken part in a one-to-one executive coaching programme lasting at least six sessions over a number of months. Since this was not an evaluation of a specific coaching approach it is likely the seven different coaches adopted a variety of methodologies in their coaching style. All participants were between 35 and 65, and comprised of two females and six males.

Following an initial expression of interest all were e-mailed details of what was required and a consent form. If they wished to confirm their voluntary participation, a date and time was agreed for the interview. These interviews asked them to discuss their understanding of resilience and focused on three core questions:

- Can you describe your experience of resilience?
- What does resilience mean for you?
- Can you describe a time when you were/were not resilient?

While leaders were asked about aspects of their coaching (Lawton Smith, 2015), the focus here will be on the conceptualisation and understanding that can inform future coaching interventions. Since this participant group had undertaken coaching in the past they were appropriate participants in being potential coaching clients.

Procedure

Interviews were carried out at a location of their choice and lasted about one hour. None of the participants were known to the researcher prior to the interview. All inter-

views were recorded and transcribed, with pseudonyms used throughout. Data was analysed in line with constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) using NVivo software. The analysis process was based on the stages advocated by Charmaz (2006) of 'initial coding', 'focused coding' and 'axial coding' to reveal themes, culminating in 'theoretical coding' to generate the ultimate theoretical framework. However, the initial three stages were not discrete activities, rather they fused into an evolving synthesis of data, with all stages evident throughout the analysis. This process is well described by Locke (2000): 'Researchers would be setting themselves up for disappointment if they expected analysis to advance according to a linear pattern' (p.46).

The initial coding of each participant's data revealed a range of constructs. During focused coding any naturally occurring groupings were reviewed to create patterns. It was then possible to return to the individual data looking for further instances, example or contradictions.

Once the focused codes were felt to truly represent the data 'axial coding' looked for a higher level of abstraction and any links between the focused codes. These links enable themes to form, the axes around which the data pivots. These overarching themes formed the basis of the emerging grounded theory by way of theoretical coding.

This theory 'consists of plausible relationships among concepts and sets of concepts' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), but should not be seen as permanent reflections of reality. Since the pragmatist sees reality as 'nowhere else but in active experience' (Strübing, 2007, p.583), it follows that theories will be by nature evolving and transient.

Findings

The findings revealed three key areas that can inform understanding of resilience in leadership. Firstly, the leaders described resilience as more than just 'bounce back' and the assets highlighted emerged in three clear groupings that reflected alternative approaches used in relation to the past, present and future. Secondly, resilience was experienced as a 'fuel system' that shows synergy with the systemic perspective. Thirdly, this 'fuel system' is influenced by personal values, which is an aspect not currently prevalent in the literature and may merit further research.

Resilience as more than 'bounce back'

One of the interview questions asked what resilience meant to the participant. Responses reflected many of the words frequently associated with resilience, and often linked it with persistence. Neil gave a common example of a definition:

> *It's somebody who keeps on getting up when they're knocked down. Somebody that is persistent at achieving their goals in the face of adversity. That is really what resilience means to me. Somebody who doesn't take knock backs; but constantly reassesses, gets up and has another go.* (Neil)

Neil mentions the concept of 'getting up' when knocked down, in common with many definitions of resilience that talk of 'bounce-back' and the ability to manage perceptions or emotions in response to past events. Leaders described the importance of responding 'positively' to challenging or unexpected events and of having the right 'mindset'. They often referred to it as a 'learning process' and talked of 'being flexible'. Such language might suggest resilience is backward looking and that reframing or meaning-making enables recovery from difficult events. But Neil's comment also added a future imperative. Resilience is not just perceived as recovery from past events, but also about taking control and moving forward.

Many leaders expressed this duality with a sense of acceptance about being wrong in the past and linked this reframing of the past with clear outcomes and objectives for the future. Brian explains this acceptance but links it to the desire to move on and to set a new direction for the future:

> *Part of being resilient is you've got to be able to understand that you're wrong and say, 'Okay, I'm wrong. Right, now what are we going to do about it? What are we going to do to correct the mess I've got us all into?', and then go off in the correct direction…* (Brian)

This link to the future was often framed as learning from the past to inform and improve the future. In looking at past events leaders seek to recognise and accept issues that have happened and not be paralysed by rumination of the consequences. This resilience could be described as 'conquering past events'.

However, Rachel also highlighted the need to focus on the present, linking to both the past and the future. She talked about not being anxious about what has happened in the past, or about the future, and about dealing with the present in the here and now:

> *There's something about learning to deal with what's going on in the moment and not being anxious about what has happened or what might happen…* (Rachel)

She notes the importance of taking action to deal with the current situation, thus exercising a degree of control. The categories that emerged describe leaders who are reacting and responding to often unexpected events with action. They are setting boundaries, making choices and marshalling the resources required. In the present, resilience was characterised by exercising conscious control over the current situation and taking responsibility for resolving problems. Participants reported using others to help overcome issues and a toolbox to break down problems and find solutions. The toolbox also included emotion-focused strategies to manage and control emotional reactions in a positive way. It could be said that resilience in the present is based on 'exercising control' by engaging in action.

This action was motivated by a continued future focus for leaders. They maintain a belief that problems can be solved and that by applying the skills and strategies in the present they can gain control over the situation and move forward. In moving towards these future goals a significant amount of contingency planning was in operation to ensure the goal had the maximum chance of being realised. George likened it to designing a system that could withstand potential risks. For him, resilience was about setting the future goal and anticipating and mediating all potential risks. Resilience was therefore based on expecting issues and planning ahead of time how these might be dealt with. In effect, leaders are trying to make the future more predictable, perhaps to minimise risk:

> *Have an end goal in sight… and the resilience to be able to deal with perceivable issues; the 'what if' scenarios, the kind of scenario planning that you might do with a system to make sure it would be resilient to anything that you could throw at it.* (George)

This implies a form of risk assessment and management that is made explicit by Neil: For him, taking risks is what generates the need to be resilient. 'If you don't take any risks there's not really much need to be resilient.'

The leaders interviewed therefore do not see resilience as just a way of reframing disappointment and overcoming failure. Rather, they see it as having the courage to face unknown risks in the future; therefore anticipating potential adversity, but not actually 'bouncing back' from an adversity yet faced.

Facing risks and working towards the future goal is motivated by a belief that the aim is worthwhile and that they can make a real difference. In looking to the future, leaders describe a need to assess and face risk and to take responsibility for action to move forward. Resilience for the future might be described as 'courage for the future'.

Resilience is often defined as the ability to 'bounce back' after a negative event and to continue to perform or thrive despite

adversity. Such definitions encourage a focus on the past and many definitions include terms like 'overcome obstacles', 'self-righting', 'regaining equilibrium' or 'bouncing back'. The findings here replicate many of these ideas, with leaders describing the use of reframing and emotional regulation supporting recovery from difficult events. Yet data also suggests that in the context of leadership, a strong future orientation is also required. The leaders interviewed agreed that resilience involved maintaining a future focus and a degree of persistence in working towards the ultimate aim. For the leadership population these findings suggest a broader approach to resilience beyond recovery that brings a time perspective. It is proposed that resilience in this leadership context might be summarised as: 'Conquering the *past*, exerting control in the *present*, and having courage for the *future*.'

Resilience as a 'fuel' source

In analysing the language used to describe resilience, consistent reference was made to resource terms such as 'energy', 'reserves', 'fuel' and 'battery'. References often included metaphors such as Mark's, who likened resilience to a high performance car that needs regular maintenance and rest periods to perform at its best:

> *Even Formula One cars don't run for days, they do a two hour race and that's it and then they're serviced and maintained and they go out again. And I think sometimes in an organisation like XXXX people think it's a marathon but it's made up of 100 metre sprints and you've got to keep doing it. I think everybody just needs to take the foot off the accelerator… you can't run at 100 per cent all the time because then if you're a car and you need to step out and overtake someone there's nothing left to do it.* (Mark)

Interestingly, Rachel, who was in a completely different industry, used exactly the same words to describe leadership resilience. The feeling of 'sprinting' conveys a sense of pressure that drains energy very quickly. Both identified that sprinting can only take place in short bursts, and both introduced the idea of the marathon which requires endurance:

> *It's about dealing with the world as a marathon and not a series of sprints and saying that, accepting that there will be periods when you do need to sprint.* (Rachel)

This metaphor appeared in many transcripts and was described as a resource that needed to be topped up. Mark took this metaphor further by referring to his personal 'tank' with a strong awareness of what drains and replenishes this tank.

> *The thing that most quickly replenishes my tank is when I can truly switch off, and it's not from just work. Because I don't call it work–life balance, I call it passion balance, because work… I love my job, absolutely love my job… I'd do it for free, but I love a bunch of other things I do. (Mark)*

Mark mentioned 'switching off' as a way to regain energy, but others listed alternative ways to top up this resource. Some mentioned holidays or just support from others. James explained that success can also be restorative:

> *Each time you're successful that tops up that resilience because it's topping up that self-esteem.* (James)

Neil still applied the energy metaphor but uses the support of others to 'sustain' him:

> *It's like every time you get a bit down in the dumps you need an energy boost… you've got a bit low you take an energy drink. Just going around to the lawyers and saying: 'Are we really doing the right thing?' And they say: 'Yes, of course you are… That gives you that boost that you need.' It's having reference points to make sure that you are thinking straight… those are the things that sustain you.* (Neil)

The leaders interviewed therefore did not just list a set of actions they take to support their resilience, rather they see it as a system they need to manage. Jack explained very clearly that he has limited resources that need to be managed through conscious strategies:

> *I've got limited resources, I'm facing multiple problems, how do I try and adjust my mental attitude? Are there other resources I can draw on? I might have to talk to someone to bounce ideas off, that sort of thing… I suppose where I think there are things that people have been totally negative or you just can't get through things, I think that depletes my resilience.* (Jack)

Experiencing too much change, often in a short space of time or in multiple contexts was commonly highlighted as creating resilience issues. Leaders seem to be well versed in dealing with problems, being busy and facing challenge; it 'comes with the territory'. However, when too many issues accumulate, frequently across multiple contexts, their normal resilience starts to fail, perhaps where demand exceeds supply.

Experiences where resilience was lacking therefore often resulted from a high degree of change over both work and personal situations that commonly persisted for some time, causing them to become 'worn down'. This wearing down was also associated with a disconnection: When not feeling resilient, leaders reported disconnecting from the job, from other people and even from their perceptions. There is almost a denial of reality that impedes the resilience capabilities being engaged. Rachel described shutting off the emotion and becoming distant from others; yet it is only when she reconnects and talks about the issues that she can work through it:

> *What I tend to do, in that sort of spiral of worry. I do shut it off and I particularly shut it off at home and I try not to talk about it, try and work through it, and my husband says I'm distant, and then when it reaches the point of sort of crisis; then I become tearful, then I'll talk about it, deal with the crisis and go up again.* (Rachel)

Resilience, as described by these participants, is therefore experienced as an exhaustible energy system that needs replenishment and management. Leaders described how high levels of change over sustained periods lead to a level of drain that exceeds supply; it is not the skills they lack, but rather the energy to apply those skills seems unavailable. Under these circumstances individuals often withdraw and experience disengagement from the job, from others and from their emotions. This could perhaps reflect a survival mechanism to protect the individual and create the recovery time required, but suggests that resilience is not simply a set of skills to be learnt and applied in difficult situations, rather far more complex factors are at work that may require a systems perspective.

Resilience as a reflection of personal values

The third area to emerge from the findings proved to be a surprise, not expected nor anticipated from the literature in other contexts. The leaders interviewed clearly felt that their ability to be resilient was influenced by their values.

The clearest description of the importance of values in early data collection was from Jack. He explained how congruent personal and organisational values support and enhance resilience. Jack felt energised by values alignment despite having problems or issues to deal with:

> *Although there were difficulties and challenges, it was much more positive, constructive; helping people to grow, which is I suppose one of the things I'm interested in. So I think if one's values are alive in what one's doing one's resilience is automatically enhanced… whereas I found where there are tensions between how I see things and perhaps organisational systems or approaches, you feel*

> *to a certain extent your resilience has been worn down, because you're not being energised by the environment you're in. Whereas being in a work environment more alive with one's values, which you see as more positive, is almost like enhancing your resilience.* (Jack)

What comes through became a common theme: leaders are capable of dealing with problems or issues and to some degree expect them. But when asked about times when resilience failed, many chose to discuss situations where values were compromised. One example was given by Mark:

> *I went into this unit and I just expect that everyone in XXXX works to a certain standard of professionalism… and realised that this wasn't the case… and that's before I even understood quite how corrupt it was… so my struggle came when there was a question of values. I'd never come across it before, I had no one to turn to and even here all the strategies that had served me so successfully didn't seem to work in this environment.* (Mark)

Mark identified that existing strategies did not seem to help. So while very skilled in problem solving, with a strong ability to manage emotions, such situations seemed to present a new type of challenge. These different issues were explained by Rachel, who distinguished between resilience for practical work issues and resilience involving a personal values conflict. In this example she explains the conflict she felt when having to withhold information about upcoming redundancies:

> *I am a person for whom honesty and openness… I value very, very highly, so having not to be honest and open and having to deal with people on a day-to-day basis when I know what's coming, I find really, really hard. In this situation being resilient means finding a way to compromise my own values and live with that, whereas in the situation I described with the cashflow crisis, being resilient meant finding a way to learn something practical very quickly and stay positive.* (Rachel)

The picture that emerges is of capable individuals who are taking responsibility for resolving issues by applying problem and emotion-focused strategies that require the application of their skills and assets. Yet when faced with a clash of values both these strategies seemed inadequate. The clear message was that 'values matter' for leaders being resilient.

Discussion: A model of capability and also capacity

The findings revealed three key themes. Firstly, that the participants describe resilience as far more than just 'bounce-back'. Rather than just recovery from past events, resilience was also seen to have a role in the present and the future. Participants described many skills and attributes that were applied across the time domains in different ways to deal with challenging times. It appears that the skills supporting resilience need to be applied in all three time domains successfully to enable leadership resilience. Leaders draw on the past, accept the realities of the present and then look to the future, demonstrating balance. This interpretation shows links to the concept of time perspective (Zimbardo, 2008; Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2004). Identifying how resilience can be thought of differently in each time domain may bring a degree of coherence and help leaders to understand the construct in their world.

The second key theme was a clear metaphor of resilience as a 'fuel' source. These descriptions appear to support the resource approach to resilience (Hobfoll, 1989). The experiences described show leaders are skilled at dealing with issues and are generally able to solve problems until there have too many issues to deal with. It is not the skills and assets they seem to lack, but rather that the resources available to implement known strategies seem to run out.

The final theme was a significant surprise because it has received little comment in existing research; this was the relative importance of personal values. The lead-

ers who took part appeared to demonstrate many of the attitudes and skills required for resilience when faced with challenges, unexpected events and pressures of work. However, when faced with issues that caused a fundamental re-evaluation of their beliefs and values, they experienced pressure that they are unable to resolve by applying the techniques and approaches commonly associated with resilience. Under these circumstances they experienced significant sustained pressure that can cause resilience to fail.

Bachkirova (2005) identified a potential relationship between personal values and stress in teachers and the current study may indicate this relationship warrants further investigation in the leadership resilience context. Yet this potential relationship is not apparent in current literature on resilience although there is strong synergy with the concept of meaning-making or purpose that is identified by some models (Cooper et al., 2013; Davda, 2011). It might most closely align with the developmental approaches, where a values conflict could be described as the 'disruption' or 'disequilibrium' described (Henning, 2011).

The aim of this study was to gather leadership descriptions of resilience in order to inform coaching practice and to work towards a theory grounded in experience. While this was a small initial study, it could be proposed that the findings suggest resilience is experienced to have two complementary aspects. Participants reported the benefits of having skills and techniques to apply across the timeline, but also identified the importance of having the energy to implement those skills.

Many of the existing approaches to resilience are what could be called capability models. They focus on what capabilities are required to exhibit resilience. These models generally propose a checklist of attributes, skills and strategies that define the resilient person. These strategies, once learned, are fairly enduring. However, capabilities alone do not appear to adequately explain the concept of resilience for the leaders interviewed. It was clear from the descriptions that these leaders already employ many of the attributes, skills and strategies to be resilient, it is often these very characteristics that have helped them rise into leadership positions. Leaders are experienced and capable when dealing with issues and problems but can still find resilience failing, especially when values are compromised. This indicates that just having the requisite capabilities may not guarantee those capabilities are available or applied at any specific point in time. In addition to the capability, they report the need to also have the desire and mental energy to apply these attributes in any particular context, and this appears to be partly mediated by values. The prevalence of the 'fuel' metaphor indicates that this 'capacity' may be more transient and short term. While capabilities, once learnt, endure, the capacity gradually 'runs out' so needs constant maintenance. The capacity could be described as the energy to be resilient.

It might be proposed that this exhaustible energy system supports the integrated resources perspective (Hobfoll, 1989) and requires constant maintenance, so individuals need to understand and manage this system in order to remain resilient. This shows parallels with the sports arena, where intermittent recovery is required to balance periods of high energy expenditure, known as 'oscillation' (Loehr & Schwartz, 2001). Even the most successful and efficient leader participants who were used to high pressure environments had experienced a failure of resilience. This might be attributable to a lack of adequate recovery time, to demand outstripping resource supply, or to a clash of values. This would explain why some normally resilient individuals can still suffer issues despite possessing all the requisite capabilities. When the system is poorly managed or suffers an over-demand that is not regulated, resilience will fail, which may mean that the resource concept could be

used with leaders to explain the processes at work, as the language may have resonance for this client group.

The idea that individuals possess a central pool of energy is not a new concept. Freud referred to psychic energy and Gestalt therapy highlights the benefits of closure to release energy into more fruitful activities. Baumeister and Tierney (2011) expand on a similar idea with the ego-depletion model,calling it willpower and proposing that (p.35):

- You have a finite amount of willpower that becomes depleted as you use it.
- You use the same stock of willpower for all manner of tasks.

This willpower can be devoted to four broad areas; control of thoughts, control of emotions; impulse control; and performance control. Too many simultaneous demands can cause potential failures in other parts of the system. Baumeister and Tierney (2011) explain that 'decision making depletes your willpower, and once your willpower is depleted, you are less able to make decisions' (p.98). This might explain why having too much to do can result in the 'disconnection' described that supports previous research in the assertion that disengagement can be linked to lower wellbeing (Truss et al., 2013). It may also explain the influence of values as resources are diverted to the internal struggle that results from conflicting values and managing the 'disequilibrium'.

Leaders described how clarifying core values helped resilience. This may relate to the work of Westman (1990), who proposed that individuals with strong internal beliefs use less internal energy in dealing with emotions and can therefore focus this resource on task-focused strategies. When values were at risk or compromised, leaders noted a decrease in resilience. It is easy to see how trying to resolve such internal emotional turmoil could engage significant resources. The individual is faced with suppressing emotions while trying to resolve an emotional conflict created by a clash of values. Values therefore appear to be significant in the capacity system.

Implications

In drawing implication from this study it is important to highlight the small number of participants and the potential limitations of generalising from qualitative data. However, some authors do highlight that transferability rather than generalisability can be a valuable contribution in qualitative studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This can be defined as 'the extent to which the reader is able to generalise the findings of a study to her or his own context' (Morrow, 2005). It is hoped that enough information has been included about the research context, processes and participants to enable the reader to decide how the findings may be transferable to their own context. In the following section some potential implications will be outlined, although this is not to imply that these will apply in every setting. It does however raise some alternative ways of thinking that might benefit from wider investigation. In particular, it is hoped that the findings suggest resonance and usefulness, two of the criteria that Charmaz (2006) proposes that GT studies should be evaluated against.

The suggestion that resilience has two core components of *capabilities* and *capacity* has certain possible implications for existing theoretical approaches. Firstly, if capacity is by nature transient it might questions the value of many existing measures of resilience that rely on assessment at one point in time. Such approaches may prove to be an inappropriate baseline by which to evaluate interventions and it might suggest that there could be scope for more contextually based measures is some situations. Leaders in this study reported that systemic factors affected their resilience and many current measures do not appear to reflect these potential fluctuations. Secondly, while this data was gathered in an organisational context it might suggest new avenues for

research in other sectors. Highlighting personal energy systems and discussing values may be a way to support other populations in becoming more resilient, and so could provide interesting areas for future research in other fields.

The findings also present some practical implications for coaching. The first practical implication relates to the potential role of coaching in enhancing resilience. Leaders often display many of the attributes and characteristics required of resilient individuals, which may have been instrumental in them achieving leadership status. Despite this, when leaders are perceived to lack resilience, organisations often seek coaching or training to address the issue, yet this research raises questions about the ability of capability approaches alone to impact resilience. It is possible that the scope of such interventions also needs to address the capacity element and help individuals manage this personal resource. This may mean coaching is a more appropriate option as it can use a more personalised approach to discuss the personal energy system and focus on values relevant for the individual. Testing the ideas presented in a coaching context would therefore be the next step in evaluating the findings suggested by this study.

The second practical implication relates to the potential impact coaching might be capable of achieving. The findings suggest that training or coaching for resilience could prove ineffective if delivered in isolation and that organisations seeking to address leadership resilience may also need to consider systemic alignment. Resilience appeared to be most at risk when leaders lacked the internal resources to supply all the demands made upon them or their values were compromised. This may be the result of poor personal management of their own energy system, but may equally be a result of wider systemic influences. In such circumstances coaching could prove ineffective and a potential waste of resources. Ultimately, leadership resilience may be as reliant on systemic and cultural issues as on personal attributes. This means that organisations might need to consider how they ensure they provide the appropriate internal mechanisms that can identify resilience overload. Once identified, there could be value in implementing an appropriate internal social support structure to mitigate the disconnection that might otherwise result. Coaches can therefore contribute to this process but must be mindful of the limits of what might be possible as contracted outcomes of their work. This study suggests that increasing resilience might benefit from a more systemic approach that may go beyond the scope of the coaching engagement.

Finally, the findings also suggest a potential coaching approach to working with resilience that transcends the philosophical silos often found in coaching psychology. Throughout the evolution of coaching psychology, many approaches have emerged that contribute valuable ideas for the practising coach (Cox et al., 2014). Working with capacity and capability offers a flexible framework that could be integrated into many traditions. As coaching psychology evolves, it might be valuable to consider other potential ways that coaching can develop a more distinct identity, perhaps by offering a meta-level perspective that can be approached from many alternative paradigms.

Limitations and areas for future research

This has been a small study with a very specific profile of participants. The data gathered would therefore benefit from replication with larger numbers and a wider population. This would verify whether such ideas and concepts resonate in a broader target group. There is no suggestion that this framework would be transferable to all contexts, but it may merit further research.

The study was also limited to the UK, so has little to contribute to potential cross cultural differences that may influence the model proposed: In particular, whether this is a Western paradigm influenced by the language of the target population.

The study was carried out by a single researcher, which introduces the potential for researcher effects in the coding of data. The findings would therefore benefit from replication by others. It would also be useful to design and assess potential interventions based on these ideas. This would clarify the degree of face validity when applied in an organisational context.

Future research might extend these ideas to other populations to establish whether the 'fuel' metaphor may have resonance and value when working with other target groups. This may be an easy to communicate message that could help others build their resilience together with existing asset approaches. In addition, further investigation of the link to values would merit further investigation as this presented a relatively unresearched perspective on resilience.

Conclusion

This research aimed to establish how leaders describe and experience resilience. The findings revealed three key areas that can help coaches understand how their clients might make meaning of this construct, and thus help create a joint understanding during coaching. Firstly, the leaders described resilience as more than just 'bounce back' and highlighted alternative approaches used in relation to the past, present and future. Secondly, resilience was experienced as a 'fuel system' and described with similar properties of depletion and replenishment. Thirdly, this 'fuel system' was influenced by personal values.

This knowledge could help inform coaching practices aimed at building resilience in leaders and goes some way to integrating the very disparate ways that resilience is conceptualised within existing literature. The findings have been brought together in a coherent framework that coaches could use based on both capacity and capability.

Leaders commonly described resilience as 'fuel' and spoke of limited resources under certain conditions. This is referred to as the capacity to be resilient that is by nature a transient quality. There would also appear to be a role for values in achieving access to this capacity. However, in order to function effectively resilience also requires a number of skills and attributes that were identified as capabilities that once learnt are more enduring. These capabilities could be grouped by their relevance to the past, present or future in order to more clearly explain to leaders the link between often very diverse attributes.

Thinking of resilience as made up of capabilities and capacities can bring together many of the approaches and ideas found in the literature to create a more integrated perspective. In addition, this approach still maintains an accessible language that resonates with the organisational world. This may provide a starting point to build a clearer understanding of resilience in leadership that is easier to explain and to work with.

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Career derailment: Burnout and bullying at the executive level

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Executive derailment refers to unexpected and unwanted changes in the trajectory of an executive career caused either by factors within the person or by organisational factors external to the person, or a combination of both, leading to loss of identity. This phenomenological study explored subjective experiences of four high functioning professionals who had experienced executive derailment. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and data were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Results showed four superordinate themes that encapsulated a trajectory from severe loss of identity, integrity and livelihood, to newly defined authenticity following derailment: (i) self-doubt and blame; (ii) targeted bullying; (iii) psychological vulnerability and distress; and (iv) meaning-making and personal growth. The first three themes highlight varying levels of psychological distress and burnout and the vicarious impact on family life. The fourth theme involved a redefined self-integrity where forgiveness and psychological recovery could emerge and allow for a reconsideration of career pathways. The recognition that personal and professional growth can arise following executive derailment is a novel finding with important implications for coaches. A positive psychological and growth-oriented mindset may be helpful in harnessing change with executives following derailment.

Key words: *Derailment, burnout, bullying, psychological distress, growth*

EXECUTIVE DERAILMENT, or the demise of an executive career, is involuntary demotion or being made redundant below the level of anticipated achievement (Lombardo et al., 1988). Executive derailment can occur due to factors internal or external to the person. Internal factors can affect an individual's ability to self-reflect, creating blind spots in relation to leadership and sensitivity to others (Van Velsor & Drath, 2004). External factors include organisational restructuring, particularly in times of economic decline, or workplace bullying (Gray et al., 2015; Kellerman, 2004; Lombardo et al., 1988). However, there is a paucity of research into external factors. Therefore, this study explored the subjective interpretations of high functioning professionals who had been derailed by external factors. It sought both positive and negative subjective interpretations of experiencing organisational restructuring and/or executive level bullying.

High functioning executives have been shown to differ significantly from the general population in attributes of empathy, self-regard, reality testing and problem solving (Stein et al., 2009). Furthermore, they tend to exhibit emotional, social and cognitive competencies across a variety of settings and cultures (Ryan et al., 2009), which predict the ease at which they manage tasks and people, provide training and retain employees (Ryan et al., 2009; Stein et al., 2009). As a consequence, derailment of high functioning individuals can have costly effects on working relationships, productivity, financial outcomes and organisational functioning (Gillespie et al., 2001; Lombardo & McCauley, 1988). Additionally, the cost of derailment to the individual is also high, including a catastrophic loss of identity often impacting on family life, income and psychological wellbeing (McCall, 2003). Thirty to fifty per cent of high functioning managers are estimated to derail at some time in their career (Lombardo & Eichinger, 1995).

Career executives are most commonly midlife (ages 38–50), a critical time in which self-reflection and an evaluation of former dreams and current achievements often occurs (Webb, 2006). However, for some executives, grandiosity or feelings of superiority can inhibit self-reflection, creating blind spots in their leadership style and sensitivity to others (Van Velsor & Drath, 2004). Without awareness, derailment can occur. For others, derailment can occur following organisational restructuring, poor or inaccurate feedback, overly demanding timelines and workloads, or through workplace bullying (Gray et al., 2015; Kellerman, 2004). At the very top of the executive chain, corporate psychopathy resulting in abusive and bullying behaviours to second level managers has led to long periods of stress leave, high turnover, negative organisational outcomes and derailment (McCleskey, 2013).

Three dynamics of derailment have been identified. Two are regarded as integral interpersonal flaws in the individual, for example: (i) a strength becomes a weakness (such as technical expertise becoming less important than team building skills), and (ii) the individual exhibits negative personality traits (such as a lack of interpersonal sensitivity) or is psychologically unwell. A third, less researched cause of executive derailment relates to factors external to the individual, including organisational changes (Lombardo et al., 1988) and within-company bullying (Gray et al., 2015). However, little is known of how individuals make sense of executive derailment that is not of their own making (Gentry & Shanock, 2008).

Workplace bullying is a behaviour used by one person to control another and involves 'repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker or a group of workers, that creates a risk to health and safety' (Work Safe Australia, 2011, p.4). Bullying can manifest in direct or indirect forms. Direct forms include offensive behaviour and spreading misinformation or malicious rumours. Indirect forms can include 'unreasonably overloading a person with work, constantly changing deadlines, deliberately excluding a person from normal work activities, withholding vital information, or deliberately changing work arrangements, such as rosters and leave to inconvenience a particular worker or workers' (Work Safe Australia, p.4). In 2011, the Australian Productivity Commission estimated the national annual cost of productivity losses associated with workplace bullying to be between $6 and $36 billion (Guilliatt, 2011). Burnout is often a consequence of bullying as the targeted individual strives to respond to criticism, self-doubt and confusion.

Executive or managerial burnout is 'a state of depletion of a person's resources and energy, resulting in apathy and inexpressive behaviour towards others, having dysfunctional repercussions on the individual and adverse effects on organisations' (Sharma, 2007, p.23). The effects of burnout can be physical, behavioural and psychological. Physical symptoms may include emotional exhaustion, psychological symptoms may include depersonalisation or perceived lack of personal accomplishment, while behavioural signs may include withdrawal, resentment, disenchantment, discouragement, boredom or confusion (Freudenberger, 1981). Lack of performance feedback, heavy workload, time pressure, conflicts surrounding roles in the workplace, low social support and a lack of independence were identified as factors related to burnout (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

Psychologically, a burnt-out executive may have difficulties with emotional regulation, and the slightest trigger may initiate feelings of anger or a suspicious attitude involving paranoia. Continued dissatisfaction with the work situation may lead to depersonalisation, depression or physical ailments. Rigidity may also emerge as a serious personality manifestation, where the person may become closed to any input, and thinking may become inflexible (Freudenberger, 1981).

The wellbeing of high functioning executives and professionals is closely linked to burnout and career derailment. Some individuals who feel that they have been unjustly harmed by an employer may develop men-

tal health problems (McCormack & Joseph, 2013). Furthermore, profound despair has been reported by executives derailed and unemployed in their 50s (Gabriel et al., 2010), while major depression has been found in up to twelve per cent of former Danish managers after they discontinued work (Bech et al., 2005). Role overload and lack of social support are predictors of major depression in managers (Bech et al.), and as previously discussed, were identified as factors related to burnout (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). As yet, little is known of the effects of derailment on family and relationship breakdown, long-term unemployment or suicide.

However, though stressful and traumatic events can have severe and chronic effects on a person's psychological functioning, there is also evidence that positive psychological growth can result from challenging and adverse events, commonly referred to as posttraumatic growth (Joseph, 2011). Such growth can be viewed as the process of trying to make sense of this highly challenging period, which has shattered previous goals, beliefs and expectations. Growth may also involve personality development and unpacking of values to accommodate new facts and experiences, in turn modifying a person's worldviews and life-direction. Although this literature has developed in relation to traumatic events, it might be that similar experiences of personal growth can arise from experiences of executive derailment, which also shatter previous goals, beliefs and expectations.

A few studies have explored how individuals make sense of events in the workplace that have resulted in major and sometimes traumatising changes to life-direction. Executive nurses, for instance, were able to turn job loss into successful career transitions (Carroll et al., 1995). Webb (2006) found that with the assistance of an executive coach, a derailed executive in the legal profession was able to identify his cognitive blind spots and detrimental behavioural patterns through awareness of his personality structure.

Self-awareness has been identified as a key factor for avoiding and preventing burnout and career derailment (Gentry & Shanock, 2008). It aligns well with psychological flexibility, described as a fluid construct in the real world and important for psychologically healthy transaction between leaders, their staff and the work environment (Kashdan & Rotterburg, 2010). Executives and leaders with psychological flexibility: (i) adapt to fluctuating situational demands; (ii) reconfigure mental resources; (iii) shift perspective; and (iv) balance competing desires, needs and life domains (Kashdan & Rotterburg, 2010). High achievers who are psychologically inflexible, lack awareness of their weaknesses and strengths, or are unable to adapt to changes in their job environment, may be at risk of potential derailment.

Although there is a great deal of research exploring characteristics of leadership (see Hogan et al., 2009), and some research reporting on executives who have recovered from a career derailment (see Kovach, 2001), there is a paucity of rich qualitative research into the 'lived' experience of career derailment distress in the context of organisational change and bullying in high functioning professionals, and its impact on psychological wellbeing. In addition, there is a lack of individual subjective interpretation of the experience of career derailment as a product of organisational changes and workplace bullying.

This qualitative study seeks to explore the 'lived' experience of being derailed at the executive and professional level from external factors such as organisational restructuring and/or executive level bullying. It is interested in both positive and negative subjective interpretations of high functioning professionals, particularly the impact on psychological wellbeing. It is hoped that findings from this study will inform organisations, professionals, therapists and coaches regarding the impact, prevention and management of career derailment and executive burnout.

Method

Participants

Following university ethical approval from the Committee for Ethics in Human Research, the participants of the study were sourced through e-mail correspondence with organisations and 'think tanks'. It sought executives or professionals who met the selection criteria (i.e. senior professionals who had experienced the phenomenon of derailment through external factors). Four participants (one female and three male) aged between 47 and 64 participated in the study. They were all past or current senior-ranking high achievers who had experienced psychological distress following interruption to a successful and high functioning career through negative organisational changes and/or bullying.

Pseudonyms were used for confidentiality. The first participant (Diana) was in a leadership position and on track to become a general manager; however, after an organisational merger, she described that she was micromanaged and bullied by an externally instated general manager. The second participant (Chris) was a retired emergency services senior manager who reported that he experienced negative organisational changes which resulted in a significant increase of his workload. He reported that he was subjected to bullying through false accusations and experienced subsequent 'executive burnout'. The third participant (Les) was a consultant physician who explained that he was targeted and threatened with medical incompetence by an area health authority executive. He described these threats as harassment and bullying over an extended period of time. The fourth participant (Liam) was a senior manager who experienced organisational changes that resulted in forced redundancy. All four participants were high achievers who reported having worked successfully at senior levels for many years until the identified incidents. All reported that they experienced psychological distress for which they were either unprepared or lacked the resources to overcome. As a result of their distress, they all sought help from psychological or medical professionals.

Analytic strategy

Unlike grounded theory or discourse analysis, interpretative phenomenological paradigms such as interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) have a critical realism perspective of the world focusing on how individuals socially construct and interpret their world (Blaikie, 2000). As such, IPA is closely aligned with the social view of symbolic interactionism which accepts that: (i) people act toward things based on the meaning those things have for them; (ii) these meanings are derived from social interaction; and (iii) meaning is modified through interpretation (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1995). Therefore, IPA as an idiographic method (Smith & Osborn, 2008) allows researchers to unfold the idiosyncratic nature of each participant's narrative and meaning-making of a specific phenomenon from their socially constructed world, allowing both diverse and converse themes to emerge. Similarly, due to its iterative investigative style, IPA is recommended for investigating previously unexplored topics where subjective meanings, values and beliefs are important but poorly understood (Smith, 1996). At all times the researcher strives to stay within the interpreted world of the participant using a 'double hermeneutic' to reflect and clarify the participant making meaning of his/her experience (Smith, 1996).

Procedure

A semi-structured interview using a funnelling technique was developed according to the protocols of IPA (see Tables 1 and 2; Smith et al., 2009). This allowed the phenomenon under investigation to be explored from general to specific interpretations. Target questions were used to prompt responses in an attempt to understand the subjective 'lived' experiences of executive derailment. The questions aimed to capture both positive and negative interpreted meaning of experiences. Participants were informed of the study's aims and that they could withdraw at any time and request their interviews be destroyed. Prior to the interviews, the participants were given

a summary of the research aims. Following consent, semi-structured interviews were conducted at the university health clinic, via telephone or over Skype, as preferred by the participants, as three of the participants were located in another city or overseas. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Data were collected using a digital voice recorder and transcribed for analysis by the first researcher, and provided to the relevant participant to confirm its accuracy.

Data analysis

The transcriptions were individually analysed using IPA, as outlined by Smith et al., (2009) (see Table 1). The process includes: (a) reading and re-reading with initial notations; (b) development of emergent themes; (c) searching for connections across emergent themes; and (d) looking for patterns across cases (Smith et al., 2009). This process is a cyclical, re-iterative process, and involves constant revisiting of the transcripts seeking

Table 1: Steps of interpretative phenomenological analysis process

Process	
Step 1	Step by step independent auditing by first and second authors which involved emersion in the date from each interview through repeated listening to and reading of the recordings and transcribed verbatim transcript. Independent initial impressions and observations are recorded.
Step 2	Creation of a comprehensive set of initial notes primarily noting significant content, language and concepts that appear embedded in the transcript. This is done independently at this stage with no collaboration.
Step 3	Thematic emergence occurs for both auditors that concisely captures the essence of the transcript and guides further analysis.
Step 4	Establishing connections between emergent themes and identified clusters of themes in each individual case. Independent auditing.
Step 5	These four steps were repeated for each transcript independently by the first and second authors before a final coming together for robust discussion and consideration of overall data sets that was substantiated by rich verbatim extracts for each theme. No theme was included in the final set that had not been agreed upon as being substantiated within the data. The third author acted as an independent evaluator of the final results. This included examination of sets of themes for convergent and divergent themes across all transcripts. Five subordinate themes emerged. Discussion between authors ensured identified themes were supported by the data set. Superordinate theme identified. Linking of relevant theory to identified themes.

Table 2: Semi-structured interview questions prompts

How your derailment experience has impacted on your life so far?
How you have made sense of your derailment experience and its impact on your life?
How you feel you as a person have changed because of this experience?
What about this experience in particular has impacted on you either positively or negatively?
How you make sense of the human dynamics that you have been caught up in?
Any psychological, philosophical, existential thoughts that have altered or become part of your thinking since this experience?
How your future will be influenced from this experience?
How has it influenced your feelings, thoughts, relationships, goals since this event?

both convergent and divergent emergent themes that are richly highlighted in the data. Independent audits of the transcripts were conducted by authors 1 and 2 and evaluated by author 3 to ensure validity of the themes across the data set.

Unlike nomothetic research studies, each participant is a unit of analysis on their own terms. IPA requires the researchers to suspend their own beliefs, judgement and values when interpreting the participants' understanding of their experiences. Following independent auditing, robust discussion between the researchers is necessary to validate thematic representation of the participants' interpretations of events.

Validity and reliability

This study followed the rigorous protocols of IPA to ensure trustworthiness, verification, credibility, and dependability. Guba and Lincoln's (1981, 1982, 1989) earlier recommendation that researchers conduct a post hoc evaluation to support trustworthiness, has more recently acceded to a continual process of verification involving 'checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain' (p.17, Morse, 2011). Therefore, in defining rigor in qualitative research, reliability and validity is addressed through adherence to the steps of the particular methodology utilised in accordance with its philosophical stance (Smith, 1996). As such, design quality is driven by within-design uniformity and analytic expertise (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009).

Importantly, in seeking subjective interpretations of a particular phenomenon, qualitative research is not concerned with external reality, a primary concern of validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), but rather the internal subjective account of reality. Furthermore, IPA seeks both convergent (across all transcripts) and divergent (within one transcript) themes aiming to produce rich uniqueness of themes rather than saturation of themes. In IPA, rigour is reliant on adherence to methodological steps (see Smith, 2011).

Other protocols in IPA sanction rigour, including purposive sampling of a small homogenous group, funnelling down to the phenomenon being explored,; and the double hermeneutic investigative focus of interviewing (Smith et al., 2009). The argument for inter-rater reliability fluctuates as important or not (Armstrong et al., 1997), whereas strict adherence to independent auditing by the researchers, prior to collaborative consensus of themes substantiated by the data, remains a crucial step in IPA protocols (see Smith et al., 2009).

Author's perspective

Interpretative analysis is intersubjective, thus the investigator is positioned relative to their own biases and presuppositions, which need to be stated. The greatest threat to credibility in qualitative research is the investigators' inability to remain open to the data, sensitive and creative in their social enquiry, and adhere to the rigorous steps of the chosen method informed

by philosophical underpinnings (Schwandt, 2015). All authors are clinicians and researchers in the field of trauma. The third author is also a qualified coaching professional. The authors challenged each other's interpretation throughout the investigation eliminating any theme that could not be unanimously agreed by all authors.

Results

Four superordinate themes emerged which are organised as four phases in a trajectory towards personal growth: (i) self-doubt and blame; (ii) targeted bullying; (iii) psychological vulnerability and distress; and (iv) meaning-making and personal growth. Participants' quotations are presented to describe and illustrate these four themes. Three of the four themes describe each participant's lived experience of the negative effects of derailment, including the distress of seeing their livelihood undermined, their goals eroded or extinguished, as well as the psychological distress and vicarious impact on their family life. The fourth theme describes subsequent meaning-making and psychological growth through, and following, their redefining of the 'self'.

Self-doubt and blame

The first superordinate theme describes how participants perceived the initial stages of derailment, changes in life circumstances and subsequent perceived changes in mood states. It also describes doubting the efficacy of existing coping strategies and questioning of one's capacity and self-belief.

For three of the participants, the derailment occurred following an organisational restructure. Following a doubling of his workload, the desire to maintain his identity and the shame of failing pushed Chris towards psychological vulnerability:

> *I was pedalling really hard… it's part of my character not to fail, I have a very strong sense of not wanting to fail, and so that was to the detriment of my (mental) health… I didn't have the wisdom to step back.*

Liam perceived the changes as a threat to his identity, blaming himself for not being able to adapt to the changes:

> *I was very angry of what they were doing to the whole structure that we set up… I couldn't cope with it and that's why I cracked up.*

Diana became self-critical and began doubting her abilities:

> *I missed out on the promotion and thought obviously I wasn't doing something right… in the first couple of years I was almost paranoid.*

Les also had thoughts of self-doubt and victimisation:

> *During this experience I had my doubts that maybe I wasn't quite as good a doctor as I thought. I had a sense of injustice that I had done nothing wrong and yet I've been black banded from the hospital which is part of my profession; which is part of my livelihood.*

Targeted bullying

This theme describes internal reactions to perceived external threats to wellbeing and schema. It describes the debilitating feeling of being bullied or, as reported by Chris, being falsely accused of bullying. Feeling targeted emerged through over management to the point of micro-management, having doubts placed over one's reputation, and being unjustly summoned to explain behaviours.

Diana felt targeted unjustly by the level of micro-management that undermined her sense of competence:

> *He was using isolating behaviours; one minute I'd be told that I shouldn't be talking to a colleague… the next minute I'd be told that it was all ok… I would get my work constantly scrutinised, and he basically micro-managed people until they couldn't do anything.*

Les described his initial inability to recognise that he was being targeted with bullying by his senior executive manager:

> *It took me a while to realise that she [the senior executive] had effectively put a black ban on me, she would veto them [my job applications] without anything in writing.*

Chris experienced the shameful loss of reputation associated with derailment:

> *It was a difficult five months because everyone knew about the accusation, my reputation was tainted.*

Les described how it impacted on his professional identity and livelihood:

> *There was a cloud over me. Many of the local GPs in the area, they thought that I was under suspicion. It was impacting on my professional work and my livelihood.*

Psychological vulnerability and distress

Psychological vulnerability and distress also consistently emerged as a theme across participants, and captured the cumulative effect of derailment.

> *I was overloaded with work, and then the false bullying and harassment claim were made against me… I didn't spring back, I didn't come back from those claims, and I eventually fell over… and I had strong suicidal tendencies.* (Chris)

Feeling unwanted at the workplace increased vulnerability to high risk thoughts and behaviour:

> *I suddenly slipped down hill in a big way… I used to fly off the handle pretty easily, once, a couple of times I got into the car and took off, and disappeared for an hour, and there were a couple of times I felt like driving the car into a tree, in that 12 month period.* (Liam)

Accustomed to accepting responsibility, the lack of validation and the insidiousness of bullying contributed to mental health difficulties:

> *I felt like a failure… and I just went into I suppose a depressive spiral, over a period of about six months … but I didn't recognise that I was depressed at the time.* (Diana)

The powerlessness of their situations, and feelings of being unsupported in the workplace, led to behaviour that isolated the participants from their loved ones, and vicariously contaminated other areas of their lives. Participants were not able to cope with the changes and felt that others also did not understand what they were experiencing. Both Chris and Les described breakdowns in family relationships:

> *We were under pressure, the kids were stressed and didn't know what was going on … and it was one of the reasons my marriage had come to an end.* (Les)

Struggling to manage the spiralling downwards sense-of-self in the aftermath of extreme invalidation, relationships suffered irreparable damage:

> *My anxiety and my poor reactions to some family members and their inability to understand my mental health, has caused a breakdown to those relationships.* (Chris)

The decision not to complain about the bullying or the false accusations of bullying contributed to regret and a lack of closure from two participants:

> *In hindsight and reflection, I should have gone outside the organisation, gone to an independent person or other government agency and taken action against these individuals.* (Chris)

For some, the inability to challenge acts of injustice, resonate as unfinished business:

> *I haven't entirely let it go, it's still quite an intrinsic part of my life but it just doesn't make it feel as depressed and as unhappy as it used to.* (Diana)

Chris regretted not accepting his own limits, allowing things to 'fall over':

I should have stood my ground and basically said 'no'… I should have allowed some things to fall over, and that would have proven that it didn't work. But I proved that it did work for a couple of years because I did it, but it was at the expense of my health.

Meaning-making and personal growth

Participants reported that re-appraisals of new meanings were achieved after experiencing self-awareness and moments of self-realisation, and mobilisation of internal agency:

Twelve months later, I read an article… on psychopathic bullies… it made me feel a lot better, I actually finally felt that I had something I could hold on to, to describe what had happened. (Diana)

Moments of self-realisation clarified that the fears of ongoing bullying were irrational, providing increased awareness and relief from the emotional pain of self-doubt and self-blame:

I was fearful of meeting my old boss, literally fearful, the old sweaty hands thing, and I realised at that point that a lot of what I was feeling wasn't rational, and the churn I was having over this, and that was I suppose was a point of clarity to me. (Diana)

Les slowly began to regain his sense of direction and sought redress by taking action against what he felt was an attack on his integrity and livelihood. He began to re-honour himself and trust his judgement again:

It took me a year to wake up that this wasn't gonna go away… It took me a while to wake up to the fact that unless I got to an external body to pass judgement on the whole issue, nothing was ever gonna change.

The distress of the burnout was reappraised as an opportunity for increased self-knowledge and better judgement:

The really important lesson that I've learned that in my life I've pushed myself too hard on too many fronts. (Chris)

Positive and genuine professional and social support resulted in feeling understood and cared for:

The thing that I'll always remember is my doctor saying, 'I understand what you're going through, I know what the problem is and I understand it all.' (Liam)

In addition to describing the support she received from her partner, Diana in particular described the value of having a personal coach in providing her with practical solutions:

I think the personal coach has probably been the biggest impact. I mean time to some degree would almost certainly have moved me on and got me to a better place, but I think the personal coach helped the most.

One participant considered the stressful events were an opportunity for learning:

In everyone's life a little rain must fall… about time I got a kick in the pants. (Les)

In particular, Diana redefined herself:

I got a lot fitter, and socialising with friends a lot more. I'd gone back to university… I said: Okay, I need to get fit, I need to look after myself a bit, was trying many of those [self-development] things, and reconnect with my friends… I became a bit better saying well, I'm not coping with this at the moment, maybe take some workload off me.

One participant found a level of peace by defusing the anger, shame and pain and replacing them with forgiveness:

The importance of being able to forgive and move on is a very important lesson I have learned and still learning. (Chris)

Having experienced the distress of derailment, participants expressed their desire to help others who are going through similar life changing experiences:

> *I hope that sometime in the future I may have the ability to speak into the lives of others who have had a similar experience… I can see and hope that it would be of assistance to others.* (Chris)

Increased empathy was also reported by participants:

> *I find that I'm more aware of people; I can see the signs in people who are having trouble… I think I'm far more tolerant of people who are finding it tough at work than I probably was if I hadn't gone through it.* (Liam)

Significant changes in life purpose were reported. It appeared that by re-appraising her priorities, Diana's psychological flexibility allowed her to change her identity from a senior manager to a consultant. By making this difficult decision, a very positive change occurred as she described increased contentment:

> *This experience has been a key to personal growth, and it probably pushed the personal growth in a quite a different line to what might have happened if I had not been in that situation.* (Diana)

Changes in thinking styles also resulted in significant increases in productivity:

> *I suppose I stopped fighting with myself on a lot of things. I actually got a lot happier and more content … I stopped being so task focused, and started sleeping again which was good… and I was probably not as productive as I am now as well.* (Diana)

New meanings involved regaining the feelings of spirituality and connectedness, and regaining a sense of identity:

> *In my early twenties I had a quite a strong sense of self, and I felt I'd actually lost it in the corporate climb and, I think that this [the derailment experience] gave me an opportunity to regain some of that.* (Diana)

One participant regained his subjective self-worth by rechannelling his energy from fighting change to adapting to the change, and regaining recognition for his work in an alternate field:

> *I get a lot of satisfaction from what I'm doing now, I'm contributing back to the industry … I think the experience that I gained since I've left has made me a better person.* (Liam)

For another, the decision to make a formal complaint and stand up against perceived injustice was related to better outcomes and more closure. Perceptions of increased resilience, self-worth and authenticity surfaced:

> *I'm far more prepared if there was ever such a second event, that I would be far more assertive and aggressive and much much quicker at not letting the issue drag on… I'm pleased I stuck it out. I would always have had the doubt that maybe she was right, maybe I wasn't performing up to scratch… I really would have always had a cloud over me that in some way I just wasn't performing appropriately.* (Les)

Discussion

This study provides an insider's lens on career derailment in high level executives/professionals. Such understanding is important for coaching psychologists, particularly how these experiences provide opportunities for new meaning-making, and personal and professional growth. Specifically, the implications for coaching psychologists include the importance of being aware of the early warning signs of burnout in high functioning individuals, the importance of acting on these signs with psychological flexibility as early as possible, but in a way that helps the executive to find

new and more purposeful direction. The notion that career derailment may provide a springboard for positive change is a novel result and one that has significant implications for executive coaching.

Traditionally, the experiences that arise from career derailment such as burnout have been discussed in relation to which remedial clinical interventions might best be able to help the individual. Coaching psychologists are well placed to recognise and refer onwards when other services are needed. However, our research suggests that there is a larger coaching role in which the client can be helped to draw on their agency towards positive psychological outcomes. As such, coaching that facilitates self-questioning, openness to change, and maintains a growth mindset may best help the executive overcome adversity and move forward more purposefully. As highlighted by Webb (2006), coaches can tap into the different stages of the lifespan and promote change as part of a life adventure that can inform executive wisdom. Specifically, applications from positive psychology and the field of posttraumatic growth which help clients to harvest hope, identify change, and re-author their lives seem relevant (Joseph, 2011).

The current research offers an in-depth and rigorous qualitative investigation of four participants, but further research is needed. First, there is a need for research into what makes for effective coaching following career derailment, but also to understand more fully what defines successful coaching. The benefits that arose for these participants following derailment appear to be as much related to changes in personal direction and new priorities in life as they are to do with the enhancement of their career. Future research with executives who report personal and professional growth subsequent to derailment might specifically probe for what it is that they found helpful in making this transition from a state of distress and vulnerability and to explore the relevance of the concept of posttraumatic growth.

Second, qualitative studies do not offer generalisability. However, there is no reason to expect that our findings will not apply to other groups of professionals where derailment has occurred due to extrinsic factors (i.e. bullying or organisational restructuring). What is less certain is whether growth is as likely when derailment occurs as a result of intrinsic personality attributes of the individual. Future research could specifically examine the experiences of individuals following executive derailment caused by intrinsic factors.

Third, it is important for organisations to understand that the cost of executive derailment is high. For that reason, organisations need to be aware of the risks to their executive staff of derailment when carrying out organisational restructuring. When derailment is due to re-organisational strategies, organisations could promote flexible and creative opportunities to redefine identities and grow psychologically and keep on track those who might otherwise derail, contributing to retention of valuable individuals. Similarly, bullying at the executive level requires specific procedural and psychological support. When bullying is responsible for derailment an organisation can lose a high functioning individual who is the victim of bullying, but retain the perpetrator, who may continue to disrupt productivity. Early identification of disruptive and bullying behaviours is essential. In both these situations, coaching psychologists are able to bring independent and fresh perspectives.

Finally, organisations need to recognise that derailment experiences are common and work towards reducing the stigma that may be attached to it, and to understand that when derailment occurs it can actually provide opportunities for the personal and professional growth of the executive which in turn can be to the benefit of the organisation.

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Large-scale survey of trust and safety in coaching supervision: Some evidence that we are doing it right

Erik de Haan

Objectives: *There is increasing interest in supervision across the executive and workplace coaching professions, and so it is worth exploring whether promised benefits can be demonstrated. A large-scale empirical survey was conducted into the satisfaction, trust and vulnerability of coaching supervisees. Results are compared with those that have been achieved in other areas of supervision such as occupational therapy and counselling supervision.*

Design: *We employed a cross-sectional design focused on relatively experienced coaches, directed at large numbers so as to measure differences within the population. We inquired into satisfaction and trust in general terms, and we also asked more specifically about the most worrying, concerning or shameful episode in the coach's practice over the last few years, whether this episode had been brought to supervision and if the ensuing supervision had been helpful.*

Methods: *The sampling strategy was snowballing out from our own experienced coach networks, with help from European professional organisations. The web-based questionnaire was short, easy to use and entirely confidential with no requirement to leave any personal data. Five hundred and eighteen full responses were received on the questionnaire, from 356 female and 162 male coaches from 32 countries. Statistical properties of the responses were computed and two-sample t-tests and non-parametric (Mann-Whitney) U-tests were conducted to look at the influence of gender, age, experience, nationality, amount and nature (i.e. group versus individual) of supervision on satisfaction and trust scores.*

Results: *The results show that these experienced coaches are considerably safer, more satisfied and more trusting of their supervisor than was found in comparable research in counselling and psychotherapy. Significant differences were found in the appreciation of supervision by men and women, and also with supervisee age and relative exposure to supervision.*

Conclusions: *With this sample of relatively senior coaches it appears that highly trusting and satisfactory supervision relationships are emerging, perhaps thanks to current practice where most coaches self-select and engage supervisors out of the proceeds of their own work. Nevertheless, even in this sample there are still just under eight per cent occurrences of insufficient trust and safety around really worrying episodes. There are also demonstrable differences within the overall diversity of the profession.*

Keywords: *Executive coaching, coaching supervision, supervisor effectiveness, satisfaction ratings, trust, cross-sectional empirical study*

BY ITS NATURE workplace coaching is a rather isolated profession where we can feel 'out on a limb' and exposed as we make split-second decisions within and around client sessions. Supervision is a space for coaches to review their practice with the help of a dedicated professional who is specifically trained to quality assure and monitor those decisions (Special Group in Coaching Psychology, 2007; Carroll, 2007). Through shared reflection with our supervisor we can develop and refresh our ability to engage in helping conversations. Supervision then provides an opportunity to learn from our own experience and improve the quality of coaching, to process and overcome emotions

linked to our practice, and to scrutinise the boundaries of our work (Hawkins & Shohet, 1989). Because of the scrutiny and exposure that this implies, there have always been concerns that supervisees may feel ashamed or judged, and as a result may not bring their most pertinent doubts or their most worrying mistakes to supervision, believing that that is the best way to protect themselves and/or their supervisors.

Quantitative research into coaching supervision and its effectiveness is only beginning to emerge. Early overviews by Moyes (2009) and Joseph (2016) show that as yet there is very little rigorous research in business coaching supervision, and no empirical research into the important aspect of safety and trust in coaching or consulting supervision. Joseph (2016) recommends that there should be more large-scale, cross-sectional research adopting a clear and replicable methodology, including more research into the 'unintended negative consequences' of supervision such as a lack of safety. This study is intended to begin closing that gap in the literature.

Cohen (2015) in her exploratory study confirms that feelings of incompetence, along with the evaluation and exposure inherent in supervision, have the potential to generate shame and withdrawal in supervisees. 50 per cent of the 15 supervisees (coaches) researched had had an issue in their practice that evoked a sense of shame or embarrassment which they had not taken to supervision. In an earlier survey we conducted with 28 very experienced coaches we also found that a considerable percentage of them did not bring their most 'critical' moments to supervision (Day et al., 2008).

From the research in other helping professions a bleak picture emerges regarding safety and trust in supervision, with abundant evidence that supervisees often *do not* bring their most pertinent issues to supervision. As many as 84 per cent of supervisees (trainee therapists) in Mehr et al. (2010) reported that they withheld information from their supervisors in their previous session. Gray et al. (2001) looked into data from 13 supervisees (trainee therapists) who specifically reported on a 'counterproductive event' in supervision. Although these trainees typically thought those events negatively affected their work with clients, most did not disclose their counterproductive experience with their supervisors. As many as 38 per cent of the 158 supervisees (trainee clinical psychologists) surveyed by Moskowitz and Rupert (1983) reported conflict within their supervision relationship. Eighty-four per cent of those had been forced to raise the matter themselves, either because their supervisor had been unaware of the conflict or had not reviewed it nor brought it up for discussion. Conflicts centred on supervision 'style' were easier to resolve than conflicts caused by a clash of personality. If conflicts were not resolved, the supervisees adjusted their behaviour: they sought help from others, they became less open and concealed their professional struggles and queries, whilst they dutifully did what their supervisor asked of them but without it really affecting their clinical work.

Several other empirical studies show that supervisees do not bring their most pertinent issues to supervision, sometimes for fear that the process will be too painful or shaming for themselves, sometimes related to an experience of awe or a need to shield their supervisor – and themselves – from sensitive issues or potential conflict (Lawton, 2000). This applies also to experienced practitioners and even to supervisors themselves (see Day et al., 2008). Time after time the literature shows that during the process of supervision supervisees expect more empathy, listening ability and support from their supervisors than they feel they receive (Moskowitz & Rupert, 1983; Gray et al., 2001).

On reflection these research results do not seem so strange. Most supervision is still compulsory, whether organised in a training context, within a professional institution, or to meet membership requirements imposed by a professional association (e.g. 'a minimum of six individual supervision sessions per year'). In the majority of cases, therefore, there is an element of compulsion or at least obligation. Moreover, in

many cases, for example where supervision is organised by a training institute or an employer, the supervisee cannot choose their own supervisor (Martin et al., 2016, confirm that in the supervision of occupational therapists perceived quality of supervision is significantly lower if supervisees cannot choose their supervisor).

Other than the dependency involved in not being able to choose one's supervisor, safety in supervision comes up against persistent fears by both individuals and coaching companies around: (i) violation of confidentiality, (ii) a standardisation and conformity agenda, (iii) unnecessary bureaucracy, and/or (iv) an intention to police and even stifle creativity (Salter, 2008). If we finally consider the fact that, as a supervisee, you are expected to put your cards on the table, to contribute the case material that causes you the greatest anxiety or uncertainty, and in particular to discuss your own doubts, mistakes and faults openly with your supervisor, it is not surprising that supervisees often have negative experiences in or around supervision. Add to this the fact that the supervisor has substantial power, often gives opinions – including written evaluations – and even, in some cases, plays a role in deciding whether a supervisee can continue to train or to practice in their profession, and the 38 per cent of supervision relationships that Moskowitz and Rupert (1983) found to involve conflict appears to be on the low side.

Group supervision has the additional complication that supervisees are more exposed and required to work together (Proctor, 2000). Have they chosen each other? Do they actually like each other? Do they see each other as supportive peers, 'comrades in adversity' or instead as competitors? There will invariably be times when their peer relationships are put to the test, as well as their relationships with their supervisor. They somehow have to divide up their allotted supervision time between them, and they sometimes feel that someone else is receiving more attention or being treated more favourably. In addition, they have to maintain helping relationships with each other: relationships in which unconscious ambivalence, wavering trust, and fragile security always play a significant role. And even if all of that is going well, they can come up against different levels of competence, ambition and success within the group, which can trigger feelings of jealousy or superiority, or make them feel (temporarily) unwelcome in the group.

Supervisees often feel shame during supervision; they feel vulnerable and insecure, and they feel exposed, especially after painful feedback or criticism from the supervisor – or after they have challenged their supervisor or expressed criticism. It is not unusual to feel nervous or hesitant before embarking on supervision, or to feel upset, exhausted, confused, offended or stripped bare afterwards. However, it could be argued that these commonly observed negative feelings are no reason not to take part or to be reticent about supervision. It could be precisely because of these risks and sensitivities that so much can be learned in supervision. Provided you also feel a 'modicum of trust' that the supervisor has your best interest at heart, these very tensions may yield substantial benefits. There is something paradoxical about helping conversations and this is no different for supervision: it appears to be precisely through taking a manageable risk and allowing exposure that we can build up safety. This is why, despite – or actually because of – the possibly 'unsafe' space, supervision appears to build up a layer of protection over time that makes working with clients and their organisations ultimately feel a lot safer (Gonzalez-Doupe, 2010).

For all these reasons it is important for supervisees to keep 'exposing' themselves as much as possible and to contribute truly sensitive case material, even if they have doubts or anxieties about their supervisory relationship, because this can ultimately be very fruitful. One's ambivalence as a supervisee is mirrored in the ambivalence of one's clients. The same is true for exposure, tension, or (veiled) opposition in helping conversations,

as supervisees are in most cases in turn trying to help people who are not fully committed or have not had full authority in choosing their coach or coaching psychologist. As supervisees can apply themselves to supervision and continue to learn despite tensions and frustrations, they are likely increasing their chances of being of service to others (clients), who are not altogether dissimilar from them as they are in supervision.

The objective of the research was to look into this problem in more detail. Might it be true that supervision does not cover or address the very aspects of practice that it was primarily designed for? Might coaches in regular supervision fail to gain access to their very isolation and their existential doubts? To research this question, we constructed a web-based survey for executive coaches, where in a safe and confidential way they could report about their 'most concerning/worrying/shameful episodes' in practice.

Our first two hypotheses were that safety and trust in supervision would be slightly more readily experienced by female coaches than by male coaches (following what Salter, 2008, found in her large-scale exploratory study), and that the experience of trust and satisfaction would go up as exposure to supervision increases (which is also one of the findings of Gonzalez-Doupe, 2010):

(i) **Hypothesis 1:** Response patterns between men and women will be different, with women expected to report significantly more trust in and satisfaction with supervision.

(ii) **Hypothesis 2:** Response patterns are significantly different with increased exposure to supervision as familiarisation will make supervision safer, and therefore
   - H2a: Trust in and satisfaction with supervision increases with age;
   - H2b: Trust in and satisfaction with supervision increases with coaching experience;
   - H2c: Trust in and satisfaction with supervision increases with amount of supervision; and

(iii) **Hypothesis 3:** Individual supervision is experienced as significantly safer than group supervision (Proctor, 2000). An individual supervisory contract is more protected and safer by virtue of having to expose one's practice only to one's supervisor.

Methodology

We constructed a survey focused on as many aspects as possible that may be relevant for trust, safety and satisfaction in supervision to prepare the ground for future longitudinal and causal studies of coaching supervision and coaching supervision effectiveness. The survey contained a high percentage of factual, demographic variables, so as to minimise the impact of same-source bias. There were no open questions to make uptake of the questionnaire as easy as possible and to make answering the questionnaire least exposing. For the same reason we did not ask for any personal (identifying) data and we made clear in the preamble that no-one, not even the researcher, would handle questionnaire responses. A statistician took care of data handling and analysis in the safest possible way.

The sampling strategy was snowballing through our colleagues and professional networks, as in Grant (2012). We set out to obtain at least 300 responses from mostly experienced workplace coaches, and we were positively surprised when a number of senior coaching supervisors in the UK, Holland and France offered to promote the questionnaire actively in their networks because of the importance of the topic for them.

Questionnaire design

The survey had nine closed questions, mostly with five response categories on a Likert scale, which could together be answered in less than five minutes:

1. What is your gender? (male/female)
2. How old are you in years? (below 30; 31–40; 41–50; 51–60; 61+)
3. Please select your main country of residence (drop down menu with all countries).

4. How many years of experience do you have as a workplace coach or organisation development consultant? (less than 1; 1–2; 3–4; 5–8; more than 8).
5. For every 40 coaching sessions, how many times do you make use of supervision in your practice? (less than 1; 1–2; 3–4; 5–8; more than 8).
6. How would you describe the percentage split between individual and group supervision within your sessions? (100 per cent individual; 25 per cent group and 75 per cent individual; 50–50 per cent; 75 group and 25 per cent individual; 100 per cent group).
7. Please rate how satisfied you were with your last four supervisors (four scales from 0 to 100).
8. Think about the most concerning, worrying and/or shameful episode in your practice over the last few years – did you bring this to supervision? Response categories were:
   - Yes, and it was helpful.
   - Yes, but it was unhelpful.
   - I could have brought it to supervision, but did not for some reason.
   - No, because I did not trust my supervisor with it.
   - No, because it was too shameful.
9. To what degree do you trust your current supervisor? (0: 'do not trust at all' to 100: 'trust completely').

Procedure and data collection

Our target group consisted of executive and workplace coaches with particular emphasis on senior practitioners. Hence a personal invite e-mail which contained the web link to this questionnaire was distributed through our Ashridge Centre for Coaching coach networks, as well as through the journal Coaching @ Work, and through professional associations such as AC, EMCC and ICF (mostly making use of their LinkedIn groups), and stayed open for exactly two months (February and March 2016). When we distributed the questionnaire to close colleagues and participants in the second year of their MSc in executive coaching, we obtained a response rate of 92 per cent. By 1 April 2016 it had been completed by 518 professional coaches (69 per cent women and 31 per cent men) from 32 countries with mostly more than eight years' experience (57 per cent more than eight years' experience and only 10 per cent less than one-year experience, see Table 1). Some 75 per cent of the sample was over 40 years old, 53 per cent over 50 and 18 per cent over 60 (i.e. quite a senior sample of (mainly) workplace coaches – see Table 1).

Results

Overview of supervisory arrangements

For every 40 coaching sessions 27 per cent of coaches report that they take more than five supervision sessions (Table 1); 14 per cent take less than one supervision session and 14 per cent take more than eight supervision sessions for every 40 coaching sessions. So it appears that 85 per cent of these coaches take more than the one hour minimum that the EMCC currently stipulates for every 35 sessions.

In a CIPD report in 2006 (Hawkins & Schwenk, 2006), 88 per cent of organisers of coaching and 86 per cent of coaches said that coaches should have regular ongoing supervision. However, only 44 per cent of coaches received regular supervision and only 23 per cent of organisers of coaching provided it. In this survey we seem to be witnessing increasing uptake in the use of supervision in the coaching profession over the last decade. This could of course be partly self-selection, as those who do not take any supervision would be less likely to complete the questionnaire. Grant (2012) adopted a similar sampling strategy in Australia and found a similar percentage, 83 per cent of the coaches, receiving formal supervision.

The participants reported a good balance and integration between group and individual supervision: 28 per cent reported only individual supervision and 12 per cent only group supervision, with an equal spread between the various other ratios of individ-

Table 1: Distribution of study variables

Variable	Distribution of responses (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Age	17	8	22	35	18
Experience	10	9	8	16	57
Amount of supervision	14	32	27	13	14
Individual versus group supervision	28	21	18	21	12
Supervision of concerns, worries and/or shame – Did you bring these to supervision?	85	5	7	2	0.6

Response categories:

Age (1 = below 30 years; 2 = 31–40 years; 3 = 41–50 years; 4 = 51–60 years; 5 = more than 60 years).

Experience (1 = less than one year experience as an executive or workplace coach or organisation-development consultant; 2 = 1–2 years experience; 3 = 3–4 years experience; 4 = 5–8 years experience; 5 = more than 8 years experience).

Amount of supervision: For every 40 coaching or consulting sessions, how many times do you make use of supervision in your practice? (1 = less than once; 2 = 1–2 sessions; 3 = 3–4 sessions; 4 = 5–8 sessions; 5 = more than 8 sessions).

Individual versus group supervision (1 = only individual supervision; 2 = 25 per cent group and 75 per cent individual supervision; 3 = 50 per cent group and 50 per cent individual supervision; 4 = 75 per cent group and 25 per cent individual supervision; 5 = only group supervision).

Supervision of concerns, worries and/or shame – Did you bring these to supervision? (1 = 'Yes and it was helpful'; 2 = 'Yes, but it was unhelpful'; 3 = 'I could have brought it to supervision but did not for some reason'; 4 = 'No, because I did not trust my supervisor with it'; 5 = 'No because it was too shameful').

ual supervision and group supervision investigated (50:50, 75:25 and 25:75 individual and group supervision – see Table 1).

Satisfaction with supervisors

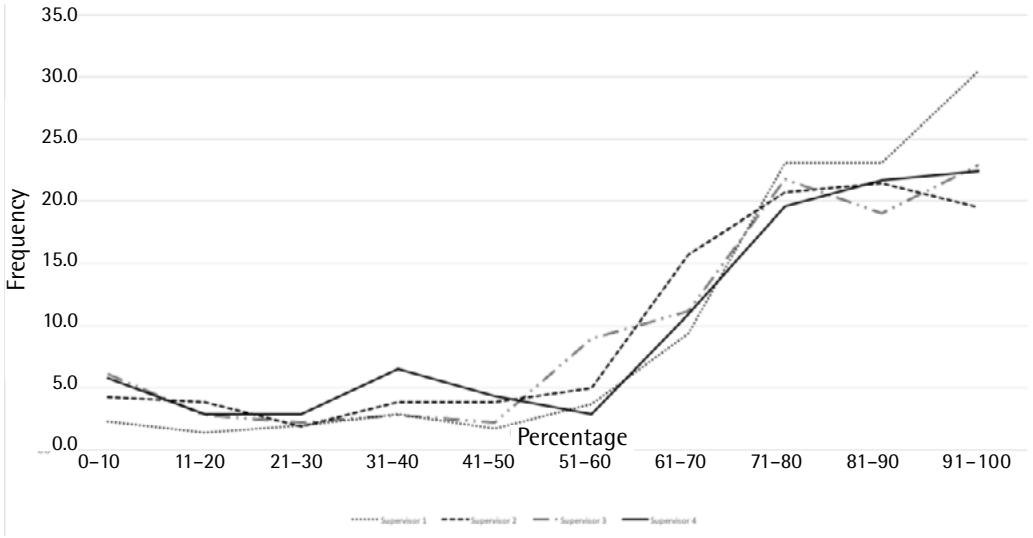
Supervisee satisfaction was on average just above 72 on a scale from 0 (extremely unsatisfied) to 100 (extremely satisfied) (i.e. in the normal range for helping conversations and service provision). Interestingly, coaches were more satisfied with their current supervisor than with previous supervisors: the average percentages dropped from 78 per cent for the current supervisor to 71 per cent, 71 per cent and 70 per cent for the three prior supervisors. See Figure 1 for the distributions of ratings for each of these.

Trust and safety in supervision

The core of the questionnaire explored the most concerning, worrying and/or shameful episode in the coach's practice over the last few years (i.e. major issues of concern for the coach him- or herself). When asked if this most worrying episode had been brought to supervision 85 per cent of coaches responded 'Yes, and it was helpful', which could be considered a very good result (see Table 1).

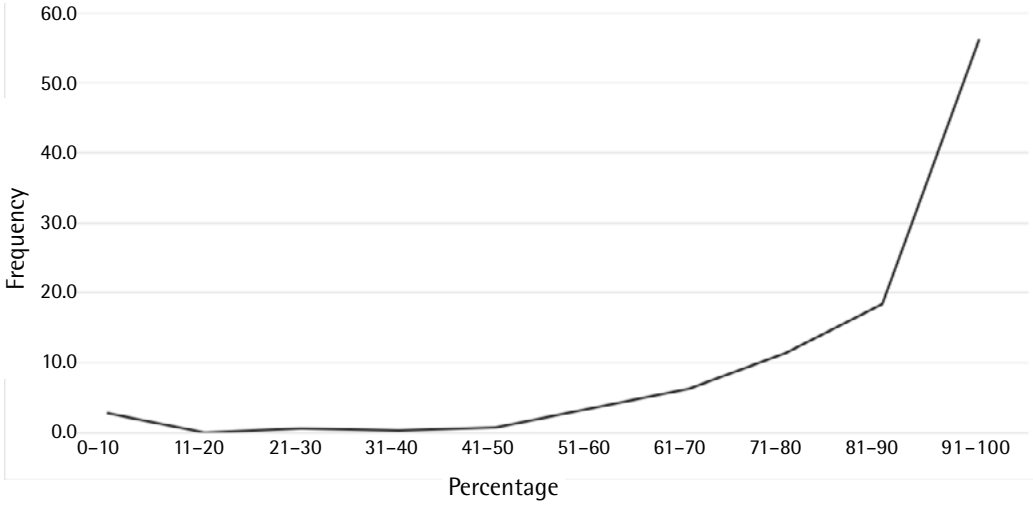
Nevertheless, 5 per cent of coaches still answered 'Yes, but it was unhelpful', testifying to an episode in supervision that must have been difficult. Another 7 per cent answered 'I could have brought it to supervision but did not for some reason'. Finally, there were another 2 per cent who did not

Figure 1: Distribution of satisfaction with current and previous supervisors



The means of these distributions are current supervisor ('Supervisor 1') 77.85 per cent, previous supervisor ('Supervisor 2'): 70.55 per cent, supervisor before previous ('Supervisor 3'): 70.63 per cent, and third previous supervisor ('Supervisor 4'): 69.86 per cent (standard deviations 21.16, 25.18, 26.58, 27.37, respectively).

Figure 2: Distribution of trust with current supervisor



The mean trust level with current supervisor was 86.02 per cent, with standard deviation 19.4.

bring the episode to supervision because they 'did not trust their supervisor', and another 1 per cent who reported that they did not bring it to supervision 'because it was too shameful'.

These percentages are very low but they are nevertheless worth noting. Even within a generally positive picture in terms of safety in supervision there were still approximately 8 per cent negative experiences (the sum of options 2, 4 and 5: unhelpful experiences in supervision, plus not trusting the supervisor, plus feeling too ashamed) with bringing serious concerns to supervision, many of which are likely to go unreported.

General trust in the current supervisor was also very high – on average 86 on a scale from 1 ('do not trust at all') to 100 ('trust completely') (see Figure 2 for the distributions of trust in current supervisor ratings). One participant reported that for him trust does not just revolve around shameful and embarrassing issues but also around commercial sensitivities. This respondent continued by writing:

> *In my case I've established trusting relationships by finding supervisors who are geographically or institutionally distant from my immediate circle of coaching colleagues.*

Significant differences between distinct groupings

To test whether there were significant differences between younger and older, male and female, experienced and less experienced coaches, and all other combinations, we devised two-sample *t*-tests to explore differences in the means of such groupings. However, in all cases, with the exception of question 8, the data was not normally distributed. For this reason, a standard non-parametric two-sample test, the Mann-Whitney *U*-test, was used for most groupings. For the questions that grouped the coaches within five response categories (i.e. questions 2, 4, 5, 6: age; experience; amount of supervision and splits between individual and group supervision) we compared the difference of the means on the lowest two categories with the means of those in the highest two categories (i.e. for question 2, age, we compared those under and up to 40 with those above 50).

Hypothesis 1: Gender

Results for male and female coaches were broadly similar, including their ratings of trust and satisfaction with supervisors. However, women brought significantly more of their 'concerning' or 'shameful' experiences to supervision (M = 4.59, SD = .87; $t(202.69) = 2.12$, $p < .05$, $r = .16$), and women also reported a slightly better experience than men when they brought those issues. So Hypothesis 1 was partially supported (in terms of 'trust' but not 'satisfaction').

Hypothesis 2a: Age

A Mann-Whitney U non-parametric model test indicated that older participants showed higher trust in their supervisor (question 9) ($Mdn = 95$) compared to the younger participants ($Mdn = 86$) $U = 10{,}226$, $z = 4.61$, $p < .01$, $r = .27$.

An independent *t*-test indicated that older participants (M = 4.78, SD = .64) reported significantly higher rates of submission of issues of concern and shame (question 8) compared to younger participants ($M = 4.52$, SD = .97), $t(91.29) = -2.06$, $p < .05$, $r = .14$. Moreover, it was also more helpful for those older participants to bring their concerns to supervision (question 8.2) $\chi^2(4) = 8.24$, $p = .08$, Cramér's $V = .17$. As such hypothesis 2a was partially supported.

Hypothesis 2b: Level of experience

Regarding the coaches' level of experience, a Mann-Whitney U non-parametric model test indicated that trust (question 9) among coaches with 'more' experience (Mdn = 92) differed significantly from coaches with 'less' experience ($Mdn = 88$), $U = 12{,}485.5$, $z = 3.75$, $p < .01$, $r = .20$. However, no significant difference could be identified for satisfaction or the submission of highly concerning issues to supervision. This provides partial support for hypothesis 2b.

Hypothesis 2c: Amount of supervision

Regarding the amount of supervision, a Mann-Whitney *U* non-parametric model test indicated that participants who made more use of their supervisor (*Mdn* = 83) indicated higher satisfaction with their supervisors (question 7, supervisor 1) compared to participants who made less use of their supervisors (*Mdn* = 80), *U* = 8 282.5, *z* = 2.36, $p < .05$, *r* = .15.

An independent *t*-test indicated that coaches who made use of their supervisor more often (*M* = 4.8, *SD* = .89) reported significantly higher levels of submissions around concern and shame (question 8) compared to participants who made use of their supervisor less often (*M* = 4.55, *SD* = .71), *t*(229.17) = –2.5, $p < .05$, *r* = .15. Moreover, it was significantly more helpful for those participants with more supervision when they brought their concerns to supervision (question 8.2) $\chi^2(4) = 13.69$, $p < .01$, Cramér's *V* = .23. This provides full support for hypothesis 2c.

Hypothesis 2d: Nationality

We compared only the two most represented countries in the sample, namely the Netherlands (147 responses) and the UK (113 responses), and a Mann-Whitney *U* non-parametric model test indicated that participants from the UK showed significantly higher satisfaction with their current supervisor (question 7, supervisor 1) (*Mdn* = 85) compared to participants from the Netherlands (*Mdn* = 80), *U* = 4,414.5, *z* = 3.36, $p < .01$, *r* = .26. Furthermore, participants from the UK also reported higher trust (question 9) (*Mdn* = 91) compared to participants from the Netherlands (*Mdn* = 82.5), *U* = 5,236, *z* = 4.59, $p < .01$, *r* = .35. However, no significant difference could be found for other supervisors or the submission of their most concerning event. Hypothesis 2d was therefore fully supported.

Hypothesis 3: Use of group versus individual supervision

A Mann-Whitney *U* non-parametric model test indicated that participants who attended more individual supervision (*Mdn* = 80) reported higher satisfaction with some of their previous supervisors compared to participants who attended more group supervision (*Mdn* = 71), *U* = 1,735, *z* = –2.29, $p < .05$, *r* = –.2. Furthermore, participants who attended more individual supervision reported higher trust (question 9) with their supervisor (*Mdn* = 92) compared to participants who attended more group supervision (*Mdn* = 90), *U* = 8490, *z* = –2.68, $p < .01$, *r* = –.16. No other significant differences could be found here. This nevertheless provides support for both satisfaction and trust in hypothesis 3.

Potential selection bias was explored (i.e. spurious effects due to associations between sub-samples, both through Cramér's *V* for the nominal and the ϕ coefficient for the binary variables). We found strong associations between age and experience, as expected (Cramér's *V* = .69, $p < 0.001$), but also unexpectedly between nationality and age ($\phi = .66$, $p < 0.001$). This means that the Dutch sample was found to be substantially younger than the UK sample, which may partially explain the effects reported just above. Interestingly, the associations of both gender and the relative amounts of group versus individual supervision with the other variables in the study actually work against the trends we have found (with maximum values of ϕs around .17 ($p < 0.01$), so we can assume that the reported effects above on those two variables (gender and group versus individual supervision) would be even stronger if we had started with a more homogeneous sample.

All significant results found were medium-sized effects ($r > 0.15$) according to Cohen (1988), with the only large-sized effect ($r > 0.35$) being for 'nationality' where we realised that selection bias may have amplified the effect.

Discussion

As discussed in the introduction, there is substantial narrative and quantitative evidence that supervisees often do not bring their most pertinent issues to supervision,

particularly in counselling supervision. From the findings in this study we can conclude that perhaps the situation for experienced coaching professionals is more positive than for other clinical professions and for trainees. Firstly, many trainees and clinicians from other professions are under an obligation to attend a certain amount of supervision and they cannot in many cases choose their own supervisor. This is not the case generally for workplace coaches, which may mean on the one hand that those who really need strict quality monitoring and supervision are not getting it, yet on the other hand that those who undertake supervision are much more motivated and trusting of their (after all, self-selected) supervisors. Another factor that may play a significant role is that many coaches pay themselves or apply for budget to pay their supervisors, and as such ordinary market forces might play a role in making the supervision safer and more dependable.

Below is a summary of all our significant cross-sectional results:

- Women are significantly more open in supervision and as a result receive more help with their most concerning episodes (this supports our hypothesis 1);
- Older coaches are also more open than younger coaches in terms of bringing their most concerning episodes; and moreover they report higher levels of trust in their supervisor (this supports our hypothesis 2a);
- Experienced coaches report higher levels of trust in their supervisor (this supports our hypothesis 2b);
- Taking more supervision for every 40 coaching sessions leads to higher satisfaction ratings with supervisors; moreover, those taking more supervision are significantly more open in supervision and as a result receive more help with their most concerning episodes (this confirms our hypothesis 2c in full);
- UK coaches report higher levels of satisfaction and trust with their supervisors than Dutch coaches (this confirms our hypothesis 2d); and
- Coaches who take relatively more individual supervision achieve higher levels of satisfaction and trust with their supervisors (this confirms our hypothesis 3 in full).

Significantly higher levels of trust in supervision were reported by: (i) older coaches; (ii) more experienced coaches; (iii) coaches mostly in individual supervision; and (iv) UK coaches. This confirms that individual supervision is likely to be safer than group supervision and also that trust grows with time. Satisfaction ratings are significantly higher (i) with more supervision; (ii) in individual supervision; and (iii) in the UK as compared to the Netherlands.

One would expect that individual supervision is indeed safer and more confidential than group supervision. As such it is surprising that the differences are not greater; for example, that group and individual supervisees bring equal amounts of their most worrying episodes to supervision (in other words, there was no difference in terms of openness – question 8).

Dutch coaches seem to be less satisfied and less trusting of their supervisors. This could be because coaching supervision is still relatively new in the Netherlands compared to the UK, and perhaps also because there is more formal 'peer supervision' ('intervision') in Holland.

Looking specifically at the frequency with which the single most worrying episode in practice has been submitted, we see how some coaches seem to allow themselves to be more vulnerable in supervision than others, and as a result can expect to draw a higher benefit from their sessions. According to our findings, women, older coaches and coaches that undertake more supervision are more inclined to bring their most worrying episodes to supervision and also receive significantly more help as a result. In the case of older supervisees and those taking more supervision the straightforward explanation could be that over time through familiarity with supervision they develop more trust. Female coaches also

seem to be more courageous and open when it comes to submitting themselves to supervision, even though their satisfaction and trust levels are the same as those of their male counterparts.

A great deal more research is needed in this area. Important next steps are to correlate these responses with those of supervisors or co-supervisees, and to link these statistics to narrative research in supervision such as has been done in psychotherapy where supervisees describe their personal experiences in supervision, including their experiences with 'counterproductive' events (cf. Gray et al., 2001).

Limitations of the research

This was only a first, albeit large-scale cross-sectional study to map current ratings of satisfaction, openness and trust, and their relationships with demographic properties of the sample (i.e. gender, age, nationality, experience, amount and nature of supervision taken). In the absence of a control group it was not possible to conduct longitudinal sampling, nor link these aspects to outcome and effectiveness of supervision. Whilst our population sampling was wide, it is not possible to confirm the randomness of the sampling. As such, it is likely that there will be an influence of self-selection by those who are more engaged with supervision.

With regard to 'satisfaction' and 'trust' the research only measured supervisees' perceptions of supervision, and therefore these results may be subject to same-source bias. For this reason we have not explored any correlations between these two variables. Same-source bias in the other variables is likely to be very reduced as they are all factual ('demographic') questions, rather than subjective ratings by participants.

It remains a limitation that the research did not include perceptions of other interested parties; in particular, supervisors, co-supervisees and clients. Moreover, we haven't strictly controlled for dependencies between sub-samples, although we have checked for selection bias which seemed to be rather limited (except for the sample of different nationalities, as reported).

Most importantly, our closed questioning only demonstrates very generic patterns, whilst at the same time satisfaction, openness and trust levels may be more influenced by highly specific aspects of coaching supervision. Some participants e-mailed us to draw attention to the links between the commercial 'business' of executive coaching and trust and safety. One of the coaches wrote:

> *For me trust does not just revolve around shameful/embarrassing/etc. matters, but also around commercial ones. This is an unfortunate but I feel realistic factor because of the competitive business side of the coaching industry clashing with the supportive/developmental side of the supervision profession.*

Conclusion

It can be argued that a general motto in fitness: no pain no gain, is also very true in supervision, and it is likely that the more vulnerable the supervision setting for both partners the higher the levels of effectiveness, satisfaction, openness, trust and safety. In this light we seem to be doing something well in coaching supervision. We are finding an increased reported uptake of supervision over the years, and are now able to demonstrate high perceived levels of satisfaction, trust, openness/vulnerability ('daring') and high rewards ('helpful supervision outcomes') in supervision as well. We have some first indications that levels of vulnerability and reward are even higher for women, older coaches and those that make more use of supervision. Group and individual supervision seem nearly equally rewarding, and the UK levels of satisfaction and trust are slightly higher than in one other specific European country.

Given these findings the coaching profession ought to continue its voluntary, 'light touch', approach to coaching supervision (as compared to, for example, the counselling, social work and psychotherapy professions),

in terms of, for example, regulatory requirements. Also, coach training institutions should offer more choice regarding supervisor and supervisory arrangements when designing training programmes for coaches, as this element of choice and self-selection appeared to work well for more senior coaches. Finally, more research certainly needs to be done, particularly into the views of other interested parties and the attitudinal and emotional patterns underpinning the demonstrably high levels of trust, safety and satisfaction in supervision, as expressed by relatively experienced workplace and executive coaches.

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The state and future of coaching supervision

J. Thomas Tkach & Joel A. DiGirolamo

As the coaching industry has grown over the past twenty years, so has the interest in coaching supervision. Although most in the industry agree that supervision plays a valuable role, few agree about what that role should actually be. Even the definition of coaching supervision is widely debated. This paper provides background and history on coaching supervision, an exposition of supervision in the multiple domains, and some areas for future efforts.

COACHING can trace its roots back to many different fields and ideological movements, including philosophy, psychology and the business world (see Figure 1). One of the biggest influences on coaching comes from the human potential movement in the 1960s, which sought to help individuals to reach their full potential (Brock, 2008; DeCarvalho, 1991). The human potential movement was influenced in part by humanistic psychologists Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, who emphasised the concepts of unconditional positive regard, self-awareness, personal growth, and self-actualisation (DeCarvalho, 1991; Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 1957).

While it is hard to determine where specific practices in coaching originated, similarities between coaching and clinical or counselling psychology suggest influences from these domains as well as social work. For example, all of these modalities frequently involve one-on-one helping relationships, which require confidentiality (Hart et al., 2001). Supervision is another area where psychology may be influencing coaching (Carroll, 2007).

Supervision in counselling and other forms of psychological therapy can trace its roots all the way back to Freud (Carroll, 2007; Watkins, 2013). The first known requisite for supervision came in the 1920s when it became a formal requirement for psychoanalytic training at the Berlin Poliklinik, which was largely funded and influenced by Max Eitingon (Carroll, 2007; Watkins, 2013). From these roots in Europe, supervision eventually made its way to the North American continent. Other helping professions such as social work, counselling, probation, and teaching began incorporating supervision into their practices, although we are unable to discern if a connection exists between the use of supervision in psychoanalysis and a migration to other professions or vice versa (Carroll, 2007).

In the US, supervision evolved from a counselling process to a more educational process. In the 1970s, US universities conducted abundant research to create supervision models and theories and it soon became a requirement for training in counselling. During the late 1970s and early 1980s these models and theories had a significant influence in Britain. There, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy not only made it a requirement for training, but also required all members to receive ongoing supervision – a requirement that remains to this day (Carroll, 2007).

Prevalence of coaching supervision

Supervision has since spread to the coaching field. Although it is impossible to know for sure, the regional differences in counselling supervision between the US and the UK may have influenced how coaching supervision is regarded today. Reports indicate that coaching supervision is gaining popularity in the UK (Hawkins & Schwenk, 2006a, 2006b; Hawkins & Turner, 2016a, 2016b).

Research on how widely coaching supervision is practised has been limited in quantity and scope. Only a handful of coaching super-

Figure 1: Roots of present day coaching

vision research studies have been conducted and most are confined to a specific geographic region. This has made it difficult to compare supervision trends over time and across regions. Differing methodology has also made it challenging to compare these studies.

A 2006 study conducted by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development found a large discrepancy between coaches' beliefs about the importance of supervision and the actual practice of supervision in the UK. The study reported that 86 per cent of coaches believed that coaches should have regular, ongoing supervision while only 44 per cent reported receiving supervision (Hawkins et al., 2006a, 2006b). However, follow-up research conducted in 2014 by Hawkins et al. (2016a, 2016b) indicated that over 92 per cent of coaches in the UK reported having some form of coaching supervision.

Coaching supervision appears to be popular in other regions. A study by Grant (2012) reported that 83 per cent of Australian coaches were receiving supervision, although only 26 per cent was formal supervision. Hawkins et al. (2016a) also reported that a high percentage (81 per cent) of European coaches outside of the UK receive supervision.

Although supervision is prevalent in Australia, the UK, and other parts of Europe, little is known about the prevalence of coaching supervision in other parts of the world. Findings by Hawkins et al. (2016a) suggest that supervision is much less popular in North America. Although this is likely true, one must be cautious with the data since the sample size is quite low (42 participants). Data from Australia and New Zealand, Asia, Africa and Latin America was also included in this study but had even smaller sample sizes.

The rise in coaching supervision in the UK and other parts of Europe over the last 10 years could be attributed to a number of factors including cultural influences and accrediting body requirements. For example, when stating the top two reasons coaches participated in supervision, 36 per cent of UK coaches listed 'professional body requirement'. Confounding matters further, 87 per cent of UK coaches reported 'personal commitment to good practice' as one of their top two reasons (Hawkins et al., 2016a). This data suggests a complicated relationship between external pressures and intrinsic motivation. Future robust studies are needed to understand coaching supervision prevalence and regional differences in attitudes, motivation and growth trends.

State of coaching supervision

Functions and definitions of coaching supervision

Coaches, clients, accrediting bodies and organisations that procure coaching services all have a stake in coaching supervision, and each has a somewhat unique perspective. Consequently, supervision may serve different functions for different stakeholders. For example, research conducted in 2006 in the UK found that most coaches (88 per cent) sought supervision for developmental reasons while the majority of organisations (70 per cent) were most interested in the quality assurance function of supervision (Hawkins et al., 2006a, 2006b). This disparity makes it difficult to identify a universal purpose of supervision. It also highlights a difference between supervision in the therapeutic fields versus coaching, namely that coaching frequently involves a third party, the employer of the client (Bachkirova, 2008), and further, that the employer of the client may view supervision solely as a quality control function (Hawkins et al., 2006a, 2006b).

Some researchers and organisations have attempted to outline the primary functions of supervision. A popular framework of the purpose of supervision is outlined by Hawkins and Smith (2006), which offers three functions of coaching supervision: developmental, resourcing and qualitative. These functions were adapted from similar functions developed for social work by Kadushin (1976). The developmental function serves to develop 'the skills, understanding and capacities of the supervisees' (Hawkins & Smith, 2013, p.173). This is an exploration of the dynamic between the supervisee and his or her clients through reflection. The resourcing function is about supporting supervisees emotionally (Hawkins et al., 2013). Finally, the qualitative function provides 'quality control'. This ensures not only the quality of the supervisee's work, but also that they are following ethical guidelines (Hawkins et al., 2013, p.173).

Research seems to support the existence of these three functions, especially the developmental and qualitative functions (Champion, 2011; Hawkins et al., 2006a, 2006b; Lawrence & Whyte, 2014; Passmore & McGoldrick, 2009). Some have argued that the resourcing function may be more applicable to the fields of social work or therapy (Lawrence et al., 2014; Moyes, 2009). Others have found, however, that supervision can help supervisees feel less isolated (Champion, 2011; McGivern, 2009; Passmore et al., 2009). It has been suggested that group supervision in particular 'provides a supportive atmosphere of peers in which practitioners can share anxieties and realise that others are facing similar issues' (Hawkins et al., 2013, p.209).

Due to the varying functions of supervision, defining supervision has been challenging. No universally accepted definition for coaching supervision exists (Moyes, 2009). Table 1 compares several popular coaching supervision definitions and each of these is provided in Appendix A.

Table 1: Themes in definitions of coaching supervision*

	Formal process	Learning or development	Monitor or evaluate	Reflection (on work and self)	Support	Understanding client-system or organisation	Client protection (ethics)
Association for Coaching (2015)	✓			✓			
Bachkirova (2008)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Bluckert**		✓		✓	✓		✓
Carroll (2007)		✓		✓			
de Haan & Birch (2010)		✓					
European Mentoring and Coaching Council (2016)		✓	✓		✓		✓
Hawkins & Schwenk (2006b)	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Hawkins & Shohet (2012)		✓		✓		✓	
International Coach Federation (2016)		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Stevens (2004)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		

* Definitions were compared as they were explicitly stated

** Bluckert (2004) as quoted in Hawkins & Schwenk (2006b)

Within these definitions, the most common themes were: learning or development, reflection, and support, which echo the developmental and resourcing functions described above. Monitor or evaluate and client-protection, which most closely resembles the qualitative function, was represented in almost half of the definitions examined. Although understanding client-systems or organisations is only mentioned in two of the 10 definitions, some have argued for the importance of a systemic approach to coaching supervision (Bachkirova et al., 2011; Hawkins et al., 2013). The popularity of Hawkin's 'seven-eyed model' (Bachkirova et al., 2011; DeFilippo, 2013) seems to reflect this trend.

Differences among accrediting bodies

When examining the different definitions and functions supervision can play, it is important to understand how different accrediting bodies approach the issue. Each organisation has its own definitions, policies and positions regarding supervision, and therefore comparing their positions is difficult.

The International Coach Federation (ICF), for example, makes a distinction between mentoring and supervision. According to the ICF, mentoring is defined as 'coaching for the development of one's coaching' (International Coach Federation, 2014) whereas supervision is defined as 'a collaborative learning practice to continually build the capacity of the coach through reflective dialogue and to benefit his or her clients and the overall system' (International Coach Federation, 2016). This distinction is not made with the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) and the Association for Coaching (AC). Interestingly, Gray (2010) describes a model which utilises a mentor more for career and business development.

These differences are most apparent when comparing the accreditation requirements of these organizations. For instance, the EMCC and AC require supervision for accreditation whereas the ICF does not (Association for Coaching, 2016; European Mentoring and Coaching Council, 2012; International Coach Federation, 2015). However, the ICF does require mentoring in lieu of supervision. It is hard to determine if this translates to measurably different practices and outcomes or whether these differences are simply a matter of semantics.

These organisations also differ when it comes to ongoing supervision. The *Global Code of Ethics*, which both the AC and EMCC endorse, states:

> *To support their learning and ongoing professional development, members will engage in regular reflective practice. Members will engage in supervision with a suitably qualified supervisor or peer supervision group with a level of frequency that is appropriate to their coaching or mentoring practice.* (Association for Coaching & European Mentoring and Coaching Council, 2016, p.5)

Contrasting this, the ICF does not require ongoing supervision (International Coach Federation, 2015). According to the EMCC *Guidelines on Supervision*:

> *Coaches/mentors should undertake no less than one hour of supervision per 35 hours of practice, ensuring a minimum of four hours per year, evenly distributed if possible.'* (European Mentoring and Coaching Council, 2016, p.3)

The AC does not outline the amount of time or the type of supervision (one-on-one, group, formal, informal, peer, etc.). The only publicly available information comes from an AC newsletter, which states:

> *Best practice would be no less than quarterly and ideally monthly. If you have a lower caseload you may consider attending group rather than one-to-one supervision.'* (Lucas, 2015, p.2)

Coaching supervision models

As mentioned previously, one of the earliest models for supervision in general was proposed by Kadushin (1976) and subsequently adapted or developed independently by others (e.g. Proctor, 1987). This model has considerable

Figure 2: Hawkin's seven-eyed model of supervision (Hawkins, 2014).
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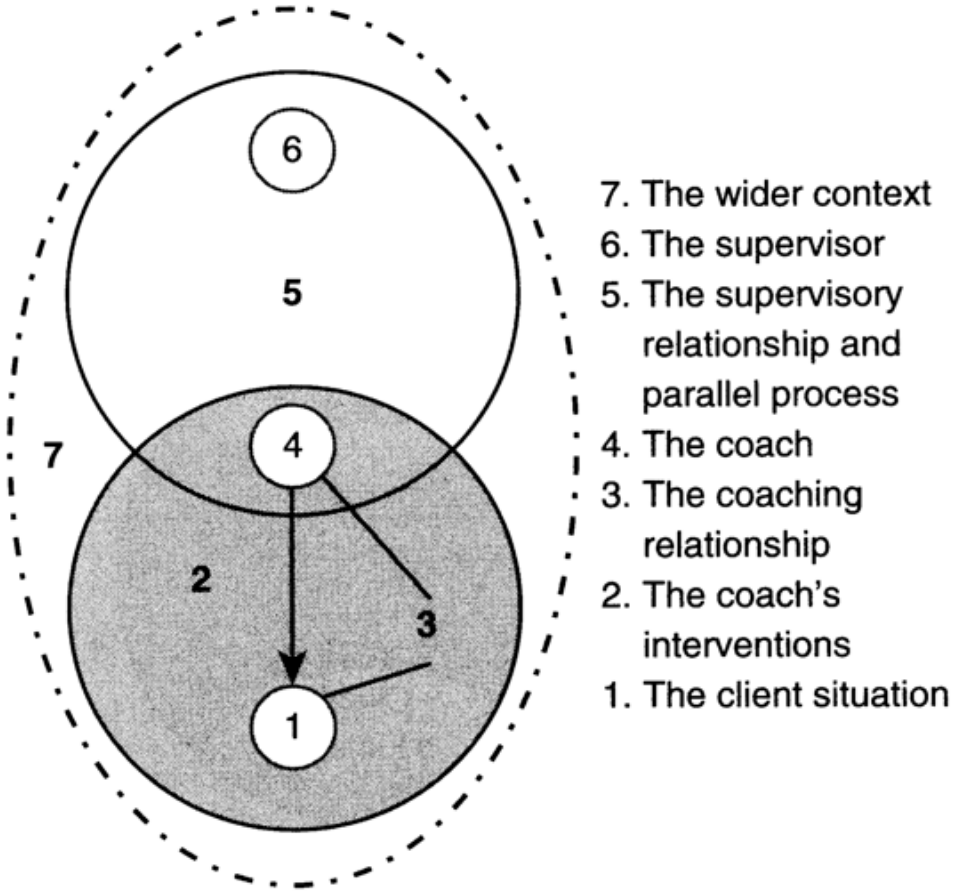


utility. Kadushin proposed three components: administrative, educational, and supportive. The administrative component centres around the client case management, rights and ethics. Monitoring and self-care falls into the supportive component in order to maintain job satisfaction and prevent burnout. Lastly, the educational component entails personal and skill development. This fundamental model continues to provide utility in supervision research to date (e.g. Bambling, 2014; Hodge, 2016). It also plays into the concept that 'supervision should be a mix of simultaneous challenge and support' (Cavanagh et al., 2016, p.178).

As demonstrated earlier, the history of coaching supervision has been heavily influenced by psychotherapy and social work (Carroll, 2007). Similarities between the fields and an increasing number of therapists training as coaches may also have an influence (Bluckert, 2005; Butwell, 2006; Moyes, 2009). Thus, the most popular models and functions in the literature can trace their roots back to these fields.

Some have argued that these models, functions and definitions are incompatible with coaching:

> *Coaching is not counselling or psychotherapy and one could argue that we should not assume that we can blithely transpose one set of standards across to another arena.* (Butwell, 2006, p.49)

Consequently, practitioners and researchers have expressed the need to develop coaching models, definitions, and functions that are unique to coaching (Hawkins et al., 2006b):

> *One of the dangers of a coach going for supervision to a counsellor, or counselling psychologist, is that the supervisor's professional focus will tend towards understanding the psychology of the client.* (Carroll, 2006a, p.3)

The most widely used model of coaching supervision is the seven-eyed model created by Peter Hawkins. Originally developed for use in counselling and psychotherapy, the seven-eyed model was adapted for use in coaching beginning in the mid-1990s (Hawkins & Schwenk, 2011). This model uses a systemic approach to supervision. Figure 2 illustrates the model and explains the seven 'eyes', or modes, contained within. Several other coaching supervision models based on Hawkins' seven-eyed model also exist, including Megginson and Clutterbuck's seven conversations model (Clutterbuck, 2011) and the three worlds four territories model (Turner, 2011). The seven-eyed model is comprehensive since it includes all parties in the conversation – the client, coach, supervisor and organisation or other external context. It is also valuable since it includes elements internal to each of the parties as well as their relationships to each other.

Coaching supervision models are not limited to the seven-eyed model and its variants, however. Other models and techniques include the reflective coaching practitioner model developed from Schon's work in social work and psychotherapy in the 1980s (Campone, 2011), the full spectrum model (Murdoch & Arnold, 2013), action learning supervision (Childs et al., 2011), the gestalt supervision model (Gillie, 2011), non-directive supervision (Thomson, 2011), and narrative supervision (Congram, 2011), although the use, development and establishment of these models vary greatly. For a more in-depth review of these models and techniques, refer to Bachkirova et al. (2011), Hawkins & Shohet (2012), Passmore (2011), and Murdoch et al. (2013).

A case for a systemic approach to supervision

Supervision was originally focused solely on the therapist's client (Carroll, 2006a). However, with the growth of counselling in organisations, supervision began to take a more systemic approach (Carroll, 2006a). Guidelines from the American Psychological Association now mention the importance of understanding the contexts and systems involved in clinical supervision (American Psychological Association, 2014). Several proponents have argued that coaching supervision should also have a systemic focus (Carroll, 2006a; Gray, 2007; Hawkins, 2011; Hay, 2007). Carroll (2006a, p.2) explains:

> *Unlike workplace counselling where what happened in the counselling room was dictated by the client and the organisation had little say in that agenda, suddenly with executive coaching it is the organisation that often sets the agenda.*

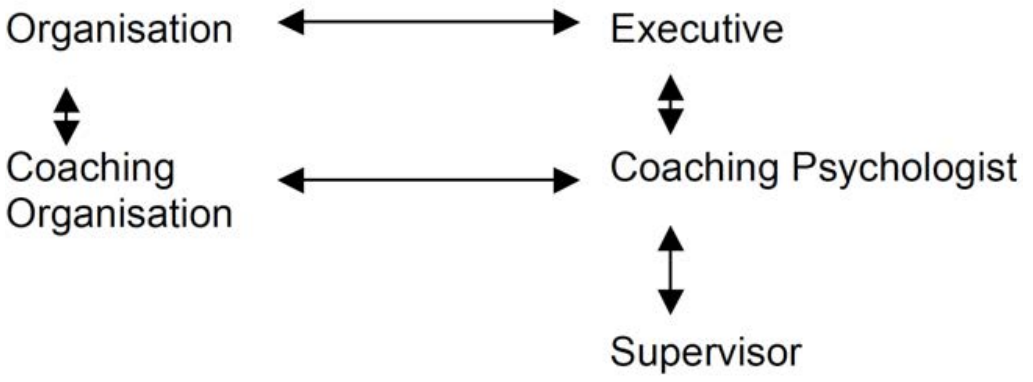
Self-deception is another concern for coaches. Bachkirova (2015) interviewed six coaching supervisors about self-deception in their supervisees and found examples, including:

> *Overstepping the boundaries of coaching when clients wished to work on issues more appropriate for therapy; pushing the client too much for their own reasons; ignoring ethical dilemmas; and colluding with powerful clients.* (Bachkirova, 2015, p.11)

One influence of self-deception reported was wider influences such as 'power balance, organisational culture [and the] current state of society' (Bachkirova, 2015, p.13), further adding to the case for a more systemic approach to supervision.

In addition to supervision models for the supervisor/supervisee relationship, several meta-models describe the interactions between the different elements within a supervisory relationship (Carroll, 2006a, 2006b; Gray, 2007). Carroll (2006a) presents a model (see Figure 3) that expands upon other models by highlighting the connections between different 'subsystems' in a coaching supervision relationship:

Figure 3: Systemic overview of coaching psychology supervision (Carroll, 2006a, 2006b). Reproduced with permission from the British Psychological Society.



> *While the visible focus of executive coaching supervision is usually two people or a small group of people (peer, team, group supervision), to ignore the systemic side of supervision is to miss the unseen but very active participants in the wider field who impact dramatically on the executive coaching, the coachee and their work together. Supervision inevitably involves a number of subsystems, even if they are invisible participants in the process.* (Carroll, 2006a, p.48)

Gray (2007) also presents a meta-model of supervision (see Figure 4), which provides context for the supervisory relationship.

In addition to these models, Hawkins has developed the 'four pillars of systemic supervision'. These pillars emphasise the importance of a systemic perspective in coaching supervision, which focuses on the organisations, relationships and processes that surround and interact with the coach, client and supervisor. Within the four pillars is the CLEAR process model, which outlines the five stages that take place during supervision: Contract, Listen, Explore, Action, and Review (Hawkins, 2011).

Best practices

Currently there are no universally accepted guidelines or best practices for coaching supervision. However, Hawkins et al. (2006a, 2006b) have outlined eight 'good practices' based on their research. Although these practices have not been validated, findings from a study by Passmore et al. (2009) support these guidelines. They include:

- Takes place regularly.
- Balance of individual, group and peer supervision.
- Manages ethical and confidentiality boundaries.
- Generates organisational learning.
- Provides support for the coach.
- Quality assures coaching provision (provides quality assurance in regards to ethics and competence).
- Provides continuing professional development to the coach.
- Focuses on client, organisation and coach needs. (Hawkins et al., 2006b, p.8)

The Special Group in Coaching Psychology (2007) published guidelines for coaching psychology supervision which included a discussion of the appropriate formats for supervision (one-to-one, peer and group), agreements, confidentiality, climate, frequency, roles and responsibilities, and competencies.

In the domain of clinical supervision, a distinction has been made between supervision competencies and best practices. Borders (2014) defines competencies as knowledge and best practices as the procedures used in carrying out the supervision.

The Association for Counselor Education and Supervision commissioned a task force to 'formulate a relevant and useful set of best prac-

tice guidelines for clinical supervisors, regardless of work setting' (ACES Task Force, 2011, p.1). The resulting document is a comprehensive guideline, which includes elements of process, inclusion of diversity considerations, relationship, ethics, supervision format, and supervisor responsibilities. These guidelines were created through a consensus process among task force members after a review of the supervision and ethics literature as well as gathering data from task force members.

A developmental approach is considered important by many (e.g. Bambling, 2014; Cavanagh et al., 2016; Hodge, 2014). This orientation considers the need for early practitioners to work on skill acquisition, skill development, and maintaining consistent quality in their work. Mid-level practitioners may wish to hone their skills and integrate techniques sufficiently that their approach feels fluid and seamless to clients. Coaches at the master level may choose to co-create their supervision plan and remain more open to what arises during the supervision process. This approach brings to mind the shift away from a hierarchical model that Watkins and Milne (2014) have observed:

> *First, if there is one feature that now seems to characterise the tenor of all supervision models, it might best be stated as follows: Across the decades, supervision conceptualisation and conduct have come to increasingly reflect a more egalitarian, collaborative, co-participative, and co-constructed vision of process and outcome, where supervisor and supervisee actively and fully work together to create a supervision experience that is jointly optimal and productive. At its core, that evolving shift is ultimately about power, influence, and agency – the move toward recognising that: (a) both supervisor and supervisee have power and influence in the supervisory endeavour, and (b) supervision works best when that power and influence are mutually used and shared for its enhancement.* (p.676)

Supervision outcomes and experiences

Studying and measuring coaching supervision efficacy would be an extremely difficult,

Figure 4: Systemic meta-model of coaching supervision (Gray, 2007).
Reproduced with permission from the Australian Psychological Society.

expensive and time-consuming process due to the number of supervisors, coaches and clients that would need to be involved, the length of time needed for the study, and the quantity of assessments needed to be given to each of the three parties. Consequently, no study to date has attempted to do so. However, anecdotal findings from several studies suggest that coaches who undergo supervision generally report having positive outcomes and experiences. The most common themes were developmental in nature and included increased self-awareness, confidence, objectivity, resourcefulness and capability (Champion, 2011; DeFilippo, 2013; Lawrence et al., 2014; Lucas, 2012; McGivern, 2009; Passmore et al., 2009). A sense of belonging and reduced feelings of isolation were also described, especially in group supervision settings (Butwell, 2006; Passmore et al., 2009).

Barriers to supervision

Despite mostly positive perceptions about coaching supervision, some have described negative experiences. For example, Grant found that 30 per cent of participants had poor experiences. However, despite these negative experiences, 91 per cent of these same participants also agreed or strongly agreed that 'it is very important that all professional coaches should have regular on-going supervision on coaching' (Grant, 2012, p.27)

When asked about these negative experiences, 26 per cent expressed dissatisfaction with the supervisor's skill level. Not surprisingly, 35 per cent of participants reported that the lack of good supervisors as a barrier to receiving coaching supervision. Of all the participants in this study, 39 per cent used peer supervision and 18 per cent had informal supervision, which may have contributed to the reported poor experiences (Grant, 2012).

Cost was also cited as a barrier (Salter, 2008). Grant (2012) reported that 32 per cent of participants listed cost as an obstacle to receiving supervision. In 2006, 17 per cent of UK coaches listed cost as a reason for not receiving supervision (Hawkins et al., 2006a, 2006b). Recent research has suggested that the cost and negative experience barriers may be falling away (Hawkins et al., 2016a). However, the participants in this study were mostly pulled from the UK so this finding may not apply to other regions of the world.

Future of coaching supervision

Should supervision be mandatory?

Although most research indicates that coaches are in favour of coaching supervision, there has been some debate about whether or not it should be mandatory. Some coaches argue that supervision directly affects coaching quality and could help strengthen the profession. Others have reasoned that supervision stifles creativity, breeds conformity, and violates confidentiality (Salter, 2008). A survey of 218 coaches across the US, Canada and Europe found that 63 per cent of coaches do not believe supervision should be mandatory, although overarching generalities and conclusions cannot be made from a single study (Salter, 2008).

Bachkirova (2008, p.16) argues that supervision is actually more important for coaches than therapists:

> *Coaches have more than one client in each coaching engagement and so have a greater need to see the complexity of the relationship and the many perspectives of the various stakeholders in their work. Furthermore, coaches are less equipped than counsellors to identify mental health issues impinging on the boundaries of coaching, so they would benefit from another pair of eyes to check their concerns.*

However, even with this strong endorsement of supervision, Bachkirova et al. (2011, p.4) state, 'we hope and believe that discretionary supervision is likely to work better than if it were mandatory'. More recently, Hodge (2016) states:

> *When the coach takes personal responsibility for their supervision (including preparation and subsequent reflections) this gives them a wider purpose than just meeting imposed accreditation requirements… This voluntary approach may potentially conflict with the*

> *coaching associations' mandated approach in their wish to establish standards of professional practice.* (p.101)

Hodge (2016) also concludes 'one-to-one supervision alone is not enough to support coaches in this work' (p.98).

Based upon the fact that no robust studies exist identifying the efficacy of coaching supervision, one would be hard-pressed to defend a position mandating coaching supervision on an ongoing basis.

Future research

Despite a growing number of books and academic articles, the scope of research on coaching supervision is still rather limited. This is most likely due to the fact that 'supervision is a complex intervention' (Watkins et al., 2014, p.683) and lack generally accepted models and standardised instruments. For example, the recent dissertations of DeFlippo (2013) and Hodge (2014) do not develop or employ similar coaching supervision models.

Wheeler and Barkham (2014) discuss the deficiencies in clinical supervision research, such as weak procedures and methodologies. Additionally, their research showed very little overlap in the instruments used from study to study. To overcome the instrumentation deficiency, Wheeler et al. (2014) have proposed a fixed battery of five assessments to begin gathering consistent data. While this will move the industry forward it still lacks client measurement – a critical measure of supervision efficacy.

Based on the exposition herein, coaching supervision research that incorporates the following elements is recommended:

- Randomised control and experimental groups.
- Client, coach and supervisor outcome measures.
- Client, coach and supervisor characteristics.
- Measures of coach-supervisor bond.
- Measures of coach-supervisor tasks.
- Assessment of supervisor flexibility to adapt to coach developmental level.

Conducting a robust study with sufficient statistical power will require a large number of clients, coaches and supervisors over an extended period of time, even if the effect size turned out to be large. Obviously such a study will be considerably expensive.

Until such a study is undertaken, however, an approach similar to Wheeler et al. (2014) would provide small steps toward that goal. Development, validation and agreement among researchers on tools needed to conduct such a robust study will pave the way for that ultimate journey.

Conclusion

This review of the coaching supervision literature highlights the steady progress made toward a better understanding of what takes place in coaching supervision. The latest studies have shone light into the coaching supervision process and effects on coaches as well as supervisors. These studies also highlight the need for standardised elements such as models and instruments. While the seven-eyed model is sufficient to illustrate the players, relationships and context, it does not speak to the activities and processes taking place within supervision. Development and agreement amongst researchers of standardized measures will prove very helpful in moving the industry forward.

We have seen that with the apparent consensus amongst clinical supervision researchers on measures, they will be able to gather large quantities of data, albeit with somewhat limited usefulness, since client outcomes will not be measured. However, the coaching industry can continue to observe the clinical field for additional clues into coaching supervision.

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Appendix A: Definitions of coaching supervision

Association for Coaching (2015): A formal and protected time for facilitating a coach's in-depth reflection on their practice with an experienced coaching supervisor. Supervision offers a confidential framework within a collaborative working relationship in which the practice, tasks, process and challenges of the coaching work can be explored. The primary aim of supervision is to enable the coach to gain in ethical competency, confidence and creativity to ensure best possible service to the coaching client, both coachees and coaching sponsors. Supervision is not a 'policing' role, but rather a trusting and collegial professional relationship.

Bachkirova (2008): Coaching supervision is a formal process of professional support, which ensures continuing development of the coach and effectiveness of his/her coaching practice through interactive reflection, interpretative evaluation and the sharing of expertise.

Bluckert (2004) (as quoted in Hawkins & Schwenk (2006b): Supervision sessions are a place for the coach to reflect on the work they are undertaking, with another more experienced coach. It has the dual purpose of supporting the continued learning and development of the coach, as well as giving a degree of protection to the person being coached.

Carroll (2007): Supervision is a forum where supervisees review and reflect on their work in order to do it better.

De Haan & Birch (2010): Coaching supervision takes place either in groups or on a one-to-one basis. Its purpose is to help the coach bring the best of himself to his work with clients; in practical terms this means ensuring that he is sufficiently well-resourced to help his clients take responsibility for their behaviour and their choices at work.

European Mentoring and Coaching Council (2016): The interaction that occurs when a mentor or coach brings their coaching or mentoring work experiences to a supervisor in order to be supported and to engage in reflective dialogue and collaborative learning for the development and benefit of the mentor or coach, their clients and their organisations.

Hawkins & Schwenk (2006b): A structured formal process for coaches, with the help of a coaching supervisor, to attend to improving the quality of their coaching, grow their coaching capacity and support themselves and their practice. Supervision should be a source of organisational learning.

Hawkins & Shohet (2012): Supervision is a joint endeavour in which a practitioner, with the help of a supervisor, attends to their clients, themselves as part of their client practitioner relationships and the wider systemic context, and by so doing improves the quality of their work, transforms their client relationships, and continuously develops themselves, their practice and the wider profession.

International Coach Federation (2016): Coaching supervision is a collaborative learning practice to continually build the capacity of the coach through reflective dialogue and benefit his or her clients and the overall system.

Stevens (2004): Coaching supervision is a formal learning process in which a coach engages with a more experienced coaching practitioner in order to articulate, reflect on, evaluate and receive support to monitor his/her coaching practice.

Report

Special Group in Coaching Psychology Chair's Note

David Webster

ON BEHALF of the Committee for the Special Group in Coaching Psychology we wish you all the very best for a great 2017. It is a pleasure to have taken over the role of Chair from Dasha Grajfoner and as I write, I look forward to a 2017 full of great conversations which further our profession.

It is perhaps useful to remind ourselves of the aims of the SGCP, contained in our Strategic Plan 2015–2020 (for the full plan, go to www.bps.org.uk/networks-and-communities/member-microsite/special-group-coaching-psychology):

- Promote and advance coaching psychology by further developing the Coaching Psychology Research Network.
- Develop coaching psychology as a profession through establishing training routes for coaching psychologists.
- Engage our members and the wider community and communicate the views of our coaching psychology community through the British Psychological Society to the wider public.
- Support our members and the profession of coaching psychology and making it accessible to all the British Psychological Society's member networks.

In 2016 we addressed these aims though a variety of activities. We concluded the review of our group which was helpful in understanding how we can resource our activity in the future; we held 15 workshops to support CPD; we continued to build on the success of the Peer Practice Groups (which was showcased in *The Coaching Psychologist*) around the country; and we refreshed our social media channels to enable clearer opportunities for members to get involved. Following a membership survey (the results for which were published in the December 2016 issue of *The Coaching Psychologist*), in 2017 we will be introducing a pilot programme of CPD events on 'accessible research methodologies', tailored principally to the needs of practitioners, alongside the usual coaching psychology CPD offerings. These will be aimed at supporting our members' confidence and skills in investigating their practice and will pay dividends in developing our research programme and contributing to our community's learning.

Our 2016 SGCP Conference 'Creating a New Sustainability in Uncertain Times' examined the idea of coaching psychology and positive mental health. It was a great success, supported the meeting of a number of our strategic aims, and is a valued resource for our members. We held two excellent half-day workshops on day one: 'Motivational interviewing' with Dr Jeff Breckon and 'Resilience, wellbeing and performance at work' with Dr Derek Mowbray. On day two, the full day conference saw invited speakers and submissions from around the coaching firmament. Professor Sarah Corrie's keynote drew upon her work both as a coaching psychologist and consultant clinical psychologist and addressed the conference theme with her characteristic care and intelligence, with a focus on self-care. It also reflected her impressive contribution to the field of coaching psychology for over a decade. For this

contribution, she was awarded the Distinguished Contribution Award 2016. It is rare that one person is able to speak with such authority in two areas of practice – and this is what Sarah does. The Research Award 2016 went to Louise Kovacs for her fascinating and robust study on coaching effectiveness which used realist evaluation and applied it in a complex international environment. (I shall use this opportunity to invite further submissions for awards in 2017: If you would like to nominate someone who deserves recognition for either of these awards, or indeed for the Student Award, please visit the SGCP website for more details).

We also heard from Jamie Hacker-Hughes, onetime President of the BPS and now Vice President, who spoke eloquently of his experience as a clinical psychologist with the military, in the NHS, with families and latterly with those who support refugees. Our own turbulent world can seem quite stable when we think of the lives of refugees from war torn Syria. Jamie also shared his work in leading on the BPS Structural Review which is to publish recommendations in spring 2017. This will help us to make more progress on 'development of coaching psychology as a profession' as a result of being clearer on how the BPS as an organisation will be shaped.

The conference was also an international affair, with voices from around Europe, the Far East, Australasia and the Americas – testament to the connections we will continue to foster in 2017, reflected in this very publication and our relationship with Vicki de Prazer and the Australian Psychological Society.

The Special Group in Coaching Psychology is the sixth largest group in the BPS – this reflects our attractiveness to psychologists from other psychological disciplines and to non-psychologists who are interested in finding out more about the body of knowledge from which we as coaches all draw. We hope to continue to support this 'broad church' of membership and be a home for great development, great research, and great conversation about our discipline. If this is a compelling aspiration for you and you feel you have the time, energy and skill to make a contribution to our work, get in touch – we would love to hear from you. We also look forward to seeing you at our 2017 Conference – be it as presenter, award winner or participant, psychologist or non-psychologist and from whatever discipline – you will all be very welcome

Finally, if you are reading this and would like to see your own work appear in the pages of *International Coaching Psychology Review*, please contact Roger Hamill or Sandy Gordon, our co-ordinating editors, who can offer guidance and support on the process should you need it. We look forward to hearing from you.

David Webster
Chair, Special Group in Coaching Psychology
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Report

Interest Group in Coaching Psychology News

Vicki de Prazer

AS the Australian Psychological Society, Coaching Psychology Interest Group didn't hold a Congress in 2016, we utilised our time to take a fresh look at our vision, *Excellence in Coaching*.

Our Executive Committee has representatives in each state and throughout the year many innovative events encouraging networking, professional development and marketing have been creatively and professionally delivered, all effectively delivering on our mission: 'To explore and expand the contribution of psychology to best practice coaching within all areas of coaching'.

Continuing the momentum created in the states and with the very successful Australian Psychological Society Congress Panel symposia, we recognise and appreciate the great wealth of talent and expertise within our membership and network and are looking at new ways to access the knowledge of these practitioners, educators and researchers to create many more options and opportunities for the exchange of information and ideas.

In 2017 we are seeking to further expand the ways we communicate, educate and collaborate with our members, the coaching community nationally and internationally, and the purchasers of coaching. We are excited about the prospect of working in partnership with other groups around the world and invite you to contact us to explore how we might establish:

- forums for coaches with particular interests to exchange and debate ideas;
- forums for coaches who may not be academics to find support and mentoring to undertake research, or formulate their casework into material that could be published in the ICPR; and
- more online educational resources by coaches working collectively to establish a collection of reviewed recourses.

I am very keen to see the global coaching psychology community communicate more in 2017 and invite you to contact the Coaching Psychology Interest Group, and perhaps visit Australia and share your expertise and perspectives.

Best wishes to all

Vicki de Prazer
National Convener,
Interest Group in Coaching Psychology
v_deprazer@yahoo.com.au

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.
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